

BARTON (CLARA)

An abstract of the
paper presented by x + x +
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The paper which we publish in part to-day evinces a diligent historical research, an alert, vigorous, intelligence, and an organizing faculty rare among superior men. The whole paper would richly repay the widest publication and perusal, but we are informed that it is already promised for use as a lecture, and we content ourselves with

An Abstract of the Paper Presented by
MISS CLARA BARTON

ON
"International Relief in War."

When the official invitation was given eight months ago, to prepare this paper the world slumbered in unwanted peace. For a scientific and philanthropic association devoted to social science to have then been bused with thoughts of "International Relief in war," now seems to clothe that association with the mantle of wise and prophetic foresight, for the same lightning flash that told the terrible news of the bombardment of Alexandria told us also that above the fire and the smoke of battle, above the wounded and the slain, floated out full and clear the brave, peaceful Samaritan folds of the flag of the Red Cross of Geneva, and as every newspaper in the land reiterated the fact, from many hearts went out a sigh of relief and a benediction on those who organized this great mitigation of the horrors of war. We all learned at that moment that no step towards the right can be premature, and that it is possible for the wisest even, to build better than he knows.

Relief of any kind in war to wounded or prisoners seems not to have anciently occupied the serious attention of nations or individuals, and although the whole written history of mankind is filled with the slaughter of victims; the sacking and burning of towns, the famine and pestilence of sieges, the torture, degradation and enslavement of captives; little attention has been given to amelioration of these wretched conditions, and all account of that little seems to have been dropped through accident by historians. One searches wearily through volumes of international law to find in Wheaton a few pages upon the exchange of prisoners, and the conditions are not easy. Grotius and Puffendorf lend neither more light nor comfort to the subject. The original rule of war is laid down in the Old Testament in rude ferocity, even to the extermination of neighbors, but no hint of mitigation appears till the command "Love your Enemies," lights up the banner of Christ. When pestilence and malaria struck the Greek host before Troy,

"The frequent pyres of the dead kept burning ever; and neither man nor beast was spared. The plague of Athens, the expedition to Syracuse, the invasion of Scotland by the Emperor Servius, fill us with special terror, even in the merest recital. The Romans excelled in political and military organization, but they developed no system of care for the sick and wounded of their vast and populous armies; although some monuments recently discovered seem to disclose that under the empire there were surgeons of cohorts and surgeons of legions, corresponding roughly to regimental and brigade surgeons.

It is less than three centuries ago that the leading nations began to comprehend the grave responsibility resting upon them as the creators and promulgators of war; they then began an official sanitary service, the foundation of the present military medical service and staff of armies which in comparison with all that had gone before it, was considered so great a step towards supplying the sanitary necessities of soldiers, that nothing further could ever be required. As the governments took the initiative, it was naturally left to them to do all that was needful, and this charge once assumed by the governments and military, was left unthought of by the people. Thus the suffering of the sick and wounded soldiers constituted one of the large class of misfortunes for which no one was to blame, provided wars must be. The military surgeons, humane and noble, have been the first to pity, and the bravest to proclaim the necessities of their wretched patients, and have ordinarily acted up to the full measure of the regulations for their relief.

Little or no progress was made in sanitary work by the French during the wars of the first Napoleon; his method was swift marches, overwhelming slaughters, new levies, and great wretched heaps of misery suddenly left where they fell like the wrecks of a tornado. The women of Germany, particularly of Frankfort, in July, 1814, united to form the *Frauenverein* of that city, to care for the sick and wounded in war, and they provided for the wants of the military hospitals of Frankfort without distinction of friend or foe, during all the war and the typhus that followed it.

But the events of the vast military operations of the war of the Crimea in 1854, showed that the times had changed; human progress had evolved a press whose lever moved the world. The newspaper correspondents first threw back upon astonished England

the terrible fact of the entire inadequacy of her military and medical field service, and both government and people awoke as from a dream. When the letters of Lord Sidney Herbert, the British Minister of War, and Florence Nightingale crossed in transit, the one begging civil help for military wounded, the other begging to render it, they marked an era in the world's progress. Two weeks later Miss Nightingale and her forty faithful attendants sailed from England. This little unarmed pilgrim band of women that day struck a blow not only at the barbarities of war, but at war itself, which wrought more for the advancement of mankind, more for the future history of the world, than all the fleets and armies of that vast campaign. The story of that volunteer corps seems like a romance, and the world knows it by heart, how disease lessened, gangrene disappeared, pestilence fell away; how under the strong support of the military authorities and of the gracious Queen herself, the British military hospitals in the Crimea, from awful depths of wretchedness soon became types of what military hospitals ought to be. The great example was given; this seed of costly sowing took root and would not die. In the Italian wars of Napoleon III, the garden cities of Northern Italy—Milan, Turin, Brescia, burst into bloom with civil hospitals for the care of the sick and wounded, which were the wonder of the hour. But they were without organization, the first excitement died away beneath the weight of difficulties and inexperience.

