

# B O O K S

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TO ALL MEN<sup>1</sup>

by

McKENZIE PORTER

With its lively contents and its appearance of quiet distinction, this book, published recently under the auspices of the Canadian Red Cross, is bound to attract attention. It is illustrated with four remarkable drawings by four Canadian artists and bears the subtitle "The Story of the Canadian Red Cross".

In this work, the author, Mr. McKenzie Porter, a Toronto journalist, has attempted to introduce the work of the Canadian Red Cross to the general public—not by means of a long description of the numerous activities which a National Society must perform, but rather in the form of a commentary on various episodes, which the author chooses, not for the spectacular effect they produce, but for their particularly human and real-life character. Moreover, the whole work is enlivened by the fast-moving and at times allusive style which the author uses in order to confront his readers with reality, thus stressing the urgent character which so often marks Red Cross action.

We also find this descriptive and concise style in the introductory passage: "A child is crushed beneath the wheels of a truck, and blood transfusions spell the difference between life and death. Families are separated by wars and revolutions, and are joyously reunited months or even years afterward. Flood waters inundate the city of Winnipeg, and the inhabitants are moved to safety while men frantically build dykes to hold back the raging river... The *S.S. Noronic* burns at its dock in Toronto and presents the horrifying and sometimes macabre task of identifying the charred

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<sup>1</sup> McClelland & Stewart Limited, Canada, 1960.

remains of the victims . . ." and so on. Thus we find some of the principal tasks which a National Society has built up over the years : blood transfusions, reuniting of families, relief action in the event of disasters and many others.

In the short preface, tribute is paid to the principles of the Red Cross in general and the Canadian Red Cross in particular : " Experience of the Society's development and activities over the last forty or more years convinces me of the validity of its underlying principles. Foremost among these is a sense of the paramount value of the individual suffering human being. To his assistance the Canadian Red Cross has mobilized volunteer effort inspired by brotherly charity. Thus . . . the Society has been able to play a worthy part in the world-wide Red Cross movement to which all nations subscribe, irrespective of race, colour, creed or political belief, with the object of providing relief for suffering on the basis of need alone ".

The book also includes a foreword by the author, in which he emphasizes, first of all, the anonymous character of Red Cross work : " The Canadian Red Cross Society is a team ". " If you mention Jack at this point, you ought to mention Jill ", the author was often told—a fact that soon became evident, but which was clearly opposed to this idea of anonymity. Further on he explains how he has dealt with the subject : " . . . in selecting material from the enormous reservoir of publications, reports, letters, surveys, newspaper clippings and other documents in the Society's archives, I have attempted to crystallize by the anecdote, by the single incident, by a given individual's act, a record of service that one day, perhaps, will find a fuller and more worthy treatment in several volumes." He concludes this foreword by reminding readers that the Canadian Red Cross Society, in alleviating distress, calls upon its public not only for money but, literally, for blood and sweat, that is, for an active, physical and material co-operation on behalf of those who are most in need.

As we already mentioned, this book consists of a series of episodes which illustrate most vividly some of the tragic situations in which the Canadian Red Cross has had to step in and carry out its traditional work.

The first two chapters, however, are an exception. The first, entitled "The Man in White", which is illustrated by one of the remarkable drawings mentioned above, is a biography of Henry Dunant and also describes the other personalities and events which led to the creation of the Red Cross.

The second chapter is devoted to the founder of the Canadian Red Cross, the first follower of Dunant in Canada, Dr. George Sterling Ryerson of Toronto. Dr. Ryerson served as a surgeon to the Tenth Royals, a local militia regiment. On March 27, 1885 he received an order from his commanding officer to join his regiment the following morning in order to leave for the scene of Louis Niel's Northwest Rebellion. In order to distinguish his horse-drawn wagon carrying the medical supplies from ordinary transport, Dr. Ryerson made a flag of factory cotton on which he sewed a red cross made from bits of bunting which he had taken from the quartermaster's stores. "This was the first red cross flown in Canada!" wrote Dr. Ryerson. That was the moving and modest beginning of a future rich in humanitarian activity.

