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NOTES OF THE WAR.

ADVENTURES OF AN AMBULANCE-SURGEON IN THE SORTIES FROM PARIS.

WE have been favoured with a perusal of a very interesting private letter from Dr. Rose Cormack, who is in surgical charge of an ambulance in Paris, and have been permitted to make the following extracts.

Last week was in many respects the most eventful, exciting, and laborious week of my whole life. This you will be able to understand at once when I tell you that I was in two great battles—on Wednesday, 30th November, and Friday, 2nd December. On both days, unavoidable circumstances—not likely to recur—placed me in great danger, as I shall now explain to you. I may premise, that I was not the only member of the surgical service subjected to peril. Several of the ambulance service were wounded on the two days I have named.

On Tuesday (29th November), I was out all day with my ambulance, and heard the roar of the battle, but was not in it. On Wednesday, from six in the morning till next day at ten o'clock, I was without intermission hard at work. At the latter hour, I returned with my patients to my own ward at Les Ternes. I slept some hours after this, and again joined the army. I returned to Paris about midnight of Friday, and have since been occupied with my patients. Probably I go out to another battle, expected in two or three days.

On Wednesday, I was with the right wing of Ducrot's army at Creteil. For some hours I was stationed very favourably for seeing a great part of the battle. The day was clear; I was for some time on the roof of a house in the midst of reserves of infantry and artillery, and quite out of danger. I had a good field-glass. Colonel Hicks, acting as *infirmier*, was with me. About eleven o'clock, we were ordered to the front—about a mile from where we had been mere spectators—leaving our wagons, and advancing with our stretchers and "croix rouge" flags to a place where there were heaps of dead and wounded. I was one of a party of four doctors and about forty carriers and other subordinates. I worked diligently, staunching blood, and placing those with broken bones so that they could be carried to the rear to our carriages. This was going on, when Hicks, with glass in hand, said "Doctor, you must look at this pretty skirmishing of the Prussians and then we must retire—the French are giving way in front of us". I rose from the ground to take a peep, when a regiment began to pass our post into action. They had not been ten minutes clear off, and had only fired one or two rounds, when they were driven back: at first they retired in some order, but in a few minutes they were on us in a crushing crowd, and the Prussian fire was getting nearer and nearer. We had to leave our wounded; Hicks and I tried to carry one poor fellow who was on a *brancard*, but after a few yards there was nothing for it but to leave him. A ball struck the ground with a thud within a few inches of Hicks's foot; another struck a stone near me, and, after dancing hither and thither for an instant, lay quietly before me. I put it in my pocket. All this happened within a briefer space of time than it has taken me to write it. We retreated as fast as we could with the receding infantry. Soon, however, the retreat moderated. Up came three field-guns and a mitrailleuse. The 117th Regiment began to reform; still the Prussians were getting nearer and nearer, when the mitrailleuse, taking up a position exactly in front of that where we had abandoned the wounded, and within a very short distance of the enemy, sent three showers of bullets at them. The field-guns did not fire, though ready to do so; at once the Prussians ceased their musketry, the 117th French renewed their attack, and within an hour of the time when we left the wounded we were back to them, and with the assistance of other doctors, etc., sent to us, we completed our work. My staff—I had charge of two wagons—were, however, dispersed, and it was not till next day that they all turned up. The night of Wednesday I passed partly in a church and partly in a château, ministering to the wounded. I had also some hours of sound sleep in a deserted house of which we took possession.

On Friday evening, I was waiting orders to advance, when a priest came to our carriages. He said that he had been confessing dying French soldiers on the brow of a hill (to which he pointed) where, he said, there were at least fifty lying wounded, and dying from cold. The sun had now set; the moon was rising; a keen cutting wind was blowing from the north. For me and half-a-dozen *brancardiers* to go alone so far when we had work nearer seemed absurd; but the priest was urgent. Our wagons were a mile and a half nearer, he said, than any others. I agreed to go on, but told the priest to go back to a certain point where I knew that more than a hundred wagons were waiting orders to advance. This he agreed to do; and we set off to climb the

