

Provision for Those Who May Fall Sick

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Our Fairfax Correspondence.

FLINT HILL, FAIRFAX CO., VA., October 12.

In all well regulated armies, ample provision is made for those who may fall sick, in advance of their taking the field. It is generally estimated that at least five per cent of the soldiers are liable to disease. To this extent, every possible comfort is provided. Hospital Depots in the most healthy localities, are established; bedsteads, bedding, medicines, medical attendance, suitable food, clothing, &c., are considered quite as much a necessity as shrapnel shell and muskets. Every comfort that can be thought of, is at hand, ready for service of the afflicted.

I have looked in vain for such things in the Army of the Potomac. Instead of hospital depots, I have sickened at the sight of hundreds of brave fellows, borne down with disease, crouching in the drenching rain for 12 or 24 hours, waiting for transportation and enduring the misery of starvation, with no kind hand to assist them, and no shelter from the summer heat or the winter storms and rains. I have asked—why is this? Is there no remedy for such brutal negligence? I am told that the order is peremptory, that all the sick in the camp should be sent to the railroad for transportation to the hospitals, which are scattered over the country from Manassas to Richmond, and that no better arrangements can be made. I protest against any such settlement of the question. There is a remedy, and an indignant people, who have given their sons and brothers to the cause of Southern Independence, should rise up and thunder their complaints in tones that will be heard in Richmond.

In order to make you understand this matter properly, I propose detailing the difficulties by which a sick soldier finds himself surrounded.

He is taken sick and reports himself to the Surgeon of the regiment. If the case promises to be a protracted one, the Surgeon's duty is to order the invalid to hospital. The hospitals, as I have said, are out of the camps at distances ranging from 50 to 150 miles. The poor fellow, weak and almost helpless—possibly with typhoid or other fever, is assisted into a common country wagon, without springs, which, it may be, has just discharged a load of bacon, sugar or molasses, to the commissary. Into which he stretches himself, and is jostled and jolted over a rocky road, 10 or 20 miles to the nearest railroad station. Here, he, in a majority of instances, is delayed and has to spend the time on the railroad platform, or the hotel steps, or in some neighboring piazza. If the weather is hot, as in August, he is blistered by the scorching sun; if cold, as now it is, he shivers, with his scanty clothing, and rain finds him altogether unprotected. But this is not all. The time for taking the cars arrives, and he gets a place in a crowded box car, which may have brought up a load of cattle the day before; he is carried to Gordonsville, Culpepper, Orange or Charlottesville, perhaps to Richmond, dependent on such attention on the journey as his fellow passengers are able to

afford him; he finally arrives at a hospital, and his life is entrusted to the care of those who, however competent, find that to visit all once a day is as much as can be accomplished, with every exertion. Here, it is true, the kindness of neighbors and the attention of friends or family may reach him and be of service; but there are many—very many, who die, and a candid verdict would substantiate the fact, that exposure and want of care in the first symptoms of the case, are, in the main, the causes of their decease.

The remedy for all this is:

First, ambulances, comfortably arranged, at least six or eight to a Regiment, (we have good reason for knowing, that all we have of these conveyances, are those which the fortune of war has placed in our hands).

Secondly, a large and judiciously arranged shed, near the railroad station, capable of containing five hundred persons comfortably. This hospital depot should be supplied with bedsteads and bedding—enough of the latter to allow of a frequent change—medicines, medical attendants, ranges near by for cooking, and at this season, the building should be kept warm by fires. Into such a place a soldier might go, and if unforeseen circumstances delayed him twelve or twenty-four hours, he would be as well cared for as if he were at home.

Third, four or five ambulance cars should be kept exclusively for the transportation of invalids; they should be kept supplied with clean bedding, kept warm in such weather as this, and have attendants to assist the invalids on their journey.

Fourth, the medical bureau should provide regular hospitals at stated points, and not depend upon such apartments as town halls, court houses, &c. which all people have reason to know are unfit for the habitation of the sick, many of them having no fire-places, or other necessary conveniences.

Lastly. The most ample arrangements ought to be made for hospital attendants. Our domestics make the best nurses; we control their labor, and they can be had in any number, if proper steps are taken to secure them.

Cannot public attention be directed to this matter? Is it not possible to have our sick cared for and more humanely treated than they have been for six months past?

This is no sensation letter. The subject is too serious a matter to be longer neglected. Let it be borne in mind, however, that the people must sustain the press, to ensure a reform.

KIAWAH.