BARTON CLARA

A STORY OF THE RED CROSS; GLIMPSES OF FIELD WORK

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Barton C.

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Содержание

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PREFACE

Since the foundation of the Red Cross in America, many direful calamities have afflicted the country. In each of these visitations the Red Cross has acted in some degree as the Almoner – the distributer and organizer – of the bountiful measures of relief that have been poured out by the American people.

Its work has been accomplished quietly and without ostentation. All the relief has been administered – not as charity – but as God-sent succor to our brothers and sisters who have been overwhelmed by some mighty convulsion of the forces of nature.

The wreckage has been cleared away, the stricken people have been wisely, tenderly, and calmly guided out of panic and despair on to the road of self-help and cooperative effort to restore their shattered homes and broken fortunes; and then the Red Cross has retired as quietly as it came, and few, outside of the people immediately concerned, have realized the beneficent powers of help and healing that have fallen like a benediction upon the stricken wherever that sacred symbol of humanity has made its way.

It is my thought that a brief account of the work of the Red Cross during the past twenty-five years will be of interest to the American people. In a volume of this size it must of necessity be but a brief outline, sufficient, however, to convey a clear impression of what the Red Cross really means to every individual in this great country of ours.

To the thousands of American men and women whose generous bounty has made the work of the Red Cross possible, to the stricken and distressed who because of it have been helped back to life and hope, and to all the friends of the great, universal humanity which it typifies, this small book is lovingly dedicated.

Clara Barton.

Glen Echo, Maryland,
May 15, 1904.

I
EARLY HISTORY
1880-1884

"I have lived much that I have not written, but I have written nothing that I have not lived."

It was a little blue-eyed girl of ten who sat on a low hassock at my feet, slowly drawing the soft auburn curls between her fingers, when, suddenly lifting her head and looking me earnestly in the face, she exclaimed: "What is the Red Cross? Please tell me about it; I can not understand it."

There was a pleading earnestness in the tone not to be resisted, and laying down my pen I commenced to explain to her the principles, history, and uses of the Red Cross. She listened anxiously, the pretty brow knitted; she seemed more and more perplexed, until, as if a light had broken over her, she exclaimed, half impatiently:

"Not that – not that, tell me something it *does*– it and you, I can understand it better then."

A light had broken over me. It was a story the child wanted to illustrate the principle and bring it home to her. A story she must have.

In a half hour she felt that she knew it all and was an ardent devotee even of its principles. But she had given me more than I had given her. Here was food for thought.

For twenty-five years I had labored to explain the principles and uses of the Red Cross; had written enough for a modest library of what it was and what it meant, but, lest I seem egotistical, not a page of what it did. The child had given me an idea that I would for once put into practice, and write a few pages of what the Red Cross had done, leaving principles to present themselves.

I will commence even back of itself.

Forty years ago, before most of you were born, a great war had been fought in America, in which thousands died from battle and hardship, and thousands more still left alive were worn out in the untried and unsystematized efforts at relief that had been made through nearly five years of continuous war. Of these latter, many were women who dragged out weary lives in their own homes, some went to hospitals and retreats for rest and care, and some were sent abroad. One of these latter I knew personally, for, as Patrick would say, "It was me-self."

To me it seemed a hard sentence that our physicians imposed. I had grown to love the country we had so toiled for, and did not want to leave it. Its very woes had made it dear to me. It had quiet once more, and a peace that was not all a peace. It had its early soldier homes, its fast-filling cemeteries, and the tender memory of a martyred President resting over us like a pall. These had come to seem like a heritage to me, and in my weakness I clung to them. Still, the order was obeyed and I went.

Then followed travels in strange and foreign lands, other wars, illness and suffering of my own, until eleven years later I came almost a stranger again to our Government with another work, which I believed to be for its good and the good of our people.

This time I brought the idea of the treaty of Geneva, asking our Government, at the request of other Governments, to examine and to unite with it, if found desirable. This effort with the Government covers five years of hard, continuous labor, during which was sought the aid of friends known in other years. At the end of this time, by advice of our second martyred President and three members of his historic cabinet – James G. Blaine, William Windom, and Robert T. Lincoln – a national society was formed, known as the Association of the American Red Cross, and, by desire and nomination of President Garfield, I was made its president, and requested to name my officers.

The association was formed during the winter of 1880-'81, with the view on the part of President Garfield of facilitating the adoption of the treaty which he would name in his next message, which message was never written.

Before the message, he, too, had joined the martyred ranks, and his gentle successor, Arthur, filled his chair and kept his promise, and through action of his own executive department the treaty was adopted; indorsed by action of the Senate; proclaimed by the President to our people; later ratified by the International Powers in the Congress of Berne, with the pledge to render relief to unfortunate victims of war, and the privilege, by my request, of rendering similar relief to the victims of great national calamities or disasters.

All this had been accomplished by the kindly help of a few personal friends, tireless and unrewarded, and while the news of the accession of the Government of the United States, to the treaty of Geneva, lit bonfires that night (for I cabled it by their request) in the streets of Switzerland, France, Germany, and Spain, a little four-line paragraph in the congressional doings of the day in the *Evening Star*, of Washington, alone announced to the people of America that an international treaty had been added to their rolls.