hill. On reaching a shattered house in the lane, we heard moans, and entered. The house was full of dead and dying. An army surgeon was in charge: he said that he had got cut off from his carriages and assistants. At his request, I sent back one of my stretchers with a very badly wounded man. I was told by a captain commanding a guard that it would be dangerous to advance to the spot indicated by the priest; that it was close to the Prussian lines, and that the battle was not quite over. We might, he said, go to a certain point which he indicated; but we had on the whole better wait till general orders were given to the ambulances. . . . At this time, we heard plaintive cries; the words "Français", "blessé", and "froid", being distinctly recognised. I said to the captain that, if he would allow me two or three men as porters, I would seek out the poor fellow and do what his case required. The captain agreed, stating, however, that we must screen our lantern and go silently, otherwise we would be shot at by the Prussian outposts, within whom we would be not more than fifty yards. He said to his men, "Any three of you may accompany the doctor to bring in a comrade who has been moaning and crying for the last two hours over there". After some hesitation, three came forward, laid down their arms, and joined us in the search. Silently we advanced, stumbling on stones in the uncertain light of a good-for-nothing moon, aided by a lantern: the latter was screened in front, but the screening cloak was blown aside by the wind, and in a minute afterwards we heard three Prussian bullets whizzing about our heads. We lay down, and after ten minutes got into a quarry, where we found our plaintive *blessé* cold as death, and his clothes, which had been soaked in his warm blood, were frozen stiff. We gave him a drink of gravy and brandy, bound his wound, placed him on the stretcher, and, after various adventures, started for Paris. The poor fellow whom we took out of the quarry seemed as if he would die on the road. I therefore resolved that, if we got him alive to Paris, he should occupy one of two beds which I had ordered to be ready in my dining-room. Before midnight, he and another of our cargo (a man shot through the thigh) were deposited in the room, and left there for two hours, whilst I took the rest to Les Ternes and did the needful. On coming back, I found the two poor fellows—even the quarry fellow—somewhat rallied by heat externally and internally applied in accordance with my orders. Their clothes were cut off them, they were washed and dressed and bedded, and are now—at the end of a week—doing well. They are, as soon as they can be removed, to occupy two of six beds which I have had installed as an auxiliary military ambulance in the flat (now unlet) above ours. When I lay down on Saturday morning in my own bed, after placing my quarry friend and his shattered thigh as well as the case allowed, his moans rather soothed me; for I felt that, had I not taken him when I did, he must have died. The ambulances did not till after midnight go on the field: an armistice of an hour then took place, when Prussians and French gathered respectively their dead and wounded. The carriages which we left near the heights of Champigny did not reach Paris till seven next morning.

In coming into Paris on that night, I had an adventure which seems nothing to tell, but which frightened me more than any incident of either battle. When crossing the Marne on the pontoons by the moonlight, our waggon jolted, and tottered as if about to fall into the water, which was a swollen heavy stream. This happened though men at each side steadied the carriage. Though frightened at the time, I had forgotten my fright till I read in a newspaper that, some six hours after I passed, an ambulance with six wounded soldiers had toppled into the stream. The horse was drowned; the men were saved. On Friday, the wounded horses were killed, skinned, and cut up for Paris food. The Americans brought back a whole horse for their patients. For food, we have a meat ticket which we are entitled to use every third day: one day we get fresh beef or mutton; the next time fresh horse; the third time salt beef, salt mutton, or salt fish. The daily allowance for each person is now fifty *grammes*—that is, half a pound a day in all for the five persons constituting our present family; in other words, all that we get each time for three days' use is a pound and a half. All the animals in the Zoological Gardens have been eaten; cats and dogs have also been devoured to such an extent that they are now rare animals in Paris. Our *concierge* has killed and eaten his cat; a friend called on us the other evening after having dined on a rat ragout. Notwithstanding this queer style of living, the general health seems as yet good. Our own family is very well indeed, though we long for milk, butter, eggs, and other luxuries long untasted by us, and not procurable. The anxieties and privations of the siege are now such as to call for faith, hope, and courage. We have them; and are quite willing cheerfully to suffer longer still, if it be thought that prolonged suffering and resistance will save France from humiliation. My ambulance duties have been successful and appreciated.

