

The Casualty Clearing Station

By Lt-Col. F. S. L. FORD, C.M.G., C.A.M.C., A.D.M.S.

(continued)

At present wherever possible, the medical authorities are arranging clearing stations in groups of three to facilitate the work. This permits of the following routine: One clearing station receives cases for twenty-four hours. The following day these cases are evacuated with the exception of the seriously sick and wounded, unfit for transport. The third is spent in clearing up the station, preparing dressings, etc. The next day the round begins again. This system has been found most satisfactory. In case of heavy casualties, a clearing station takes in until full, when the next in the pool comes into operation and so on.

If there is a large and suitable receiving room, all cases except those requiring extensive operative treatment, are more expeditiously dressed at this point, and this practice obtains at many clearing stations, concentrating, as it does, the personnel and equipment necessary for the work, and keeping the wards free from the dirt and untidiness incidental to it. The Orderly Officer or one permanently detailed for the work ensures that every man has affixed to the coat or clothing, in a conspicuous place, the card giving particulars of the case, without which no case is allowed to leave the receiving room. He also affixes a "tag" with a serial number which becomes the man's serial number in the A and D. book. A scratch A.F.A. 36 is kept for all the particulars, and from this the weekly return is made up. He allocates the cases to the different wards. The quartermaster sees that all valuables are taken from the patients and put in bags, properly labeled, and that the kits are properly labeled and stored. When the cases are evacuated, the bag containing the valuables, etc., is returned to the man. The A. and D. officer sees that the "tag" with serial number is collected when the man is put in the ambulance, thus obtaining a perfect check upon all cases sent out. The evacuations are all made by motor ambulance convoy to the ambulance train or barge.

The tour of duty for the staff on "receiving days" and the day following is practically thirty hours. The wisdom of system of rotation above is thus clearly demonstrated, the "off" day giving chance for rest and recuperation. At certain points of the line special stations have been established for the collection of all abdominal cases. During heavy fighting too, the clearing station have been divided into front and rear line, the former taking lying cases and the latter sitting, thus preventing the front line clearing station from becoming congested, while giving the serious cases the advantages of a "short haul."

Casualty clearing stations during periods of comparative quiet, evacuate about eighty per cent of cases on the day following their