A Story of the Work of the Friends' Ambulance Unit

By Geoffrey Winthrop Young.

View of Camp at Jordans.
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Work of the Friends' Ambulance Unit.

The work of the Friends' Unit is already one of the institutions of the European War. It has secured the confidence, and commendation, of the Military Authorities of three countries, both in the field and at home. And it has gained its unique position among voluntary units by none of the usual social or influential channels. It has been assisted by no decorative or sensational personalities. It has hardly been mentioned in the Press. On the contrary, it has had to make its way against the inevitable military misunderstanding of principles such as prevent a large and conspicuous collection of strong young men from enlisting; against the jealousies of more socially prominent, but less well organised, units; against the cold-shouldering and suspicion which must always surround the efforts of any non-military and philanthropic undertaking, strong enough to force its way into the atmosphere of fear, death and necessary disregard of individual suffering such as characterize a war zone; where civilisation is dead, every motive is suspect, and men are but cunning to kill.

It has won its position by the courage, tact and patience of its Officers in recognising and seizing opportunities of service and in establishing cordial relationships with officials of all classes and of three races, and by the discipline, goodwill, self-abnegation, and unwearying work of its young men.

The story of its inception and growth is a romance in itself. Perhaps I can reproduce it best in the few pictures in which it remains in my own memory.

The first is in my library in London, in a few days' rest from my own work at the front. Philip J. Baker, my climbing companion in the mountains, the Vice-Principal of Ruskin College at Oxford, and known—and not only to us Cambridge men—as a President of the Union, a Whewell Law Scholar, and a world-famous athlete, whose force of character did more to raise the position of running as a sport than that of any man in recent years, came to tell me of the difficulties in which many young Friends found themselves, owing to the conflict between principle and the call of country to do some service in the war, and of his intention to form them into a trained Ambulance Corps. I could at the time hold out little prospect of an opportunity for collective work in Western Europe.

Many weeks later I was back again; and while driving down a leafy, autumn, Buckinghamshire lane I passed a noticeably athletic-looking troop of young men swinging along in the rhythm of a long tramp. The springing step of the leader seemed familiar, and Laurence J. Cadbury stopped to tell me of the progress made in the interval; of the camp at Jordans, the practice work on boy scouts, the night marches and open-air chilly bivouacs; of the wearisome negotiations to secure work with the armies, and of the possible departure for Servia.

Again an interval; and I visited them at the Jordans Camp. The picture is unfading in memory. The rise and fall of the green upland fields in that most tranquil of English landscapes. Cresting the hills and shadowing the deep lanes the woods of beech, copper and golden with autumn and white with the rime of frost; the peaceful little red-brick Jordans Meeting-house; before it the small gravestones of former Friends—William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania, and his family, among others—behind, under the trees, the canvas screen of the camp washing place filled with the laughter and noisy splashing of the young generation. And along the brow of the hill above, white against the autumn trees and looking out over the fall of woods at the red, misty sunset, the tents and camp fires, with the quickly-moving figures engaged in the manifold occupations of camp life. The contrast with the clamorous squalid circumstance and ugly setting of the war area in which I had been living was indescribable and almost poignant. But yet this training, as foreign in its character
as in its surroundings to the actual demands of modern warfare, formed a bond of work and a tradition of relationship which have brought the band of young Friends through the infinite difficulties of establishing their position at the front, strong against external disappointments and opposition, and, above all, secure against the internal discords that have spoiled the work of many voluntary organisations under the stress and nerve-tension of the war atmosphere.

Yet another picture: that of re-crossing the Channel, a little later, back to my own work, with Allan R. Baker, a single, rather lonely figure starting off into the interior of France at war to find that much-desired opportunity of peace work for the trained band.

It came from another quarter, sooner than could be expected. One of the hitches inevitable in the movement of war machinery met me on landing. The sight of thousands of wounded Belgians pouring back with but little provision for their housing or transport, came as an overwhelming, infinitely painful proof that here lay work close at hand. The Friends' Committee, formed in the Meanwhile to take the responsibility for the Unit at home, and embodying names that represented most of the influential elements in the Friends' Community, courageously trusted us for the venture. In less than a week, by exceptional exertions, the little band was ready to start, many at the call of the telegraph and without time to take leave of their families. On a dull Friday evening in October some 40 men and 8 ambulances started by road and rail, and assembled for their last night in England at a small Seamen's Rest on the South Coast. It was a veritable small pilgrimage. Uncertain whether work would be given it, without prospect of lodging, without "influence" to start or receive it. H. W. Nevinson, the well-known writer, who joined us for a few weeks, and myself, alone provided a link with the actual war conditions.

Adventure met us at the very gateway of beginning. Hardly had we started, in the grey of early morning, when a Destroyer roared past us at express speed into the mist. And a little later we saw that most tragic of all spectacles, the end of a great ship. The "Hermes" had just been torpedoed; and in the grey light, on a grey oily sea, with no suggestion of strife, we had to watch the
gradual disappearance for all time of the great grey vessel, whose beautiful lines represented the perfection of human skill, and contained so much of human hope and human achievement in discipline and organisation.

