

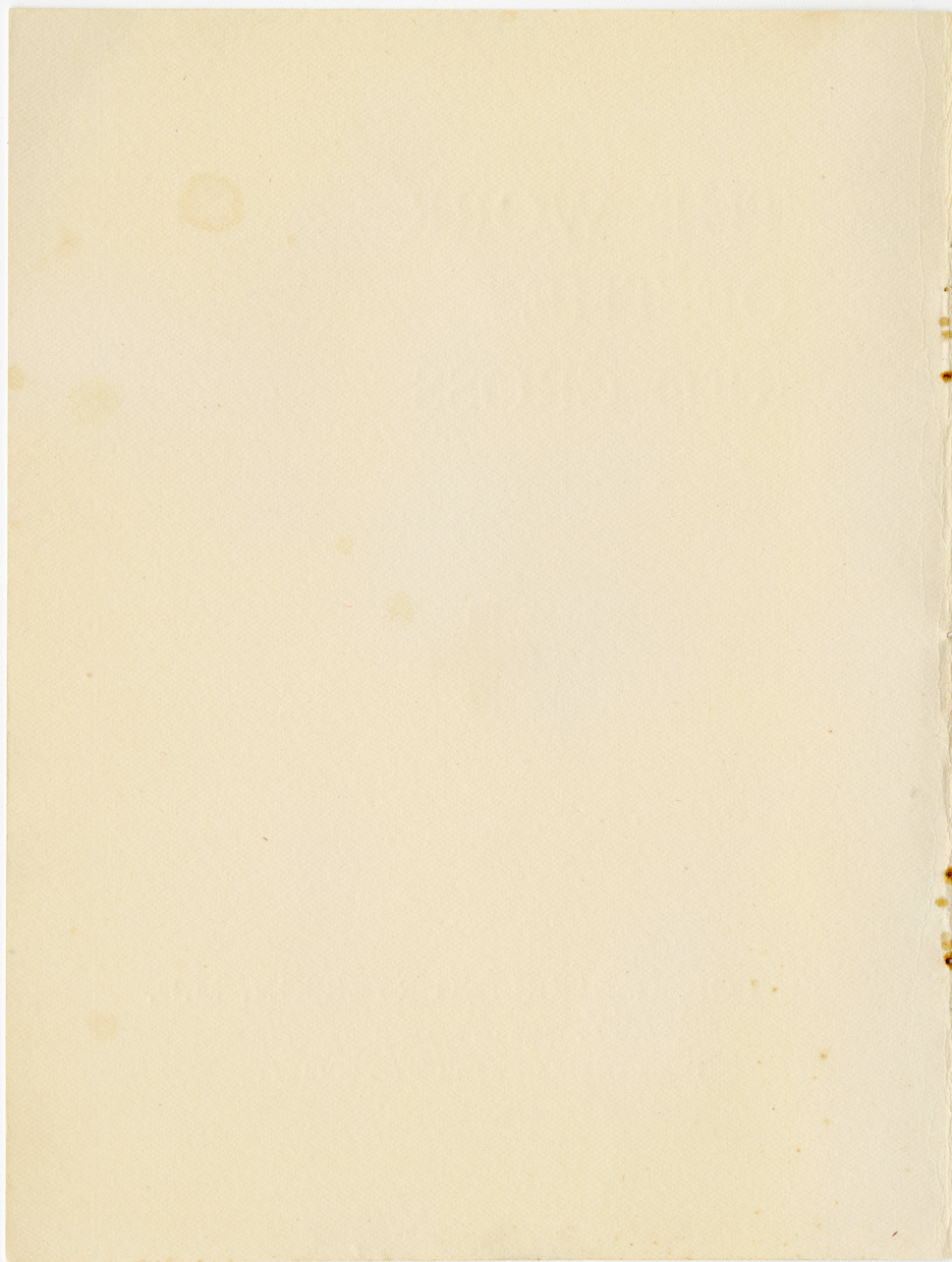
THE WORK OF THE RED CROSS



By COL. G. STERLING RYERSON, M.D.

President and Founder of

THE CANADIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY



The Work OF The Red Cross

By COL. G. STERLING RYERSON, M.D.

(Knight of Grace of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem)

President and Founder of The Canadian Red Cross Society

THE present war is the most barbarous and at the same time the most merciful war ever waged. Although the casualties are much larger than in any previous clash of nations, the percentage of deaths from wounds is much smaller. Soldiers carried from the fields of battle recover more surely and more rapidly than ever before. This is due to the wonderful stride made in surgery and to the increased efficiency of the Red Cross.