No personal distinction had been bestowed, no one honored, no one politically advanced, no money of the Government expended, and, like other things of like nature and history, it was left in obscurity to make its own way and live its own hard life.

Thus the spring of 1882 found us – a few people, tired and weak, with five years of costly service, a treaty gained, with no fund, no war nor prospect of any, and no helpful connection with or acknowledgment by the Government.

Soon the news of "Half the State of Michigan on Fire" called us to action on our own laws of civil relief. A little draft on the purse of the new, inexperienced president of the association paved the way for an agent to go to the field. Others generously joined, all reported to our friend and advocate, Senator Omar D. Conger, of Michigan. Some supplies were sent, a society or two formed to provide and forward them. The agents remained until the suffering was relieved, and thus the first field relief work of which we have any record in the United States was commenced.

Meanwhile, I had been asked by the Senate to write the history of the Red Cross, and show the official action taken by our Government on the acceptance of the treaty, which history the Senate would have printed at the Government printing-office. This volume I prepared as requested. A thousand copies were printed for information to the public, to be circulated by the society; but with no frank or other means provided, and with a postage of some ten cents a volume, we were compelled to limit the circulation to the means.

The following year, 1883, a disastrous rise in the Ohio River called for our aid. Dr. J. B. Hubbell, who had been our agent the year before, was called from Michigan University, where he was completing a course, to examine the needs of the inhabitants and take such relief as we could provide. There was little loss of life, and the destruction of property lay largely in the loss of stock, and washing away of the soil, vegetation, and the means of reproduction.

A remarkable provision for this latter loss was made by the gift of Mr. Hiram Sibley, the noted seed dealer of Rochester – who had become associated with the Red Cross, being an old-time friend of the family of its president – of ten thousand dollars' worth of seed, to replant the washed-out lands adown the Mississippi. As the waters ran off the mud immediately baked in the sunshine, making planting impossible after a few days. Accordingly, Mr. Sibley's gift was sent with all haste to our agent at Memphis, and in forty-eight hours, by train and boat, it was distributed in the four States – Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi – and planted for the crops of the coming season.

Besides this generous gift of material, a little money had been raised and sent by the three societies of the Red Cross which had been formed, viz.: Dansville and Syracuse, a few hundreds – something more from the Red Cross at Rochester – always thoughtful and generous, which served to help in the distribution of clothing and supplies promiscuously sent. And at the finish of the work,

when every donation had been carefully acknowledged, one thousand dollars and some cents were left in the treasury unexpended.

A cyclone occurring within a few months in Louisiana and southern Alabama, cutting a swath from New Orleans to Mobile, decided us to send eight hundred dollars of this reserve to the secretary of the Red Cross Society of New Orleans, which sum was forwarded by our vice-president, Mr. A. S. Solomons. This left a sum of two hundred dollars and some cents in the treasury with which to commence another field.

This was the commencement of 1883. In May, at the solicitation of General Butler, then Governor of Massachusetts, I took the superintendence of the Massachusetts Woman's State Prison at Sherborn, at the customary salary of fifteen hundred dollars a year. To this duty the Legislature added, after my arrival, those of secretary and treasurer, without increase of salary, discharging the former incumbent, a man, at three thousand dollars a year. I accepted the new duties, became my own bondsman for ten thousand dollars, by transfer of that amount of bonds from my bankers, Brown Brothers, New York, to the Massachusetts State Treasury at Boston – remaining in charge of the prison until the close of the year, and the retirement of General Butler as Governor.

In the short and interrupted existence of our association – scarce two years – our few official advisers had formed some general regulations, relating to our course of procedure. Realizing that to be of any real service as a body of relief for sudden disasters, we must not only be independent of the slow, ordinary methods of soliciting relief, but in its means of application as well, it was decided:

First. To never solicit relief or ask for contributions.

Second. Not to pay salaries to officers – paying out money only to those whom we must employ for manual labor – and as our officers served without compensation they should not be taxed for dues.

Third. To keep ourselves always in possession of a stated sum of money to commence a field of disaster – this sum to be independent even of the closed doors of a bank which might prevent leaving for a field on a Sunday or holiday.

Fourth. To take this sum of our own, going directly to a field with such help as needed, giving no notice until there, overlooking the field, and learning the extent of the trouble and conditions of the people, making immediate and reliable report to the country through the Associated Press, some of whose officers were our own Red Cross officers as well. These reports would be truthful, unexaggerated, and non-sensational statements that could be relied upon.

Fifth. That if, under these conditions, the people chose to make use of us as distributers of the relief which they desired to contribute to the sufferers, we would do our best to serve them while at the field – make report directly to each and all contributors, so far as in our power, and proceed to carry out any directions and apply the relief at hand, in the wisest manner possible, among a dazed and afflicted community.

To inaugurate this method, I, as president, placed a sum of three thousand dollars, free of bank or interest, upon momentary call, at the service of the association. On more than one occasion it has been taken on Sunday, when every bank in the country was closed and charitable bodies were at their prayers. Even the relief of Johnstown was thus commenced. This provision has never for a day been broken. It is as good at this moment as it was in 1883, and from the same source. It may not have been a "business-like" method nor one to be approved by stated boards of directors nor squared by bank regulations. But the foes we had to meet were not thus regulated, and had to be met as they came; and so they always must be if any good is to be accomplished.

