

The Quarterly Bulletin of The Kentucky Committee for Mothers and Babies, Inc.

VOL. II.

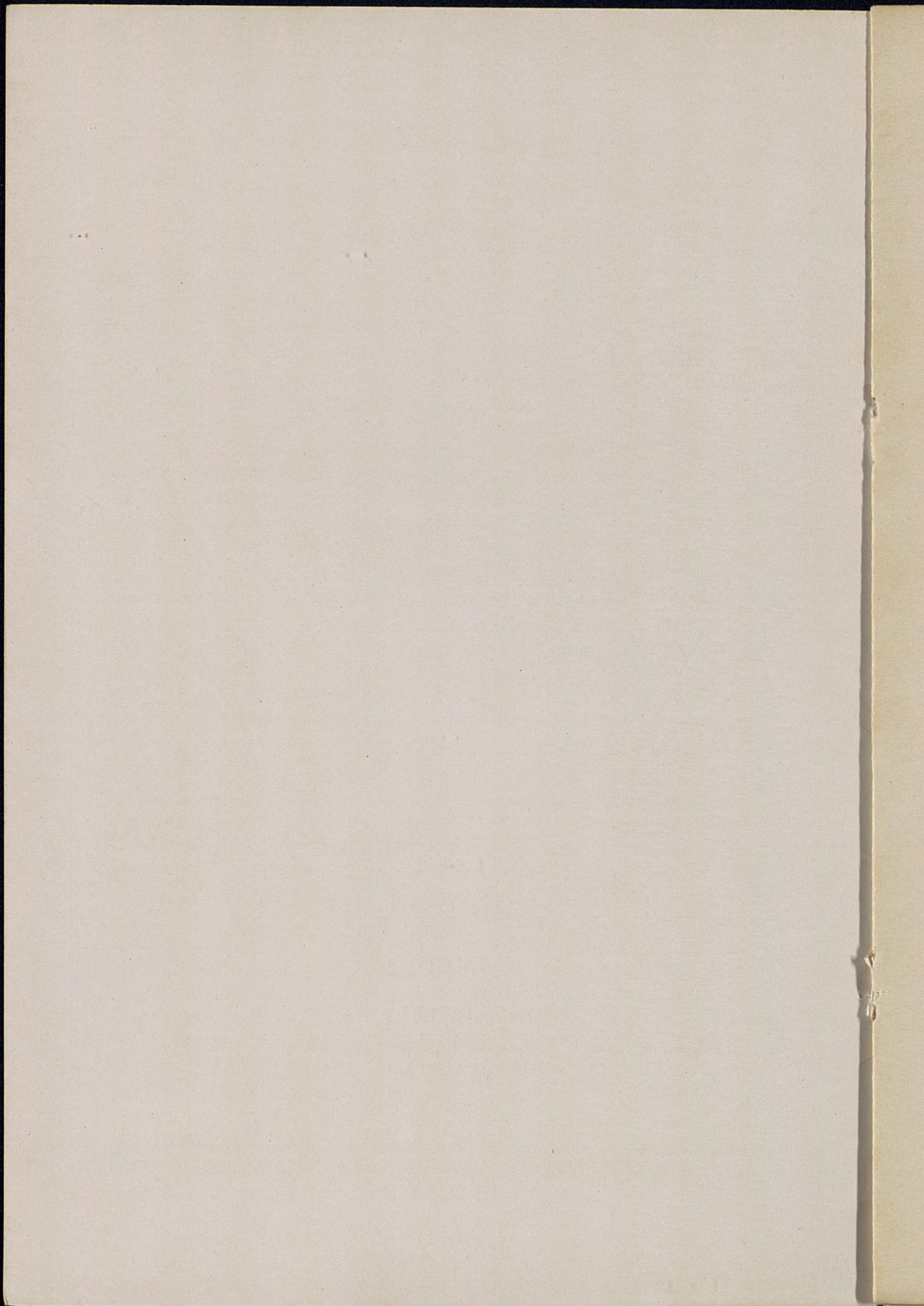
JANUARY, 1927

NO. 3



OUR AMBULANCE

**SHOOTING THE RAPIDS ABOVE JUDY'S WHIRLPOOL
AFTER LANDING THE PATIENTS TO MAKE
THE PORTAGE ON FOOT.**



TWO LETTERS

ROAD MENDING DAY

Hyden, Leslie County, Ky.,
November 18, 1926.

