

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE NEW HAMPSHIRE MEMORIAL HOSPITAL FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

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The first hospital for women and children in New Hampshire is the one established in Concord in 1896 under the auspices of the Woman's Hospital Aid association. It owes its founding and success to Dr. Julia Wallace-Russell of Concord, the dean of the women's medical profession in New Hampshire. The first consideration given to the subject grew out of the lack of facilities for the treatment, in hospitals in New Hampshire, of indigent women and children who wished to be under the care of women physicians. If one of Dr. Russell's patients were taken to the hospital here or elsewhere in the state the case had to be surrendered to the regularly attending physicians, unless the patient had means to pay for special medical attendance. The nearest woman's hospital was at Boston. The need of such a public institution was constantly brought home to Dr. Russell in her practice, which reached all parts of the state, but it seemed an almost impossible task when first considered. The earliest proposition looking to this end was that a plea be made to raise funds to aid the needy in our own state hospitals; that is, to have a fund to pay their board so that they could have attendance by their own sex. Dr. Russell reluctantly consented to adopt the chain-letter plan, and in this way to learn the sentiment of the women. One of the recipients of this chain letter, a New Hampshire woman residing in another state, was moved to learn more of the undertaking from Dr. Wallace-Russell. The outcome of that visit was a proposition for immediate incorporation, with a view to a bequest which this philanthropic woman promised to make. This was early in September, 1895, and on the 12th of that month "The Woman's Hospital Aid Association" was incorporated under the general laws of New Hampshire, with Mrs. Louisa F. Richards of Newport, Miss Mary Ann Downing of Concord, Mrs. Caroline R. Thyng of Laconia, Dr. Ellen A. Wallace of Manchester, and Dr. Julia Wallace-Russell of Concord as incorporators.

The object of the association as set forth in its articles of incorporation is "To establish and maintain hospitals and homes and otherwise aid and assist worthy and dependent women and children who

wish to be under the care of women physicians and attendants." Steps were at once taken to raise funds for the founding of such a hospital in Concord. Such immediate success attended the efforts of the promoters that within a year the trustees felt justified in erecting or purchasing such a building. Among those interested in the enterprise was Mrs. Vasta M. Abbott, residing at No. 66 South street, who contemplated surrendering her home for this purpose and donating it to the association. Before the papers could be made, she was stricken with a fatal illness and her benevolent design was not carried out. The location, however, was considered so desirable by the trustees that they purchased the estate September 23, 1896, at an expense of seven thousand dollars. Funds in the treasury enabled them to pay in cash five thousand dollars, and they gave a mortgage for the remainder of the purchase price. Some immediate changes had to be made in the house; but with friends contributing to the furnishing of it, it was ready for occupancy October 10, 1896, and on that day the first patient was admitted. The hospital was comfortably filled from almost the start, and January 1, 1897, all the beds were occupied. Applications continued to increase until it was seen that the building must be enlarged. A meeting of the trustees was called for May 10, 1897, to see what action must be taken to make the hospital more commodious and more convenient. Even thus early, the Woman's Hospital Aid association had paid all bills for repairs and furnishing. At the same time, aid had not been refused to any who sought relief in the institution,—a marvelous record for a hospital without endowment. It was voted to enlarge the building, and the work of remodeling was begun the last of May. Over nine thousand dollars were thus expended, and by August the hospital was again reopened for patients.

The income of the hospital, aside from the charges collected of its paying patients, is derived from general contributions, specific gifts and bequests, the payments for membership in the association and the income from such gifts and bequests as are donated to specific funds. The payment of one hundred dollars constitutes a patron member, of whom there are eleven; twenty-five dollars, a life member, of whom there are forty-two; ten dollars, a memorial member, of whom there are twenty-eight; and the payment of one dollar annually, an annual member, of whom there are one hundred.

The hospital had been in operation six years on the first day of



N. H. Memorial Hospital for Women and Children.

September, 1902, and during that period had cared for five hundred and forty-two different patients. They have come mainly from all parts of New Hampshire, though some have been received from other New England states.

A training-school for nurses was started October 1, 1897, and is under the instruction of Miss Esther Dart. The course is two years, and embraces personal instruction and lectures by Concord physicians. There have been eight graduates of the school.

This account would not be complete without a brief reference to Dr. Julia Wallace-Russell. It is nearly a quarter of a century since she opened her office in Concord. She was one of the first women physicians in New Hampshire, and one of the first two to be admitted to the New Hampshire Medical society. Her coming was at the solicitation of the late Dr. Albert H. Crosby, and she was personally welcomed to the profession by Dr. Granville P. Conn. It was with many misgivings that she settled in her native state, but in her long, successful career she has received most courteous treatment from physicians of the other sex. She has been visiting physician at both the Margaret Pillsbury hospital and the state hospital, and at both institutions she has delivered annual courses of lectures before the nurses' training-school. If she had done nothing more than to found the woman's hospital, her coming would have been a welcome addition to the citizenship of Concord, but her private benefactions have kept pace with her public work, and she has given cheer to many a household. Her successful practice and teachings for the benefit of her sex have placed her as a leader among the medical profession.