Until the Government and society can control the elements, and regulate a spring freshet, a whirlwind or a cyclone, they will find that red tape is not strong enough to hold their ravages in check.

It was well that these regulations had been formulated and their provisions acted upon, as the state of our treasury and the conditions immediately following will show.

I returned to Washington upon my retirement from the superintendence of the State Prison at Sherborn, accompanied by Dr. Hubbell, who, having completed his university course, had come to

the Red Cross for permanent service. Before we had even time to unpack our trunks, the news of the fearful rise of the Ohio River, of 1884, began to shock the country with its loss of life and property.

I had never been present at a disaster in civil life. It had never occurred to me that they recurred so frequently. But if by virtue of my office as president I was liable to be called every year to preside over and provide for them, it was essential that I learn my duties experimentally. I accordingly joined Dr. Hubbell, who had been appointed general field agent, and proceeded to Pittsburg, the headwaters of the rise.

Telegraphing from there to our agents of the Associated Press, we proceeded to Cincinnati, to find the city afloat. Its inhabitants were being fed from boats, through the second-story windows. These conditions were telegraphed. Supplies commenced to flow in, not only from our own societies but from the people of the country. Warehouses were filled, in spite of all we dispensed – but there were four hundred miles of this distress – even to Cairo, where the Ohio, sometimes thirty miles in width, discharged its swollen waters into the Mississippi.

Recognizing this condition lower down the river as the greater need, we transferred our supplies and distribution to Evansville, Ind. Scarcely had we reached there when a cyclone struck the river below, and traveling up its entire length, leveled every standing object upon its banks, swept the houses along like cockle-shells, uprooted the greatest trees and whirled them down its mighty current – catching here and there its human victims, or leaving them with life only, houseless, homeless, wringing their hands on a frozen, fireless shore – with every coal-pit filled with water, and death from freezing more imminent than from hunger.

There were four hundred miles more of this, and no way of reaching them by land. With all our tons of clothing, these people and their homeless little children were freezing. There was but one way – the Government boats had come with rations of food – we too must take to the water.

At eight o'clock in the morning I chartered my first boat, with captain and crew, at sixty dollars per day, to be at once laden to the water's edge with coal – our own supplies to be stored on the upper deck – and at four o'clock in the afternoon, as the murky sun was hiding its clouded face, the bell of the "John V. Troop," in charge of her owner, announced the departure of the first Red Cross relief-boat ever seen on American waters.

I found myself that night with a stanch crew of thirty men and a skilled captain, and a boat under my command. I had never until then held such a command. We wove the river diagonally from side to side – from village to village – where the homeless, shivering people were gathered – called for the most responsible person – a clergyman if one could be found, threw off boxes of clothing, and hove off coal for a two weeks' supply, and steamed away to the opposite side, leaving only gratitude, wonder at who we were, where we came from, and what that strange flag meant? We improved every opportunity to replenish our supply of coal, and reached Cairo in five days.

Waiting only to reload, we returned up the river, resupplied the revived villages of people, too grateful for words, reaching Evansville at the end of three weeks, where more supplies than we had taken awaited us. St. Louis and Chicago had caught the fever of relief, had arranged societies, and had asked permission to join our aid. Up to this time the Mississippi had given no indication of trouble, but now its great June rise commenced.

The Government boats, by another appropriation, were sent to the Mississippi, and we prepared to supplement them. Discharging our Ohio River boat we went to St. Louis by rail and chartered the "Mattie Bell." The Red Cross Societies of St. Louis and Chicago, under their respective presidents and officers in charge of them and their funds, joined us, and together we prepared to feed and rescue the perishing stock – as well as people adown the Mississippi. The animals had never been saved in an overflow; and besides the cruelty of letting them starve by thousands, the loss to the people was irreparable, as the following year must inevitably be replete with idleness and poverty till more stock could be obtained to work with.

We found as commissary at St. Louis, General Beckwith, the historic commissary-general of the old civil war, who had personally superintended the loading of my wagons in Washington, year after year, for the battle-fields of Virginia. He came on board the "Mattie Bell" and personally superintended the lading – clothing, corn, oats, salt, and hay – besides putting upon the Government boats large quantities of supplies which we could not take on at first, and giving us his blessing, watched us steam out on our joint mission; they putting off rations of meat and meal – we supplementing with clothing for the people and feed for the stock. We purchased all we could at cities as we passed, picked our course among the broken levees and roaring crevasses, all the way to New Orleans. The hungry were fed, the naked clothed, and the stock saved. The negro had his mule, and the planter his horses and cattle to carry on his work when the flood should disappear. We had lighter boats, still lighter purses, but lightest of all were the grateful hearts that a kind Providence and a generous people had given to us the privilege of serving.

We discharged the "Mattie Bell" at St. Louis, bidding adieu to the officers of the Red Cross Society, who had rendered most acceptable service to the cause. They had brought their own funds and material – had personally administered them from the decks of the "Mattie Bell," made their own reports, and modestly retired to their home duties, there to await the next call.