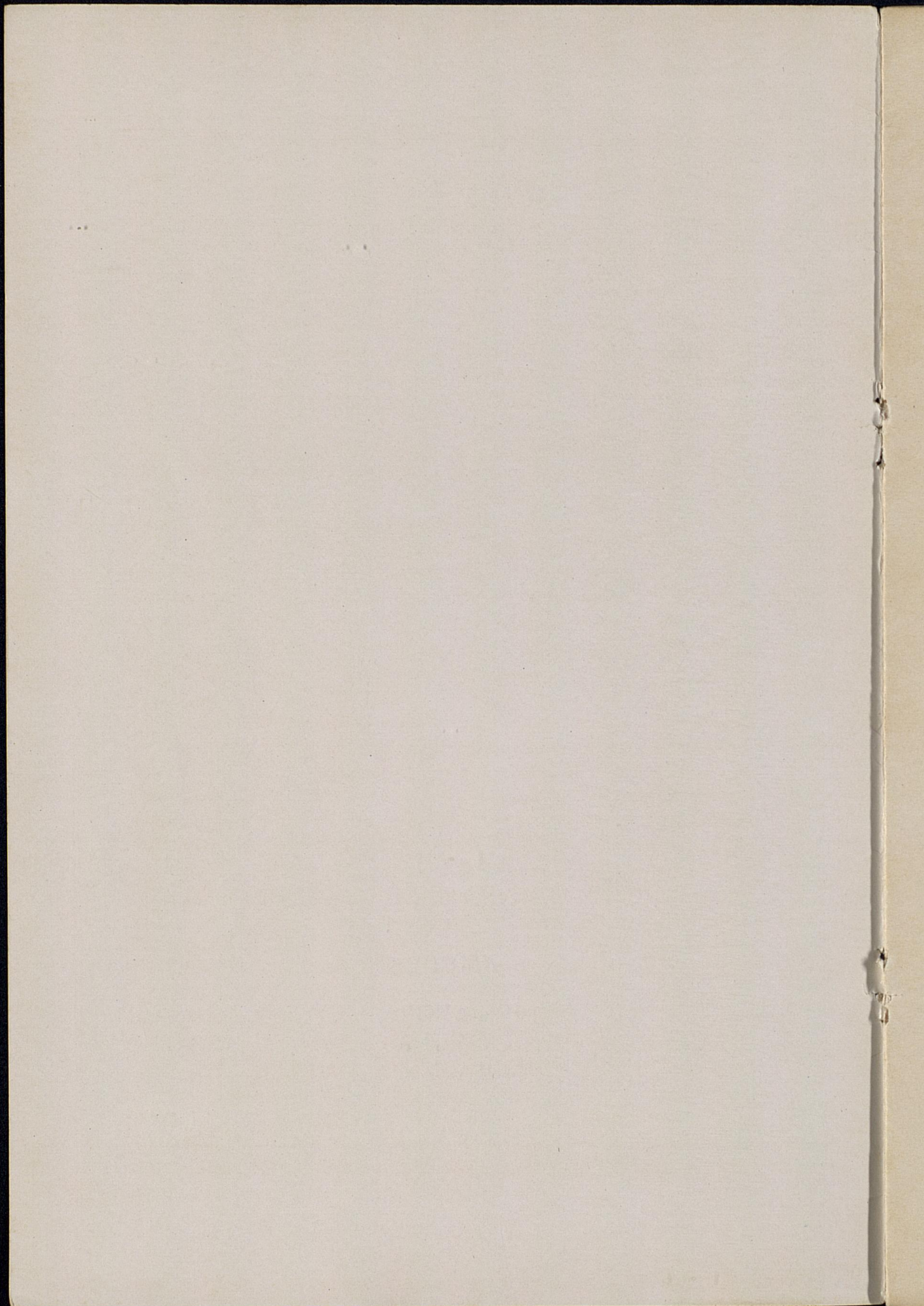
Dear Mrs. Breckinridge:—

I think you will like to have a fuller account of our Road Mending Day than Freda has been able to send you.

The thing that has made this Day a truly thrilling experience is the fact that it has been from first to last a spontaneous action on the part of the Community—as true an expression of community spirit as I have ever seen. It began at the Monthly Meeting, when Freda asked the advice of the Committee as to what could be done to put the road into such condition as to be reasonably safe not only for the nurses but also for the patients who come to visit them. A few desultory suggestions were made, then Sherman Eversole up and spoke with decision. He said he could not see why the men should not get together and fix a road that they need not be ashamed of. The idea was caught up at once with enthusiasm, a Committee, with Walter Hoskins as chairman, appointed to look the place over and decide what should be done, round up men and teams, ask the help of the High School boys and arrange the work. Then Mrs. Pearl Eversole said that she was sure that if the men did the work the women would like to provide them a dinner and again the suggestion was received with enthusiasm. Mr. McKee offered the use of the Manse Kitchen, though he himself would be away bringing home his wife. (We did not use the kitchen, everyone doing their bit in their own homes and sending the cooked results here to be reheated and served), but the offer was mighty friendly.

