LES DAMES AMERICAINES.

(*Concluded from page* 344.)

We left Coucy immediately after tea, and on our way to Vic-sur-Aisne Mrs. Breckinridge paid some visits to patients. One was to an expectant mother who had been treated for albuminuria. "There are occasions when life is worth living," she remarked. "That woman's urine, when she first got into touch with us, was nearly solid with albumen. Now, with dieting and treatment it has quite cleared up, and she will probably have quite a normal confinement."

That points a moral to the public:—Never think because a doctor, nurse, or midwife has few abnormal cases that his, or her, skill is the less. It is probably because of their skill that the case is normal. Take, for instance, the after-treatment of an operation case 35 years ago and at the present time.

Then there was the daily dressing under the carbolic spray, the preparation and use of elaborate dressings, involving the expenditure of much time by the nurses concerned, much apprehension, and perhaps suffering, or at least discomfort, on the part of the patient, much awe and admiration, on the part of relatives, of the elaborate ritual.

Now there are none of these things. Once an operation is performed the dressing frequently remains untouched until it is time for the surgeon to remove the stitches, and some people are inclined to think that everything is so simple "anybody could be a nurse." But the altered ritual is the result of careful preparation beforehand, and perfection of technique. The knowledge and skill of all concerned in the treatment and care of an operation case is greater, not less, than 35 years ago.

So it is with midwifery. The skill of doctor, nurse, or midwife who successfully pulls a patient through a severe attack of eclampsia is indisputable—the patient lowes them her life; but, like a combatant severely wounded in war, she probably carries the mark of the battle for life to her dying day, in more or less serious disablement or disability.

The reverse of the picture is when, by keeping careful watch over the expectant mother, the albuminuria which, at the time of the confinement, would cause the eclampsia so dangerous to both mother and child, is detected, treated and cleared up, and a normal confinement follows. Only the experts know the danger that has been averted, but for them, the knowledge that in all probability the life of the mother of a family has been saved to care for its needs makes life worth living indeed.

As we sped along the long level roads there were the unmistakable scars of war on the beautiful countryside; here were lying about what appeared to be glorified carriers for wine bottles, but which were really the frames in which half-a-dozen shells were carried on to the battlefield; there we passed through a village which had been occupied by the Germans, and I heard a grim story of the methods of terrorism exercised to which we are all well accustomed. When they took possession they issued an order that all the men were to report themselves. Some old men and boys at work in the fields either did not hear of it or did not heed it. They were all rounded up, brought into the village, placed against a wall and shot. Again, bridges had been destroyed, and as we approached Vic ("the nicest little town in Europe") we passed a factory completely gutted. When I commented on this destruction, Mrs. Breckinridge told me that most of the bridges had been destroyed, but one at Vic was a "shining exception." A fuse had been laid by the Germans, and it would have shared the fate of the rest, but the Vicomte de Reisit, who comes of a line which has inhabited the Chateau since the days of Charlemagne, and the Mayor of Vic, cut the fuse and averted the disaster. "It was a very brave thing to do, because if the Germans had discovered it before they left they would have been hanged out of hand." Happily no such tragedy happened, and later both Vicomte and Mayor received the Croix de Guerre in recognition of their brave services.

Vic is a charming little town, and the headquarters of the "Cards" a most home-like house, with an outlook on variegated shrubs, copper beeches and flowers, which make a picture to be remembered. And surely, never were guests given a more delightful welcome than that extended by the Directrice, Miss Margaret Parsons, with a warmth and charm peculiarly her own. One can imagine what the comforting inspiration of such a personality must be to the *répatries* in these devastated districts when they are met with the kindness and helpfulness of Miss Parsons and her unit.

The large party which had been scattered over the countryside returned to dinner, a very merry meal, as they interchanged the news and adventures of the day. Then there was an hour or two over a grateful fire with Miss Parsons and Mrs. Breckinridge, when I heard more of their work, their hopes, their plans.

A word must be said about the composition of the unit, which differed from the British one in including teachers, for a very important part of the work of the "Cards" is educational. It seemed to me an ideal arrangement. Most important is it that the children should recover as far as possible "the years that the locusts have eaten," though, as the Committee state in their report, "no amount of writing could describe these effects. We had in our dispensary at Blérancourt children who had seen their mother and sister killed before their eyes by a bomb dropped from a German plane: children with skin disease due to malnutrition from practical starvation; children with curvature of the spine, due to the fact that the Germans made them work in the fields and abandoned trenches for over three years." Think of the weight of misery pressing on young lives represented by that brief record, and then come with Miss Clarke to the school at Montigny. First, to quote from the report: "Admirable as the French school system is, we

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