

800 patients passed through the field hospitals during the day. The men showed the utmost pluck and endurance; there was not the smallest despondency, the predominant feeling being anxiety to return and fight again. This was very splendid of them after such a day as they had experienced, and makes one feel very proud of their fine mettle.

The hospital trains rapidly took them away. Each train carries on an average 100 cases and is equipped with every possible requirement, besides iced soda, champagne, soup, and other comforts in abundance, so I am certain that all that human foresight could accomplish was done during the journeys for the mitigation of the sufferings of the wounded. The first train, which was for a time under fire, left the immediate vicinity of the battlefield at 2 p.m. with 119 wounded; a second train was despatched at 8 a.m. on the 16th; a third at 2 p.m. on the 16th; a fourth at daylight on the 17th; and a fifth at 8 a.m. on the 17th—a very quick succession. All the field hospitals were empty at daybreak on the 17th, and this was done, notwithstanding that they were obliged to move the hospitals in the midst of their work to escape from the zone of fire.

Poor Captain Hughes, R.A.M.C. (on General Buller's staff, an officer of the highest merit and promise), was killed by a bullet which severed the innominate artery, and Major Brannigan, R.A.M.C., was seen by me shot through the foot. Major Stuart-Wortley, Rifle Brigade, who officered the 2,400 volunteer ambulance bearers, did splendid service and I heard him report about 5.30 p.m. that the whole field was then clear of wounded, which was very rapid and good work. When I saw that I could do no more personal work for these hospitals, we returned to No. 4 Stationary Hospital at Chieveley station and managed to get a shake-down in the deserted and dismantled house of the station-master. During the night I assisted Major Mallins to perform a laparotomy on a man whose intestine had been pierced in two places, with a very successful issue up to the date of writing. It is worthy of note that the operation was performed in a tent (equipped with everything needful) in a hospital which had been in full activity eight miles away on the morning of the same day. The conveyance of the wounded by stretchers from the field hospitals and from the field to this hospital has been going on the whole evening, many being carried from five to seven miles with great comfort, and at the same time more marquees are being pitched, so that 200 beds may be shortly ready. All the marquees are provided with iron beds, wire-spring bottoms, and hair mattresses, the gift of a Durban gentleman. Two army

nursing sisters (Miss Sammut and Miss Martin) are hard at work doing excellent service under difficulties. One of the ambulance waggons which went too far under fire in the morning was blown up by a shell (accidentally, no doubt). Fortunately there were no patients in it, and the drivers escaped unhurt.

*Dec. 17th.*—Yesterday and the day before were indeed days of hard work. A hospital train, filled with wounded, had arrived from the field hospital about 8 a.m. (16th) and discharged many of the more severely wounded into our stationary hospital. A second hospital has now been added to ours under the command of Major Baird, R.A.M.C., assisted by Captain Begbie. The two operating tents are constantly busy. I was consulted about many cases and assisted at several operations. In the afternoon I performed an amputation of the right thigh for a fracture of the femur in which gangrene of the leg had supervened. There were many abdominal and lung cases, but comparatively few of these required operation, being either of a favourable character or the patient being too ill to allow of interference.

An order having been given last evening for the brigades to retire on Frere, No. 4 Hospital became, of necessity, crowded by the wounded of the field hospitals belonging to those brigades. By 10 p.m. all the wounded had been found sleeping-places, but there were no more beds to spare. The medical officers could now do no more till morning than see that the serious cases obtained morphia, milk, and needful comforts. Everyone was exhausted and almost fell asleep at his duties. This morning the brigades have left and we hear that the whole army is to retire on Frere. Water is very scarce indeed. There will probably be no further fighting for the present, and as all the wounded will have left the front by midnight to-night, the principal medical officer (Colonel Gallwey) has advised me to return to Pietermaritzburg. Considering the great strain of the work and the number of the wounded after this hotly contested engagement (where both rifle and shell fire were something, it is said, never seen before) I would like to draw attention to these facts:—(1) The skill and care displayed in treating compound fractures and injuries requiring calm attention and time under heavy fire. (2) The skilful and efficient way in which serious major operations were performed on the same day as the battle (under considerable pressure and disadvantages) by the medical officers of the field hospitals. (3) 800 wounded were cleared from the field by 6 p.m., the action having finished at 2 p.m. (4) By midnight on the second day after the battle (to-night) the last wounded man will have left the hospitals at the

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