Our boys manned and lowered the boats, and for some hours worked saving life over a wide surface of troubled grey waves. Others, slung on lines over the side, pulled up the rescued. Others with the doctors laboured at restoring life to the exhausted and apparently drowned. They were successful in all but a few cases. To many of them this must have come as their first sight of death; death violent, causeless, futile, suddenly out of the mist, and only a few miles removed from the still peaceful English atmosphere.

We put back with the survivors, and only reached Dunkirk late in the evening, and tired. But there was to be no rest, we were out for work, and it was to come, changing, insistent.

Another of the gaps that seem inevitable in war, when the cumbrous machinery of rescue and repair can only wait slow attendance upon the fluctuating movements of the machinery of destruction, waited us on the busy quays. From a great and costly struggle at the front the French wounded were pouring back in thousands. In their slow and painful passage, by rail and ship, upon which the claims of the effective soldiers must always take precedence of those of the no longer serviceable, thousands were being blocked in the railway sheds, lying unattended until their turn came to be shipped further back to where they no longer encumbered the fighting zone, and where their wounds could be at last seen to.

It is impossible to describe the horrors of sight, of sound, of smell, with which our lads fresh from home began the struggle on this their first night, and without sleep. In half darkness, in the

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Headquarters' Office at Dunkirk, France, Hotel du Kursaal.

indescribable stench of old wounds, among always fresh hundreds of shattered remnants of human beings, heaped on the floor in delirium, coma and death. Tirelessly they worked on, at first continuously, and then in shifts. A few suffered from actual physical nausea, but there was never a word that suggested anything but cheerful, quiet acceptance of the duty. Gradually the machinery of armies followed us up. The sheds were properly reorganised, the regular Service-people took our place. The need for our work diminished, and in a few weeks our men were set free again to take up some new task.

But the introduction to war-needs in the sheds showed us what should be the guiding principle of our work: to be at hand to step into the gaps as they opened, to be elastic, and prepared to initiate and undertake any big task at any moment, and to be ready to surrender it again as the slower, more complete, official machinery moved up to replace us and relieve us.

In the course of this work the doctors and men dressed over three thousand wounded men in the sheds alone.

At the same time other squads took over the charge of superintending the loading of the wounded into the Hospital ships. For this the men received the special thanks of the British Naval officers. The sight of the long lines of muddy, limping figures in uniform, filing up the ships' sides, and of the ranks of "stretcher-cases," grouped according to the gravity of their condition, along the quays, remains a grim memory. Some six thousand or more were carried or directed on board by our men engaged on this task.
During these first days we actually remained without sleeping quarters, our kits and Red Cross surgical boxes piled on the quays, in curious juxtaposition to the piles of destructive shells. Finally quarters were secured at Malo-les-Bains, at the Hotel Kursaal, since then our headquarters and the heart of our growing organisation.

Meanwhile the Administrative Officers were energetically conducting negotiations to secure a building for a hospital, and to obtain work for the ambulances at the front. One of the chief reasons of our success has been the harmony established from the first between our surgeons, with their primarily professional interests, and the “lay” officers, chiefly concerned to secure work of any active, useful character for the Unit. This harmony has only increased with time, in notable distinction to the history of other Volunteer Units, where the nerve-stress and the conflict between different professional interests and traditions have too often led to gradual disruption.

In this respect, as in all others, the organisation owes an incalculable debt to the wisdom, sympathy and wide views of Dr. Humphrey Nockolds, our “Médecin Chef”: who has known how to guide and accommodate the demands of professional etiquette to the changing requirements of war conditions and the ultimate good of the whole Unit.

It is useless to resume the story of the negotiations. At one time I counted that we were dealing with fifteen different military authorities simultaneously; only five of whom could really help us, but any one of whom, if wrongly handled, could have blocked all our chances!

After several false starts we at last secured a building for a hospital at Dunkirk. In the final arrangements we were immensely helped by the arrival of Miss Irene Noel, our “Lady Superior,” whose name is a household word in Greece and one well-known in Balkan politics. Her tact, ability and charm have simplified all our later relations with the military authorities at our base.

The Hospital St. Pierre was started; and fitted out, lighted, and supplied with highly-trained nurses and all equipment in an incredibly short time. In this we were assisted beyond all expectation by the generosity of the Hon. Mrs. F. Guest, daughter of Henry Phipps, Esq., of New York, who not only presented the hospital equipment but herself came to help us for a time in the initial work. During the subsequent months of its existence it has nursed back to health more than 400 wounded or sick soldiers, with only a few deaths. Its warm bright comfort, cheerful organisation, efficiency and ingenious economy of space and contrivance, have won the special commendation of the highest French authorities. It has also formed an admirable training school for our dressers and nursing orderlies, under the able direction of our surgeons, who take it in turn to do work at the base or at the front.

