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REPORT

OF THE

Louisiana Charity Hospital
Building and Sewerage Fund,

AND

— ACCOUNT —

OF

THE AMBULANCE SYSTEM

OF THE

CHARITY HOSPITAL.

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OCTOBER, 1885.

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NEW ORLEANS:

A. W. HYATT, STATIONER AND PRINTER, 73 CAMP STREET.—32974

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S. S. CARLISLE.

Charity Hospital Ambulance Service.

This service, in full operation since the 2d of February, 1885, can be best described by incorporating herewith extracts from the account given by Dr. A. B. Miles in the June number of the New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal. But little is to be said in addition, except noting the fact that initiatory steps are now being taken by the Board of Administrators, looking to the erection of a two-story house on Common street, opposite the Hospital, suitable for sheltering the ambulances and stabling the horses conveniently near for rapid hitching, with furnished rooms overhead for comfortably quartering those in charge. When completed, the work will be in keeping with the high character of the institution, renowned for its charity, and will provide permanently for this auxillary service, which has contributed so much to the comfort of patients in transportation, and proved so essential to their welfare in after-treatment :

“This service was organized to meet a demand well-nigh imperative. Since the erection of the Hospital in 1832, the sick and injured have been brought to the door in vehicles of every conceivable kind employed in the travel and traffic of the city. Many patients suffered discomfort merely, while others sustained injuries prejudicial to their after-treatment. Some, only a few let us believe, must have succumbed to the delay and ill-usage incident to such hap-hazard transportation.

The Board of Administrators, having recently renovated the Hospital, with improvements and additions in every department of the service, realized more fully the necessity of improved means for conveying patients to the door. They resolved in August, 1884, to establish an ambulance service, and intrusted to the writer the work of organization.

Preparatory to the work, the ambulance equipments of the Eastern hospitals were thoroughly inspected. The points

of practical utility, observed here and there, suitable to our requirements, were embodied in the specifications for two ambulances for the Charity Hospital. They were built by the New York City branch house of the Abbot-Downing Company, of Concord, N. H.

The Charity Hospital Ambulance, designated by gilt lettering on the sides, presents a striking and attractive appearance. It is a commodious vehicle, weighing sixteen hundred pounds, and requires a double team. Although wagon-built, to be durable, it has a carriage finish, and is mounted on easy springs. The body is made entirely of paneled wood, lined with varnished maple, for cleanliness, and arched for short turns. The interior is conveniently fitted up with medicine chests, boxes for surgical apparatus, racks for splints, hooks for swinging the lantern, the surgeon's satchel, etc. The surgeon's seat is inside, conveniently near the patient, and when unoccupied, folds up out of the way. The ambulance is provided with an easy bed, which trundles in and out, and which can be used as a litter. The bed rests on a wooden frame, which is fitted in the bottom of the wagon, and which is itself supported by steel springs placed longitudinally. These extra springs, a home invention, contribute no little to an easy ride.

In addition to the bed, there is an improved field stretcher, with adjustable handles, convenient for bringing patients out of places not easily accessible, and indispensable for lifting and handling them without inflicting pain and injury unnecessarily. While still resting on this stretcher, the patient is lifted into the ambulance, and from the ambulance to the rolling litter in waiting at the Hospital door. Thus the patient is easily and quickly conveyed to the operating room, or to any ward of the Hospital buildings.

The medicine chests contain the anodynes, antidotes and stimulants most serviceable in emergencies :

Chloroform, sulphuric ether, whisky, brandy, carbolic acid, olive oil, ferri ox. hydrat., Monsel's solution, dialysed iron, ergot fl. ext., aqua ammoniæ, solution ammon. carb., cosmoline, mustard, syrup morph. sulph., tr. opii. camph., hypodermic tablets and syringe, water, graduated glasses, and one gallon of carron oil. This oil makes a dressing quickly and easily applied in the emergency of burns and scalds.

