I feel that I ought to apologize for speaking here but it is not my fault; Dr. Buchanan is responsible, and has said that you want to hear what I did in France. Being there for twenty months, it is rather hard to tell in twenty minutes what I did. First of all I had the great privilege of going over as Dr. Tallant’s assistant, when I had been out of College only two weeks. I did not know very much then, but know a little now because she taught me very hard. The work we did with the Smith College Unit was work of reconstruction, helping the people in every way possible. The whole country had been held by the Germans for two or three years. The people had suffered terribly and now that the Germans had gone the conditions were unspeakable, there were no homes and no shelter. The people wanted to come back to live where they belonged and we tried to make it easier. We were not a medical unit. We were first told there would be no medical work, when we said we could do something else. We went to the military doctor whose business it was to see that the people were looked after in the fifty or sixty villages, and he was only too glad to have our help. Other members of the unit fed the people, clothed them, saw to their comfort and we tried to attend to their health. We stayed there six months. The head of the American Committee for Devastated France asked if we would not organize medical work in their villages. Dr. Tallant thought I could do it, and on leaving gave me her blessing. I found myself the only doctor in about twenty-six villages. I had told Mrs. Dick before consenting to go that I was to be there only until she could find someone to take the place and that we could not do the work properly without a hospital. The Germans did not come very near to Blerancourt, but all the time I had to know that that might happen and be prepared for an emergency. We were under military discipline and were very proud to belong to the French Army, and we were there where we knew the need was greatest. Being in the war zone and under military discipline the army appointed us to the thirteen villages for which we were responsible, and when the Germans advanced we felt that we must see that these people were taken to safety. Among the members of our unit we had several girls who acted as chauffeurs. A good many came from Philadelphia, and they all did most wonderful work during the night and day going over to the front lines and taking away the poor women and children and men sometimes who were left there. All of the people were
gathered together and taken to the interior. It sounds very easy to say that I just had to look after the sick people, but there were many difficult cases, and, of course, there was obstetrical work, and I did it the best I knew how. Then there were a great many accident cases and many chronic cases, patients who would have gone on for years, but who could not bear the strain of war conditions. Also many went violently insane and we had nowhere to take them. So I went to the Major de Zone and said: "Here are some people I must take care of, and there is no place in which to do it; where shall I take them?" "What about the military hospitals? Is there absolutely no hospital any place?" They replied: "Oh, yes; there is a hospital ten miles from here, but it is full. It is a nun's hospital." I said: "I will take them at once." I picked out the worst-looking of my people, put them in the camions and said to the chauffeur: "Drive as fast as you can." When we reached the hospital the people were still living. I said: "We are trying to get away from the Germans and these poor people are very ill and have no place to go." The answer was that they had no room. I said: "What shall I do with them. We are Americans; we are willing to help, but they are your people." The reply came back: "Oh, take them all in; I will find room for them somewhere."

Two or three of our unit stayed to take care of the people where we were located and the rest of us went where more needed. The people did not want to leave their homes. The word was given that they could stay, but that if anybody was hurt then everybody would have to leave. We went around telling the people that they must absolutely live in their cellars.

When we moved to our new location I found that there was no doctor about for miles and miles. There were many people and many villages there and the people had not had care for months; also there was no doctor for the soldiers. A message came from headquarters asking if I would take care of the soldiers; they had already been coming to my dispensary. I said I was perfectly willing, but that it must not interfere with my civilian work. They said they would only have dispensary work at eight in the morning for the soldiers. So at eight o'clock I presented myself at what was supposed to be the dispensary. Medicine they had none. There was one cot and a screen, a stool and a stove. I found a man, called an orderly, who said he would give me all the help he could. We managed to get the place somewhat clean. It seemed rather strange to act as officer, just give my orders and have them carried out. I met with no disrespect, and even when I ordered punishment it was not resented. I was
asked if I would take care of the Italian soldiers, too, and these I saw from seven to eight in the morning. I had a great many interesting cases; one was that of a man who had fired a pistol the night before. He did not hurt anyone, but it was a court-martial offence to carry firearms unless in the trenches. His captain said to me that if I could prove that the man was suffering from anything that might affect his mind he might be willing to let him off. I did not care to have the man’s life in my hands. No alcoholic history could be obtained, but I had a sudden inspiration when I remembered that the man had confessed to syphilis years ago.

