The Hospital Ship *Maheno*

The *Maheno*, in her own form of service, is well worthy of being associated with the heroic men who have won much distinction for New Zealand. We have had between three and four thousand sick and wounded through our hands. During the time we have been on the station.

I cannot adequately convey to you a picture of what goes on each time we get to the Front. It is something like this: We have discharged our last cargo of sick and wounded men at one or other of the base centres, after, at most, two days' sailing, during which we have a general clearing up of the ship—a process of absolute necessity and we are back again at our old anchorage in the bay, and just over there the same old game is being played. From ships and land batteries the shells are hurtling through the air, to which the enemy replies as vigorously as he can.

The din is sometimes awful, and is greatly intensified by the sound of rifle fire, machine guns, and the dreadful hand-bombs. Airships of various kinds float above the positions, doing useful scouting work. Torpedo boat destroyers and monitors are moving about; getting in their say at times very effectually. It is rather exciting to watch the attempts of the enemy to bring down or drive off our aircraft by their shrapnel fire, as, also, their efforts to sink or cripple our destroyers and monitors. The shells fall to the right and left of the ships, but we have never seen any damage done, except, perhaps, to the fishes, when the shells burst in the water. When an attack is made, either by our people or the enemy, we know that our gruesome, though helpful work will soon begin, and all the necessary preparations are made to meet the great needs of the men who will soon be coming to us. Surgeons, chaplains, nurses, and hospital orderlies, and ships officers, too, are ready to do all they can to help the dear fellows, who will need all the help we can give to them.

We see a battle in progress during the late afternoon, and on into the evening, and in a short time the lighters draw up alongside the ship and pass over to us their loads of wounded and exhausted men, and this goes on during the night until the hospital ship can take no more; and, as soon as we get our sailing orders, we lose no time in getting to the specified base, where the "cases" are transferred from to be taken to the various hospitals at that particular base. The work is exceedingly trying to all engaged in it—the suffering and misery is so concentrated all about us. When one hospital ship leaves the Front for a base, another ship is ready to take its place.

When the full account of the inexpressibly valuable services which the *Maheno* has rendered to the sick and wounded at this "front" is told, the people of New Zealand will be more than thankful that they so

---

*Maheno aground on Fraser Island.*

Image: John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland.
splendidly equipped her and sent her on this great mission. We left New Zealand as No. 1 Hospital Ship. Our official number on this station is No. 30, so, you see, we are one among many; but it is acknowledged by all who know her work that she is in most respects the most efficient ship on the station, and the expressions of gratitude we receive from those who have come under our care gladden our hearts more than I can tell.

We have had far more Australian and British patients on board this ship than New Zealanders. The wounded and sick are brought down to the dressing stations on the beach, and are sent off to the hospital ships as quickly as possible after they arrive. No discrimination can be made, and so it unavoidably happens that our New Zealand lads will sometimes find themselves on other ships; but, in any case; they are not long before they arrive at the base hospitals.

A word of praise ought to be added here of the splendid self-sacrificing work of the shore ambulance men. The stretcher-bearers, have done wonders, and, looking at the nature of the country over which the fighting takes place-high hills, and deep gullies, and very rough ground-one wonders how they manage to get the stretcher cases down to the beach. These noble men have paid a heavy toll in life and limb and health at the shrine of duty and humanity, and the fighting men are full of appreciation of their services.

(From a letter from Chaplain-Major Dutton.)

NZMJ December 1915:301-302