The great need for men "skilled to heal" with armies in the field was early recognized. References to this fact are to be found in the classics. Recognition of the value of military surgeons grew very slowly, however, up to the sixteenth century; and the temper of the times can be estimated when we read such allusions as, "the poor soldiers when severely wounded were discharged with a small gratuity to find their way home as best they might."

Unbelievably barbarous as this may seem, the practice of turning wounded soldiers adrift through lack of facilities for caring for them was not uncommon during the dark centuries. It was based on the principle that it cost more to cure a wounded soldier than to buy a recruit.

The roots of this diabolical idea will be found in the mercenary system of warfare which prevailed. It will be remembered that until quite late in the eighteenth century it was customary for monarchs to hire troops from

other countries when they could not raise a sufficient number within their own boundaries, paying for their hired forces at so much per head. When a foreign trooper became through injury or illness of no use, the hirer had no further interest in him.

It was not until the campaign of Marlborough in Germany that military surgeons really had any official existence. At the outset of the brilliant campaign conducted by that versatile leader, full attention was focused on the winning of battles and no thought was given to the inglorious



BRITISH WOUNDED BEING CONVEYED FROM A HOSPITAL TRAIN TO A HOSPITAL CAMP IN FRANCE.

details of nursing and surgery. A veritable cult of iron efficiency had sprung up in the British ranks. It was considered effeminate to be ill. As the campaign developed, however, and sanguinary battles were fought, the need for an adequate hospital service became recognized. This was felt all the more keenly as the armies marched and fought in fever-stricken countries and contagious diseases decimated the ranks.

The utmost credit is due to Sir John Pringle, Marlborough's principal medical officer. The clever administration and the great courage and per-

severance of Sir John kept the medical service prominent and ultimately led to its recognition as not only a humanitarian measure, but as an essential factor in the winning of battles.

The next advance came during the Napoleonic wars, and again it was in the British army that the idea was evolved. Sir John McGregor was the head of the medical service with Wellington through the Peninsular campaigns. In order to systematize the work, he devised the scheme of having regimental medical officers—the idea being that each regiment was a family and that it was the duty of each family to look after its own sick. This proved an extremely effective measure and paved the way for reforms in the medical service. Sir Arthur Wellesley (later the Duke of Wellington) was a very humane general and on every occasion he spared his troops. Nevertheless the campaigns in the Peninsula proved an extended period of hardship and horror and the terrible experiences of his ill-equipped corps led to many improvements in the medical service. Improvement from this time on was very slow, however, little progress being recorded until the Crimean War.

The Crimean proved the darkest hour before the dawn of a new medical era. Every reading man knows of the horrors of that war, brought about largely by the almost entire absence of drugs and medical appliances and equipment. Red tape and indifference in the home departments reached their apex at this time and the result was seen in the sufferings of the men who fought the Empire's battles at the front. So bad were conditions that the nation was aroused and there was brought about the rise of the trained nurse. Until the end of time or the annals of human glory fail, the name of Florence Nightingale will be indissolubly associated with this great development. The popular idea of Florence Nightingale is embodied in the figure of "a gentle lady with a lamp"—an angel of gentle ministering care, carrying peace and comfort to painracked men. Such, no doubt, is the picture that best fits the efforts of Florence Nightingale at the front; but there is another side. Miss Nightingale would never have scored so remarkable a success had she not been possessed of a masterful personality. She was a strong-minded woman with a large share of the gracious gift of tact. Her influence was not confined to directing the work of mercy on the battlefield, but was even more potently exerted in securing co-operation from unwilling or indifferent ministers. She had the good fortune to be on terms of personal friendship with the Secretary of State for War, Mr. Sydney Herbert. By exerting her influence, some say by browbeating the distinguished war minister, she managed to gain official assent to her wide propaganda of reform in the nursing of the sick and wounded.

Up to this time, the female nurse had been conspicuous by her absence, if we except the wives of some of the soldiers who followed the forces and in their rough and untrained way nursed the sick.

