

EXPERIENCES OF UNIT K. AT VIENNA.

A most interesting paper was read by Miss Lyda W. Anderson, R.N., at the eleventh annual meeting of the American Red Cross at Washington, which in a condensed form is published in *The American Journal of Nursing*, on the "Experiences of Unit K. at Vienna, Austria," from which we publish the following extracts.

AN AMERICAN RED CROSS NURSE IN AUSTRIA.

A year's work as a Red Cross nurse in Europe during its grim and tremendous war had its hardships, its problems, its disappointments, but no less its gratifications, in incomparably interesting experience, and compensations, likely to be realized more in the future than just now.

The hospitals in Vienna reserved for military use were of two kinds, those under the Kaiser's special patronage, *Kaiserliche und Konigliche Reserve Spital* and those managed by hospital associations, *Vereine Spital*. Our hospital was known as the *K. u. K. Reserve Spital No. 8* and as the American Mission. . . . The coming in of the transports gave us the most strenuous work. The railroad stations where the wounded were first received were all under military organization.

VOLUNTEER WORKERS.

A corps of volunteer Red Cross workers were in service night and day at these stations; these workers were investigated and accepted at the Red Cross headquarters, upon application. Some had received a six weeks' course in first aid, but those without any special training were received as well. Might I suggest that a branch of Red Cross relief work needing most careful, rather special organization is the body of volunteer untrained workers? Transports of from one hundred to one thousand wounded would arrive at one station during the night, the patients were fed, urgent needs looked after, classified according to seriousness of condition, and distributed according to this classification to the various hospitals of the city. Transports for our hospital were announced three or four hours before. The gymnasium of the school, situated on the ground floor and opening out into the court, was used as a receiving room. From thirty to one hundred men were received at one time. They were first given food: hot soup, hot cereal, bread, a small glass of cognac, and the indispensable cigarette. Thousands of cigarettes were consumed daily and such a comfort as these were to the soldier! They were not the injurious cigarettes we preach against, but were prepared from a mild tobacco by the workers in the hospital. Then the cleaning process began. The head was first shaven; soldiers doing their military service on duty at the hospital attended to the undressing. The clothing was immediately dropped into a sack ready for sterilization; men doing this work were protected by linen suits completely covering the body, head and all, similar to a diver's garb.

TREATMENT OF THE WOUNDED.

The wounded were afterwards smeared with a disinfecting salve, robed in a sheet and sent to the next room which had been equipped for bathing, and the scrubbing they received here they will long remember, neither will the nurses forget it soon. Many had not had their clothes off for six, seven and eight months or even had their faces washed in this time. Frozen feet were one of the most lamentable conditions we had to meet. During the campaign in Galicia last winter few escaped and it almost always meant amputation, conditions were so advanced. After the bath they were registered, their wounds dressed and they were put to bed. We had good, comfortable beds supplied with hair mattresses, linen and warm blankets. To this comfort the poor man succumbed, fell asleep and, unless he had some pain, slept incessantly the first few days in the hospital from sheer exhaustion. To be free from the vermin, with which they were almost always infested to a greater or less degree (they had often rubbed their bodies to a bleeding point) was in itself the greatest relief. The warm furry garments on the dead bodies of the Russian soldiers found on the field were a temptation to the Austrian marching in the cold; but he utilized these to his intense regret, they were invariably alive with vermin. Thousands of crates of germicidal salve, put up in individual tin boxes, were sent from Vienna to the trenches and soldiers begged more for these than for clothes.

AUSTRIAN SOLDIERS AS PATIENTS.

Our hospital accommodated three hundred and fifty patients and was almost always fully occupied. The Austrian soldier was a most appreciative, courteous, obedient patient, far superior to the same class of patients in our own public hospitals. The American nurse will never forget this "game" crowd of men, nor question for a moment if it was worth her while to go over to nurse them when she thinks of their heroism, and remembers their sincere, tear-compelling words of gratitude for her services. The saddest time in our hospital was when these men marched out in their crumpled uniforms, a little weak and unsteady, but "fit" for further field service according to the hospital surgeon, brave and uncomplaining. The Austrian soldier accepts the war submissively, as the inevitable, never questioning for what he is fighting, or whether the sacrifice of his precious life is adding to the glory of his country or is fulfilling anything of value to the world. Seeing troop after troop of the best men of the country, as fine as the world has to offer, talented, men of great minds, marching out daily, few to return, and these few maimed and useless citizens, one wondered that it did not stir anarchistic feelings. Nursing the men back to their normal life of usefulness would have given one a joyful satisfaction, but to know that they were made well in order to go out and possibly be destroyed the first day, and the uselessness of it all, one could not permit oneself to think about!

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