AN IMPROVISED METHOD OF EVACUATION OF CASUALTIES ACROSS RIVERS.

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The problem of river crossings may arise in Field Ambulance work as, for example, when a Section has to go forward to deal with casualties in a Bridge Head or when it is necessary to evacuate casualties before bridging operations have finished. Various methods may be used for conveying stores and wounded, such as assault boats, rafts and improvised canoes. These have many disadvantages. Assault boats are not part of the G. 1098 equipment of a Field Ambulance and if required must be borrowed—a procedure which obviously takes time and thereby causes delay in operations. Rafts are cumbersome and take up a lot of valuable space and improvised canoes are at best slow. A method has been evolved in this Field Ambulance which has certain advantages—it is comparatively simple in that it requires no elaborate equipment. It can be used for conveying either personnel or stores and it is swift in action. A distance of 325 feet has been spanned without difficulty and a patient weighing 15½ stone carried. The apparatus is described below.

Necessary Equipment.—This consists of two pairs of sheers, each leg being 7 feet long, each pair being joined by a strong bolt.

Wire rope (unserviceable balloon cable, obtained through Ordnance).

Pickets, wood, 4 feet long.

Two pulley wheels with brackets, fixed as in the diagram. (These were obtained from an old sliding door.)

Rope "slings" (1 inch sisal rope).

Twine, coarse, for pulling.

Method of Use.—Two men cross the river, either by swimming or by Recce boat, taking with them the end of the light pulling rope (coarse twine). From the far shore they pull over one pair of sheers, which float, with pickets, axe and one end of the wire rope lashed to them. On both sides of the river the pickets are driven in about 18 to 20 feet from the river edge and the wire rope is pulled tight and securely fastened round the pickets. Trees if convenient may be used instead of pickets.

The two men on the far side then push their sheers into position; when this is done the sheers on the near side are erected. The erection of the sheers causes the wire to become taut.
The pulley is then placed on the wire and the light pulling rope attached to each end of the pulley to enable it to be drawn backwards and forwards.

The stretcher is suspended from the pulley by 1 inch rope, slings being passed through the runners and the loops of the slings being passed over the hooks on the pulleys.
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By shortening one sling the stretcher can be maintained level despite any slope in the wire.

Advantages.—The apparatus takes up little space on a lorry. It is not very heavy, the whole being easily carried by three men. It can be used over most rivers, gullies or down cliffs. It can be erected in twenty minutes. When erected, loading, crossing and unloading and return of replenishments can be done in two minutes.

The accompanying photographs illustrate the apparatus and its use.

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