CHAPTER V. A BUSY WOMAN.
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"There comes Philothea, her face all aglow,
She has just been dividing some poor creature's woe
And can't tell which pleases her most to relieve
his want, or his story to hear and believe;
No doubt against many deep griefs she prevails,
For her ear is the refuge of destitute tales."

Lowell.

From October, 1861, to June, 1865, was the busiest most self-sacrificing period in Dr. Mary Walker's long life and it proved to be a liberal education in philanthropy of the broadest kind. She spent only a few weeks at Indiana Hospital but she had some interesting experiences while there and met some interesting people. It was one of the few periods of which she herself left some record.

The Government, in 1861, appointed Dorothea Dix to take charge of volunteer nurses. She was a very conscientious, unusual woman but she was then rather old for such a job, was not popular
with the nurses, did not seem to have a sympathetic understanding of
the soldiers' needs and was persona non grata to many of the military
officials. Taking the rounds of the Washington hospitals, Miss Dix
countered Mary Walker at Indiana. The Doctor remarked that Miss Dix
seemed to be in "a troubled mood" that day and naively added that she
later learned that Miss Dix considered it part of her mission to try to
keep young and good looking women out of the hospitals. It was not an
uncommon comment on the lady. It was Miss Dix's attitude toward the
patients which called forth Dr. Walker's sharpest criticism. She said:
"Then she saw a patient who was too ill to arrange the clothing on his
cot and a foot was exposed, she turned her head the other way, seeming
not to see the condition, while I was so disgusted with such sham mod-
esty that I hastened to arrange the soldier's bed-clothing. --- I was
not able to understand what use anyone can be who professes to work for
a cause and then allows sham modesty to prevent them from doing little
services that chance to come their way." In an effort to be fair, she
paid tribute to Miss Dix's work for the betterment of condition in
insane asylums.

The Doctor was usually a stickler for the observance of law
but her sympathy for the patients made her at times surprisingly leni-
ent. On one occasion a young convalescent wrote her name on a pass for
himself and she contented herself with mildly lecturing him on the evils
of forgery instead of turning him over to the authorities for military
discipline.
She was a great believer in fresh air as a reviving influence and one evening left the Hospital to take a walk. As she passed in front of the Treasury Building, a "dude", as she called him, asked her how far she was going. She was wearing one of the long "circulars" then in vogue and drawing a revolver from beneath its folds, she pointed it at the young man, remarking that she could kill six just like him. His fear must have magnified the tiny woman for he hastened away, looking back at every step. This amused her and she further entertained herself by firing one ball into the ground when no one was looking. A policeman appeared upon the scene and everyone, including the Doctor, manifested great curiosity about the shooting. She explained her action: "I fired the ball for the purpose of giving those dudes to understand upon what ground I stood, believing that those of his class who believe that there are no women capable of taking care of themselves when young, would inform their friends that they might be in danger of their lives if they approached me. I was never spoken to again in an impertinent manner in my walks thereafter."

Before very long people began coming to Indiana Hospital to meet Dr. Mary Walker and she began to receive many letters asking about the soldiers and about supplies for the hospital; finally stores were sent in her care. A typical question requested information about a soldier patient from Long Island, his name, home
residence and disease. From these questions asked of her and demands
made upon her, grew the Doctor's self-appointed task of helping the
soldiers and their friends. It was a work which she carried on nobly,
about which the world knows little and for which she has received
little credit except from those for whom she labored. She gave much
thought to each matter that came up and sometimes showed herself in
advance of her time in the conclusions she drew from her observations
as she went along as, for instance, she grasped the principle which
has since developed occupational therapy when she asked for checker-
boards to help take the minds of convalescent patients from themselves.
She said they thought too much about their own condition and diversion
"would hasten their recovery". The checker-boards were furnished.