The St. Pierre Hospital, with its glorious view over sea and land, and fresh breezes, remains our centre of curative work. To it we have brought not only the wounded soldiers, but the occasional
wounded man or dying child struck down by the bombs of the aeroplanes, which wheel constantly above us on the clearer sunny days.

The Hotel Kursaal remains also the heart of our administration. Here Philip Baker

and the Administrative Officers conduct the endless negotiations and the endless correspondence, and here our Adjutant Maxwell, with Ronald Lloyd, Maurice Stansfield, and a growing number of secretaries, controls the complete organisation. On the walls are maps of all the "Stations," plans of roads, tables showing the daily position of every man and car in the Unit, lists of orderlies and their shifts, supply schemes, night guards, etc., etc.; all the business of a fair sized Government office or a busy firm. And anyone watching the smooth working of the machine, and knowing that this is all run on a single line of supply from England, and in an "entrenched camp," under difficult changing war conditions, might well be amazed to hear that three of the mainsprings of this finished machine celebrated their twenty-first birthdays within two days of each other last week!

We may well claim that youth has been the secret of our success.

But this is to anticipate. From the first our main object was rescue work at the front. Modern conditions made "stretcher bear-
ing" of the old type impossible. But we knew that there was need of our ambulances to get the wounded quickly back from the lines, could we overcome the natural distrust of voluntary non-military units.

The Belgians, to whom we were first accredited, advised us to try Ypres. A few of us ran there in an ambulance late in October. The town was then still untouched, in all its grey quiet beauty of wide streets, picturesque houses, and noble public buildings. The British Army was in occupation. Round the encircling trenches raged the fiercest battle of the war: the great effort of the Germans to carry our central position, that lasted for five weeks and practically annihilated two armies. The roar of the guns was deafening, the sight of countless shells bursting, in a vast semi-circle, over the autumn blue sky, was unspeakably impressive. We listened and watched from the grey walls over the old wide moat, and then left, since they still thought they had no need of us. And as we drove away, the first shells of the great bombardment began to fall; the bombardment which, during the next weeks, was to reduce half the city to ruins. So, still in the pride of mediaeval beauty, we had our first sight of Ypres; and began the long connection which in the course of months has brought the town to be recognised peculiarly as our charge.

We early adopted as our motto—for the confused circumstances of war—"Search for the work that no one is doing; take it; and regularise it later, if you can!" So we waited only a few days, till we heard that Ypres had been "evacuated," and then set off, with 15 men, 3 ambulances and a lorry—a mobile little column, on a second lonely pilgrimage—to occupy a Belgian convent in Ypres as our hospital.

The second return is unforgettable. On a murky, sullen evening we travelled along the now familiar muddy roads, blocked by long columns of moving troops and convoys. At Poperinghe, now one of our home stations, we waited for an hour at a dark corner, while cavalry passed us silently, shifting uneasily and half seen. Then, a reach of deserted plains; and on the horizon, against the brown-yellow wreaths of fog, the sullen flare and red smoke of forty burning columns, pillars of fire from the falling buildings of the abandoned city. And still the menacing growl and roar from the great semi-circle of protecting trenches, where the savage battle of weeks continued, and the flower of the Prussian army shattered on the unyielding British lines.

We crept without lights through the black, deserted streets, dodging vast shell cavities and the piles of crumbling bricks and fallen masonry. Our promised hospital was empty, and already partly destroyed. The cheery old Flemish doctor and the nuns of our last visit were gone. During the night five big shells fell in our street, demolishing the near houses. There seemed to be not a soul left in the town, and nothing left to do but to escape, and even this with difficulty.

But it was still a hopeful, if homeless, party that drove out along the front of the French armies to the north. Undiscouraged, we offered our services as we went; and at the little village of Woeston—name familiar and dear now to all our Unit, the parent station of all our ambulance work—we met a cordial welcome from a French "evacuation" hospital. Excellent quarters were found for us in a school, and here we installed ourselves, still within reach of the German guns, but happy, and gradually converting our single upper room, by means of acetylene lighting, kitchen conveniences, etc., into a real home.

Then followed our weeks of ceaseless ambulance work, of which it is not yet time to write in detail. By punctuality, careful observance of orders, tactful conduct, and the cheerful willingness of our men to work day and night with the same courage and endurance, we won the confidence of our Allies. Whether along the trenches at night, without lights on what they called the "shell-bitten" roads, or down the crowded wearisome highway to base towns, our ambulance drivers worked with unflagging zeal. Gradually we were asked to extend our sphere; station after station was started, and quartered comfortlessly in hovels or lofts. Our lads developed rapidly, and could soon be trusted to manage the delicate relations with the countless military and medical authorities.
by themselves. With enterprise and tact they pushed out in new lines and established new connections; we had as many as seven stations going on at one time. The work was not without danger. For weeks together the ambulances ran under shell fire; but an extraordinary measure of fortune has so far attended us. In a number of remarkable escapes only two of us have been touched, and a couple of cars have been hit. May it so continue!

