

V. K. LIBBY : HENRY DUNANT, PROPHET OF PEACE ¹

This new biography of the author of *A Memory of Solferino*, which has just appeared in the United States, is written in a lively and incisive manner by Mrs. Violet Kelway Libby. Well presented, the work is much enhanced by illustrations, a list of sources and a comprehensive index.

As the author demonstrates, the spirit of Henry Dunant was resolutely turned towards the future. The message which he brought to a world torn apart by a succession of wars had ripened during the years of suffering. It is all the more valuable for that.

By way of introduction, Mrs. Libby paints a historical picture of Geneva of the 19th Century and many personalities enliven the scene, such as Mrs. Eynard, Countess Gasparin, Dunant's mother and other warm-hearted women who devoted their time in those days to works of assistance. Later, Dunant himself became a pioneer of international co-operation in many spheres. His ideas were bold but constructive and he knew how to be realistic in his enthusiasm.

In spite of every obstacle, he kept an inextinguishable faith in the power of human fellowship. History was to prove him right and the universal development of the Red Cross movement is the best proof of this. Furthermore, the Geneva Conventions affirm the spirit of peace in the midst of war itself.

Mrs. Libby does not conceal the differences which existed between Dunant and Moynier and which led to a break in their relations, immediately after the first International Conference of the Red Cross in Paris, in 1867. Their characters were indeed fundamentally different. Whilst Moynier, as a conscientious and prudent builder, wanted to raise the institution on narrow and solid foundations before going further, Dunant showed himself to be a prophet. He could see afar a world of peace and he imagined it established and defended by universal associations destined to spread culture and promote a spirit of understanding amongst men.

The author has had the privilege of having had access to intimate correspondence which Dunant exchanged with those close to him until the day of his death. Mrs. Libby has, on the other

¹ Pageant Press, Inc. New York, 1964, 378 p.

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hand, splendidly recreated the particular climate then prevailing, which alone can explain the disappointments of the founder of the Red Cross, and why the visionary which he was had to expatriate himself. Finally, she recalls what the award of the first Nobel Peace Prize represented and that Dunant never lacked the affection of his own family or of his few friends. Mrs. Libby is therefore right in concluding her excellent work with the words which Clara Barton wrote to the "prophet of peace": "None of us living today will ever comprehend the full value of the thought you gave to the warring world; but if the seed is sown somewhere and garnered in other fields by reapers yet unborn, its worth is all the greater, and in centuries to come the name of Henry Dunant will be written higher in the scroll and in broader letters than today."

M. I.

G. DEL VECCHIO: « HUMANITÉ ET UNITÉ DE DROIT »¹

Professor Giorgio Del Vecchio, former Rector of Rome University, has published under this title a series of essays on legal philosophy with conclusions which included a tribute of praise to the Red Cross idea.

These studies are of general interest, for they broach such problems as "The bases of comparative law and basic legal principles" and "The rights of man". Of special interest to us, however, is the section dealing with "The history of the Red Cross" and "The problem of peace and war in modern times".

The author recalls the fundamental importance of Rousseau's ideas for the establishment of humanitarian law. Apart from the writings of the philosopher of Geneva and the work of another Genevese citizen, Henry Dunant, after the battle of Solferino, he describes the merits of another precursor of the Red Cross, Ferdinando Palasciano, who was born in 1815 at Capone and who was "the first to realize the necessity of a genuinely technically effective and legally recognized medical organization for assistance to the war wounded".

¹ Librairie générale de droit et de jurisprudence, Paris, 1963, 312 p.