MEDICAL PREPARATIONS FOR SIEGE AT LYONS.

IN the prospect of siege, Lyons has been divided into four parts, to each of which is assigned a section of the ambulance organisation of the city. Each section comprises a surgeon-in-chief, a surgeon *adjoint*, and a certain number of medical officers, and of assistants taken from among the hospital *internes* and students, one or more apothecaries, and a certain number of squads of infirmiry nurses, selected from men who are not liable to be called on for military duty; viz., Frenchmen from 40 to 60 years of age, with a large number of Swiss and Italians, who have shown much zeal in offering their services. The four chief surgeons are MM. Pétrequin, Bouchacourt, Rollet, and Delore. There is a large supply of necessities; and it is believed that, should it be required, more will be provided.

THE MEDICAL SERVICE OF THE MOBILES.

THE *Lyon Médicale* of the 4th instant contains the text of a circular issued by M. Gambetta to the generals and intendants of divisions and the prefects of departments. It is as follows. At the commencement of the present war, measures were taken to regulate as far as possible the medical service of the Garde Mobile, and to keep in reserve sufficient resources for certain eventualities. These measures were described in a circular dated September 1st, by which the generals of division were authorised to appoint one medical officer to each battalion of the Garde Mobile, and to keep at their homes all men called on to serve who could prove the possession of a degree of doctor in medicine or in pharmacy, or of at least twelve inscriptions. In consequence of the recent decree calling out all the able men aged from 21 to 40, provision must be made for the medical service of the new forces. The following measures are therefore decreed. 1. The generals of division preserve the right of directly nominating one medical officer to each battalion of the National Guard, in conformity with the terms of the circular of September 1st. 2. Every corps mobilised in pursuance of the decree above alluded to, must, before marching, be provided with one medical officer to each battalion or force equivalent to a battalion. 3. The generals of division, in concert with the prefects of departments, will issue direct commissions to the medical officers of the mobilised corps, and will give an account to the minister of war of the nominations made by them. As far as possible, the medical officers should be chosen from the *arrondissement* furnishing the corps. Preference is to be given to doctors in medicine; these failing, the generals of division may nominate *officiers de santé* or medical students having sixteen inscriptions. 4. Applications for medical employment in the mobilised corps must be sent to the generals of division; those addressed to the minister of war will not be answered. 5. The medical officers nominated by the generals will have the rank and grade of *aide-major* of the first class if they possess the diploma of doctor in medicine; and that of *aide-major* of the second class if they are only *officiers de santé* and can only produce sixteen inscriptions. They will receive the pay and allowances corresponding to these ranks. 6. The same classification will be made in the case of future nominations of medical officers to the Garde Mobile; but no modification of grade is to have a retrospective effect. 7. The generals of division and the prefects will take the necessary measures for exempting from mobilisation (a) all doctors of medicine and *officiers de santé*; (b) all students of medicine or pharmacy having at least sixteen inscriptions; (c) all druggists established in business. 8. Students having less than sixteen inscriptions will not be exempted from service. 9. In other respects, the directions given in the circular of September 1st, as to the requisition of medical officers for the service of bodies of troops or of military hospitals, are not interfered with.

ALLEGED INFRACTIONS OF THE GENEVA CONVENTION BY THE PRUSSIANS.

THE *Lyon Médical* complains bitterly of the manner in which the regulations of the Geneva Convention have been set aside by the Germans. It is said that, to a remonstrance made by the staff of the first Lyons ambulance, General Werder replied: "We know the Geneva Convention: but the war which we are making is a special war." General von Treskow is also reported to have refused admission to Belfort to two medical men, alleging that "to succour the sick or wounded in a besieged place was equivalent to a revictualling." The *Lyon Médical* also publishes a letter from a member of the staff of the Vesinet ambulance. He says that the ambulance came within the Prussian lines on September 21st; and, on October 1st, the wounded were removed, and the staff sent as prisoners to Versailles. There they addressed a protest to the Crown Prince, who caused them to be set at liberty and sent back to the ambulance; which, however, had been in the meantime occupied, and the provisions seized. The officers of the ambulance were, after their return, daily visited by a Prussian medical officer with a