It remained for a Swiss gentleman, Henri Dunant, to bring to the aid of the sick and wounded in war co-ordinate and systematic assistance. It so happened that this high-minded man was traveling in Northern Italy on the 24th of June in the year 1859 and that by chance he was present as an



THE GYMNASIUM OF THE ANTWERP UNIVERSITY CONVERTED INTO A MILITARY HOSPITAL, WHERE BARONESS GERVERSGRISAR (FOREMOST LADY STANDING IN PHOTO), AND OTHER LADIES OF NOTE ARE SERVING.

onlooker at the great Battle of Solferino. This battle fought between France and Italy on the one side and Austria on the other, was perhaps the most sanguinary conflict of history. An idea of the appalling casualties may be gained from the statement that there were killed or wounded, three field marshals, nine generals, fifteen hundred and sixty-five officers of other grades, and nearly forty thousand soldiers. To this total could be added two months later another forty thousand sick and those who died of the excessive fatigue or of wounds. Bald figures can give no ade-

quate conception of the soul-searing horrors of Solferino, of the wholesale slaughter of gallant men and the suffering which ensued through the absolute lack of facilities for caring for the fallen. Wounded men died on the field and their bodies were left to rot; and a pestilence arose which added disease to the other horrors.

His soul was sickened at what he had witnessed. Dunant left the field of Solferino with a great resolve. He had determined to devote his life to bringing about an improvement in Red Cross work. Inasmuch as it was evident that the organized medical services of armies was quite insufficient, the remedy as he saw it lay in bringing about some form of voluntary organized aid. Dunant thus evolved the idea which has served as the foundation on which the modern Red Cross has been built.

Filled with his great resolve Dunant visited all the courts of Europe and expended many years, and his private fortune, in an endeavor to arouse the world to united action. As a result of his efforts and influence a conference was held at Geneva in October, 1863, at which were present representatives of sixteen of the powers of Europe. This was followed by an important gathering on August 22, 1864, when the representatives of the following nations signed a convention on behalf of their respective Governments, namely: France, Prussia, Spain, Portugal, Holland, Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, Greece, Denmark, Sweden and Norway, Baden, Wurtemberg and Hesse-Darmstadt.

The principal articles of this Convention were that all material of the Medical Service of belligerents should be immune from capture, that hospitals, nurses and medical officers should be "respected and protected."

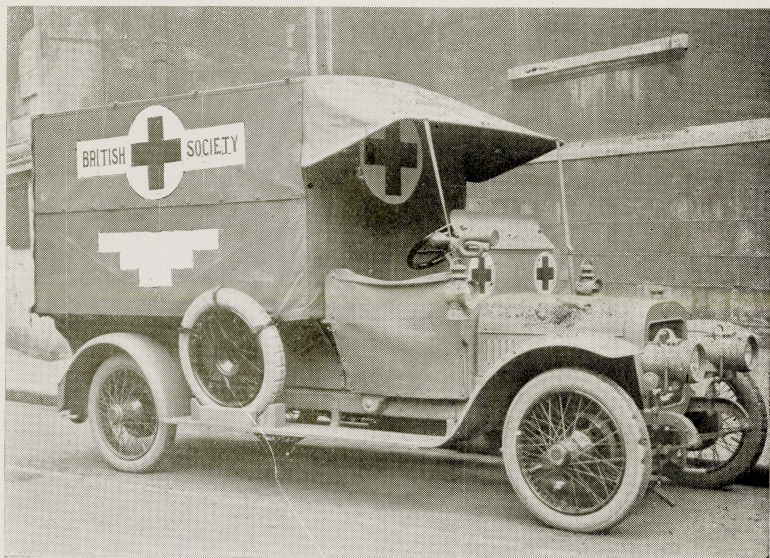
It is worth noting that Bismarck was one who supported the movement, with a view, it is said, to securing a good medical service for the German armies in the war with France which he was even then planning. Certain it is that the Franco-Prussian war saw a great improvement in the matter of caring for the wounded.

Although it is not the object of this article to touch upon matters of a controversial nature, the subject invariably leads to the work of the Red Cross during the present war and to the consideration of the lamentable fact that whereas the medical services now in operation have seen a development to the point of highest efficiency, there has at the same time been a tendency to revert to the barbarous practices of earlier wars.

The Germans have taken advantage of a weak spot in the Convention to seize hospital equipment and to make prisoners of medical officers. It was the intention and it is the practice of all civilized nations to consider

medical officers as non-combatants and as representing philanthropic aid, to be immune from capture. At the present moment there are between fifty and sixty medical officers of the British army prisoners of war in Germany. It would appear, moreover, that these medical officers are not allowed to render medical aid to their fellow prisoners or to anyone else, but are obliged to waste their time in idleness.

