A MOBILE HOSPITAL IN NATAL.

READERS of the interesting series of letters from Mr. Treves which have been published during the last three months in the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL will be pleased to see the accompanying photographs taken by Mr. Treves of the hospital with which he worked. They give a very good idea of the difficulties of transport and of the rough and ready conditions under which the surgical work had to be done.

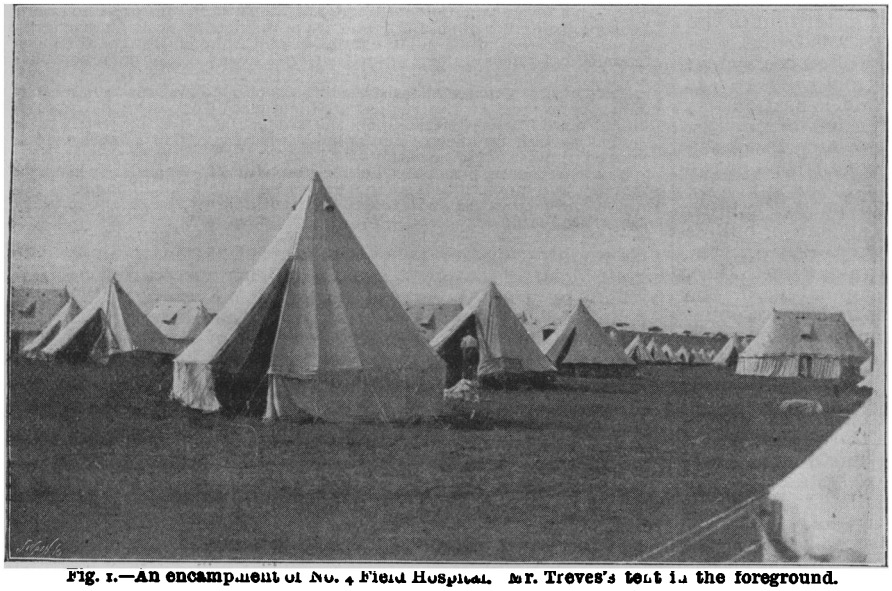

Fig. 1.—An encampment of No. 4 Field Hospital. Mr. Treves's tent is the foreground.

The hospital was No. 4 Stationary Hospital, but the term "stationary" must be understood in a Pickwickian sense, for the hospital was in fact not stationary but mobile. However, it was not technically a field hospital, although at the battle of Colenso and during the fighting about Spion Kop its officers managed to get it up not very far from the fighting line. Major Kirkpatrick, R.A.M.C., was the officer in charge, and the other officers were at first Major Mallins and Lieutenant Simson. On December 11th, 1900, it was established at Frere, a station on the line from Maritzburg to Ladysmith a few miles south of Chieveley, and Mr. Treves, with his two nurses, Miss McCaul and Miss Tarr, went up with the hospital. A day or two afterwards the nursing staff received a valuable reinforcement in the person of two sisters of the Army Nursing Service. The general appearance of the hospital camp is seen in the first photograph (Fig. 1), which shows both the large marquees and the small bell tents, in one of which—that in the foreground—Mr. Treves was established. The army moved off from Frere Camp on December 13th, and early on December 15th, the day of the first unsuccessful attempt to force the passage of the Tugela at Colenso, No. 4 Stationary Hospital was ordered to move up with all speed to Chieveley, where it was established about three and three-quarter miles from Naval Hill, where the British big guns were firing. There it remained for that day, and until December 17th, when a retirement to Frere was rendered necessary by the fact that the camp at Chieveley was within reach of the Boer shells. During these two days an enormous amount of work was done by the staff of the hospital which Mr. Treves rejoined on the evening of the day of battle (December 15th), after a heavy afternoon's work with the field hospitals established immediately behind Naval Hill and under its shelter. The tent in which all the operations were done is seen in another photograph (Fig. 3), which shows the improvised operating table of biscuit boxes. When it is remembered that the temperature in the shade on December 15th and 16th was 100° F. and on December 18th 104° F., and that at Chieveley water was scarce, it will be understood that these were very trying days both for the wounded and their surgeons and nurses. Mr. Treves pays a warm tribute to the patient courage of the wounded, to the excellent work done by the R.A.M.C. officers, and to the devotion and cheerful endurance of the four nursing sisters, and it does not require much reading between the lines of his graphic letters to perceive that Mr. Treves spared himself not at all, but worked as hard and cheerfully as anybody.

