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THE RED CROSS. From Solferino to Adowa.

(Review of Reviews).

Solferino is little more than a name to the average educated Englishman. At most it evokes vague text-book recollections of the war between Austria on the one side and France and Sardinia on the other, and of one of the bloodiest battles of the nineteenth century.

It is probable that Dunant is not even a name to the majority of Englishmen. Yet the name of Dunant, coupled with that of Solferino, is the root from which one of the most familiar organisations of our day sprang — the Red Cross.

Dunant was a Swiss doctor who was travelling in Italy during the war against Austria. Chance took him to Solferino on the day of the great battle. He saw forty thousand soldiers left dead on the battlefield. He also saw that the number of the dead would have been greatly reduced but for the lack of the most elementary medical attention.

With the groans of the wounded still in his ears, Dunant returned to his home at Geneva. Three years later he published a pamphlet, *Un Souvenir de Solferino*, in which he described the horrors of the battlefield to his countrymen. In conclusion he put forward suggestions for combating the horror. Many volunteers, he was convinced, would give their services to the relief of the sick and wounded in time of war. It was only necessary to train them to their work in time of peace. Above all, this aid must be entirely neutral. He hoped that one day the armies of the world would "agree upon some sacred international principle which would serve as the basis for the creation of societies for the aid of the wounded in the different European countries."

There was in Geneva at this time a Society of Public Utility. Its president at once saw the importance of Dunant's proposals. The society nominated a commission to work out the details of the scheme in cooperation with Dunant. It is now a habit to sneer at Geneva's endless committees and commissions. It is worth remembering that the members of this original commission became later the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The commission drew up a draft agreement. The object of the agreement was, through the medium of national committees, to enlist volunteer medical services in aid of the regular army provision. After a preliminary international meeting had been summoned in 1863, the Swiss Government was a year later induced to summon a diplomatic conference at which twenty-six nations were represented, among them England, where Florence Nightingale actively aided the movement.

The result of this conference was the Convention of Geneva, a covenant that has on the whole been faithfully observed. It gave the Red Cross a recognised status in international law. Medical attention was henceforth to be neutral, its ministers and its stores inviolate. Dunant's "sacred international principle" had received its recognition.

The symbol of the organisation bears witness to its Swiss origin. The arms of Switzerland are an equal armed white cross on a red background. The flag adopted for the new organisation was an equal armed red cross on a field of white.

War demands did not claim the entire attention of the Red Cross. Dunant, in the third edition of his pamphlet, developed his ideas in relation to natural catastrophes, such as floods, earthquakes and pestilence. But, unhappily, it is on the field of battle that the Red Cross has found the greatest scope for its activities.

The case of Great Britain is an illuminating illustration. Although working under the powerful patronage of the War Office, the Red Cross found small scope for work before the War. The British standing army was small, and its medical service efficient. With the formation of the Territorial forces the situation changed. The British Red Cross Society was invited to form Voluntary Aid Departments for service in connection with the Territorials. When war broke out in 1914 the V.A.D.'s had over 2,000 departments and 70,000 workers. By the time of the Armistice the departments numbered 4,000, and the personnel 125,000.

The work of the various national committees during the war was centralised in an international agency with a staff of two thousand. This agency handled from 2,000 to 15,000 letters a day. The index of requests for information by the end of the War numbered over 5,000,000 cards. Missing men were traced, prisoners were assisted and civilians evacuated from occupied areas. Regular visits were made to over five hundred internment camps. The agency distributed in cash something approaching a £1,000,000.

The sums collected in the individual countries were enormous. No voluntary collection in

England has ever reached the figure collected for the Red Cross during the war. *The Times* fund reached a figure of £16,500,000, which included special efforts, "Our Day" collections and others. The farmers sent a million pounds, the coal industry half that sum. Sales of pictures and jewellery at Christie's amounted to over £300,000. Sums received from individuals ranged from threepence to £25,000.

At the end of the Great War the greatest of all charitable institutions reaped the highest of rewards. Its work was duly recognised in the document that became the foundation of the League of Nations. Article 25 of the Covenant says "that the Members of the League agree to encourage and promote the establishment of duly authorised voluntary National Red Cross organisations having as purposes the improvement of Health, the Prevention of Disease and the Relief of Suffering throughout the world."

Since the War the Red Cross has been for the most part absorbed in peacetime activities. Maternity and child welfare receive attention in the Red Cross Welfare centres. Outpost hospitals have been provided in Australia for the benefit of farmers who live too far from the towns to receive adequate medical attention. Mosquito-breeding swamps have been drained, and sufferers from malaria provided with sufficient quantities of quinine.

Vapour baths have been developed in Scandinavia, and mud baths in Latvia and Estonia. The Polish Red Cross has paid special attention to an ophthalmic disease known as trachoma, and the Belgian branch has done fine work in checking leprosy in the Congo basin.

Disease does not furnish the Red Cross with its only peace time activity. There was the great earthquake that wrecked Tokyo and the floods that inundated the Mississippi valley. In countries such as these, where earthquakes and cyclones are common, the organisation has to maintain its equipment in a high degree of preparedness, ready to move to the scene of the disaster as soon as the news comes over the wireless or telegraph.

Recently, the Red Cross has extended its activities to the air. In remote parts of the world, such as Siam and Lapland, where sufferers are separated from hospitals by wide belts of ice and forest, airplanes are used to bridge the distance between the sickbed and the sanatorium.