Headquarters backed up the work with constant watchfulness and ready contrivance. More men came out; the Unit doubled its numbers. The new men caught the spirit of the old. We could count upon every man for tireless, cheerful work day or night. A daily supply system for all the stations was developed. Woeston became a distributing centre; not only for ourselves, but for the needs of our allies in hospital and ambulance. The men grew up to the increasing demands; business men, supply officers, repairing engineers, convoy leaders, “liaison” officers with the French, we had only to select to find able assistants in all branches. At Woeston we took on a second room as store, the lower room in which, during the long battles, the dying men used to be left on their stretchers, and where all night we used to hear, coming up to us, the little bell and quick patter of the priest giving extreme unction. The nuns, whose infinite kindness and care will remain a lifelong memory with every member of our community, became our firm friends and helpers. Later, they acted as a distributing agency for clothes to the crowds of the destitute refugees and peasants in the neighbourhood. Later still, in the absence of any civilian doctors, Dr. Mallabar founded here a large practice among the wounded and fever-stricken civilians, which proved of inestimable service in saving life.

During the weeks of the great battles of Flanders, from this and our other stations, our small

**Group at Ypres.**

*Left to right: Geoffrey Young, Officer Commanding Field Stations; Monsieur Colarret, Burgomaster of Ypres; Commandant Count Delanoy, of the Belgian Army, attached to French Forces, A.D.C. to General Limau, and one of the heroes of Liège.*
body of cars and men carried over 12,000 wounded men, and journeyed more than 20,000 miles. The work was only possible on a regular system of relief and rest periods organised by Headquarters.
Ypres Civil Hospital. Salle Marie José (Women’s Typhoid).

Front of Sacré Cœur after Bombardment of December 21st.
In recognition, we have received over 30 letters of personal thanks from the heads of different branches of the French “Service du Sante.”

As the fighting died down, towards the turn of the year, we withdrew our Ambulance Stations, temporarily, one after another, to use the cars for more pressing work, in conformity with our principle to take up each new work as it came. To Woeston, and its civilian work, we held on to the last, and only temporarily withdrew the station with real regret and with the promise to return there first, just as soon as the fighting demanded it and a new arrangement in the shifting policy of moving armies permitted. On the nuns’ wall hangs the letter of thanks signed by some fifty names, and in the nuns’ kitchens are still sheltered two of the homeless families of children which we rescued and adopted during our stay.

While the ambulance work was being developed from Woeston in all its difficult ramifications, our position was much strengthened by two circumstances. The first was our combination for ambulance work with the Red Cross unit controlled by the Hon. Lionel Holland, brother of Lord Knutsford, who was better known in all hospital circles as the Hon. Sydney Holland. This brought
Ypres Civil Hospital. Salle Elizabeth (Men's Wounded Ward).

Names from left to right: G. H. Ward, Dr. G. Fox, E. B. Fox, S. Pim, E. I. Lloyd, J. King.

...us a great accession of good cars and drivers, for Mr. Holland placed his ambulances at the front under our control. His own delightful personality and sage counsel proved also a great strengthening.
of our hand in the never ceasing negotiating with changing authorities. The second was the official recognition of the position of our ambulances with the ——th French Army through the good offices of the French Mission, which was sent to arrange all such matters for the armies in Belgian territory. This recognition we were told, was given solely upon the merit of our past work and the confidence which its businesslike conduct had inspired. From this time forward our relations with the military chiefs of the French armies, although subject to temporary set-backs and rebuffs, were constantly improving.

Meanwhile, through all the varied beginnings and elaborations, Ypres remained our particular interest. Cars were frequently sent out along the bombarded road to see if a return there was yet possible, and on a memorable morning, only a week or so after our hurried night of occupation, I ventured once again in Cadbury’s swift little grey car along the fatal road. The sky was clear, only an occasional shell screamed in the distance. The conflagrations were just over. The ruined towers stood gauntly against the sun. But as we entered and ran through the wrecked streets it seemed a city of the dead; scarcely a soul to be seen, and only a lost puppy or cat clamouring behind door or grating. A chance meeting with a courageous girl, a daughter of one of the very few families that remained throughout the bombardment, revealed to us, however, a corner of the “under-world” still persisting in the cellars. We learned of some seventy old almspeople, unhappily left in the convent “caves,” and of the hundreds of children and miserable folk hidden in the darkness under the great earth fortifications. In a few hours we had fetched some dozen ambulances, loaded them up with the frail remnants of old folk, and watched the long procession wind safely out of the gates, a strange sight in the deserted, battered streets, with the whistle and blast of shells overhead as the only disturbance.
From this day on began our work for Ypres. Each day we returned with a doctor (Dr. Rees at first) and sought out and looked after the wounded and sick in the scattered, dark, noisome cellars. In this work we were helped by a straggling R.A.M.C. soldier, "Frederick"—whose civilian ministrations could not save him in the end from a sharp punishment for shirking his real duties—but above all by the heroic Curé of St. Pierre, Charles Delaere. This man's name deserves to be remembered as one of the real heroes of the war. He, practically alone, remained among his people, tending, consoling, joking, inspiring, helping until the last penny was spent. His Church, only lately restored, was shelled four times: once he climbed on to the roof and himself cut out the burning rafters. His vicarage was wrecked. His curate was killed beside him. His own cassock was torn with flying fragments. The Convent St. Marie, where he continued to lodge, with the angelic, ministering Sœur Marguerite and a few other Sisters, has five times been bombarded. But still his strong, aquiline, humorous face, his flying grey curls, his spare athletic figure in torn cassock move ceaselessly night and day among the people. His has been the powerful co-operation that has enabled us to carry out all our subsequent relief work for the town. There have been others, a few courageous and good men, who stuck to their work, but his has been the dominant personality. I have never worked with a man whom I could more wholeheartedly admire and like. But for him we might never have overcome the suspicion and nervous terrors of the reserved Flemish peasantry, or gained their confidence sufficiently to get them to adopt our measures of precaution.

