

Floating Hospitals.*

In the summer of 1873 New York City was visited by a spell of very excessive hot weather, and the suffering among the poor was very great. The inexpensive summer resorts and trips to the seashore, now so numerous, did not then exist to afford their welcome relief, even if the people had the means to get to them. A member of the editorial staff of one of the large daily papers, while crossing the park surrounding City Hall, was a witness to the sad sight of seeing a company of newsboys chased from the grass plot to the paths where the stones were so hot as to burn their bare feet. The thought occurred to him that if these boys could be given even a day away from the city, great benefit would result, and he undertook to arrange an excursion for them. To carry out his plan he turned for help to St. John's Guild, then a parish organisation working among the poor in their homes. A barge was hired, the children gathered together, and the first excursion became an accomplished fact. The beneficial results were so apparent as to warrant giving another trip during the same year, and in the following summer, through gifts of the public for the purpose, eighteen such trips were given. We have no record of the number who were benefited the first year, but 15,200 persons availed themselves of the opportunity during the second year.

One of the projectors of the scheme who was on board on one of the first trips, and made inquiry of a small lad if he was enjoying himself, received the reply: "Yes, but I wish me muther and the sick baby wuz along." This remark started the idea of getting mothers with babies, and, in the years since, the development of the work has been with this in mind. The vessel now in use is not the excursion barge of the beginning, but a hospital completely equipped to care for day patients. The present mortality among infants during the summer months is very much less than in former years, and authorities give credit for a good measure of the reduction to this Floating Hospital work.

In 1875 a vessel was bought and rebuilt for the special purposes of the Guild. This was supplanted in 1899 by a larger boat, especially built and equipped. A description of the "Helen C. Juilliard," named after the donor, will be of interest to those who are thinking of organising a similar work.

The vessel is of wooden construction, 212 ft.

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long, 42 ft. beam, 750 tons. It cost \$33,000 to construct and \$10,000 to furnish and equip. On the main deck amidships is a large open space where are the gangways and the stairs leading to the decks above and below. This affords ample room for the reception of patients and their distribution on board. Forward of this space there are two wards, one on either side of the vessel, each ward containing nine cribs. The babies who because of their condition should be placed in bed, are conducted immediately to these wards. A graduate nurse is in charge. Forward of these wards is the Superintendent's office and staff cabin. Aft of the space referred to is a large bathroom, hereafter mentioned. Still further aft are dressing-rooms for the nurses and maids, and in the extreme stern is a toilet room for the patients. This room is entered by means of a special stairway from the upper deck, so as to keep the people from the parts of the boat where the crew has to have free passage.

Below this main deck, in the bow, is the fore-castle, where part of the crew sleeps. The crew are the only persons who sleep on board at night. Aft of the fore-castle is the galley. Aft of this are storerooms, pantries, etc., and then a large dining-room, seating 400 persons at a time. In the stern is the engine-room. The vessel has not its own propelling power, but is towed. This eliminates the danger from fire. The engine on board is a small one for pumping salt water to the bathroom and keeping the toilets flushed. Hot water is supplied from the boiler.

The upper deck is entirely open, except for a small compartment where the feedings for the infants are prepared. On the top, or hurricane deck, are located the pilot house, the captain's room, the berths for some of the crew, and at the stern an isolation ward.

Contagious diseases are excluded, but if one should be inadvertently passed in the admission of patients, and discovered afterwards, it can be kept away from the other patients on board.

The bathroom has tubs for bathing babies, with fresh and salt water connections. Medicated baths are given as prescribed by the physician. The room is also furnished with about forty shower sprays, and the older children and mothers can take salt water shower baths. A graduate nurse is in charge of the bathroom. The mothers give the baths to the babies, unless they seem not to know how, and then they are given by an attendant, the nurse standing by to give instructions to the mother. The nurse watches out for any

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