The surgical outfit consists of the following:

Complete pocket case of instruments, extra Langenbeck's forceps, set of (3) tourniquets (Mass. Gen'l Hosp.), folding fracture box, two Liston's long splints, wooden and tin splints (for extremity fractures), bandages, charpie, carbolized gauze, cotton padding, pillows, oakum, surgeon's lint, sponges, tracheotomy tube, Nelaton's catheter, pus pans, water buckets, etc.

The wagons having been constructed and equipped as above described, and the fourteen Resident Students charged with the special duty of Ambulance Surgeons, the Charity Hospital Ambulance Service was organized by resolution of the Board of Administrators, February 2d, 1885.

RULES AND REGULATIONS.

1. The ambulance service, constituted a part of the medical department, shall be conducted under the general rules governing the Hospital.

2. An ambulance will be dispatched to any part of the city at the call of patrons of the service, physicians, the city police, the fire department, or other responsible source, subject to the approval of medical officers of the Hospital.

3. When out on a call, the ambulance shall be attended *only* by the driver and a member of the medical staff on duty for the day, each designated by a badge of the service.

4. The medical attendant of the ambulance shall have entire control; shall administer to patients such temporary treatment as may be necessary, and, except in cases specified below, convey them without delay to the Hospital.

a. The ambulance shall not receive cases of small-pox, or other patients rejected by the rules of the Hospital.

b. In cases of surgical accident, by request, patients may be removed to their homes, or places of lodging, without charge.

5. Upon return of the ambulance to the Hospital, the medical attendant shall supervise the removal of patients to the ward, or operating room, and then report to the House Surgeon or to the Assistant. It shall also be his special duty of the day to record in the clinical note book of the ward his knowledge of the patient's disease or injury and the preliminary treatment adopted.

6. The ambulance may be hired by responsible persons, and for suitable purposes—for instance, the conveyance of patients between steamboat landings, railroad depots and the hotels—for ten dollars; the amount thus accruing to be credited to the fund of the service.

7. The Ambulance Relief Fund, created by resolution of the Board of Administrators and aided by the contributions of patrons, shall be devoted exclusively to establishing and maintaining this service, and enhancing its usefulness as a practical charity.

Contributions to this fund are acknowledged by the Secretary and Treasurer of the Hospital.

An account of the practical working of the service may be of interest. The ambulance is usually called by telephone. To insure hearing the signal at night, an electric bell at the gate, where the watchman is on duty, is switched on to the telephone wire. By a system of electric bells the call is immediately transmitted to the driver's room in the ambulance stables and to the surgeon on duty for the day. In from one and a half to three minutes, day or night, the ambulance is under way.

By a system of signals, turned in from the fire boxes located throughout the city, the engineer of the fire department may, at any hour, call an ambulance to the scene of the accident.

By ordinance of the City Council, the ambulance has right of way, within the city limits, over all vehicles except those of the fire department and the United States Mail.

In answering calls, the ambulance corps move with all possible dispatch.

The efficiency, so far attained, is due in a large measure to the competency of the staff of Resident Students of the Hospital, and the zeal with which they discharge their special duty.

Various instances may be cited in which the prompt aid rendered on the spot was simply invaluable. * * * * *

Indeed, the usefulness of this right arm of the medical service, extended in charity to those on their way to find relief at the Hospital, is daily becoming more and more apparent, nay, indispensable, in the humane care of the sick and wounded.

Railroad and steamboat corporations, owners of machine shops, mills, manufactories, etc., should all be enlisted among the patrons of this service, and contribute to its maintenance ; for their workmen, by whose labor they live, exposed in their employment to risk of life and limb, are so often the beneficiaries of the ambulance service.

Within the short space of time since its organization, the Charity Hospital Ambulance Service has become one of the most useful and practical of our public charities, and surely deserves the patronage it has already received, and that for which it appeals.

* * * * *

I remain, gentlemen,

Yours very respectfully,

A. B. MILES, M. D.

Charity Hospital, October 15th, 1885.

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