I saw a great many cases of trachoma, none of which were put in isolation. In malaria it had been the custom to give enormous doses of quinin. This I felt affected their hearing most seriously. At the same time we had an epidemic of what was called Spanish grip. The men would be well in the morning, but about noon would complain of headache and have a temperature of 102°, nose-bleed and would seem to be in very bad shape. I was alarmed, but, of course, I had to be careful about sending them to the hospitals, which were more for the wounded. I said I would wait and see what happened, and found that with a little treatment the condition would disappear in a day or two, and in about five days the man was able to go back to work. I had hundreds of such cases, and with one or two exceptions there were no bad results. We had many accident cases. One night, about three o’clock in the morning, an officer came and asked if I would attend some poor civilians who had been hurt. I was only a minute before I grabbed my emergency bag and went over to the house. But of the house there was nothing. Fortunately the people had just gone to the cellar. They had been taken down underground by the French officers. I found two very excitable women, an old man, a dog and a cat. The dog and the cat were not hurt. The old man was slightly hurt, but the two women were very badly injured. As I had only one hand, having managed to dislocate the thumb of the other, I took them to the military hospital. I no sooner had gotten back when I was called again to see a man who had been run over by an automobile and was almost bleeding to death. I gave him first aid help and took him to the hospital. At another time a young British soldier carrying dispatches and riding his bicycle was thrown by the wheel slipping. He showed, I think, the most remarkable pluck I have ever seen. I used my first aid and stopped the hemorrhage and gave him stimulation. This man was very badly hurt and he was suffering agony. I went over to him thinking he was moaning in pain and spoke to him in English. He said, “Will you promise faithfully to carry out my instructions?” I said: “First of all I
want to make you comfortable." He said: "No, sister; do not do that. I am carrying important messages and they must get to the English commander tonight. I do not know where my bag is." When I gave it to him he said: "Will you promise not to let it out of your sight?" When I told him I would take the messages for him he said: "Will you swear to it?" So I swore to him. Think of my horror when I learned that this brave boy was subject to court martial on the ground that he did not take proper precaution against accident in the discharge of his important duties. I know, however, that he lived, and I am glad of that.

It was a happy time for us when Mrs. Dike told us that the American Women's Hospital was coming over to work with us. The work which we have started will go on.

AMERICAN COMMITTEE FOR DEVASTATED FRANCE

DR. ALICE WELD TALLANT

One thing which Dr. Kelly has left out is the reason why she was thrown out of the car. She was riding on the step so that some refugees could have her place inside the automobile and that is how the accident occurred. In spite of her dislocated thumb she went right on working for the people and it was not until I had arrived to join the unit that she took the time to go to Paris to have her thumb attended to.

My service with the committee began in the midst of the great German drive at the end of May, 1918. I took the last train that went through from Paris to Vic-sur-Aisne, the committee's headquarters, at the time of this offensive. The advance had been so rapid that before the people knew it the Germans were almost upon them. There were two French hospitals which were in the path of the offensive and they were so taken by surprise that one lost practically all its material, although able to evacuate its patients, while the other, in spite of the approach of the Germans, could get no official word to evacuate, and did not get its patients out before the arrival of the enemy. This gives some idea of the suddenness of the attack.

On my arrival at Vic-sur-Aisne, in the midst of the offensive, I have a rather confused recollection of hot sun, dusty streets crowded with troops, guns so near that the house shook and the windows rattled with the shock, and a big French observation-balloon in the field in front of our house. In the afternoon I went