HOSPITAL NOTES.

Memoir

Abby Hopper Gibbons, a Quakeress, living in New York City,- went in November 1861 to Washington with her daughter, as a volunteer nurse.

Visits and describes the hospitals in and around Washington. Notices particularly camp fever, and the need that there was of better nursing. Finds that stockings are lacking. No personal notes of interest, save on Dr. Mary Walker: "A very little woman in bloomer costume, presides over the Indiana hospital; she is a character; she has a keen eye and cheerful manner; the patients believe in her."

In December visited the patients at Falls Church.

In January they went to Winchester, where they remained until Banks was driven out from Strasburg.

They were transferred in July, 1862, to Point Lookout; were much troubled here by the inhumanity of the soldiers to the contrabands who flooded their camp and were often pursued by their masters. Did a great deal to improve the condition of the contrabands, and succeeded in making their own positions secure. Had great difficulty with the red tape of the officers. One of the officers, a German, allowed nothing to be done, if it was not "according to the army regulations." Mrs. Gibbons cites a case: Man inquired what did these men die of; surgeon tried to explain, but the steward responded "No, no; he must die according to the regulations; you must make it rheumatism, typhoid fever or some definite thing that is according to regulation."

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Afterward went to City Point, from there was transferred in August 1864 to Beverly, N. J., where she remained until close of the war.

One interesting point to be gathered from her letters and journal is the way a warning of a coming battle affected hospital service. For days before the battle was expected, wounded along the Potomac and in Washington would be hurried on to cars and sent northward to make room for the wounded that were expected; thus the transferring of wounded became a sign all along the route of a coming conflict.

Note also the intolerance of Mrs. Gibbons for the Sisters as nurses, and her dislike of Christian Commission

The convalescent soldiers were obliged to go to their dining-room in line "according to the regulations." Some were so weak that they would sit on the floor unable to wait until their places were ready.

Returning to duty after this interruption, Mrs. Gibbons went in September to Point Lookout. In May she was transferred to Potomac hospitals; was at Belle Plain when the first of Grant's wounded came in. Speaks of seeing from the boat where she landed, a train of ambulances two and a half miles long winding down through a gap in the hills. Says that on the 16th, at 5 o'clock, not a wounded man was there, but before the nurses had gone to bed they had fed 3,000.

At Fredericksburg, nearly every house in town was taken for the wounded. Went up to Washington on platform cars without railing or cover; had to wait in the broiling sun for hours. This was what the wounded were put upon.

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Vie, July 23, 95.

After Battle of Manassas 2, Bull Run (2) men brought up to A. S. yard full before they could be registered and cared for - many died in yard. Brought to wharf and many were so mutilated they feared to put them in ambulance, and were put on stretchers.

Kearney killed at Chantilla when wounded - died under a tree and wanted Father.

Father was field division surgeon in Kearney's division.

Piled up arms and legs at 1st Bull Run like cord wood.

Father had just been ordered in from the front by Pres. Lincoln to organize and build A. S. when Kearney was wounded.

Mrs. Nellie White Dowling, Melrose, Mass., first nurse - was at Ward A.

Flag was on a requisition (?) and had a flag raising, ask Curtiss.

Vie had song service twice a week (Tuesday and Friday between 7 and 9 ?) in Convalescent Ward ("H"?) all would come in that could get out of bed - would sing all old songs and end with "Star Spangled Banner". All join - piano in one ward - organ in other - Vie used as an extra nurse and if she staid late a special detail was sent home with her. Men so benefitted by these musicales would come up with tears and thank her. Ward K was cleared and hung with flags not an unpainted board was visible, rostrum was built one side of center near middle door as room was very long and narrow.

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Father sang Lord Lovell, Vie and Mrs. Trenham sang Hear me, Norma, Sep sang Casta Diva, also closed with Sep, in solo of Star Spangled Banner with string band and piano for accompaniment with all audience in chorus - Vie thinks there was a request for no flowers, money to be given to the Hospital Sinking Fund.

Special diet kitchen was Father's pride and Mr. Lincoln to help build it when it was started he was invited to come down to see first issue of rations was heralded by inviting Pres. down to see it he looked so proud.

Between wards was a space for air and light, fine grass plat and flower beds with labor of convalescents - no expense to govt.- when laying them out Mr. Lincoln visited A. S. twice every week without fail.

"Say Bliss have to have some flower seeds."

Will send some over from Agricultural." and they were sent on his personal order some came up beautifully but in one the seeds came up tomatoes, cucumbers and artichokes. Father took Pres. personally to see his flowers when he laughed heartily. They let them grow and every vegetable was eaten - these things more funny because of everything being so sad and full of suffering.

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HOSPITAL NOTES:

In driving through the Soldiers' Home grounds with Mrs. Delano, she describes to me the way in which the hills and valleys there were dotted with white hospital tents during the war. Entering by the 7th street gate and driving towards the cottage which the President occupied, one saw to his right on the rolling hillside, scores of these little tents. In entering by the First street gate one passed between rows of them. The tents were placed close to the road, so as to get all the air,- the grounds being more thickly wooded then than they are now.

Mrs. Delano tells me that she has frequently looked from her carriage on the beds of the wounded soldiers.

The stables and outbuildings of the Corcoran summer home, were also used as hospitals. She does not remember that there were any barracks on the grounds. Tells me that she has seen Mr. Lincoln more frequently at the second of the large houses on the left as you approach the cottage, than in the cottage. That here he often stood by the door talking or sat with his feet on the balustrade leaning back. Speaks of Owen Lovejoy going there frequently and persuading the President to walk with him through the more retired portions of the grounds. Mr. Lovejoy feeling that Mr. Lincoln was getting too little outdoor life.

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NOTES:

Ward A, of the Armory Square Hospital, opened on June 2, 1862, with 17 patients. The general hospital opened on July 7, 1862, and closed October, 1865. Wards A to K, were wooden barracks; L to O, were tents. The Armory building was used for officers. Each ward contained 50 beds. In rough estimate, Armory Square accommodated something over 1300 patients. 1350 bedticks were supposed necessary.

There are five army hospitals in Washington, two in Georgetown one in Alexandria and one at Claremont, near the latter place on the road to Fairfax Court House. Of those in Washington one is at the old Infirmary Building near the City Hall, a central situation. Some two hundred patients are now under treatment, with reasonable promision for their comfort. This hospital is in charge of the Sisters of Mercy

The C. Street Hospital consists of two or three dwelling houses and is devoted exclusively to regulars, both sick and wounded.

The Columbia College Hospital is on Fourteenth Street, Meridian Hill, a large building well fitted up. It, in connection with various hospital tents in the adjacent grounds, will accommodate some 500 patients. About 180 are now under its care.

The fourth hospital is devoted to contagious diseases and now shelters forty or more patients suffering from the smallpox measles, scarlet fever, etc. The physicians object to having small pox cases mixed with others and the building will probably be wholly given up to victims of that disease, of which there are fortunately but few.

The other hospital within the city proper has just been opened It is favorably located on E. St. and will well accommodate a large number of patients.

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