As the number of medical officers increased, Dr. Walker
felt justified in shifting to another field of volunteer work, "an-
other very important work connected with hospitals and the interests
of soldiers generally. --- As I had no official position under the
Government, there was no authority over me except the authority of
Dr. Mary Walker, therefore, when I saw wrongs anywhere or when com-
plaint was made to me of wrongs by soldiers or their friends, I
immediately took it upon myself to right those wrongs in the only
way they could be effectually and legally righted."

All of her life Mary Walker had a deep respect for law
and office but she stood in no awe of the incumbents of office and
did not hesitate to approach them if she thought circumstances justified her in so doing. Therefore she was able to do many things that more timid souls did not dare to attempt. Of all the noble women who worked for and with the soldiers, it is doubtful whether any other one of them found so many ways of being useful as did Dr. Mary Walker. Her ministrations were not confined to healing and soothing the sick and wounded, though no one will ever know how much she did in that way. She did everything else that occurred to her or came under her observation. Being possessed of a lively imagination, a resourceful mind and much sympathy, she discovered very many things to do that would benefit the men fighting for the Union.

She had faith in herself and in ultimate justice; the combination helped her to attempt and often to accomplish what others would have pronounced impossible at the outset. On one occasion she went to visit the Federal Deserters' Prison in Alexandria and the guards refused to admit her, which is not strange, considering her sex, her appearance and the nature of the offense committed by the prisoners. The Doctor drew herself up to her full height, which was not so much, and announced with great firmness: "I am Dr. Walker of the Union Army, I command you to let me pass." Whether it was awe or sheer amazement on the part of the guards is immaterial; Dr. Walker entered and, once inside, listened to the story of each prisoner. Then she returned to Washington to secure
pardons for those whom she considered unjustly confined. The first name she presented was that of a boy who had slipped away from his regiment to see his dying mother. Dr. Walker not only secured the pardon but also a pass and an escort for the boy.

It is not strange that her influence spread beyond Washington and that soon she was being asked to execute all sorts of commissions of charity and kindness. "She served the Union Army in a way that in any other country would have caused her to be recognized as a heroine of the nation."

With all that she was doing, Mary Walker did not forget the need of a reform in dress. In December, 1861, she wrote to The Sibyl saying she still found that "the comfort and convenience and healthfulness of the Reform Dress over-balanced all the annoyances due to its reception by the public".

For a short time the Doctor was unofficially connected with Forest Hall Prison in Georgetown, D. C., where she is said to have had charge of six hundred men in the hospital division. From there she went to New York City for a brief course in medicine at the Hygeio-Therapeutic College. R. T. Trail was then at the head of the school and there was one woman on its Faculty, Huldah Page, M.D., Professor of Physiology, Hygiene and Obstetrics. The work included lectures and a few clinics at Bellevue Hospital. Among the Doctor's papers was a diploma from this school, dated March thirty-first, 1862,
giving her again the degree of Doctor of Medicine. Several other women wearing the Reform Dress were attending the school at the same time.

The Progressive Annual of 1862 and 1863, an odd little reform magazine gave Dr. Walker's address as the Hygeio-Therapeutic College and put her name in two lists, "Practicing Women Physicians" and "Practical Dress Reformers".

No matter how strenuous a life she led, the Doctor did not forget her former interests --- about this time she sent contributions to The Sibyl on "Noble Men in the Army" and "Dress Reform".

After her "refresher" course in New York, the Doctor returned to Washington. It had become very difficult for any one, not an official, to pass the lines and contact the Army, but not long after her return she was visiting hospitals in the vicinity of Warrenton, Virginia. Learning that there were many sick and wounded in the camps of General Burnside's Army, down near Warrenton, she "went there to see if I could be of any service". Conditions were very bad, she found a group of typhoid patients lying on the floor of an old house, no supplies with which to make them comfortable and the surgeons-in-charge, utterly exhausted. There were no means of bathing the men, no towels, no bandages. Dr. Walker said: "I went to my trunk, took out four pretty nightgowns, tore them into small squares and, taking them into the hospital, told the soldier nurses
how to apply them to the temples of the sufferers." The public took up this simple tale, not because of Mary Walker's sacrifice and ingenuity, but because, in those days, under clothes were not mentioned in polite society and her use of "pretty" was the last straw. It was a long time before she heard the last of that story.