Chicago, which had a new Red Cross Society, formed almost for the occasion, through its most worthy and notable representative, Rev. E. I. Galvin, did the same, performing the long journey with us, superintending the distribution of his own relief and making his own report with such convincing power, that societies of no less excellence than the Lend-a-Hand were its outgrowth.

I am thus particular to mention this from the loving gratitude fervently cherished for strong, tender help in the day of small things. Their contributions largely served to run our boat and keep our crew, and with heads, hearts, and hands we struggled as one, to avert the destruction so rife around us.

From St. Louis we crossed over to Evansville, rechartered the "John V. Troop," and put on accumulated supplies. The waters of the Ohio had subsided and the people were returning to the old spots of earth that once had been their home, but there was neither house to live in nor tool to work the land with. We reloaded with pine lumber, ready-made doors, windows, household utensils, stores and groceries, farming utensils, and with a good force of carpenters proceeded up the Ohio once more. The sight of the disconsolate, half-clad farmer waiting on the bank told us where his home had been – and was not.

Three hours' work of our carpenters would put up a one-room house, meanwhile our efficient men and women helpers, among them the best ladies of Evansville, would furnish it with beds, bedding, clothing, provisions for the family, and farming tools ready to go on with the season's work.

Picture, if possible, this scene. A strange ship with a strange flag steaming up the river. It halts, turns from its course, and draws up to the nearest landing. Some persons disembark and speak a few minutes with the family. Then, a half dozen strong mechanics man a small boat laden with all material for constructing a one-room house – floor, roof, doors, windows. The boat returns for furniture. Within three hours the strange ship sails away, leaving a bewildered family in a new and clean house with bed, bedding, clothing, table, chairs, dishes, candles, a little cooking-stove with a blazing fire, all the common quota of cooking utensils, and meat, meal, and groceries; a plow, rake, axe, hoe, shovel, spade, hammer, and nails. We ask few questions. They ask none. The whistle of the "Troop" is as welcome to their ears as the flag to their eyes.

At one of these wrecked villages the entire little hamlet of people stood on our decks. Only four, they said, were left at home, and these were sick. They had selected their lawyer to speak their thanks. No words will ever do justice to the volume of native eloquence which seemed to roll unbidden from his lips. He finished with these sentences:

"At noon on that day we were in the blackness of despair – the whole village in the power of the demon of waters – hemmed in by sleet and ice, without fire enough to cook its little food. When the bell struck nine that night, there were seventy-five families on their knees before their blazing grates,

thanking God for fire and light, and praying blessings on the phantom ship with the unknown device that had come as silently as the snow, they knew not whence, and gone, they knew not whither."

When we finished the voyage of relief, we had covered the Ohio River from Cincinnati to Cairo and back twice, and the Mississippi from St. Louis to New Orleans, and return – four months on the rivers – traveled over eight thousand miles, distributed in relief of money and estimated material, one hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars – gathered as we used it.

We left at one point on the Ohio River a well-lettered cross-board, "Little Six Red Cross Landing" – probably there to this day. The story of The Little Six might be given in their own little letter:

Waterford, Pa., March 24, 1884.

Dear Miss Barton:

We read your nice letter in the Dispatch and we would like very much to see that house called "The Little Six," and we little six are so glad that we helped six other little children, and we thank you for going to so much trouble in putting our money just where we would have put it ourselves. Some time again when you want money to help you in your good work call on "The Little Six."

Joe Farrar, twelve years old.

Florence Howe, eleven years old.
Mary Barton, eleven years old.
Reed White, eleven years old.
Bertie Ainsworth, ten years old.
Loyd Barton, seven years old.

These children had given a public entertainment for the benefit of the flood sufferers. They themselves suggested it, planned and carried it out, and raised fifty-one dollars and twenty-five cents, which they sent to the editor of the Eric Dispatch, asking him to send it "where it would do the most good." The Dispatch forwarded it to the president of the Red Cross, with an account of the entertainment given by "The Little Six."

The entire matter was too beautiful and withal unique, to meet only a common fate in its results. I could not, for a moment, think to mingle the gift of the little dramatists with the common fund for general distribution, and sought through all these weeks for a fitting disposition to make of it, where it would all go in some special manner to relieve some special necessity. I wanted it to benefit some children who had "wept on the banks" of the river, which in its madness had devoured their home.

As we neared that picturesque spot on the Illinois side of the Ohio, known as "Cave-in Rock," we were hailed by a woman and her young daughter. The boat "rounded to" and made the landing and they came on board – a tall, thin, worn woman in tattered clothes, with a good but inexpressibly sad face, who wished to tell us that a package which we had left for her at the town on our way down had never reached her. She was a widow – Mrs. Plew – whose husband, a good river pilot, had died from overwork on a hard trip to New Orleans in the floods of the Mississippi two years before, leaving her with six children dependent upon her, the eldest a lad in his "teens," the youngest a little baby girl. They owned their home, just on the brink of the river, a little "farm" of two or three acres, two horses, three cows, thirty hogs, and a half hundred fowls, and in spite of the bereavement, they had gone on bravely, winning the esteem and commendation of all who knew them for thrift and honest endeavor. Last year the floods came heavily upon them, driving them from their home, and the two horses were lost. Next the cholera came among the hogs and all but three died. Still they worked on; and held the home. This spring came the third flood. The water climbed up the bank, crept in at the door, and filled the lower story of the house. They had nowhere to remove their household goods, and stored them in the garret carefully packed, and went out to find a shelter in an old log house near