Then came the period of anxiety. The day the women were to meet to organize the dinner was stormy—a tide following. Only two came but one of those was Miss Huston and she valiantly plunged into the storm to notify each and all of what was to be done. The day was saved.

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was holding some of the promised wagons on yon side of the river.

Don't you know just how desolated and flat we felt? There seemed to be no further object in life. I had a huge pot full of turnips cooked which would never be eaten by us and Miss Huston had kettles full of beans for which she would have no use. In this mood we went to bed.

Then bright and early in the morning—a pink and gold morning with silvery wisps of cloud rolling over the mountain-sides—came Jonah Begley—FROM “YON SIDE” OF THE RIVER—and another man. They had managed to ford the river, and their opinion was that we could have the Road Day. Three more teams arrived and other men began thronging in, so the nursing staff scattered to spread the news. Again Miss Huston rallied the housewives while Miss Moor aroused the school and Miss Buyers baked cake and sent details of girls to carry dishes up the hill and soon the road was alive with a busy throng. Every one agrees that for good work, good feeling and a good dinner the day could not be beaten in the records of the county. Fifty men and twelve women and many boys and girls worked all day—in addition to the housewives who cooked the dinner.

Then the caterers. Leslie County people certainly do know how to cook. Of course, we all know Miss Mabel and her pupils can be counted on for the best but the rest of the Leslians did not fall behind. Delicious chicken and sweet and mashed potatoes, dumplings excellent enough to make me own them eatable—(I never could be enthusiastic about a dumpling), corn muffins which could convert any one to the wholesomeness of corn—(Mrs. Lew Lewis brought a peck poke full of them as well as those brought by other women and all disappeared to the last crumb). And all the women worked with the best good will, Mrs. Lish Lewis and Mrs. Price Terry peeling turnips and washing dishes, Mrs. Young superintending the actual cooking and coffee making.

And a nicer lot of guests you could not wish for. We sat in relays of 16 in the dining room, 8 at a long table and 4 at each of the two small tables. Wash basins and warm water were put in the dog-trot so that each man gave himself a good scrub before entering the dining room. They brushed the mud from their clothes, combed their hair and all sat down spruced up like the self-respecting fellows that they were.

At the end of the day the leading spirits conferred with Freda. The road needs still more rock to make the job permanently good. Couldn't they come again with teams Monday? Delighted, says Freda, and what about dinner? Well, perhaps that would be too much, they could bring their own. But Freda said she thought if the men were willing to work the women would be willing to feed them, if they would like it. You bet we'd like it, was the response. So Monday sees the finishing touches put to what seems to be a fine job.

As always yours,

CAROLINE CAFFIN.

Post Script—Later—AND MONDAY DID.

OUR CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS

Lexington, Ky.,

January 1, 1927.

Dear Friends, Far and Near:—

We feel that the only way to carry you into the heart of our country this wintry weather is to write you direct.

So many of you have given lavishly towards the Christmas season now passing that you will want to know all about it. Well, to begin with, there haven't been such floods at this time of the year in the memory of man. Three "tides" in ten days have left us with inundated roads, torn almost beyond repair, heaps of mire and quicksand, great washouts and gullies. Christmas Day dawned on the second "tide" at its height, with half our supplies for the holidays still at the railroad. No second class mail for ten days past and the prospect of none for two or three weeks to come.

It was a bit disheartening. The big party Up River, scheduled for the day, was not only hopelessly off, but our three centers were all marooned from one another by a waste of river twenty feet above its banks and angry torrents tearing down the mountainside. No telephone connection, remember! We began at once to plan for Christmas January 6th—"old style"—at Up River—and nothing could really be more fitting, for we were often asked whether we kept Christmas old or new. The Gregorian calendar was only adopted legally in England in 1750—and our ancestors had all left the old world before then.

So that, with the Kentucky mountaineer, as in Russia, "old" Christmas with its special traditions of Epiphany and Twelfth Night, is well in keeping.

But the floods rose and the creeks and branches tore madly down the craggy slopes, bearing with them logs and boulders and the earth itself in landslides.