After a few days it became evident that we could do little to save the wounded in the darkness and damp of the cellars. We had to take the grave responsibility of collecting them into some central room above ground. Here again fortune favoured us. The Cure piloted us to one of the great asylums on the edge of the town that had escaped damage. The steward smiled at our request. "I knew they must come to me for a hospital some time," was all he said. Through the barrack quarters of some 3,000 soldiers, he led us by a series of locked doors in a maze of buildings, and threw open the door of a ward, untouched, clean, unsuspected, unpillaged, all but ready for use! This was our famous "Gustav," our second great stand-by, a man who has done all he has promised up to time (in war!) and whose stores and inventive genius seem inexhaustible. His five pretty
children and good wife have been with us through all dangers since that time. Not for one day has he left his charge of the great Institute placed in his care. His varied services and successful dealings, with intrusive authorities of four nationalities, would fill a book.

At 11 o'clock we entered. By 12 we had fitted up the stoves, etc. By 1 o'clock the Cure had fetched us two nursing sisters from Poperinghe. By 2 the beds were ready. At 2.30 we moved in the first cases. Surely few hospitals have ever been opened at shorter notice!

These sisters deserve further mention. Antoria and Aloise came first. Then, as the work grew, Anna, Madeleine, Elizabeth, and Julienne. Lastly Godalieve, Marie, and the old Reverend Mother. Splendid, vigorous, humorous, sympathetic Flemish women, caring for nothing but work, and full of fun. They are the sisters of the Civil Hospital. When this was bombarded they had to move to Poperinghe with their soldier patients. But a number of German wounded were left behind, by one of the oversights common in war. Anna and Elizabeth walked all the way back from Poperinghe, and through all the succeeding terrors of the daily bombardment, did their best for the dying men; only returning to safety when the last of the Germans had been removed. And a few days later back they came again, at our request, to resume their good work.

So started our Ypres Civil Hospital, unauthorised and cut off from all communication with the world of armies. Gradually it has grown, as the people ventured out of their cellars and the fatal homing instinct of the peasant brought more and more dwellers back to the town, and to the daily toll of shell and shrapnel fire. Under the Post Office alone we found a hundred people who never came up for a month. A baby was born here, who for a month never saw the daylight. And it was impossible to get many people away out of the town with the few roads blocked by military requirements.

The army began to move up again. Military ambulances occupied other wings of our great building. On a fatal day, December 21st, a “Taube” sailed over us, and seeing the crowds of loitering stretcher-bearers, took them doubtless for troops. In half an hour the bombardment began. A number of huge shells were dropped into the building, destroying the chapel. The shelling began afresh on the next day. Six of the Institute retainers were killed, and many others of the French Ambulances killed and wounded. Our patients were hurriedly moved into the cellars, and here in the dark our surgeons worked untiringly on the new cases as they were brought in. They, and our lads, had several remarkable escapes. In one case a great shell exploded beside a stretcher carried by our chief surgeon and three men. They were blown aside, but unhurt.

The same day we sent off every case that could be moved to any town that could be got to receive them, for there is little provision for civilians in a war zone. Dr. Fox and some dressers moved with the worst cases to another part of the town. An Ambulance Station which we had in the intervening weeks placed in the building, to work with the military, had to change its quarters elsewhere permanently.

But it was only a few days before the hospital was installed in its building once again, this time under Dr. Smerdon. For the civilian work had to go on, and no better building could be found. Since then the Germans have studiously left us alone, though it has been at times one of the lads’ distractions to stand outside the gate and watch the shells bursting over the field beside and behind us, or hear them shrilling over the building, bound further afield.