by, used for a corn-crib. Day by day they watched the house, hailed passing boats for news of the rise and fall of the water above, always trusting the house would stand – "and it would," the mother said, "for it was a good, strong house, but for the storm." The winds came, and the terrible gale that swept the valley like a tornado, with the water at its height, leveling whole towns, descended and beat upon that house, and it fell. In the morning there was no house there, and the waves in their fury rushed madly on. Then these little children "stood and wept on the banks of the river," and the desolation and fear in the careful mother's heart, none but herself and her God can know.

They lived on in the corn-crib, and it was from it they came to hail us as we passed to-day. Something had been told us of them on our downward trip, and a package had been left them at "Cave-in Rock," which they had not received. We went over shoe-tops in mud to their rude home, to find it one room of logs, an old stone chimney, with a cheerful fire of drift-wood and a *clean* hearth, two wrecks of beds, a table, and two chairs which some kind neighbor had loaned. The Government boats had left them rations. There was an air of thrift, even in their desolation, a plank walk was laid about the door, the floor was cleanly swept, and the twenty-five surviving hens, for an equal number were lost in the storm, clucked and craiked comfortably about the door, and there were two-and-a-half dozen fresh eggs to sell us at a higher rate than paid in town. We stood, as we had done so many scores of times during the last few weeks, and looked this pitiful scene in the face. There were misfortune, poverty, sorrow, want, loneliness, dread of the future, but fortitude, courage, integrity, and honest thrift.

"Would she like to return to the childhood home in Indiana?" we asked the mother, for we would help them go.

"No," she said tenderly. "My husband lived and died here. He is buried here, and I would not like to go away and leave him alone. It won't be very long, and it is a comfort to the children to be able to visit his grave. No, I reckon we will stay here, and out of the wreck of the old house which sticks up out of the mud, we will put up another little hut, higher up on the bank out of the way of the floods, and if it is only a hut, it will be a home for us and we will get into it, and make our crop this year."

There were no dry eyes, but very still hearts, while we listened to this sorrowful but brave little speech, made with a voice full of tears.

Our thoughtful field agent, Dr. Hubbell, was the first to speak.

"Here are six children," he said with an inquiring glance at me.

No response was needed. The thing was done. We told the mother the story of "The Little Six" of Waterford, and asked her if that money with enough more to make up one hundred dollars would help her to get up her house? It was *her* turn to be speechless. At length with a struggling, choking voice she managed to say – "God knows how much it would be to me. Yes, with my good boys I can do it, and do it well."

We put in her hands a check for this sum, and directed from the boat clean boxes of clothing and bedding, to help restore the household, when the house should have been completed.

Before we left her, we asked if she would name her house when it should be done? She thought a second, and caught the idea.

"Yes," she replied quickly, with a really winsome smile on that worn and weary face, "yes, I shall name it 'The Little Six.'"

We came to Pittsburg, discharged our empty boat, bade a heart-breaking good-by to our veteran volunteers from Evansville, who had shared our toil and pain and who would return on the boat, we taking train once more for Washington. We had been four months on the rivers, among fogs, rain, damp, and malaria – run all manner of risks and dangers, but had lost no life nor property, sunk no boat, and only that I was by this time too weak to walk without help – all were well.

Through the thoughtfulness of our new societies – St. Louis and Chicago – we had been able to meet our share of the expenses, and to keep good the little personal provision we started with, and were thus ready to commence another field when it should come.

On arriving home I found that I was notified by the International Committee of Geneva, that the Fourth International Conference would be held in that city in September, and I was requested to inform the United States Government, and ask it to send delegates. With the aid of a borrowed arm, I made my way up the steps of the Department of State (that was before the luxury of elevators) and made my errand known to Secretary Frelinghuysen, who had heard of it and was ready with his reply:

"Yes, Miss Barton, we will make the needful appointment of delegates to the International Conference, and I appoint you as our delegate."

"No, Mr. Frelinghuysen," I said, "I can not go. I have just returned from field work. I am tired and ill. Furthermore, I have not had time to make a report of our work."

"There is no one else who sufficiently understands the Red Cross, and the provisions of the treaty, that our Government can send, and we can not afford to make a mistake in the matter of delegates to this first conference in which our Government shall participate," answered the Secretary. "As to the report, have you not acknowledged the contributions to all those who have sent?"

"Oh, yes; every dollar and every box of goods where the donor was known," I replied.

"Has any one complained?" he asked.

"No; not a single person so far as is known. We have had only thanks."

"Then to whom would you report?"

"To you, Mr. Secretary, or to such person or in such manner as you shall designate."

"I don't want any report; no report is necessary," answered the Secretary. "Our Government relief-boats have reported you officially, and all the country knows what you have done and is more than satisfied. Regarding your illness – you have had too much fresh water, Miss Barton, I recommend salt – and shall appoint you."