Five babies chose this inauspicious moment to make their advent. The rule of our nurse-midwives is simple. If anyone can come for us, we can go to them. Horses were out of the question. For the first Hyden baby, Miss Caffin went with the father across the Middle Fork on the swinging foot bridge, with the flood barely two feet below her. There were five such swinging bridges over the Middle Fork before the Christmas "tides," There are now but two. Miss Rockstroh followed the second father up Thousand Sticks Mountain, the last few hundred yards in the blinding storm on all fours, he throwing the saddle bags up above them every few steps and both climbing up after.

At Wendover, Miss Halsall was called out at 4:30 o'clock on the morning after Christmas for a case on Coon Creek, six miles away. The man who fetched her said the back water from the river covered the road most of the last mile and his horse had sometimes to swim. Miss Halsall rode off with him into the gray dawn.

Eight hours later her horse, Nellie Gray, came back dripping wet, saddle bags dangling, and riderless.

If one's hair turned white *every time*, we should all be crowned with snow. This time the strain was not for long. As Martha Prewitt hurried off, the missing nurse came down the trail. She had been dragged off her horse but was uninjured.

On the 30th of December I had to leave Leslie to meet outside engagements, and I wanted to take some patients with me. One was an expectant mother, whom Dr. Hunt had seen on her visit up in October, and indicated as a possible Caesarian. Getting her safely to a Lexington hospital could not be much longer delayed. Then the Up River nurses, Miss Peacock and Miss Willeford, had found a pathetic little boy, age eleven, whose mother died in childbirth two years before. Dr. Stoddard went up Greasy Creek and pronounced his a case of sub-acute endocarditis. The Children's Hospital in Louisville stood with hospitable doors wide open to receive him, and our neighbor Elihu Mosley had ridden sixteen miles to bring him down to

Wendover on his own mule, carried on the pommel of his saddle in his strong arms—A heart case in a mountain country, where every step is a pull up, is helpless indeed. We had to get him out. How could it be done?

One of my neighbors had some planks. I had pitch. In a day he built and corked a flat bottomed boat, which we named the "Ambulance." We turned the floods to our advantage, and on the 30th floated down the river from Wendover with our heart case and our expectant mother, picking up three other children whose homes lay along the banks. First, in the bow, stood Taylor Morgan, builder of the "Ambulance", guiding our destinies with the branch of a pawpaw tree. Next, on a plank, sat Mallie, age three, and Hannah, age eight, sisters. I sat on the second plank with Joe, the heart case, snugly wrapped up in woolens and blankets. The third plank held the expectant mother, and a crippled, cross-eyed child of six, named Jean. Lastly, in the stern, on the luggage, which included supplies for any emergency, sat Martha Prewitt, alternately baling out our leaky vessel with a tobacco can and steering with a shingle.

Thus we made sixteen miles with the current down stream. Twice we landed our precious freight, to portage the worst rapids, while we took the boat through—at the mouth of Hert's Creek, and again in that foamy bit of water near the mouth of Bettie's Branch known as Judy's Whirlpool. At the mouth of Trace Branch we landed, with only one mountain, four miles across, between us and the coveted railroad. We got the patients over in three hours by mule wagon—the hardest lap of all—in the dark.

Passes for all our party were waiting with the station agent, with the season's compliments of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad, which never fails us. At eight that night we stood by the tracks when the long train came thundering through. I felt Joe's hand and Hannah's tremble in mine, for they had never before seen a train. "Won't it git us?" gasped Joe. Later, in his Pullman berth, sinking back on white pillows, he added: "I thought it was goin' to be like a waggin." Then he turned big, sad brown eyes up to mine and said, "I stood this better'n I thought I could," and I whispered under my breath, "Indeed, Joe, you did."

The night by train to Lexington and the trip next morning to Louisville, lay ahead. But as the train thundered down out of the mountains we counted our little boatload over—everyone of them safe—with grateful hearts.

With warmest thanks for the support you are giving us, and for all the things you sent us at Christmas, and with best wishes for a happy New Year all around,

Yours faithfully,

MARY BRECKINRIDGE.

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THE KENTUCKY COMMITTEE FOR
MOTHERS AND BABIES, INC.

Its motto:

“He shall gather the lambs with his arm
and carry them in his bosom, and shall
gently lead those that are with young.”

Its purpose:

To safeguard the lives and health of mothers and young children by providing trained nurse-midwives for rural areas where there are no resident physicians—these nurse-midwives to work under supervision; in compliance with the Regulations for Midwives of the State Board of Health, and the law governing the Registration of Nurses in Kentucky; and in co-operation with the nearest medical service.

THE QUARTERLY BULLETIN

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