Here, daily almost, come our civilian wounded, women in large proportion, old men, and above all children. Marie (14), the dark-haired, whose mother never left her bedside. Wilhelminchen (7), our golden-haired pet, who calls herself “Dimples,” and whose mother and grandmother were killed by the shell that wounded her. Maurice (13), the “imp” of his ward, all sulks and sunshine; Albert (16), who has lost a leg; Julia (2), with a head wound; Lucien (13), whose fingers were shot off; Bertha (3), who is all wounds; little Jules (4), who chuckles gaily over an amputated leg; babies of all ages: little maimed boys and girls; too many, alas, only with us for a few hours before death claimed them. We have rescued from one house two wounded children, the last survivors of a
family of nine, all killed; and from another a baby and mother, the last of seven. A wounded father last week was watching the death of first one and then the other of his two last children; three were killed with their mother. But the stories are too many and too sad to set down. There is, happily, little time in the rush of work for our boys to think of them. But sometimes in the evenings as I sit and smoke a silent pipe with old “Poppa” (81), who has watched his daughter carried dead from the ward without a tear, and with “Onkel” (79), who refused to come into hospital at the risk of losing his shattered leg until he had found a home for his dog, his only friend; or as I wait in the sleeping typhoid ward beside some child whose life is fluttering minute by minute out of its throat, the thought of the great crowded wastes of unrecorded pain outside in the dark about us becomes almost unendurable. And night after night as the sound of cheerful singing comes from our pleasant refectory, where the lads whose names would be familiar in any company of Friends, are having a hard-earned relaxation after each day of unattractive, painful service, the great rocket-flares are whitening the sky along the arc of trenches about us, and the roar and rattle of continuous rifle fire echoes a strange accompaniment.

On the work for the wounded has followed another development. Among the underfed, homeless population began the inevitable epidemic. The hospital was enlarged. Up to the present date 470 cases of sickness and 130 serious surgical cases have been treated in it. An out-patient dressing station was established in the town for the treatment of lighter wounds, where thousands of patients have been attended to. More doctors have been brought up, who carry on a large visiting practice among inhabitants and refugees, crowded in lofts, stables and outhouses. More than 2,000 families have been thus visited, visits made often under shell-fire and at considerable personal risk.

Encouraged and supported by the liberal policy of the British Army, which found us at work when it returned to Ypres, at once appreciated the importance of the isolated effort we had been making, and forthwith opened a large civilian base hospital into which our patients could be cleared out of the danger zone. We next undertook precautionary measures against the spread of the epidemic.

Inoculation stations were established in the town, and subsequently extended over all the neighbouring districts. Over 11,000 first and over 10,000 second inoculations have thus been administered; the latter figure is a tribute to the confidence felt in our doctors.

Water purification stations, to supply Chlorinated water, were established in the town and neighbouring villages. From seven of these stations as much as seventeen thousand gallons of purified water have been supplied in a single day. One of our men makes the rounds every day and tests the barrels. For the actual pumping, etc., local labour is employed. (Donald Gray has been chiefly in charge of this section.)

Where the distances are too great for the people to be able to fetch water from the barrels, a system of “spoon-feeding” has been introduced; each house is supplied with a small spoon-measure, a box of Chloride and a paper of instructions. In villages local carts make the rounds, and stores of Chloride, for reserved distribution, are regularly supplied to local functionaries. Over five thousand houses have thus been reached.

Under the direction of Captain Coplans of the R.A.M.C., our constant guide and friend, our engineer, W. Buckton, also purified and prepared the Swimming Bath, as a great reservoir of good water for the troops, a big and difficult undertaking.

Another measure, of an original character, has been the “house-to-house search” for typhoid cases and insanitary conditions. A selected party, which has had to acquire a proficiency in Flemish, has inspected every house in town, village and rural district over a large area. Their results are embodied in reports, and they follow a system of markings on the houses as an additional precaution. Their work has involved an immense labour of map-making and accurate collation.

The reports of the Searchers are acted upon by Sanitary Squads, supplied by the R.A.M.C. acting in close co-operation with us. They disinfect the houses; and in cases where blankets,
mattresses, etc., have to be destroyed, they give receipts provided by us, in exchange for which we supply new bedding, etc., from a central store. For this sanitary work, and for the making of the mattresses, etc., we also employ local labour.

In the process of this search an area of over 20 square miles has been covered, and just under five thousand houses have been inspected.

To cope further with the situation, we opened, in conjunction with the Belgians, a second hospital, the Chateau Elizabeth, at Poperinghe. Here we have the admirable co-operation of Countess Van den Steen, herself the head of a college for trained nurses, and of Countess d'Ursel, Lady-in-Waiting to the Queen, and an indefatigable collaborator in the general "relief" measures. Through these ladies we have obtained a strong staff of nurses, and they have served as the channel of communication through which supplies and funds from many sources have reached us, as well as our introduction to, and our intermediaries with, the highest officials of the Belgian Government.

Hospital Château Elizabeth, Poperinghe, Belgium.

With Wooden Extensions, not shown in Photograph, will accommodate 200 Patients.