The Doctor went out into the surrounding neighborhood in search of something that would hold water for bathing purposes. She said she never had seen "so poverty-stricken" a people, that "the armies had taken away every dish and pan". Food was so scarce that she saved the greater part of her own meager supply of cornbread "for the sick who had only hard tack and coffee".

Having made a thorough inspection, Dr. Walker went to headquarters, reported the conditions and asked that the sick be sent at once to Washington where they could be cared for properly. General Burnside ordered her requests to be honored and gave her authority to accompany the sick to Washington. Her account of the trip is entertaining: "Soon the camp was broken up, the troops going South after the enemy, the sick and wounded being ordered to Washington. There were rumors that the rebels were cutting the railroads and attacking the guard between our camp and the Capital and I never saw men so eager to get away from a place as some of the officers and men were after the Army had advanced to the South. Two locomotives
were there, a lot of freight cars and one passenger car, a number of congressmen and army officers were down from Washington and they rushed for the front cars and ordered one of the engineers to start for Washington."

The sick and wounded had been loaded into the remaining cars and made as comfortable as possible but the train did not start. Dr. Walker grew restive and finally discovered that there was no one to issue orders, all those in authority having departed by the first train. "So I stepped up to the engineer and asked why he didn't start. 'I have no authority,' said he. 'Then I will give you orders,' I replied. 'Start at once for Washington. Oh, yes, I have authority,' and I waved at him my letter from General Burnside." She told him to run "slowly and cautiously" because of the danger and in order not to jolt the poor patients more than was necessary. The Doctor acted as conductor, spending most of the time with the very sick. Arriving at Alexandria, the engineer said that he could not run on to Washington without orders. Whereupon Mary Walker said: "But I order you to go on to Washington immediately and if you dare refuse, I'll see that your case is reported to the War Department." The train went on to Washington "immediately".

Two soldiers died on this short journey and it was Dr. Walker who thoughtfully gathered all the information available about them and reported it in Washington to a representative of the War
Department. She wrote to the home of one of the men to tell his family of his death. Twenty years later this letter secured a pension for the soldier's aged father. The Doctor, later on, suggested that when soldiers or their relatives failed to get evidence in their pension cases they should send on to the Pension Office any and all letters that were received from or about the soldier while he was in service.

Some of the medical officers of the Army looked upon Dr. Mary Walker's visits to the hospitals with much irritation, considering her either a type of spy or an out and out meddler. She went on her way, in spite of them, and continued to call the attention of the authorities to anything that appeared to her unjust or a matter of neglect or capable of alteration for the better. Being a keen observer, she learned many things as she went about on her errands of mercy and some of these lessons she applied to her own conduct with the patients. She came to believe that it was the duty of those working in hospitals to maintain a cheerful attitude and when the atmosphere seemed particularly gloomy she would force herself to smile and say something pleasant to each patient. One day, stopping beside a young soldier, she touched a leather case lying beside him and said: "I suppose the sweetest face in the world is in that case". "Yes," he answered, "You open it and you will see the sweetest face I ever saw." The case contained a mirror which reflected the Doctor's much
surprised countenance.

After observing a number of cases, the Doctor decided that too many limbs were being amputated, particularly among the poorer, more ignorant men. Quoting an instance in which she was sure that the surgeons involved did the amputation for the sake of practice, she said: "I then made up my mind that it was the last case that would ever occur if it was in my power to prevent such cruel loss of limbs. —— Having had a little experience and observation regarding the inability of some of the ward surgeons to diagnose properly and truthfully, I considered that I had a higher duty than came under the head of medical etiquette." After that, when, upon inspection, she thought amputation unnecessary, she swore the patient to secrecy, told him that the operation could not be performed without his consent and instructed him how to proceed in order to prevent it. Though she was still working for an Army appointment, the Doctor ran the risk of antagonizing the medical authorities for the sake of helping the wounded men. The tradition has come down from the Civil War that many men had Dr. Mary Walker to thank for preservation of some of their limbs. A neighbor of Dr. Walker on Bunker Hill said that through the years many old soldiers came to see the Doctor and visited other homes nearby, telling how good the Doctor had been to them. Many of them told of limbs saved by her intervention or advice.

