

LES DAMES AMERICAINES.

I said good-bye to the Unit at Reims with much regret, after having refused an attractive invitation to join Miss Cunninghame and Miss Ivy Edsell, who were going to help in the ingathering of the grape harvest for some weeks. I should have worked from sunrise to sunset, and earned my board and lodging and six francs a day, but time did not permit, so I took train for Soissons, and incidentally spent some interesting hours at Laon where, as the funicular railway has been destroyed, I climbed up 1,000 steps from the station to the town, but the beautiful Cathedral and the glorious view were ample reward.

Laon has not suffered much materially, but I was told it suffered considerably morally from the German occupation. I may mention, in passing, as evidence of the widespread appreciation of first-class products advertised in the BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING, that I saw Fallière's Phosphatine at Laon, and Nestlé's Milk at Verdun; the latter must have been a great asset in that sorely tried city at the time of the bombardment.

It was my exceeding good fortune on leaving Reims to spend two unforgettable days with the American Units at Soissons and Vic-sur-Aisne, and to see something of their work for the community in these towns and the surrounding countryside. These units are working in connection with the 'Comité Américain pour les Régions Dévastées' which has its American Headquarters in New York and its French Headquarters at 15, Boulevard Lannes, Paris. They are known for short as "The Cards," presumably because they have the letters C.A.R.D. embroidered on their service jackets of *horizon bleu*. The President and Commissioner in France is Mrs. A. M. Dike, and the Vice-President, Miss Anne Morgan, both of whom have been awarded the "Croix de Guerre" with palm, and other decorations, for their fine work.

The nursing work at Vic-sur-Aisne, Coucy-le-Chateau and the surrounding district is under the charge of Mrs. Breckinridge, and at Soissons of Miss Evelyn T. Walker, Associate-Directors of Child Hygiene and Public Health Nursing. The nursing staff at Soissons also includes Miss Cave (English), Miss McIntyre (American), Mlles. Mertillo, Monod, Abram, Dumon, Ahne, all graduates of the Maison de Santé Protestante, Bordeaux, and Mlles. Filhol and Braley, pupils of the same school, who are taking a course in public health work. Dr. Anna Hamilton is to be congratulated on the credit her pupils are proving to her careful and liberal training. Miss Walker writes in her official report, "Their work is excellent, and we can only look forward to the time when France will have many schools graduating nurses of this type." Again she reports that the work of her department "continues to grow apace, the main drawback to its development

being that we are not able to get a sufficient number of the right kind of nurses. On all sides one sees the needs and possibilities of further progress, and the temptation to 'spread ourselves too thin' in our efforts to meet the demands is very real."

The aims of the American Committee and its workers as they presented themselves to me on a brief visit are:—

1. To re-vitalise the people who have suffered so cruelly, and to re-establish them in their old surroundings.

2. To re-vitalise the land and bring it under cultivation.

3. To bring help, hope and happiness to the repatriated, especially to the children ground down under the iron heel of German oppression.

4. To teach the laws of Hygiene, and to organise Public Health Nursing.

5. To save the mothers and babies. It seems almost a passion both with Mrs. Breckinridge and Miss Walker to safeguard infant life, and neither would leave any stone unturned to help the babies of France. "The Right of Life to Health" is the keynote of their work, as it was with that great social reformer, Charles Kingsley.

The task of the American Committee is an immense one, but they are tackling it with a skill, sympathy, and thoroughness that commands one's unbounded admiration, beginning with a "personal and intensive study of each family as it returned, with special reference to its status before the war." This done the help given is of a quality to enable the repatriates to settle down into quarters equipped with all essentials for the making of a home.

On my arrival at Soissons, I found Miss E. T. Walker kindly waiting for me at the station, and after a quick run to Headquarters, an introduction to its charming hostess, Mme. de la Fallière, and other members of the group, we started off for Crouy, and were just in time to see the "Goutte de Lait" and the Baby Clinic there.

This Babies' Clinic and dispensary is at the end of the *foyer*; the doctor in charge of the "Goutte de Lait" at Soissons was so pleased with the result of the work that he raised funds to start a "Goutte de Lait and Babies' Clinic," at Crouy on the condition that he could have the help of a nurse from the C.A.R.D.S. The central hall of the *foyer* is used for re-unions, cinemas, concerts, &c., for both children and adults—in short, as a centre of village life.

What is a *foyer*? Literally a hearth, a place of warmth and cheerfulness round which to gather. Just as *foyers des soldats* were established during the war, so now it is the aim of the American Committee to establish them in as many villages as possible as the centre of village life. So the *marraine*, or godmother, of the village goes out into the countryside once with the nurse, and the following week alone, and thus gets into touch with the people, and so the good news is spread. Besides this, there are travelling cinemas with

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