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AFTERNOON SESSION

The President announces that the program for the afternoon is a symposium on

OVERSEAS SERVICE OF MEDICAL WOMEN

The following papers are presented:

AMERICAN WOMEN'S HOSPITALS

DR. CAROLINE M. PURNELL

My part in war work has been rather a subordinate one, so far as a report to any Association is concerned, because organization is not very interesting. I will tell only a part of my experience over there, leaving the rest for the other speakers of the afternoon and especially for Dr. Tallant and Dr. Kelly who worked in the same department of our unit. The American Women's Hospitals is a name which very few of the women physicians seem to understand. They do not know whether it belongs to the Suffrage Association or the Medical Women's National Association. It is in fact the Medical Women's National Association, and is the name of their War Service Committee. After a year of waiting
they finally decided to get into some actual work. They raised in all $300,000, and decided to found two hospitals. They at first founded a small hospital in the Aisne region but later moved over the line from this section because they could not get sufficient water. Their hospital here was an old château which had been used previously as a hospital for American soldiers; previous to that, a hospital for French soldiers and previous to that time, a school for poor children from Paris. Our unit went down there about September 12, and consisted originally of about four physicians and one dentist, later increased to three dentists and eight physicians. There were about twelve nurses and three or four nurses’ aides, a secretary and treasurer and one who did the buying for the hospital. In addition to this hospital we had a smaller one farther north, originally intended to consist of ten beds but which was enlarged to twenty-five. Dr. Louie Hurl of New York and ———— had charge of this hospital and we had as patients, men, women and children. We had no soldiers except those who came from accidents or such other cause. We did no military work, although if the war had gone on we would have had to do our share. The medical side of the work was interesting, very much like that which comes in a village practice—all sorts of medical and surgical cases, acute and chronic cases, with some operations. We treated 421 cases in Hospital No. 21 from August 1, 1918, to March, 1919, and at the hospital Dr. Child established in November we had 61 cases. The total number of surgical cases which Dr. Child had was 411 with a death-rate of 2 per cent. One-third were major operations. She has done very good work and is a graduate of our College. The dental cases numbered about 472 and this work formed a very important part of our cases. We have now three dentists; they go around to various points working as needed. The total number of house calls from the hospital was 3626. I will not describe the conditions in the hospitals. I think that the character of the work we did was fairly good. We did not get our x-ray apparatus until just before the Armistice was signed and that was brought for military work. All the x-ray work is now done at Paris.

I was much interested in going about among the dispensaries. One experience was full of interest; as I was going out one day one of the nurses asked me if I would take some patients home. We filled the ambulance with several children and one man. The nurse then brought a little baby about ten months old. I looked at that baby with some hesitation, when the nurse said, “I am going to give this to you.” “Whatever you do, don’t bring it back.” I said, “What am I going to do if it cries?” She said, “Either give
it some milk, or sing to it.” I said, “I think I will give it the milk.” But, I said, “Where shall I leave it?” The nurse said, “Somewhere up above Château-Thierry.” I said, “I am afraid to start with it.” But the young woman who drove the car said, “Oh, well, I have a general idea where it is; I am not afraid; I can find the mother.” I said, “You do not speak French, and I do not feel like taking it.” She replied, “You don’t have to know more than ‘right, left, and straight ahead.’” I said, “You have always run this car very well and I will trust you, so I will get on the front seat and take the baby and the bottle.” We delivered the patients and finally I was left with this baby. I said to the driver, “What are you going to do first?” “Watch me,” she said. We came to a village and I was amazed to have her toot a horn, and as the women ran out she called, “Baby Blinn. Baby Blinn.” But no one recognized “Baby Blinn.” She then said, “She doesn’t live here; her mother is not here.” We then came to a second village with the same experience. In the third village the women all came out and one woman’s face looked pretty bright. She said “I know where it lives,—up on the hill.” I said to the driver, “Do you think we can trust her?” She replied, “Oh, yes; she has a nice face; we can trust her.” She got on the running board and went up the hill. The women came out. I held up the baby, and the child’s mother came running for it. I was convinced that the chauffeur had a very good system, and the baby had a good system, too.

We had for these children Christmas entertainments just as did all the other committees and hospitals for the little souls who had had such sad times. These were for the hospital children and the children of the village of Luzanne. The Mayor of the town seemed to appreciate the effort very much. Four members of the unit were decorated and awards of medals made to others. The French people have shown their appreciation of the sympathetic interest of the Americans, and the tales we hear about the French people being so disagreeable I do not believe. Personally I never saw any of it and do not believe it existed unless the Americans were disagreeable to them. I have seen Americans take advantage of them and exhibit surprise because they resented it a little. From the commercial spirit I think they were a little afraid that the Americans might stay too long and interfere with them. So far as the physicians, nurses and all relief committees were concerned, I think the French were very grateful and they expressed their gratitude in every possible way. They gave all sorts of presents,—rabbits, chickens, apples and whatever they had. One woman even wanted to give her bedspread to one of the unit because this
member had admired the embroidery on it. The Mayor of Lavaun on All Saints Day made a little address in the Park in one corner of which are some American soldiers buried, and these graves are kept in good order by the children of the town who put flowers on them on every Sunday. All the townspeople and the people from nearby came to hear the Mayor’s address; all of the unit were present and in his address the Mayor expressed his great admiration for the work which the American soldiers had done, spoke of the great rapidity of the execution of the work and of the work of the American women physicians, expressing his appreciation in the most beautiful language, peculiar to the French. The French children struck me as being the most polite children I ever have seen in my life. When they had an adenoid and tonsil operation they thanked you when they got on the table and when they got off.

Our future work is to be in Serbia. We have now money enough for a hospital there and we hope to have this started in July.

WOMEN’S OVERSEAS UNIT

DR. MARIE K. FORMAD

It gives me great pleasure to be back home again among you. Our unit was under the direction of the Woman's Suffrage Association, and was termed Women's Overseas Hospital. There were three units; we were the first. We sent a subsequent unit to take charge of a gas hospital, but unfortunately it came too late, after the Armistice was signed. Then there was a third unit to do work among the civilians. I went over there in February, 1918. We had a personnel of about twenty; three trained nurses; six aides and a woman carpenter, a woman electrician and a chauffeur. Before leaving we received a cable that the Germans had advanced so far that we could not go to our appointed destination. We were directed to go ahead any way, and we arrived in Paris in due time. Crossing the ocean in war time was not a very pleasant experience, as it was a sort of perilous journey. When we arrived in Paris they were having air raids every night, and during the day the long-range guns were fired every fifteen minutes in the morning, when they thought the people were on their way to work, at noon hour and at evening, when it was thought the streets would be mostly crowded. Many people were killed in the streets.