You certainly need no reminder of the distressing inadequacy of our own medical and hospital field service in the war of the rebellion, fearfully apparent within a month after the firing upon Fort Sumter, nor of the uprising of the Sanitary Commission with its 32,000 relief committees all over our land, its struggle for existence and military recognition, even in the face of the daily demonstration of the great and pressing necessity of its humane cooperation. No act of our country has ever won for it such an amount of moral credit and respect from other nations as has resulted from this unparalleled display of active humanity. The highest French and German authorities upon the subject are enthusiastic in their praise; it was claimed to have marked a new era in the world's history; to have been the greatest act of philanthropy that humanity has ever meditated and accomplished, to have modified the whole social system of the United States.

Even before the American conflict was ended, in 1864-66, occurred the war of Schleswig-Holstein. Here again was the old experience of insufficient official medical service; here again appeared ever increasing manifestations of unofficial relief, timely, useful, welcome.

These statements otherwise so inadequate, sufficiently show three facts:

1. That the official army medical staff and provisions for sick and wounded of armies have never been adequate to the emergencies of active service.
2. That individual humanity and ingenuity have been untiring in their efforts to meet and supply the costly deficiency.
3. That through lack of organization and that concerted action which alone supply the power to overcome great obstacles, the best of these efforts have nearly failed.

You recall how the work of the American Sanitary Commission was at first jealously regarded as a cunning device to gain power for selfish ends; one secretary asking the committee to "state frankly what they did want, since it was evident they could not want only what they seemed to be asking for." Even President Lincoln thought them only "adding a fifth wheel to the coach." At last after repeated rebuffs and discouragements, on the 13th of June, 1861, there was appointed "a commission to inquire and advise in respect to the sanitary interests of the United States forces."

It was in the midst of a very carnival of war in 1864 that the great keynote of a grand harmony of peace was struck in Switzerland. M. Henry Dunant, a Swiss gentleman traveling in Italy in 1859, was in the neighborhood of Solferino on the day of the great battle of the 24th of June. He seems to have been deeply impressed by the aspect of the battle-field and the sufferings and death of vast numbers, from the inadequate nursing and official surgical relief. In 1864, inspired by these memories, he stood before the "Genevose society of public utility" in Switzerland and asked that society to consider the question of organizing permanent volunteer relief societies in time of peace to act in time of war, by supplementing the regular military establishment of medical and surgical assistants; also as to a system of neutrality between belligerents for hospitals, surgeons, nurses, supplies, and the wounded themselves; he also published a book entitled "Un Souvenir de Solferino."

To these initial efforts of M. Dunant, the International Congress of 1864 and its wonderful results are primarily due. An international conference, attended by delegates from sixteen governments, including Great Britain, France, Spain, Prussia, Austria and Italy, was held in Oct., 1863. It sat four days, agreed upon some important resolutions, and resulted in the calling of the congress known as the International Convention of Geneva of 1864, for the purpose of considering the question of the neutralization of the sick and wounded soldiers of belligerent armies. Called at the request of the Supreme Federal Council of Switzerland, it was accepted by sixteen powers, and opened its sessions at the hotel De Ville at Geneva, on the 8th of August, 1864, by delegates accredited with sufficient power to sign a treaty. Nine articles agreed upon by the convention were signed on the 22d day of August; the main object being to establish, as a rule governing military forces on all occasions, the humane principles which from time to time had been applied exceptionally.

The first article provides that all hospitals occupied by the sick and wounded shall be *neutral*.

Articles 2 and 3 hold neutral all persons employed in the care of the sick and wounded.

Article 4 settles the terms on which the *materiel* of hospitals shall be regarded.

Article 5 offers military protection and certain exemptions to all who shall entertain and care for wounded in their houses.

Article 6 relates to the treatment of sick and wounded prisoners, and provides that they shall not be retained as prisoners of war, but if disabled for military service, they shall be safely returned to their country and friends; and that all convoys of sick and wounded shall be protected by absolute neutrality.

Article 7 provides a flag for hospitals and convoys, and an arm badge for persons. The design proposed was a red cross upon a white ground.

Articles 8 and 9 provide for the details of execution, and for the treaty being left open for the subsequent admission of other governments.

The articles adopted, constitute a treaty which received the signatures of twelve governments at first, shortly increased to sixteen, and now to double that number.

A notable opportunity for putting these principles to the severest test soon occurred in the Franco-German war of 1870; and it is cheering to know that they stood triumphantly every test of military trial, in one of the momentous wars of modern times. No instance of the infraction of their regulations, or of advantage being taken of their privileges, is recorded. Every anticipated advantage was realized; every treaty-bound power found its contributions for the relief of the sick and wounded in either army promptly acknowledged, faithfully distributed and returns made with absolute accuracy and fidelity. Every power not within the treaty and the organization, found its contributions objects of indifference and suspicion; there was no voucher for their character and no one to take charge of them who could pass through army lines. In this condition the magnificent contributions of this country were found at last, in spite of the best judgment of the most conscientious of agents, they partly perished and were largely wasted because there was no organized channel through which they might flow.