After the Battle of Fredericksburg, Dr. Walker was on the
field to help with the wounded. Wearing the badge of her profession, the green sash, she stood by the river one very warm day while the invalids were being loaded for transportation to Washington. The men were laid on stretchers on the river bank, then carried on to the boat. The Doctor, discovering that they were being taken over the gang-plank head first, took charge, assumed a strategic position and directed the carriers to face about and carry the patients feet first, explaining that "It is almost needless to say that men who were wounded so that they were obliged to be taken on stretchers, taking them down head first would have produced pain in the head, if not serious congestion of the brain on such a warm day."

On the boat she discovered a poor little drummer boy who had lost both legs; she drew from him his story, learning that he was the only child of a widow. He died soon after arriving at a Washington hospital. A little later Dr. Walker found a woman in Washington in great distress, seeking in vain for her young son. She proved to be the little drummer's mother and, finding herself alone, begged to stay and work for the soldiers. The Doctor found a position for her in the Washington Insane Asylum "where a number of soldiers had been sent who, from wounds, sickness and other causes, had lost the proper use of their mental faculties." These are only a few of the many stories told about the good deeds of Dr. Mary Walker.
It would have taken an extraordinarily active person to keep up with her at this time; a movie-camera artist would have been in despair had he attempted to record her history in pictures. She was having new experiences all the time. One of these came while she was on a visit to New York, where she was arrested on Grand Street for "appearing in man's clothes in public", the first recorded instance of her numerous clashes with the police over her attire. A lawyer named Gold secured her release.

With all of her other activities she made or found time to write a lecture on Washington, showing an exhaustive knowledge of the city. She referred to the custom in Washington, unusual at the time, of dining in the evening; described Mrs. Lincoln as "lively and pleasing in appearance"; and said that Mr. Lincoln was cordial and "appeared not to unduly feel the dignity of his position". At the end she mentioned feelingly the great struggle going on and pleaded for all possible help for "our soldiers".

The Doctor wrote a letter on press reform for The Sibyl in March, 1863, stressing the disadvantages of the long dress in muddy weather. A week later she was elected sixth in a list of thirteen vice-presidents at a Dress Reform Convention held in Rochester. The following summer she sent a contribution to the magazine on the subject "Woman's Mind". She wrote it very seriously but it is very amusing reading. She emphasized the thought that men seldom under-
stand or appreciate the feminine mind which is "capable of profoundest reasoning and reaches all of its conclusions through reasoning". One of the curious statements was this: "I have a woman's mind and know that all my conclusions are obtained through the reasoning powers and not through instinct. Let no man dare say that woman jumps at conclusions through instinct, for no man is capable of fathoming a woman's mind, for woman reasons by telegraph and his stage-coach reasoning cannot keep pace with hers. Woman's mind is an emanation from Deity and man's mind is very probably emanated from the same source and the differences in the minds of the sexes is owing in part to the weight and roughness of the clay that is the message-bearer or soul-clogger of the mind." That does not sound as though Mary Walker wanted to be a man.

For a brief interval Dr. Walker's pen was again active. She wrote one article for The Sibyl on the unheralded faithfulness of the women working for the soldiers and another on "Positions that Women Ought of Right to Occupy". In the latter it was very evident that her failure to be recognized by the Army rankled deeply; she prophesied more freedom for women as a result of the War and predicted a prolongation of the War if women were not allowed to do their part. She was quite evidently irritated and unintentionally amusing when she said: "I confess myself unable to see how respectable men can allow a laundress to go with their regiment --- and
shake their wise heads at the respectability of an educated lady acting as surgeon."

