



U. S. Sanitary Commission,
Central Office,
Washington, D.C., May 20, 1865

To Socty Soldiers Aid Society
Bethel
Maine

During the next few weeks a very large number of convalescent and partially disabled men will be discharged from the General Hospitals and sent to their homes. Many of these men will be in a condition ill suited to bear the fatigue and privations incident to a long journey; they will be men who under ordinary circumstances would not be allowed to leave the Hospitals. But under the privilege now fitly granted to hospital inmates, permitting all who desire it to be discharged, these men, in their impatient eagerness, will try to the utmost what little strength they possess.

Under these circumstances there will be a peculiar call for watchfulness and efficiency on the part of all agents of the Sanitary Commission, and of Relief Organizations, who have taken in hand the duty of meeting discharged men at the various railroad stations on their journey homeward.

Therefore, let additional Agents be in readiness, so that every train, regular and irregular, may be met, and not a disabled soldier reach or pass your station who is not promptly greeted by an offer of whatever refreshment or help he may need. Let your supplies be abundant, and your watchfulness wakeful.

In addition, and as supplementary to the regular "Sanitary Commission Relief Couriers," who go out over the several railroads upon the evening express trains daily from Washington, you should have at your place men in readiness, with proper material at hand, to accompany at shortest notice any soldier who may be found in the cars exhausted by his journey, and evidently too feeble to travel further without additional care.

If your station be a point where many soldiers leave the cars to scatter in various directions for their homes, or where they remain some hours--as is the case with many central towns

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Description: U.S. Sanitary Commission in Washington letter regarding convalescent and partially disabled soldiers that will soon be released from hospital care.

and large cities—you will find it eminently wise to employ, for the time being, men of energy and judgment, who shall be posted near the railroad station, and whose sole duty it shall be kindly to guard these soldiers while there from being robbed, defrauded, or led astray. Such men could likewise see that all of these soldiers, who have to go on further, are informed of the time of leaving of their several trains, and have tickets or transportation secured, and are seated in the right car. By these means a very valuable service may be rendered.

It is now nearly our last opportunity to extend this kind of help or protection to our returning soldiers, wounded in battle, and we cannot perform the service too promptly or too generously if we would represent to these soldiers the gratitude and the love of the people.

Yours, very truly,

FRED. N. KNAPP,
Superintendent of Special Relief Service.

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