It may be asked why this country had not adopted the Treaty. The story would be long. The United States had been represented in the convention of 1864, the articles presented to our government and declined. We were again represented in the convention of 1867-8 by the great head of the Sanitary Commission, the lamented Dr. Bellows, who formed a society of medical and leading men, and presented the subject to the United States government ably and well, and it was again declined, and the society fell away, to the amazement and perplexity of the International Committee of Geneva. It was again urged upon the attention of the government in 1877, during the administration of President Hayes, and a committee formed, styling itself the "American Committee of the Red Cross for the relief of sufferers by war, pestilence, famine and other great national calamities." The subject was again declined; and it was not until almost four years later, with the incoming of the administration of President Garfield, that any favorable response was made to those urging this most important treaty of humanity through seventeen weary years. President Garfield promised to recommend the adoption of the Treaty in his first annual message to congress in December, 1881. The Hon. Secretary of State, Mr. Blaine, wrote a most cordial letter of approval, embodying the sentiments of the whole cabinet. President Arthur faithfully carried out the plan and performed the promise of his lamented predecessor,

by recommending the accession of the United States to the articles of the Treaty of Geneva, in his first annual message to congress. This carried the subject before the able committee on Foreign Relations in the senate, which body unanimously recommended the accession of the government to the articles of the conventions of both 1864 and 1868, covering both land and naval forces. The Treaty received the signature of President Arthur on the first of March, 1882. It was ratified by the senate in full session on the 16th of the same month. The stipulations were exchanged at Berne, Switzerland, on the 9th of June, and on the 26th of July, less than six weeks ago, the Treaty was proclaimed by the president to the people of the United States. Thus, this first great movement towards the neutrality of nations, and international relief in war, became for the people of this country an accomplished fact, and a law of the land.

A word of the relief societies or committees designed to co-operate with the Treaty may not be out of place:

1st. The International Committee of Geneva, coexistent with the conference and congress of 1863-4, is the authorized medium through which the various nations communicate upon matters of international relief, and was invested with this prerogative by the great Powers constituting the Treaty. Its efficient and accomplished president is M. Gustave Moynier, who was also president of the congress of 1864.

2d. National societies exist in thirty-two countries, and generally under these exist subordinate but permanent societies in most important towns, corresponding almost perfectly to the relief societies of the sanitary commission.

The American committee, in view of past experiences, hesitated to extend its organization until some confirmation of the adoption of the Treaty should be given. Immediately upon this assurance by President Garfield, in June, 1881, this committee reorganized and became incorporated under the name of the "American Association of the Red Cross," with the same extended scope as at first, providing for the relief of the greater calamities to which our vast country is so painfully liable, in the same manner that it does for the miseries of war. It is believed that no other national society has, until now, extended its sanitary work beyond the original idea of relief in war, although Article 20 of the Berlin conference of 1869, recommends the inclusion of great calamities. In July and August, 1881, subordinate societies were formed in Dansville, Rochester and Syracuse, in Western New York, just in time to aid in meeting the emergencies of the Michigan fires of that year, which they did bravely and well; and the recent overflow of the Mississippi called again for help, which was rendered with a promptness, exactness and ease alike gratifying to all concerned. It is a fact worthy of mention that the munificent contribution of one individual through the Rochester society of \$10,000 in seed for planting the desolated district, was rendered doubly, trebly valuable by the rapidity and precision with which it was distributed through the organized societies of the Red Cross. The slow decline of the water delayed the planting, until great haste was necessary to secure any return from the land the present year. A call from the National Committee made upon the Rochester society to meet this new emergency, was promptly responded to, and within three days the seed was on its way to the Red Cross society of Memphis, which society, being notified of its transit, made the necessary provisions for its immediate distribution, and within twenty-four hours after its arrival in Memphis it was assorted and reshipped to the proper points in five different states with full instructions for final distribution.

There is neither teacher nor preacher like necessity, and the late lesson of the Mississippi valley has resulted in the formation of societies in most of the cities of importance from Chicago to New Orleans, all organized under a general constitution as auxiliary to the "American Association of the Red Cross" at Washington, and all affiliated with the national and subordinate societies of thirty-two nations, acting in concert in the common cause of humanity and the practical furtherance of good will among mankind.

My task is done. I have endeavored to submit to the judgment of this high assemblage such facts and observations in regard to the practical utility of a system of national and international voluntary relief in great emergencies as some years of attention to the subject, and some little experience have given me. If your honorable body shall find the subject matter of sufficient importance to attract its further attention, and elicit such suggestions and counsel as it may from time to time be pleased to bestow, the great object of my coming will have been attained.