It was very seldom that any sign of complaint or fatigue appeared in what Dr. Mary wrote in those days but a little note to Dr. Hasbrouck was very expressive: "I intended to write an article for this month's Sibyl and have intended to write often but you have no idea how hard I labor in a thousand directions and positively have not had time when I have not been so very weary."

Her last communication to the magazine for 1863 shows one more way she found to aid the soldiers. She "sat up until after midnight, as a volunteer, helping to write transportation orders on the furloughs of the New York soldiers on the Saturday night previous to election," because she "feared many would not get their tickets in time to go home and vote the Union ticket" and so won "the thanks of hundreds of soldiers".

Being very busy and tired did not keep Dr. Walker from reading the papers. She actively disapproved of spreading what she considered false ideas. Several times she read a certain item on salt and at length sent it to Dr. Trail who published her letter and the item, with comments, in The Herald of Health. The obnoxious paragraph was headed "Why Salt is Healthful" and the criticism supposed to squelch it said, in part: "The simple fact that salt is not changed in the living system at all, that it is passed out of the
body in the same state in which it is taken in, is a positive demonstration of the falsity of everything Professor —— has alleged in favor of its dietetic use; in its relation to the living tissue, it is an absolute and pernicious poison."

No one knows how often the Doctor "visited" the Army to look after the needs of the sick and wounded soldiers but there was a pass issued to her May 3, 1863, good for ten days to Acquia Creek and return and she went to the front again in August.

Evidently she belonged to the Union League of Washington, when in the city — she generally attended the meetings and often took part on its programs. A meeting of the League, held August 18, 1863, was reported in The National Republican. Mr. William Cody, Indian Agent, was the first speaker and Dr. Mary Walker, just returned from a visit to the Army of the Potomac, told of some of her experiences. She closed the recital with her parody on "The Old Arm-Chair", perhaps her best effort as a poet, since she was not born for that role.

"I love it! I love it! Oh, who shall dare
To chide me for loving that flag so fair?
I treasured it long for the patriot's pride
And wept for the heroes who for it died.
'Tis bound by a thousand spells to my heart,
Nothing on earth can e'er us part.

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Would you learn the spell? There is liberty there,
Making that flag the fairest of fair.
Then chide me not if here I wave
That flag, redeemed by brothers brave,
For while I live that flag shall be
Waving over you and me.
When I am buried 'neath the ground,
Wrap that flag my corpse around,
Plant that flag above my grave,
There let it wave! Let it wave!

After the Doctor had retired one night in Washington, a
Mrs. Wrenn and her daughter-in-law came to beg frantically that she
would go to the Army somewhere over in Virginia and bring Lieutenant
Wrenn, son and husband, respectively, back to them; he had had a
sunstroke, his little son was very ill in Washington and at that
time no women were allowed to go to the front.

The Doctor started the next morning, without a pass, since
it would take too much time to secure one. She crossed the river
and was at once challenged by a sentinel who, at her request, con-
ducted her to the officer of the guard, who listened to her story
and told her she could go on if she would promise to bring the man
back, which she did. She took a train at Alexandria, upon which was
traveling a group of officers bound for the Headquarters of the Army
of the Potomac. One of these men wrote rather flippantly to his family about the Doctor. He said "she was attired in a small straw hat with a cockade in front, a pair of blue pantaloons and a long frock coat or sack. Over all she had a linen duster and this, coupled with the fact that she had rips in her boots, gave her a trig appearance. She was liberal in her advice to all corners and especially exhorted two newspaper boys to immediately wash their faces, in which remark she was clearly correct." At this time Dr. Walker was working very hard for the soldiers, without remuneration and was almost at the end of her own financial resources. Had the officer known of all the good she was doing, would he have been more respectful?