This was done, and the appropriation for expenses was made, and at my request Judge Joseph Sheldon, and by invitation Mr. A. S. Solomon, our vice-president, were also appointed to accompany me. The appropriation sufficed for all.

The conference was held at Geneva, September 17, 1884, and thus was had the first official representation of the United States Government at an International Conference of the Treaty of Geneva. There have since been five. I have attended all but one.

II
THE TEXAS FAMINE AND THE MT. VERNON CYCLONE

Before the close of the following year, 1885, came what was known as the "Texas Famine." Thousands of miles of wild land, forming the Pan Handle, had been suddenly opened by the building of a Southern Railroad. In the speculative anxiety of the Road to people its newly acquired territory, unwarranted inducements of climatic advantages had been unscrupulously held out to the poor farmers of Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia.

Lured by the pictures presented them, some thousands of families had been induced to leave their old, worn-out farms, and with the little they could carry or drive, reach the new Eldorado, to find a new farm that needed only the planting to make them rich, prosperous, and happy, without labor. They planted. The first year brought some returns – the second was a drought with no returns – the third the same. Hunger for themselves and starvation for their stock stared them in the face. They could not pick up and go back – the rivers were dry from the Rio Grande to the Brazos – the earth was iron, and the heavens brass; cattle wandered at will for water and feed, and their bones whitened the plains.

These were poor little peoples. They tried to make the great State know of their distress, but the rich railroad proprietors held the *press*, and no one knew their condition or could get correct information. At length a faithful clergyman came to Washington, to President Cleveland, and the Red Cross.

We consulted with the President, who gave encouragement for us to go to Texas and learn the facts.

In mid-winter, 1886, accompanied by Dr. Hubbell, the journey was undertaken. We proceeded to Albany, Texas, made headquarters – traveled over the stricken counties, found wretchedness, hunger, thirst, cold, heart-breaking discouragement. The third year of drought was upon them, and the good people of that great State, misled by its press, its press in turn misled by the speculators, innocently discredited every report of distress, and amused themselves by little sly innuendoes and witty jokes on the "Texas Famine."

The condition was pitiful. To them it was hopeless. And yet not a dollar or a pound was needed outside of Texas. They only required to know the truth. This then was our task. We ceased to journey over arid fields of suffering, and turned our steps resolutely to the editorial rooms of the Dallas and Galveston News, at Dallas. Both editors were present; both sat half-breathless while the flood of information rolled over them in no uncertain terms.

I shall never forget the tears in the mild blue eyes of General Belo, as he learned what he had done, and was still doing. Twelve hours brought another issue of the two papers. A column of editorial told the true situation. A modest contribution of the Red Cross headed a subscription list, General Belo following with his, and almost immediately the legislature made an appropriation of one hundred thousand dollars for food and supplies.

The tender-hearted and conscience-smitten people sent their donations. Our task was done. We had seen and conquered.

In the midst of a cold rain in February we reached Washington. A concise and full report was made to President Cleveland, saying in conclusion: "I thank you with all my heart, Mr. President, for the encouragement at the commencement, and for the privilege of writing you. We have done this little bit of work faithfully and hope it may meet your approval."

President Cleveland's letter of thanks still bears testimony of his care for the people of the country, and his faith in its institutions.

Not a dollar of outside help passed through our hands, but the little permanent provision was equal to the occasion and we had still a half left of our three thousand dollars. That was our first acquaintance with Texas. Galveston followed many years later with the same firm accord and good results. The bonds of affection had grown deep and strong between the great thousand-mile State and the little Red Cross that loved to serve her.

In the following year, 1887, we were notified by the International Committee of Geneva of the conference to be held at Carlsruhe, by invitation of the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Baden. We were directed to inform the Department of State of this fact. We did so, and an appropriation was made by Congress to defray the expenses of three delegates.

It may be well to explain that in these appointments the Government does not place the appropriation in the hands of the appointees, but simply becomes a guaranty. The appointee provides his own funds. If, after return, vouchers can be shown that the sum guaranteed has been spent according to regulations, he is reimbursed in due course.

Here was at least a contrast from a rough Mississippi River boat and the crude homes of an unsettled Western State, to the royal carriage waiting to convey one to the apartments reserved in a palace, the elegance and culture of a court, the precision of a congress of representatives of the nations of the world. The questions of humanity discussed by them, the meeting of friends of other days, the regal bearing of the royal host and hostess, the last parting from the dear old Emperor of ninety-two, and his tenderly spoken, "It is the last time, good-by"; the loving and last farewell of the beloved Empress Augusta, the patron saint of the Red Cross; Bismarck and Moltke, in review, each with his Red Cross insignia; the cordial hand grasp and the farewell never repeated – and all of this attention to and interest in a subject that the country I had gone to represent scarcely realized had an existence beyond the receiving of some second-hand clothing, misfit shoes, and a little money sent by some one to some place, where something bad had happened.

No one dreamed that it meant anything more, or that it needed anything after this, and nothing more was done.

It is only now, after almost two decades and within the last three months, that we commence to awaken and wonder, with a mingled national and personal sense of indignation, why our American Red Cross is not as rich and great as in other nations?

