

CHAPTER XXV.

THE MARGARET PILLSBURY GENERAL HOSPITAL.

JAMES O. LYFORD.

To the zeal and energy of Dr. Shadrach C. Morrill is due the establishment of the first hospital of Concord, which was the first general hospital of the state. He went among his friends and secured pledges of money before active steps were taken to organize the hospital association, and when the nucleus of a sufficient sum had been promised, the first meeting was called of citizens interested in the subject. This was held July 3, 1884; and at a subsequent meeting the following associates were organized under the general laws:

Shadrach C. Morrill, Samuel C. Eastman, Granville P. Conn, Parsons B. Cogswell, Charles R. Walker, John A. White, Franklin Low, Francis L. Abbot, Mrs. Mary Stearns, Henry Bedinger, George Cook, Oliver Pillsbury, Joseph C. A. Hill, Julia Wallace-Russell, Waldo A. Russell, William Abbott, Rufus P. Staniels, Jesse P. Bancroft, Joseph B. Walker, and Henry J. Crippen.

These associates were known as the Hospital association, and they chose the following officers and trustees: President, Oliver Pillsbury; clerk, Francis L. Abbot; treasurer, William F. Thayer; trustees, for one year, Henry J. Crippen, Parsons B. Cogswell, Mrs. Elizabeth P. Schütz; for two years, John A. White, Joseph C. A. Hill, Mrs. Frances C. Stevens; for three years, Samuel C. Eastman, Mrs. Mary Stearns, Mrs. Lydia F. Lund.

A committee was appointed to select a suitable location. This committee fixed upon the Bowers house, situated at the corner of Allison and Turnpike streets, and such location was ratified by the trustees. A lease of the premises was taken for the term of two years from October 1, 1884, with an option of buying at any time during the lease for the sum of six thousand dollars. Necessary alterations were made, and on October 20 the hospital was opened. Before the first report of the hospital, January 27, 1885, nine patients were admitted for treatment, of which number four were surgical cases. The permanent employees of the hospital at this date were the matron, a nurse, and one domestic. The contributions up to the time of the first report were three thousand ninety dollars and seventy-four cents, nearly all of which were in response to the

personal appeals of Dr. Morrill. The first medical staff was organized from among the physicians interested in the project, as follows:

Attending physicians: Granville P. Conn, Moses W. Russell, Ferdinand A. Stillings, Charles R. Walker, Shadrach C. Morrill, Albert H. Crosby.

Assistants: George Cook, Herbert C. Cummings, Dennis E. Sullivan, Henry M. French, Albion P. Chesley, Thomas Hiland.

Consulting physicians: Jesse P. Bancroft, William G. Carter, Charles P. Gage, Edward E. Graves, Julia Wallace-Russell.

The services of the medical staff have from the first been gratuitous, and it is not too much to say that no part of their professional work has been more conscientiously performed. The calendar year is divided into quarters, to each of which is assigned a surgeon and a physician, whose duty it is to visit the hospital daily. The associate staff has since been enlarged by the appointment of physicians from no less than twenty towns of the state whose nearest hospital facilities are the capital of the state. The trustees also have a visiting committee, whose term of service is two months for each member.

During the first full year of the hospital, from January, 1885, to January, 1886, the city government made an appropriation for the support of two free beds. This appropriation was nine hundred dollars, which was continued for the following year, and then increased to one thousand two hundred dollars, to be continued at that sum until 1892, when it was further increased to two thousand dollars, which has been the annual appropriation since.

The first endowments of the hospital were those of Benjamin F. Caldwell, Mrs. Jane A. Eames, and Mrs. Julia A. Witcher; and subsequent gifts and bequests by Mrs. Pillsbury and others have increased the permanent funds to sixty-two thousand seven hundred and eight dollars and thirty-four cents. Donation parties were started in October, 1885, and have continued since that time; and the annual gifts have been of money, clothing, household articles, and provisions. A large assistance is given to the hospital each year through these donations in which the entire community shows an active interest. The first gifts of surgical instruments and hospital apparatus were made by Dr. Albert H. Crosby, Dr. Hiram B. Tebbetts, Dr. Moses W. Russell, Dr. Sargent by his daughter, and Mrs. Frances K. Lane, the latter in memory of her husband, Dr. Charles I. Lane.

For several years John H. Lamprey freely supplied the hospital with vegetables, and Edward J. Knee gave his services every Sunday to indigent patients in need of tonsorial work.

Among the most praiseworthy of the endowments of the hospital is that of the children's free bed. This was suggested by Mrs. Frances C. Stevens, one of the trustees, and has grown by the self-denying gifts of children and their friends, and collections taken in Sunday-schools, until three thousand four hundred seventy-four dollars and sixteen cents of the necessary five thousand dollars have been obtained.

It was evident from the start that the hospital must find a permanent location, and an appeal was made early in 1885 for funds with which to buy the land and building then occupied. Not meeting with immediate response, the trustees in October, 1886,—the lease having expired,—took the necessary risk and bought the property, giving their personal note for the purchase. Extensive alterations and repairs were necessary, and these were undertaken in confidence that the public spirit of the people of Concord would make good the outlay of the trustees. For seven years it was a hard struggle to maintain the hospital, for its excellent work taxed its capacity, and constant appeals had to be made to the liberality of our citizens. Often the trustees incurred obligations with no surety that funds would be available to meet them, but they never wavered in faith that the hospital had come to stay and expand in its sphere of beneficence.