The Doctor went as far as she could by train but found herself still five miles from the camp where Lieutenant Wrenn was supposed to be. Borrowing a horse from a Christian Association Station at the depot, she set out without escort or map, though the armies of both sides were skirmishing in the vicinity. She eventually reached her goal, found her man, went to Headquarters, successfully plead for a leave of absence for him and obtained an ambulance and a man to ride her borrowed horse back to the station. She rode in the ambulance supporting the patient's head on a pillow. When the train arrived she made a bed of blankets in a box car for the soldier and begged two candles from the Christian Association to
afford a little light. Arrived at Alexandria, the sick man was taken by ambulance to the boat which "conveyed them to Washington", where someone placed the Lieutenant on the seat of a street-car for the Doctor. When they reached his street, she prevailed on the conductor to help her patient to the house. The man and his small son recovered and the officer returned to the Army.

In September the Doctor was to be found in Tennessee and Georgia; she was engaged in her work of mercy on the field after the Battle of Chickamauga.

The New York Tribune, more kindly than most papers in its treatment of Mary Walker, published an article late in the summer of 1863 entitled "Women in the War", in which it devoted several paragraphs to her, all in a complimentary vein. A few sentences in this item gave the first suggestion of a new role for Dr. Mary Walker: "Hoping in other modes to serve her country, she has been anxious for employment as a spy". Something was told of her own plans for this work, plans suggested in turn to Burnside, Patrick, Hancock, Couch, none of which in the end were accepted.

Uncertainty surrounds the subject of Dr. Walker as a spy. With her strong patriotism, pioneer spirit, courage and imagination, it is easy to understand how service to her country in that field might fire her zeal. She was not of a disposition to wait passively for the opportunity so gave much thought to ways and means herself.

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A niece said that her Aunt Mary was "one of Grant's trusted spies" but there is no account of her activities in that line. It was rumored that she was attempting to spy out the land when she was captured by Southern troops but nothing was found to convict her of such a charge and the Confederate authorities apparently dropped the idea. In fact there is no proof that she was ever employed as a spy except, perhaps, an official paper, still on file, which states that as her business (during the war) was "confidential", it was not written down. The War Department says there is no record of her ever having served as a spy, which proves nothing. The tradition of such an activity, however, adds to the mystery and drama of her life.

There was a young girl, Frances Hook by name, who put on a uniform, enlisted several times, concealed her sex long enough to participate in several battles and was discovered at last after being wounded. Mary Walker considered her a singular example of martial spirit and wrote up her story for publication. The Doctor believed and sometimes argued that "Congress should assign women to duty in the Army with compensation, as well as colored men, averring that patriotism has no sex".

Mrs. Mary Livermore, also noted for her work among soldiers, told a characteristic story of Mary Walker. There was a young man from New Hampshire who volunteered to help defend the Union and "survived many bloody engagements, long marches and other hardships only
to contract consumption in the Southern swamps. Dr. Walker found him in a hospital crying for his mother and begged the surgeon-in-charge to let her take the soldier home. He told her that the boy would die on the way but the Doctor finally said: "Then let him die trying", and the surgeon yielded. The young volunteer was laid in her arms on the train and the curious passengers began to stare and at length complained to the conductor. Remembering Mary Walker's comments on "false modesty", her reaction to the attitude of the other passengers is not surprising. Rising in the seat, she said in a ringing voice: "This young man has given up his life for his country, now he is going home to die in his mother's arms". The revulsion of sentiment was immediate and until the end of the journey everything possible was done for the dying youth and his valorous companion. Reaching his home town, he was carried to his mother and sister who had been kindly warned by Dr. Walker what to expect. Within an hour he lay dead and the Doctor went back to comfort and help other dying and wounded boys.

From the time when she was in Indiana Hospital, Dr. Mary Walker received many letters asking for help of various kinds, their confidence in her is touching and amazing. She made notes on the envelopes, outlining her movements in attempting to do the things asked of her. She seems never to have turned down a request that she thought worthy without trying to comply with it. She was asked
to visit men in court, hospitals and prisons, to see authorities, to secure releases, to look after stores and supplies, to right all sorts of wrongs. Sometimes it was a wife or mother who made the appeal. "As you then would see, as a man never could, my greatest need and feeling assured of your sympathy and assistance, I applied to you, the soldiers' friend, for this great kindness." One man thanked her for saving his life. On one occasion she secured a furlough for a New York man detained in a New Orleans hospital.