In February, 1888, occurred the Mt. Vernon, Ill., cyclone, cutting a broad swath through one-half of the beautiful county-seat, tearing down all heavy buildings, picking up the lighter ones and sweeping them along like cardboard.

In three minutes the work of destruction was over. Ten minutes later the sun shone out brightly over the ruins of the town, the wails of the maimed and dying, and the lifeless bodies of the dead.

Fires broke out on every hand, and the victims pinned down under the wreckage were subjects for the flames. Appeals for assistance went out, but by unfortunate press representation failed to arouse the public, till after several days, when we were reached, through their representative in Congress, begging that in mercy we go to them. We arrived in the night, found homes destroyed, hospitals full, scant medical care, few nurses, food scarce and no money, a relief committee of excellent men, but little to distribute.

At daylight we looked over the situation and sent this simple message to the Associated Press:

> "The pitiless snow is falling on the heads of three thousand people, who are without homes, without food or clothing, and without money.
> *"American National Red Cross,*
> *"Clara Barton, President."*

This was all. We assisted their relief committee to arrange for the receipt and distribution of funds, sent for experienced helpers to take charge of supplies, to distribute clothing, and aid the hospital service. We remained two weeks, and left them with more supplies than they knew how to

distribute, and the Citizens' Committee, with accumulating cash in its treasury of ninety thousand dollars, full of hope, life, and a gratitude they could not speak.

As in the Texas famine, we paid our own expenses and no dollar but our own had passed our hands. We were only glad to do this, in the hope that we were building up an institution of self-help of the people, that would one day win its way to their favor and aid.

III
YELLOW FEVER IN FLORIDA

During the same year the yellow fever broke out in Jacksonville, Fla., and was declared epidemic in September.

An arrangement had been made between the National Association and the Auxiliary Society of the Red Cross of New Orleans, which society embraced the famous old "Howard Association," that, in case of an outbreak of yellow fever, they would send their immune nurses from the South, and we of the North would supply the money to support and pay them.

This arrangement was carried out so far as could be, under the very natural differences of a medical department of active, professional men, taking up the treatment of an epidemic of which they knew very little experimentally, but filled with the enthusiasm of science and hope, and the unprofessional, fearless, easy-going gait of the old Southern nurses, white and black, whose whole lives had been spent in just that work.

The Red Cross sent no Northern nurses. But eighteen or twenty "Howard nurses," mainly colored, went out from New Orleans under charge of Col. Fred. F. Southmayd, their leader of twenty years in epidemics. A part of his nurses were stationed at Macclenny, and a part went on to Jacksonville. Under medical direction of their noted "yellow fever doctor" – a tall Norwegian – Dr. Gill, they did their faithful work and won their meed of grateful praise.

Our place was in Washington, to receive, deal carefully with, and hold back the tide of offered service from the hundreds of enthusiastic, excited untrained volunteers, rushing on to danger and death. Their fearless ignorance was a pitiful lesson. In all the hundreds there was scarcely one who had ever seen a case of yellow fever, but all were sure they were proof against it. Only three passed us, and two of these had the fever in Jacksonville.

When the scourge was ended we met our nurses personally at Camp Perry, paid and sent them back to New Orleans. All that are living are at our service still, faithful and true.

During the fourth week in November a dispatch to national headquarters announced that the last band of Red Cross nurses, known as the "Macclenny Nurses," had finished their work at Enterprise, and would come into Camp Perry to wait their ten days' quarantine and go home to New Orleans for Thanksgiving.

That would mean that seventy-nine days ago their little company of eighteen, mainly women, steaming on to Jacksonville, under guidance of their old-time trusted leader, Southmayd, of New Orleans, listened to his announcement that the town of Macclenny, thirty-eight miles from Jacksonville, Fla., and through which they would soon pass, was in a fearful state of distress; a comparatively new town, of a few thousand, largely Northern and Western people, suddenly-stricken down in scores; poor, helpless, physicians all ill, and no nurses; quarantined on all sides, no food, medicine, nor comforts for sick or well.

"Nurses, shall I leave a part of you there; the train can not stop in, nor near the town, but if I can manage to get it slowed up somewhere, will you jump?"

"We will do anything you say, colonel; we are here in God's name and service to help His people; for Him, for you, and for the Red Cross, we will do our best and our all."

"Conductor, you had a hot box a few miles back; don't you think it should be looked to after passing Macclenny?"

"I will slow up and have it seen to, colonel, although it may cost me my official head." And it did.

One mile beyond town, the rain pouring in torrents, the ground soaked, slippery, and caving, out into pitchy darkness, leaped three men and seven women from a puffing, unsteady train, no physician with them, and no instructions save the charge of their leader as the last leap was made, and the train

pushed on: "Nurses, you know what to do; go and do your best, and God help you." Hand to hand, that none go astray in the darkness, they hobbled back over a mile of slippery cross-ties to the stricken town. Shelter was found, the wet clothes dried, and at midnight the sick had been parceled out, each nurse had his or her quota of patients, and were in for the issue, be it life or death. Those past all help must be seen through, and lost, all that could be must be saved. The next day a dispatch from Southmayd went back to New Orleans for Dr. Gill to come and take charge of the sick and the nurses at Macclenny. It was done, and under his wise direction they found again a leader. Their labors and successes are matters for later and more extended record.

