The Tent System of the Boston City Hospital.*

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It is evident to the most casual observer that the love of outdoor life by the American people increases with each year. To prove this statement we have only to look back at the past summer and see that even with the wonderful advance which has been made in transportation it has been almost impossible to keep pace with the demands of the public. Crowded cars and boats give ample testimony of this. Numberless summer homes have been built where once was the unbroken forest or the lonely shore.

A vacation is no longer a luxury, but a necessity, and the practical business man realises this when he plans a two-weeks' rest for each of his employees. The numerous fresh-air funds, country homes for convalescent patients, and floating hospitals all point in the same direction: an outdoor life for a time, be it shorter or longer, for everybody.

Realising the benefit to be derived from such a life by people suffering from certain diseases, as tuberculosis, many States and municipalities, as well as private corporations, have organised sanatoria for their care, depending almost entirely for treatment upon fresh air added to proper diet.

That this element enters largely into the treatment of those persons suffering from nervous diseases, as well as the insane, is a well-known fact. History records that as early as 1854, in some of the stations of the Austrian army in Hungary, the plan was commenced of treating a portion of the patients under tents instead of in the permanent hospitals, and this was continued from spring to the end of autumn with very satisfactory results.

Patients were allowed to remain until quite cold weather, and it was found that when the thermometer fell to freezing-point at night no bad results followed, and, singularly enough, the men themselves, many of whom were severely ill, declined the offer of removal to the hospital.

Dr. Kraus, an Austrian military surgeon, in his records of 1861, speaks of the excellent results following this treatment, especially in cases of typhoid, small-pox, and gunshot wounds, and strongly advocates the use of tents for field hospitals in war.

The usual objections raised, that tents are too hot, too cold, too exposed, or likely to be wet, he considers to be of no practical value.

During the war of the Rebellion the example set in Hungary was followed on a gigantic scale, as the tent hospital was established under a great variety of conditions, and that it gave much satisfaction is evident by the strong commendation of the Surgeon-General of the United States Army, Dr. William A. Hammond.

What, then, can be done for the patients in a large city hospital during the summer months?

An answer to this question may be found in a brief description of the tent system which has been used from time to time at the Boston City Hospital.

The hospital is the fortunate possessor of a space of sodded land about four-fifths of an acre in extent, bounded on the north by the hospital buildings, with the two homes for nurses lying to the south-west, while to the east are huts for the isolation of suspected cases of small-pox.

There are large and small tents, connected by platforms—a tent for the head nurse, one for commissary purposes, a marquee, and lavatory—accommodation in all for sixty patients, medical and surgical.

In the main, the appointments are the same for either service. The bedsteads are of iron, and the bedding is the same as that used in the wards. In fact, when the first transfers were made from the hospital the patients were brought out on their mattresses placed upon trucks, so that they were disturbed as little as possible. The surgical tent is distinguished by its car for supplies and dressing-tables.

The patients are furnished with bedside tables and chairs. There are the usual screens, chart-holders, card-racks, and, in fact, all the appurtenances to which both patient and nurse have become accustomed.

The head nurse's tent combines an office and linen and supply closet. It is 14 by 14 ft., and is furnished with a desk, tables, lockers, and shelves for supplies. All linen from the laundry is brought here, folded, and kept for use. There is a telephone, and this tent, like all the others, is well lighted with electricity.

The commissary tent is also 14 by 14 ft., and is furnished like the service room of a modern hospital in so far as is possible. Shelves for dishes, a sink with hot and cold water, oil-stove, refrigerator, and table for serving diets complete the appointments. The diets are brought from the hospital kitchen in covered tins, and are served to the patients as quickly as possible. The sanitary arrangements are contained in a wooden structure which is screened from view and divided into toilet-rooms and lavatory proper, the latter containing ward crockery and disinfectant solutions. It is provided with a good supply of hot and cold water.

Last, but not least in point of popularity, is the marquee, which serves as a sitting-room for convalescent patients. Many pleasant hours are passed there in reading and playing games.

It has been found that the regular routine work of the hospital can be carried on as easily in the tents as in the wards. A force sufficient to carry

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