

## B O O K S

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### DIE ZWEITE WENDE IM LEBEN HENRY DUNANTS<sup>1</sup> 1892-1897

The sub-title of this book is : " Correspondence between Henry Dunant and the Winterthur Section of the Red Cross ". It is an interesting contribution to our knowledge of the later years of Henry Dunant's life ; there are almost ninety letters reproduced in the book, nearly all of them unpublished and most of them written by Dunant himself or by his correspondent, Mr. Johan Pfister, then Secretary to the Winterthur Section of the Swiss Red Cross. These valuable documents cover the period from 1892 to 1897 and were left by Mr. Pfister. They were given by his sister to the Winterthur Public Library in 1949. Other documents reproduced were provided by the Public Library and the University of Geneva, by the Henry Dunant Archives, collected in Gelsenkirchen by Dr. Manfred-Muller, and by public and private collections in Winterthur.

These documents were assembled and commented on by Mr. Emmanuel Dejung in co-operation with Mr. Gustav Siebenmann. They enable us to follow Dunant in France and Germany, where, " weary from his life as an outcast, demoralized by the time he spent in homes and waiting-rooms " he finished up, after having touched the depth of misery, at Heiden in the canton of Appenzell. At that time, he had become a rebel who turned away from all that he had honoured earlier. But it was there at Heiden, shortly before his end, when " he was completely resigned, and expecting nothing from anyone ", that a warm current of gratitude brought him a just and moving recompense. Several friends, including Muller in Germany and Daae in Norway, intervened on his behalf, as related by Mr. Willy Heudtlass in his book on Dunant, of which an account was given in a previous issue of the *International Review*.

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<sup>1</sup> 294. Neujahrsblatt der Stadtbibliothek Winterthur, 1963, 208 pp.

However, the change of circumstances in Dunant's life came about, says Mr. Dejung, as a result of the selfless activity of a group of men from Winterthur and of the Red Cross in that town, particularly of that great admirer of Dunant's, Mr. Pfister, its Secretary, who was, "the real driving force behind the disinterested activity which was to result in the due recognition of the founder of the Red Cross. . ." and who "enjoyed Dunant's entire confidence."

Nothing could have lightened the old man's burden of grief more than a resumption of contact with the Red Cross. The honour of bringing this about fell to the Winterthur Section. It first of all set up a "Dunant Commission" (comprising several personalities of the country, including Mr. Pfister), which had the idea of sending to the author of *A Memory of Solferino* the Annual Report of the Winterthur Section and Berta von Suttner's book "Die Waffen nieder". The spell of isolation was suddenly broken and at the same time Dunant's retirement into his shell and his bitterness were dissipated. His first letter, written on June 25, 1892, in response to being sent these books, does indeed express a gesture of confidence: "Gentlemen", he says "it is with sincere gratitude that I reply to your esteemed letter of the 24th inst., received today, in order to thank you and to tell you how greatly touched I was by your kind thought . . ." He immediately wanted to forge a closer link with the Winterthur Section and wrote: ". . . I would therefore be happy and honoured if you would be so good as to grant me the title of 'honorary member' of your Winterthur Society; if this were possible, it would be a further connection with your Committee. . ." This request was immediately granted by a resolution of the Committee reading "The Committee of the Winterthur Red Cross has the great honour to record that Mr. Henry Dunant, author of "Souvenirs de Solferino", promoter of the Geneva Convention and of the International Red Cross has today been unanimously elected First Honorary Member of this Society.

The President :

The Secretary : J. Pfister."

The regular correspondence which followed constitutes the subject of this book. Indeed, Henry Dunant had come to a turning point in his life : his confidence in his work was renewed. This he showed by his lucid advice, his excellent suggestions and the interest with which he followed the activities of the Winterthur and other Societies of the Red Cross.

But moral support needs support of another kind : financial. At the time when the movement for his rehabilitation was begun, Henry Dunant was destitute. With remarkable spirit the Winterthur Section left no stone unturned in order to bring him assistance ; it organized subscriptions, appeals in Switzerland and abroad, it tried to set up a Dunant International Foundation (which failed) it addressed requests to private benefactors. In order to lend strength and effectiveness to its efforts, Winterthur proposed Dunant's nomination for honorary membership of the Swiss Central Committee of the Red Cross following on a similar tribute paid to him by the Alliance Suisse des Samaritains and later by the German Samaritan Society.

After many disappointments this campaign finally met with success even abroad. The Stuttgart " Dunant Committee " alone collected twenty-five thousand Swiss francs ; the Empress Maria Feodorovna made him a yearly allowance from 1897 of 3,000 Swiss francs ; numerous tributes were paid to him by letter, notably from Pope Leo XIII ; and finally in 1901 the first Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to him jointly with the Frenchman Passy.

Dunant wrote many letters expressing his thanks to the Winterthur Red Cross and particularly to Mr. Pfister. He wrote to the latter in 1897 : " I am always delighted to see the Winterthur stamp and to recognize your handwriting on an envelope. But today, I was particularly moved by the contents of your letter of the 28th inst. which proves that I have not been forgotten in your town and that you are still as well disposed towards me as formerly. I thank you warmly and in a few lines intended for your President, I would add here a special word of thanks to the Secretary of the Winterthur Section (Editor's note : i.e. Mr. Pfister): I shall not forget that it is to his sense of justice and equity that I owe a great deal and the awakening of opinion in Switzerland in my

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favour, an awakening which has spread throughout Europe and beyond."

But Dunant also wanted to disseminate his ideas and his Winterthur friends worked for that aim. Once more the major part of the task was borne by Mr. Pfister when the Winterthur Society published in its annual report a general survey of the developments of the Red Cross and of the Alliance des Samaritains in various countries. Mr. Dejung writes: "He received so many documents and suggestions that he was almost overwhelmed by the task, the more so as Dunant relied on him entirely for the composition and editing."

In his letter of August 3, 1894, it was in the following terms that Dunant acknowledged what this handful of men had done on his behalf: "I have suffered so much for the last twenty-seven years or more, that you could hardly believe to what extent I am moved by your kindness and persevering goodwill, which I have been shown in Winterthur."

Henry Dunant's last letter, dated May 6, 1906, was addressed to Mrs. Pfister. It was a letter of condolence, for her husband had just died. Dunant was deeply grieved and he did not hide his emotion; but he concluded with a hopeful thought: "I am grateful that I shall be able to recall his memory for the short time left to me to live; but I firmly believe that I shall meet him in a better and happier world—even though I have never seen him in this one." This book throws light on a fine man, a generous and true friend to Dunant.

*J. Z.*