The hospital accommodation at Poperinghe proving insufficient for the growing demand, sheds have been erected in addition; and to assist us in their care, Madame O’Gorman has generously placed her nursing staff, doctor and equipment at our disposal. In the difficult task of the Hospital inauguration, Dr. Rees has, for the third time, shown himself an unrivalled organiser. Here, as elsewhere, our men have acted as our engineers, carpenters and constructors, and the installation of a complete water system bears witness to their adaptable ingenuity.

The thoroughness of the "search" and other precautionary measures for health and hygiene, revealed to us a state of destitution calling for other immediate remedies.

We therefore started Clothes distributions, centred at Poperinghe and Ypres. Between two and three thousand families have already received assistance of this kind, provided by the constant generosity of friends at home. The distribution is carried into the remoter villages of our area. A certain amount we keep for the patients in the hospitals, a continued delight to our excellent Sisters.
I have, for instance, found one small boy in bed with two complete blue suits and a girl’s green petticoat on him, all at once!

To deal with the terribly high rate of infant mortality we created another section, to start Milk distributions. This has succeeded beyond all expectation. From a central Pasteurising Dairy Milk is daily distributed, by motor lorry, to local stations. At these stations food is also distributed to older children. Nursing mothers receive malt, soup, etc., and instruction is given in the care of the babies, in health regimen, etc. Half-a-dozen of these stations are already in being. Every week more are started. Over a thousand babies and mothers are already being fed. Robert Stopford and Baron Clifford have done admirably in this work; and W. Mordey is now in general charge of the financial side of all our relief work.

Yet another call has been the necessity of providing homes for the children of Ypres and the neighbourhood orphaned by the bombardment and epidemic. Assisted by the energy of the Pastor of St. Pierre we have arranged for an Orphanage for Boys in the annexe to a Trappist Monastery near Westvleteren. This at present holds thirty, and the Monks are building on, with our assistance, so as to admit up to a hundred boys. It must be mentioned, as painful proof of the neglected condition into which these children had lapsed, that the majority were found not to have changed shirt or underwear since last August. A home for a Girls’ Orphanage has been contrived at the Chateau of Wisques, near St. Omer. Here we have already some sixty girls; and as soon as beds can be found the number will be raised to a hundred. Here also we have arranged to place a large “crèche” for babies. The supply and arrangements for these institutions, in a war area, as will be evident, present considerable difficulties. To the equipment we have been assisted greatly by the
Comte de Beaumont; and clothes have been largely supplied by the ladies of the “Appui Belge” at Paris.

For the upkeep of all these various works we are incurring a liability of between £1500 and £2000 a month, even though the service is voluntary on the part of the Sisterhoods in charge. Funds, therefore, are most urgently needed. They could not be contributed to a more immediate and appealing object.

Incidentally, we have been entrusted with a dominant share in the removal of the refugee families from the fighting area. We carry the children and infirm in our cars, feed the departing, and give them what we can of clothes. In the last few months we have fed over 4,000 in this fashion, and we have distributed clothes to over 2,000 families, both of refugees and inhabitants.

The time we have spent among the people when no one else was at hand has gained us their confidence; and we are therefore now in the position of being taken into consultation by the authorities of the Military and Civil Governments on many questions affecting the welfare of the inhabitants. This gives us an almost unique opportunity of providing the machinery for all efforts to better the condition of the unhappy people, for the distribution of relief, the organization of sanitary and charitable work, and the re-establishment of normal government.

Apart from the generous recognition and cordial help accorded us by the British and French Military Authorities we have received the personal thanks, among others, of M. de Brocqueville, Prime Minister of Belgium, and of the Duc de Vendôme, brother-in-law of the King.

For the management of all branches of our work we have found men suitable in our own unit; water engineers, sanitary engineers, architects, supervisors, accountants, cartographers, organisers. At Ypres alone we have now some six sections, each organised and working under its Secretary.

One of the Wards, Hospital Elizabeth, Poperinge.
The work alone of producing and affixing public notices takes more than one man's time. For some months, in the deserted town, we exercised all the different functions of the absent civil authorities! Perhaps our most cherished “souvenir” is a letter of thanks, from a self-constituted committee of public safety, presented on behalf of the “cellar-dwellers” of the town, on Christmas day. It was the first sign of returning civic life.

Many more citizens have now returned; and it is illustrative of the state of feeling in the war area that even these less courageous citizens are already apathetically accustomed to the bombardment. After a shell has burst I have seen old women step out of their doors and sweep up the shattered tiles fallen from their own roofs. Our men take it as quietly, but with more fun. When a shell has burst in front of, or close behind, our ambulance, I have heard a discussion begin as to which remark in the conversation before starting was responsible for the delay that secured the escape. And we hardly notice the wreck of the town. Sometimes, on a clear moonlight night, the ghostly ruined towers, that we have seen stage by stage reduced from their splendid proportions, strike the eye with a new appeal. And to visit the great Cathedral of St. Martin, and hear one of our musicians sending the echoes of the organ rolling through the ruined arches, where week by week roof and column have fallen, until it is now a dangerous ruin shattered beyond repair, reveals even a greater tragedy than that contained in each broken life we tend; it is the tragedy of the thought and ideal of man, all that he produced of the hope and soul within him and left here as a monument in stone, now perishing in wanton careless destruction.