The Captain of the "Second U. S. Colored Troops" wrote to her to say that his men needed mittens, "one hundred pairs with fore-fingers on them". He added: "I know no one except you on whom to make a special requisition".

A study of the letters leads to the conclusion that most of the men aided by Dr. Walker belonged to the poorer and more ignorant groups who scarcely knew what it was all about and, in most instances, were guiltless of any intention to do wrong when they broke army regulations. Whatever his difficulty, in so far as she was able, she befriended each individual man; nothing was too much trouble for her to undertake. She gave of her time, energy and money unsparingly in this work of real philanthropy. She had the reputation of being very well-informed upon a subject before she approached an official in Washington for help and for this reason she often gained a hearing when others were refused.
Washington in those days was crowded with soldiers and citizens; there were regular and emergency hospitals and these, as well as military camps and prisons, were scattered about Washington, Georgetown, Alexandria and points even more distant. Transportation was poor, the movements of laymen were hampered by military regulations. All of these conditions plus her poverty made Mary Walker's work very difficult; the amount she accomplished is incredible.

A group of incidents called her attention to the fact that a woman alone, no matter how respectable, could scarcely find lodgings in the city of Washington. An elderly woman spent a night under a tree in Jackson Square; the young wife of a soldier fell in labor on the street. Both of these women had money to pay their way. The police told the doctor that their force at the Baltimore and Ohio Depot had impoverished themselves trying to help women in distress. There were no hospitals where they could be taken when ill.

Mary Walker declared that "It was an outrage that in all Washington not a place could be found for a respectable woman to stay all night," and added: "I immediately began to study up ways and means to remedy this defect." A few evenings later, at two different meetings, she made an appeal on behalf of a respectable woman's home. There were some responses at both places and in less than a week the doctor hired a house on Tenth Street and put in a matron. She went to General Canby, told him of the need for cots,
blankets, sheets, pillow-cases and kitchen furniture for the house and he gave them to her, perhaps because she modestly asked for articles condemned as not fit for the hospitals or that needed repair and laundering. The police were glad to cooperate with her. She secured two rooms in the City Hall where she interviewed women in trouble from any cause, learned their needs, gave them direct aid or sent them to the home to remain as long as necessary.

Very soon a unique notice appeared in one of the Washington papers, under the heading, "Lodging Rooms for Homeless Women". It read: "Dr. Mary Walker has the pleasure to inform those females who are homeless that she has secured respectable rooms where they can remain over night, free of charge. Let no woman who is nearly out of means perish in our streets hereafter. She will also hear the cases of prospective mothers who are without homes and means to take care of themselves, and begs leave to inform all such who will endeavor to lead better lives that they need not commit suicide or murder innocents, for they shall be cared for and their misfortunes not be published to the world. ----- We shall have a temporary Foundling Hospital, for the present supported by voluntary contributions.

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M. D. Walker, M. D., 374 Ninth Street."

Many women came to Washington, searching for relatives among the wounded or imprisoned men. With no definite information as to their whereabouts and with so many places to visit, it was
almost impossible to make a thorough search and it was just a chance if the person sought was found. Noting this difficulty, Dr. Walker evolved another way to help. She went to General Pucker, in charge of such ambulance service as there was and asked that an ambulance and driver report to her each day to be used in taking those women to hunt for their kinfolks. Surprisingly, he granted her request. Had it been the World War, no doubt, the Doctor would have driven the ambulance herself and enjoyed doing so.

On the street one day she saw a poorly dressed woman looking at a food stand and asked her if she would like something. The woman replied that she couldn't afford it. The Doctor told the poor creature to take what she liked and when the woman had taken some cakes, paid for them, then listened to her story. The woman was a widow from Philadelphia, hunting for her only son who had run away to Washington as a drummer-boy for a regiment. Putting her in the ambulance, the Doctor, following the few clues she had, went first to a deserters' camp in Virginia and then back to a deserters' hospital in Washington where they found the lad. Mary Walker then went to Secretary Stanton, secured the boy's release and sent him and his mother home.