patrol; there were still twelve patients whom it had not been possible to remove. One morning they were visited by the Crown Prince, who pointed out that they were very near Mont-Valérien and in a very exposed situation, and offered them safe conducts to go whither they pleased. This they declined, stating that they had been appointed by the minister of war, and could only quit their posts by his order or under violence. On November 4th, they received, through a captain, a message to hold themselves ready for starting. They were informed that they were to go to Metz. In reply to their statement that they were without resources, they were told that they would receive money at Corbeil. On arriving at that place, however, they only got billets for a night's lodging, without food; and they had to give their word of honour that they would not quit the road to Metz. Through the kindness of the inhabitants of the places through which they passed, they were supplied with food. The journey occupied five days, during two of which it was made in carts guarded by a dozen Prussians. On arriving at Metz, they were told by the French surgeon-major that they were not required, and might go where they would; he also gave them a letter to the Prussian medical officer, who, however, would not allow them to depart. They received billets for lodging for two days from the *mairie*, and were most hospitably treated by the inhabitants. After in vain endeavouring to obtain employment or persuade the Germans to allow them to depart, they escaped in the disguise of townsmen. The writer of the letter reached Luxembourg, where he obtained money from the French Consul, and was going to join the Army of the North.

THE Municipal Council of Lyons has allotted a credit of 25,000 francs (£1,000) to the Society for aiding the wounded.

THE order of Chevalier of the Legion of Honour has been conferred, on account of zeal and devotion in the care of the wounded, on M. Bresson, *médecin aide-major* of the first class; and MM. Maury, Robuchon, and Heune, pupils of the military medical school at Strasbourg.

SMALL-POX IN LONDON.

AT a meeting of the Epidemiological Society on Wednesday evening, the President, Dr. SEATON, Inspector of Vaccination to the Privy Council, called attention to the present rapidly extending epidemic of small-pox, in a highly important statement, of which we are enabled to present a full report. There were various parts of the kingdom, especially unions in Yorkshire and Lancashire, in which small-pox had been epidemic during the present year; and the inhabitants had again entered on one of those epidemic visitations of that disease from which the metropolis was never free for more than two years together. Tracing the course of small-pox in London for the last twenty years, he showed that the last epidemic period terminated about the middle of 1868, and that from that time to the middle of the present year the mortality from that disease had been comparatively small. The minimum was reached in the quarter ending Midsummer 1869, for which quarter only 55 deaths were recorded, or fewer than are now occurring in a single week. In the Michaelmas quarter of 1869, the deaths were but 62; in the Christmas quarter, they were 87; in the first quarter of 1870, they were 99; in the second, 118; in the third, 157, or an average of 12 a week. In the first five weeks of the present quarter, the weekly average was 20; in the next three weeks, 42; and in the last two weeks, 60. There had, in fact, in ten weeks of the quarter, been 348 deaths registered. Though the epidemic was already diffused over a great part of London, and daily becoming more and more diffused, it was in the eastern districts that, as on former occasions, it had chiefly prevailed; and the circumstances under which it had been so fatal in them were in every respect the same as those in which it had on former occasions been fatal—gross and unlawful neglect of vaccination, and, in many of the adults who had suffered, the imperfect performance of vaccination, which had not been remedied by a subsequent revaccination.

The President remarked that if, at the time when the present Vaccination Act should, according to its requirements, have come into full operation—i. e., in July 1868—all had been done which should have been done, if two precious years of comparative immunity from small-pox had not been to a great extent thrown away, and if the metropolitan Boards generally had only taken from the first the course which a few of them really did take to administer properly the provisions of the law, London would not have been in the state of unpreparedness for the present epidemic in which a large proportion of it is now. He said that the successful working of the Act depended on each local authority having a proper inspector to see, as his regular and constant duty, that the children whose births are registered have the certificate of successful vaccination in due time recorded; and to see instantly, on the occurrence of any case of small-pox, that the children and others in the