It is stated that, in some instances at any rate, medical officers have been deliberately killed or wounded upon the field of battle while in the



ONE OF THE MOTOR AMBULANCE CARS PRESENTED BY THE CANADIAN SOCIETY.

discharge of their professional duties in aiding the wounded—a notable instance of which is the case of Doctor McNab, Surgeon of the London Scottish, who, it is stated, was deliberately murdered by a German soldier while in the act of assisting a wounded man. There would appear to be no excuse in this case, as Dr. McNab was dressed in a blue uniform and wore the Brassard with a Red Cross, and was, moreover, unarmed.

Added to this is the strongest indictment of Germany's methods, the barbarism displayed in the treatment of trained nurses. If but a small fraction of the atrocities laid at the door of the German soldiery be found

true when the verdict of history is rendered, it will have been established that Germany has done much to put warfare back where it was before humane considerations entered in, a brute beast conflict.

THE WORK OF THE RED CROSS.

It is not necessary to enter into the larger phases of the Red Cross work, the carrying of the wounded from the field, and the exercise of proper care afterward. This side is thoroughly understood. A further and very important function of the Red Cross—by which is meant the service that is maintained by voluntary and not Government support—is the furnishing of supplies of comforts for the sick and wounded as supplementary to the regular list of requirements as established by the Government, such as shirts, socks, underwear, cholera belts, sleeping caps and many articles of personal comfort. Further, the Red Cross supplies great quantities of dressings, rolled bandages, lint, adhesive plaster and such adjuncts to the hospital requirements.

It does not, however, limit itself to these apparently small and unimportant articles—it furnishes complete hospitals, nurses, doctors, equipment, drugs, instruments and everything which is necessary to go to make up a hospital. At the present time the British Red Cross Society, in conjunction with the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, is maintaining, either wholly or in part, no less than three hundred and fifty-eight hospitals in England and on the Continent. The Saint John Ambulance Brigade has a small army of orderlies, and there are at present employed by it on the Continent nearly six thousand of these trained hospital attendants.

The British society is aiding in the quick transportation of wounded from the front by the establishment of a great number of motor ambulances, of which they have now some four hundred and fifty in operation.

The casualties in this war have been so enormous and the number of wounded so large, that, with all these hospitals, in addition to the Government establishments, the society is now in process of organizing and equipping a hospital in the new building which has been built for H. M. Stationery Office in Waterloo road, London, with a capacity of sixteen hundred and fifty-eight beds, which are being paid for largely by individual subscriptions of £25 per bed. This great hospital will, upon completion of its installation, be maintained by the British Government.

Hospital trains, capable of carrying five hundred sick or wounded men, are either in existence or in course of construction by the society. The society has also three hospital ships finely equipped with every convenience, including a modern operating room.

All this active and philanthropic work costs a great sum of money and, while the receipts of the British Red Cross Society up to the present time amount to nearly \$3,500,000, there is but a small surplus at this time of writing.

THE CANADIAN SOCIETY.

The Canadian society, which was organized by the writer in 1896, is endeavoring to do its share, in proportion to the means at its disposal, in the relief of the distressed soldiers. The Canadian society has presented to the British society twelve fully equipped motor ambulances and has provided seven hospitals for the Canadian contingent and one traveling field kitchen. A Canadian hospital has been established in Mr. Waldorf Astor's House at Clevedon, and is being equipped by the society. This hospital will be staffed by Canadian doctors and nurses.

Great quantities of supplies amounting up to the present time to about three thousand cases of an average weight of one hundred and fifty pounds each, have been sent forward to the Canadian Commissioner in London, and their contents are being distributed by him to the hospitals in accordance with their requirements.

Some people may say: "Why should the society or the public apart from the Government be required to furnish all this money and these supplies?" In explanation of this it may be said that the medical services in the field of all armies is insufficient to meet with the demands. Also, it is the right and duty of private individuals to remedy this insufficiency. Further, the Red Cross is the means of an expression of the sympathy of the people of a nation with its soldiers.

It may truly be said that the alleviation of the sufferings caused by war is in these days a universal obligation imposed by Christian civilization on all nations. It is a solemn duty to the accomplishment of which every man of influence should lend his co-operation, and every honest man should give his thoughts.

In the end it is to the charitable co-operation of the public that we must look in order to alleviate the sufferings of the soldiers and to surround the victims of war with such comfort as is possible.



81 5.00