The great stimulus of the World War has not been allowed to evaporate. There were thirty-two Red Cross Societies at the end of the War. There are now over sixty.

Now the peacetime activities of the Red Cross have once more been interrupted.

A PROPOS.

One reads in the Swiss Press that a meeting has taken place at Lucerne, in order to discuss matters in relation to the next Federal Shooting Competition which will take place in 1939 in that town.

It is reported that nearly 900 persons were present at that meeting, amongst them high officials of the town and cantonal administration; representatives of the Hotel industry and various other industries, etc., etc. —

Judging from the Swiss Daily Papers, things in Switzerland are none too prosperous, one reads of huge deficits in the Federal, Cantonal and Municipal administrations; the balance sheets of hitherto prosperous industrial concerns make unpleasant reading. Banks, which at one time were considered to be 100 per cent. safe, have closed their doors or had to apply for a moratorium; in general the position must be viewed with great concern. The Hotel industry, in spite of a temporary revival, is in a sorry plight. The Swiss Federal Railways are piling up their losses by millions; in short the crisis seems to be still in the ascendant, judging from the serious unemployment figures just published by the Federal authorities. —

And yet, would you believe it!; 900 of our valiant countrymen are exerting their brains and their energies, not to find out ways and means to combat the crisis with its serious consequences; oh no!; they have assembled merely to discuss with patriotic thoroughness a Festival which is supposed to take place four years hence. —

Lucky land, where everything can go to wrack and ruin, as long as flags can be waved and speeches be made at some festival or other. Optimism is after all a fine thing.

ST.

HOWLER.

"The Matterhorn was a horn blown by the ancients when anything was the matter."

OVER THE AIR.

(Reported from one of our Readers).

A demonstration of the use of the long distance telephone had been arranged between the Federal and the London Telephone Services for a Conference of Secondary School-teachers at Winterthur. A Swiss gentleman resident in London for very many years was invited to speak to the Conference from the studio of the London Foreign Trunk Exchange. A lively conversation, perfectly audible to the assembly, was kept up with London by the chairman and a number of participants including two school children, in the course of which the loudspeaker at Winterthur delivered the following message:—

"We Swiss abroad remain Swiss, but we also make good citizens for the country of our adoption. This is perhaps particularly the case in England, where we enjoy personal liberty as pronounced as at home. We do not suffer here from political and religious repression; we are allowed to develop normally and reap the benefit of our industry and knowledge. In these advantages, we recognise the greatness of the English Nation, and we love her almost as we love our native soil."

"The history of the Swiss in England is a great and glorious one; we have given this country of our adoption many great men. We are respected here because of our industry, our integrity, our civic capacity and our ardent love of liberty. It is in fact difficult for us to keep our English-born sons Swiss because they are as ready to serve England as we, their fathers, are ready to serve Switzerland. There is a unity of purpose and outlook in the policies of these two States which links them together closer than all economic ties."

"Sie als Lehrer händ a ganz b'sunderi Verantwortlichkeit für eus Uslandschwyzer. Es liid in Ire Hände, ob di nächst Generation vo der Schwyzer Juged au wider gueti Uslandschwyzer werded. Mir sind über 400 tunsig Schwyzer im Usland; ekonomisch sinmer ja druf a'gwise. Sie müend das im Aug b'halte. Ich känne di hütig Jugederzieg i der Schwyz weniger als die vor ung'fähr 35 Jahre; damals isch si zue theoretisch gsi. Mer händ z'vil g'wüsset, aber käni Auge und käni Ohre meh gla. Und vo Charakter Erzieg isch überhaupt na käi Red gsi; mer hät g'meint Instruction seig Alles."

"Ich möcht Ine gern das as Herz legge:— Gönd Si in erschter Linie uf de Charakter vom Bueb aus; lehred Si en sälsbständig dänke und handle. Nu nid de Chopf überfülle; en g'ehrte-n-Esel chunt nid wiiter als an andere. Es chund ja nid druuf aa ob eine nid wüssi wo Addis Ababa seig, das g'sehd er hüt scho i der Ziitig. Wenn de Bueb t'Schuel verland, mues er chönne uf sinne-n-eigne Beine schtah, sini Auge und Ohre bruuche, und t'Wält neh wie si ischt, nid wie-n-er meint, sie sött si. Dänn häd er Charakter und dänn chömmen er bruuche im Usland. Gälled Si, Si g'sehnd doch ii, dass das vil von Ine-n-abhängend und dass das eini von Ire b'sundere-n-Ufgaabe-n-isch."

SWISS REUNION IN CHELTENHAM.

An interesting reunion of the majority of the Swiss residents of the district took place on Friday, November 15th, at the Technical College, Cheltenham, the occasion being a special Swiss evening organised by the Gloucestershire "Deutscher Sprachklub." Over 60 members and German-speaking friends were present.

The president, Mr. Eustance, in welcoming the visitors, mentioned that with a working knowledge of the German language, interest need not necessarily be confined to Germany, but also to other countries, such as Switzerland, where in certain parts German is the mother-tongue of the people.

Herr A. Tall, of the Swiss Federal Railways' Travel Bureau, London, gave a lecture in German on "Switzerland," illustrated by a magnificent series of lantern slides, most of which were in natural colours.

At the close of his address, the lecturer was heartily applauded, a vote of thanks being accorded by Miss Gwyneth Key, of Worcester. An evening of outstanding interest was concluded by the singing of German folk-songs, accompanied by the club's musical director, Mr. T. W. Llewellyn.



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— TO MR. & MRS. STRAUMANN. —