After long years of struggle, Dr. Ryerson succeeded in establishing the Association of Medical Officers of the Canadian Militia, a forerunner of the Canadian Army Medical Corps. Passing through London the same year, he had several interviews with the President and the Secretary of the British Red Cross, for he had been following the development of this Society with great interest. His object was to submit the proposal that Canada should have a Red Cross Society of its own. The suggestion was brought up at a meeting of the National Council of the British Red Cross Society, which agreed to his request. Thus, in August 1896, Dr. Ryerson received permission to form a Canadian Branch, and in October of the same year the Canadian Red Cross Society was founded under his chairmanship at Toronto; it was the first overseas branch of the British Red Cross. This chapter tells us, therefore, in outline how the Canadian Red Cross was born.

The following chapters of this book show us the new Red Cross Society at work. Under the title "Blood on the Veldt", we find Dr. Ryerson at the head of his Society in South Africa<sup>1</sup>; in 1899

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<sup>1</sup> He did not retire until 1916, during the First World War.

the Boer War had broken out and for the first time the Canadian Red Cross carried out its activity outside its own country, on the scene of the hostilities.

The Canadian Red Cross was of course engaged all through the First World War: "On August 7, 1914, three days after the outbreak of World War One, the Canadian Red Cross Society had ten thousand dollars in the bank, the fruit of careful financing. So small a sum, for so large a job ahead, did not discourage the officers. They dispatched the following telegram to a hundred and eighty local branches throughout Canada: 'Following the declaration of war the Society has resumed activities. Call together your committees and arrange for the collection of funds for the relief of Canadian and British sick and wounded'. . . . On August 21 the following cable was sent to the British Red Cross Society: 'The Canadian Red Cross Society is thoroughly organized and is establishing branches throughout Canada. Please advise fully by cable in what way we can best help as to men, nurses, hospitals, material or money'" It is a fine example of spontaneous solidarity and the whole book consists in a series of such examples. The author describes with striking realism the work carried out by this Red Cross Society in the chaos of suffering and distress brought about by the two World Wars and numerous other disasters. The episodes which the author chooses as examples always reveal that magnificent spontaneity, that immediate wish to help which is the characteristic feature of all true members of a Red Cross Society.

Mr. McKenzie Porter has not forgotten the Juniors and, as is his habit, he opens the chapter devoted to them with a charming episode by which he shows that the young people in Canada already began to "do their bit" to help our movement a very long time ago. Watching her mother, neighbours and relations knit socks to be sent to the front in South Africa during the Boer War, a teen-age school-girl in a little town in Ontario had the idea of following their example; soon all the girls were knitting socks, while the boys made up the parcels. The author sees in this modest and distant action the origin of the Junior Red Cross movement, whose progress he describes up to the present day, as well as the important place it now holds within the Canadian Red Cross Society.

We cannot go in more detail into the contents of this interesting work. Let us add, however, that if it illustrates the growth of a National Red Cross Society, it also proves that a spirit of generosity and mutual aid can perform wonders and that it is these wonders which justify the very existence of our movement.

J. Z.

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EINER GEGEN ALLE <sup>1</sup>

by

GERHARD SIMSON

This book consists of biographical portraits of five men whose lives were a bitter struggle to assert their ethical ideas: Christian Thomasius was the man who overcame the belief in witches, Georges Picquart won a battle against racial prejudice and from Cesare Lombroso came the notion of crime as predestination, Henry Dunant's story is the tragedy of a friend of mankind, while Fridtjof Nansen's life is the legend of a strong and honest man. Thus, the real interest of this book lies in the way in which the author, by describing men of various callings and different walks of life, succeeds in illustrating his main assertion: that the well-being of mankind can be achieved by ways in which only intelligence and love of justice and humanity count.

Christian Thomasius (1655-1728) spent his life fighting obscurantism. "He threw his profound sense of justice and the whole weight of his enthusiasm and energy into the fight against evil". We shall only mention the names of Picquart and Lombroso here. As for Henry Dunant, numerous articles have appeared in the *Revue internationale* concerning him during the past years, especially recently, on the occasion of the Red Cross Centenary—so many, in fact, that he still and always seems to live among us. However, that in no way diminishes the interest of this book, for

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<sup>1</sup> Verlag C. H. Beck, Munich.