It is to be borne in mind that these nurses found no general table, no table at all but such as they could provide, find the food for, and cook for themselves, for the sick, the children, and the old and helpless who had escaped the fever and must be cared for. No patient could be left till the crisis was passed, and many are their records of seventy-two hours without change or sleep or scarcely sitting down. As the disease gradually succumbed to their watchful care, experience, and skill, they reached out to other freshly attacked towns and hamlets. Sanderson and Glen St. Mary's became their charge, and return their blessings for lives preserved.

On November 1st it was thought they could safely leave and go into camp for quarantine; but no regular train would be permitted to take them. The Red Cross secured and paid a special train for them, and, as if in bold relief against the manner of their entry seven weeks before, the entire town, saving its invalids, was assembled at the station at seven o'clock in the morning to bid them good-by and God speed.

But their fame had gone before them, and "Enterprise," a hundred miles below, just stricken down among its flowers and fruits, reached out its hands for aid, and with one accord, after two days in camp, all turned back from the coveted home and needed rest and added another month of toil to their already weary record. At length this was ended, and word came again to us that they would go into quarantine. Their unselfish, faithful, and successful record demanded something more than the mere sending of money. It deserved the thanks of the Red Cross organization in the best and highest manner in which they could be bestowed; it was decided that its President, in person, should most fittingly do this, and I accordingly left Washington on the morning of November 22d in company with Dr. Hubbell, field agent, for Camp Perry, the quarantine station of Florida. Two days and one night by rail, a few miles across country by wagon, where trains were forbidden to stop, and another mile or so over the trestles of St. Mary's on a dirt car with the workmen, brought us into camp as the evening fires were lighted and the bugle sounded supper. The genial surgeon in charge, Dr. Hutton, who carried a knapsack and musket in an Illinois regiment in '62, met us cordially and extended every possible hospitality. Soon there filed past us to supper the tall doctor and his little flock; some light and fair-skinned, with the easy step of a well-bred lady, others dark and bony-handed, but the strong, kind faces below the turbans told at a glance that you could trust your life there and find it again. They were not disturbed that night, and no certain information of our arrival got among them. It was cold and windy, and the evening short, as nine o'clock brought taps and lights out. In spite of all caution the news of our coming had spread over the surrounding country, and telegrams bringing both thanks for what had been received and the needs for more, came from all sides, and the good Mayor of Macclenny made his troubled way to reach and greet us in person, and take again the faithful hands that had served and saved his people.

Surgeon Hutton's headquarter tent was politely tendered for the first meeting, and as one could never, while memory lasts, forget this scene, so no words can ever adequately describe it. The ample tent was filled. Here on the right the Mayor, broad shouldered, kind faced and efficient, officers of camp, and many visitors, wondering what it all meant; in the center the tall doctor and his faithful band – Eliza Lanier, Lena Seymour (mother and daughter), Elizabeth Eastman, Harriet Schmidt, Lizzie Louis, Rebecca Vidal, Annie Evans, Arthur Duteil, Frederick Wilson, and Edward Holyland.

I give these names because they are worthy a place in the history of any epidemic; but no country, race, nor creed could claim them as a body: four Americans, one German, one French, one Irish, three Africans, part Protestant, and part Catholic, but all from New Orleans, of grand old *Howard* stock, from Memphis down, nursing in every epidemic from the bayous of the Mississippi to Tampa Bay; and hereafter we will know them as the "*Old Guard*."

Here, in the winds of approaching winter they stand in the light garb of early September in New Orleans, thin, worn, longing for home, but patient, grateful, and glad, some trifling "nubia" or turban about the head, but only one distinguishing feature in common. A pitiful little misshapen Red Cross, made by their own hands, of two bits of scarlet ribbon, soiled, fringed, and tattered, pinned closely upon the left breast of each, strove in mute appeal to say who they were, and what they served. A friendly recognition and some words of thanks from their President, opened the way for those anxious to follow. The rich, warm eloquence of Mayor Watkins plainly told from how near his heart the stream of gratitude was flowing, and his manly voice trembled as he reverted to the condition of his stricken people, on that pitiless night, when this little band of pilgrim strangers strayed back to them in the rain and darkness. "I fear they often worked in hunger," he said, "for then, as now, we had little for ourselves, our sick, or our well; but they brought us to our feet, and the blessing of every man, woman, and child in Macclenny is on them."

It was with a kind of paternal pride that Dr. Gill advanced and placed before us his matchless record of cases attended, and life preserved. "This is the record of our work," he said. "I am proud of it, and glad that I have been able to make it, but without the best efforts of these faithful nurses I could not have done it; they have stood firm through everything; not a word of complaint from, nor of, one of them, in all these trying months, and I thank you, our President, for this opportunity to testify to their merits in your presence." The full cups overflowed, and as we took each brown calloused hand in ours, and felt the warm tears dropping over them, we realized how far from calloused were the hearts behind them. The silence that followed was a season of prayer.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.