And yet our men have had their fill of personal adventures. They have done fine work,
even these last weeks, in tending the wounded under heavy shell fire; and only three
days ago the ambulances swept up some fifty women and children in a bombarded quarter of the
town. One inoculation station has had to be finally abandoned when the shells destroyed it literally
about the doctor's ears. Another doctor has twice had his car filled with mud by shells exploding
too near. Even our Milk Centre at Poperinghe had its turn of air bombs.

At Dunkirk we have now erected yet another great hospital—our fourth—at the request of
the French military authorities. For this we have had to form yet another office, with its own
body of architects and engineers, all drawn, also, from our own men under our chief architect,
J. H. Gray.

The hospital consists of wooden buildings of a temporary character with double walls and roof,
connected with the kitchens, administration buildings, laundry and offices by covered corridors. In
all there is present accommodation for 200 beds, and extensions can be made on the same plan if
they should prove to be necessary. Attached to the hospital there is a bacteriological laboratory with
a complete equipment of apparatus.

SITE OF NEW "QUEEN ALEXANDRA" HOSPITAL FOR TYPHOID, DUNKIRK.
FIRST WOODEN BUILDINGS IN PROCESS OF CONSTRUCTION. THE ARCHITECT, J. H. GRAY, IN CENTRE.

Visits have been paid to the hospital by many of the chief officials of the French and British
Army Medical Services, who have expressed unqualified approval of the arrangements made for the
treatment of patients.

General Eydoux, the military governor of Dunkirk, was asked to christen the hospital and
the gracious consent of Queen Alexandra was obtained to call it by her name.

We now number some 230, if we count in the nurses, etc., and every man is working
up to the full limit of his strength. We want yet more, for the authorities are urging us to
extend our activities over yet wider areas. With the spring the great fighting is beginning again.
In view of this we have, in conjunction with the Hon. Lionel Holland, made a new arrangement
to restart our ambulances on the French front, and to work as before, with possibly even an increased
number of stations. This is invaluable work, as the rapid motor service undoubtedly saves a large
number of lives; but it will mean a yet further demand upon our men and our resources.

It will be seen that our principle of work has carried us into a complex relationship with two,
even three, of the great armies. We are doing civilian relief work of an extensive and radical
character, in the very front of the fighting area—an unheard-of experiment! We are fulfilling our various obligations at the same time to our more expressly military spheres of work. We are even being pressed to enlarge our sphere, and are only compelled to refuse by the human limitations put upon us by insufficiency of present funds and men.

It may be that in the not distant future we shall be asked to devote all our energies to the service of one army, that which we should most wish to serve. If that time comes, it will mean only the transference in name of our various branches of work, already established, to the superintendence of one authority, already most sympathetically disposed. Every man and every penny of money that we can place out here is placed for good, and, so far as anything in war is permanent, for enduring good.

In closing this brief statement of our work, necessarily limited by considerations of military discretion, I feel I may emphasise three points that its enforced obscurity might otherwise conceal.

"Queen Alexandra" Military Hospital for Typhoid Cases.
Showing the Nine Completed Wooden Buildings.

The work for wounded soldiers done by the Unit has proved to be of a character and interest entirely beyond what those of us who had made ourselves familiar with the conditions of the present war could have conceived as possible for a voluntary organisation to perform in the war atmosphere and between different armies. That it should, further, have developed a system of relief work on a large scale for the civilian population at the very front of the fighting area, and, in doing so, should not only have gained and kept the confidence and support of the military authorities, but should have brought them to the recognition of the value of such work in preparing the way for their troops, implies a magnitude of achievement that must appeal to those least familiar with the difficulties that attend such efforts in this war. And lastly, I would call to mind that this has been done by a party
of young men and boys, who contain in their number more lads under 20 than men over 30; who have had to develop their own organisation and their own scheme of voluntary discipline; who have had to control all their own supplies and arrangements, and who have managed to establish their position, in such circumstances entirely a matter of personal relationships, with the manifold officials of three army organisations, in a foreign tongue, and in the very front of the war zone.

If, with their youth to handicap them, they have yet gained their occasions and freedom of work by their goodwill, discretion and courage, it may well be claimed for them that any help that is given them will be used to the utmost extent and to the best purpose. And, on the other hand, it is just their youth that assures us of the future, of their readiness and ability to seize the occasions as they present themselves, to follow up the old line or change to the new with unflagging enthusiasm, to accept no defeat, and be discouraged by no disregard, but to follow with the elasticity and cheerfulness of youth, guided by the true spirit of service that animates the Friends' community, close upon the heels of death, close behind the very edge of the shifting borders of destruction.

GEOFFREY WINTHROP YOUNG.

February 28th, 1915.