1864 was a memorable year in Mary Walker's life but there was nothing in its early weeks to indicate that it would be. She continued her work of miscellaneous relief and spent a few weeks in
New York City. One of her first acts in the New Year was to pen the following letter showing that busy as she was, she had never lost sight of her original objective:

"Washington, D. C., Jan. 11, 1864.

"To His Excellency,

A. Lincoln, President, U. S. A.:

"Whereas, The undersigned has rendered much of valuable service in her efforts to promote the cause of the Union, not only in acting as an Assistant Surgeon at various times in hospitals and on the field, but in originality and urging several measures that are of great importance to Government, one of which is the Invalid Corps, she begs to say to His Excellency that she has been denied a commission, solely on the ground of sex, when her services have been tested and appreciated without a commission and without compensation and she fully believes that had a man been as useful to our country as she modestly claims to have been, a star would have been taken from the National Heavens and placed upon his shoulder.

"The undersigned asks to be assigned to duty at Douglas hospital, in the female ward, as there cannot possibly be any objection urged on account of sex, but she would much prefer to have an extra surgeon’s commission with orders to go whenever and wherever there is a battle that she may render aid in the field hospitals, where her energy, enthusiasm, professional abilities and patriotism
The greatest service in inspiring the true soldier never to yield to traitors, and in attending the wounded brave. She will not shrink from duties under shot and shell, believing that her life is of no value in the country’s greatest peril if by its loss the interests of future generations shall be promoted.

Mary E. Walker, M. D."

It should be noted in passing that Dr. Walker carried with her a little black case, containing her name and address, it was for identification if she should lose her life while working for the wounded.

It is not often that those seeking public service express so naively and openly their self-confidence but Mary Walker thoroughly believed what she said and she had no one else to say it to the President. Later President Lincoln proved in a very convincing manner his appreciation of Dr. Walker’s efforts to serve her country. That he gave due consideration to this remarkable communication from her is shown by the fact that on the back of it, he himself wrote this answer:

"The Medical Department of the Army is an organized system in the hands of men supposed to be learned in that profession and I am sure it would injure the service for me, with strong hand, to thrust among them anyone, male or female, against their consent. If they are willing for Dr. Mary Walker to have charge of
a female ward, if there be one, I also am willing, but I am sure controversy on the subject will not subserve the public interest.

A. Lincoln, Jan. 16, 1861."

(Copied from the originals.)

The Doctor said that the only other woman physician who had practiced in Washington before she came was Dr. Lydia Sayer, (later Mrs. Hasbrouck) of Middletown, New York, "who did not stay long" and that for several years there was no other woman physician practicing in the city but herself. How she found any time to practice medicine with all of her other work, it is difficult to comprehend.

Dr. Mary Walker said that before the war there had never been a woman's organization in Washington except the "Dorcas Association" in the churches. Early in the year, through the papers, she issued a call for a meeting for women and from the small number responding, a Relief Society was organized to take over her work for women and babies. (According to the Doctor, The Women's Christian Association, The Woman's Hospital Association and The Soldiers' Orphans' Home were all outgrowths of this first home established by her and these other women.) The Doctor first served as President of the group, then as Secretary, Medical Officer and Manager of the Home. Over a thousand dollars was raised for the institution through a lecture given by Anna Dickinson.
Late in February the Doctor wrote a letter to the editor of The National Republican which appeared in the paper. It was in defense of herself for resigning from active work in the Relief Association, on the ground that she had donated her professional services and that now "there are others that have become interested, who are directly or indirectly being supported by Government." She thanked General Canby for this help and closed by saying, "My heart is still with the cause but my energies must be in another direction."

At a Union League meeting in January, 1864, Mary Walker made what amounted to a speech for Woman's Rights. It was a mixture of reflections on past history, the war then in progress and some of the weaknesses of human nature. She closed with a stanza from one of the new poems:

"We are living, we are dwelling
In a grand and awful time,
In an age on ages telling
To be living is sublime."