At Frere the hospital remained, gradually passing on its wounded to the base hospitals at Pietermaritzburg or to the hospital ships in Durban harbour, but filling their places with cases of dysentery and typhoid fever until January 13th, 1900, when the order to move to Springfield, on the Lesser Tugela 18 miles away to the west, was received. Colonel Gallwey, C.B., R.A.M.C., the Principal Medical Officer with General Buller, had determined that the hospital should follow the troops, and had enlarged it to 300 beds. This involved the transportation of 60 tents and 10 marquees in 16 waggons, each drawn by 16 oxen, with nearly 100 more oxen for water carts, bread carts, and so on. There were in addition 5 ambulances, each drawn by 10 mules, and Mr. Treves's own Scotch cart with 16 mules, with which he had been liberally provided by the P.M.O. so as to be able to move independently to any point where his services might be most required. Lastly, there were the saddle horses for the medical officers, whose numbers had now been raised to 12. The camp was awake at 3 A.M., the tents were struck by 4 A.M., and the huge column was in motion by 5.15, and pushed on until 7.30 A.M.;

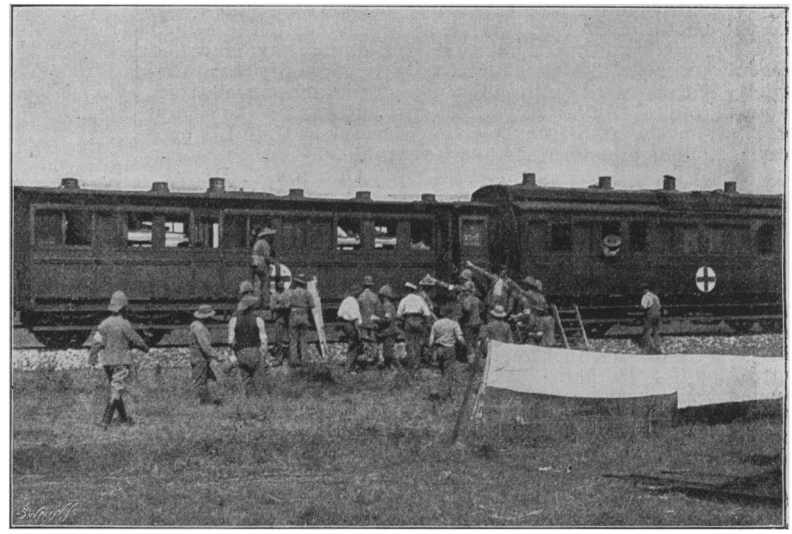

Fig. 2.—Hospital train showing the way in which the wounded were entrained, and also the disposition of some of the beds in the carriages.

after a rest of two hours it got under weigh again, and reached Springfield at 2.30 P.M. This, considering the oxen, the roads, and the hot weather, was reckoned a good performance. In Fig. 4 is seen one of the ambulances, with some of its mules, waiting to cross a drift, and gives a fair idea of one

of the minor difficulties which attend transport in a country where every stream is, as it were, sunk in a deep trench with precipitous sides.

On January 18th the hospital moved on six miles to the Great Tugela, and the tents were pitched under Mount Alice, where the big naval guns were placed, not far from Spearman's Hill. On January 23rd, the day before Spion Kop, orders were suddenly received to increase the hospital by 100 bell tents, which meant being ready for 500 more patients, or

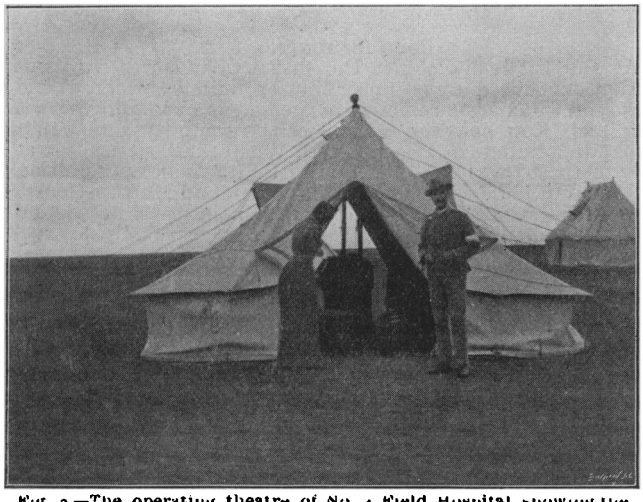

Fig. 3.—The operating theatre of No. 4 Field Hospital, showing the operating table made of biscuit boxes. The officer standing at the tent door is Major Mallins, R.A.M.C., and the lady is Miss McCaul, one of Mr. Treves's nurses.