The year 1890 opened with a most gratifying announcement to the citizens of Concord. At that time the hospital had cost twelve thousand dollars, of which seven thousand dollars had been paid from contributions, leaving a debt of five thousand dollars. There was necessity for immediate enlargement, and the trustees were considering the question of a new site and new buildings. The problem was solved by a former resident of Concord, George A. Pillsbury of Minneapolis. The history of his beneficence is this:

Mr. Pillsbury was on a visit to the state of his birth. Fortune had smiled upon him, and he determined to administer in part upon his own estate. To Sutton, his birthplace, he had given a monument to commemorate its heroic dead in the war between the states. To Warner, the town of his early manhood, he had given a public library building, and he came to Concord, for many years his home, to bestow upon her some benefaction. He had in mind a most worthy charity, and his intentions were confided to some of his Concord friends. Among these was the late John M. Hill, who had become interested in the hospital through a patient of Dr. Ferdinand A. Stillings, who had been there for treatment, and whom Mr. Hill frequently visited. It was Mr. Hill's statement of Concord's needs and the confidence Mr. Pillsbury had in him that led the latter after full correspondence with Dr. Conn to change the object of his benefi-

cence. It was after the details had been worked out with Dr. Conn that Mr. Pillsbury made public his generous intentions.

The site for the new building was selected by Mr. Pillsbury, and the plans were made under his direction after consultation with the trustees. Mr. Pillsbury's generosity grew with his consideration of the project, and the building when completed had cost nearly double his original intent. Ground was broken in September, 1890, and the building was completed and furnished for occupancy December 15, 1891, when the transfer of patients thereto was made. It was pronounced when completed the "best hospital building of its size in



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New England." The furnishings were the undertaking of the citizens of Concord; and these and subsequent additions are the fruits of their contributions.

The dedication occurred on Monday afternoon, October 5, 1891, Samuel C. Eastman, president of the Hospital association, presiding. The presentation of the deed and keys of the building was made by Mr. Pillsbury in behalf of himself and his wife, after whom the hospital was named, to which response was made by Mr. Eastman. Speeches were made by Mayor Clapp, Governor Tuttle, U. S. Senator William E. Chandler, and Dr. Granville P. Conn. In the evening a reception and banquet were given to Mr. and Mrs. Pillsbury by the citizens of Concord, at the Eagle Hotel. For more than an hour a

line of representative men and women surged through the parlors of the hotel to pay their respects to the benefactors of the city. At the banquet grace was said by the Very Reverend John E. Barry, and at the post-prandial exercises Dr. Ferdinand A. Stillings acted as toastmaster. Responses to toasts were made by Governor Tuttle, Dr. Shadrach C. Morrill, John M. Hill, Joseph C. A. Hill, Reverend Daniel C. Roberts, Dr. Charles R. Walker, and Henry J. Crippen.

The new hospital has been a stimulus to the interest of our citizens in its beneficent work. Constant improvements have been made, the corps of attendants has been enlarged, and the extent of its usefulness increased. It has prompted Concord physicians to adopt for its use the latest appliances for the alleviation of the sick and the latest methods of surgical treatment. Dr. Ferdinand A. Stillings spent a winter in Philadelphia studying the details of aseptic surgical work, and on his return supplied the hospital with the necessary materials and instituted drills among the nurses to familiarize them with aseptic work. At the Concord hospital the first successful abdominal operation, with perfect aseptic detail, ever performed in the state, was done by Dr. Stillings. Previous to this, practically all abdominal cases were sent to Lowell or Boston for treatment, or surgeons were called from those places or more distant points to perform such operations. Patients now come from all parts of the state to the Concord hospital for surgical treatment.

An incident of recent occurrence, showing the interest of the people of Concord in the hospital, is worth relating. The charitable work of the hospital has been a great tax upon its resources. Compulsory payments have not been exacted of any of its indigent patients, and at times the expenses have exceeded the income. At the close of the year 1899 the trustees found themselves with a debt of two thousand dollars incurred in a former year. Relief from this debt was essential to progressive work. Among suggestions made for raising funds was that of holding a charity ball. This met with favor, and the first endeavor to its financial success was the offer of the city hackmen to give their services. This example became contagious, and the actual expense of the ball was merely nominal. A check came from Mrs. Margaret S. Pillsbury for five hundred dollars toward the enterprise. The ball was held on February 20, 1900, and was a great social as well as financial success. The profits were over one thousand seven hundred dollars,—including Mrs. Pillsbury's gift,—and the balance of the debt was paid by the voluntary contributions of citizens.

In 1889 a training-school for nurses was established, with Miss Harriet Sutherland as superintendent,—an adjunct to the hospital most serviceable to the community and highly appreciated by our people.

The number of patients admitted to the hospital from its opening, October 20, 1884, to the close of the year 1902, is three thousand two hundred and twenty-five, of whom two thousand nine hundred and eighteen have been discharged, two hundred and eighty-five have died, and twenty-two remain. Of the deaths that have occurred at the hospital, nearly eighty per cent. have been from chronic diseases and injuries requiring surgical treatment,—phthisis or consumption, taking the lead in chronic disease, and railway accidents causing most of the deaths by reason of casualty. Many cases of railway injuries are brought here because Concord is a railway center.

Of all its public institutions the city has reason to be proud of its hospital and its work. What it has done and is doing are sufficient reasons for continued liberality and bequests for its benefit.