800 altogether, although no increase of the staff was possible. The tents were ready, however, by the next day, and on January 25th the wounded began to pour in until late at night, carried by the Volunteer Ambulance Corps (organised by Colonel Gallwey) and the coolie bearers. Some 300 wounded were at once sent on the 25 miles to Frere, but the hospital that night contained some 600 others. Additions later brought up the total which the hospital had to accommodate to about 700. Altogether the hospital stayed three weeks at

Fig. 4.—One of the ambulances of No. 4 Field Hospital waiting to cross a drift.

the camp near Spearman's Hill, and dealt with over 1,000 wounded in that time. The army began to retire on February 8th, and when, on the next day, the order came to the hospital to move, there were still about 150 serious cases under treatment. These were all carried by hand on stretchers across the veld 25 miles to the railway at Frere. By transporting the wounded in this way instead of in the ambulance waggons, which are of a clumsy pattern made strong to go anywhere, much suffering was prevented, and in Mr. Treves's opinion many lives and limbs saved.

At Frere, which was reached on February 11th, the wounded were again placed in the hospital, and as soon as possible moved on by train to Mooi River Base Hospital, or to the hospital ships at Durban. These trains were improvised by Major Brazier-Creagh, R.A.M.C., who did wonders with the material at his disposal. Unfortunately the carriages had no through communication, and it was difficult to arrange their conversion. However, by hard work and the expenditure of much energy and ingenuity, Major Brazier-Creagh overcame all superable obstacles, and made the best of insuperable defects. Fig. 2 is from Mr. Treves's photograph of one of these trains, and shows the bearers at work getting the wounded into the carriages. Through the windows the white bed linen of the upper tier of beds can be seen. It was part of the general unpreparedness that there were no hospital trains in Natal. This defect has recently been repaired by the arrival of the Princess Christian Hospital train built for the Red Cross at Birmingham, and despatched to South Africa after the battle of Colenso was fought—not a conspicuous example of the alleged superiority of voluntary effort over official methods. The War Office has no train ready and does not prepare one; the Red Cross has no train built, but does set to work to build one (one for three armies resting on three different lines of railway), and manages to get to work six months or thereabouts after the beginning of the fighting.

WITH THE SOUTH NATAL FIELD FORCE.

From an Occasional Correspondent.

The Fight into Ladysmith.

To appreciate fully the magnitude of the task accomplished by the troops under Sir Redvers Buller, one must have seen the district around Colenso. Opposite this village the Tugela is a broad and rapid river with steep and rugged banks, which changes its course continually. For months past it has been unfordable, and the only bridges crossing it had been destroyed by the Boers. On either side of the river are irregular ranges of hills, which are divided by deep ravines into innumerable kopjes of every conceivable shape. These vary in height from 500 to 2,000 feet above the surrounding plain. Many of them are almost perpendicular, and most of them are thickly covered by dense mimosa scrub and huge boulders, so that an army corps could be hidden amongst them without a man being visible. Each kopje bristled with strong and deep trenches so skilfully constructed that as each one was captured it was exposed to a withering fire from all sides. To add to our difficulties, the plain between Colenso and Ladysmith is studded with kopjes, which completely command both the road and the railway. The seeming impossibility of the task might well have caused even the bravest troops to hesitate, and it was only after four stubborn attacks, which extended over a period of 28 days' hard fighting, that the position was finally carried.

The strain which this entailed on our troops can only be realised by those who were present. Imagine an attack which lasted continuously for 17 days, as did the final one on the Boer position. During the whole of that time the troops slept on the hillsides, amidst thunder storms and rain, with not even a great coat to cover them. No words can do justice to their courage, heroism, fortitude, and cheerfulness under all the hardships and privations to which they were exposed.

Ladysmith, the goal of all our hopes during so many long and weary days, may be described as a town in corrugated zinc situated in an oasis of palms and eucalyptus trees. Stretching away to eastward of the town is a large circular plain some six miles in diameter. On the south-east margin of the plain rises Umbulwana Hill. Except to eastward the town is surrounded by barren stone-clad hills, prominent amongst them being the famous Wagon Hill, with Cæsar's Camp to the south. Whilst wandering through Ladysmith, one is forcibly struck by its wonderful state of preservation. An angle knocked off the clock tower of the Town Hall, another off the porch of the Roman Catholic chapel, and an occasional circular hole through some stray house is all that remains to