

Following the Arab Language Competition

In the July issue of the Review we recalled that the International Committee, in co-operation with the League, had organised an Arab language competition and we gave the results. This competition, which took place under the auspices of the ICRC radio broadcasts, was a great success. The first prizewinner (who comes from Jerusalem, Jordan) chose as his subject " The Red Cross as an important factor in closer relations between people ", and we think it will be of interest to publish extracts of his essay, which has been translated by the ICRC. This is followed by part of the essay by the 3rd prize-winner (from Gaza, U.A.R.), who chose to write on " Experiences or stories connected with the idea of the Red Crescent and the Red Cross ", and did so in the simple and moving manner which this theme required.

*

To enable the Red Cross to carry out its work as effectively as possible, great privileges were accorded to it during the Second World War. Having succeeded in its tasks, it won universal confidence, which has encouraged the institution's leaders, to continue their great humanitarian work in several fields. However, the aim has always remained the same : to bring immediate aid and protect the life of man suffering. It is clear therefore that the work of the Red Cross strengthens the bonds between people and brings them together for the greatest good of humanity.

This is what the work of this great humanitarian institution consists of :

It is the task of the Red Cross Societies throughout the world, not only to come to the aid of the unfortunate in time of war, but also to offer their services in time of peace. One of their activities is to help the man incapable of earning his living, as a result of illness, for example. It is without doubt, preferable for the community if

the invalid regains his health so that he can work instead of remaining inactive and dependent on other people.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent teach men to live better and to work more productively for society itself. We can say with pride, that the efforts of this organisation in its fight against illness of every description, are of a high order and amongst the most useful to the community. They are in the same vein as social security.

What do the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies do :

- 1) They endeavour to raise the health level of future generations (health education in schools), set up associations of first aid workers who watch over the moral welfare and health of students (the members of the Junior Red Cross and Red Crescent are extremely active throughout the world and they number 55 million in 75 countries).
- 2) They offer material aid in the form of clothing, foodstuffs and even artificial limbs for the disabled.
- 3) They organise publicity campaigns : film shows, distributions to the public of booklets on hygiene and nursing. The Red Cross and Red Crescent, as well as the youth movements, are therefore trying to ensure better health in every part of the world.

Together with the League of Red Cross Societies — which includes the Junior Red Cross — they undertake many important tasks :

- 1) They attach great importance to the development of nursing schools which turn out hundreds of students every year. They have done much to try to ensure that nursing is considered as the most exalted and honourable of the professions.
- 2) They manage convalescent homes, youth camps and hospitals.
- 3) They also aid mobile hospitals which have the job of solving health problems in distant villages, where medical care does not exist.
- 4) They give their support to centres which look after the health of mothers and children and they distribute milk.
- 5) They encourage the setting up of teams of voluntary aids which can assist victims.

- 6) They work for the setting up of free clinics for the poor and they help those whom adverse circumstances have prevented from studying.
- 7) They assist poor children and stateless persons.
- 8) They work unceasingly for the extension of blood banks.

All these are peace time activities. But, they are not the only things that the International Red Cross does. The International Committee carries out various humanitarian activities, the most important of which is to watch over the application of the Geneva Conventions and to make them known in all the countries of the world.

It requires a continual and considerable effort on the part of the Red Cross, to protect the rights and the dignity of mankind. Everyone must learn to respect the rights and the dignity of others, as he defends his own rights and his own thoughts. It is written in the Koran : " Oh men, verily we have created you of a male and a female ; and we have distributed you into nations and tribes that you might know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you, in the sight of God, is the most pious of you. And God is wise and knowing ". (Chapter XLIX, The Inner Apartments. Verse 13). And we read in one of the Hadiths : " All human beings form one family and the nearest to God among them is the one who renders the greatest service to this family ". The Geneva Conventions draw inspiration from these commandments. It is in this way that the fears and insecurity reigning in this world can be abolished.

The Geneva Conventions demand respect for the dignity and equality of men. They can be considered as the practical application of religious laws.

The Geneva Conventions also demand the amelioration of the condition of wounded, sick and prisoners of war at all times. They also require prisoners of war to be treated fairly and to be allowed to look after their own interests. The frequent visits to Algerian internees and prisoners are a fine example of the application of these Conventions.

The United Nations' charter stipulates that we must respect the rights of others if we wish to be accorded the same benefit. This principle is at the basis of a better world and the Geneva

Conventions, under the care of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, draw their inspiration from it.

The work of the Red Cross is like a light which pierces the **darkness** of this world. The proof of this is that, thanks to its intervention, countless families have been resettled in Germany, Palestine and many other places . . .

We can be proud and happy at the work accomplished by the Red Cross. It strengthens the spirit of fellowship and peace among the people of the world. Every country, every individual, needs this institution which is of such great value on the national and international level for old people as well as young, for the poor as well as the rich, for the sick as well as the doctors, for workers as well as students . . .

The Red Cross, the Red Crescent and the Red Lion and Sun, are therefore very important elements in the security of the world. No people, whatever their material means or moral wealth, can do without their services. They are as necessary to man as air and water, above all because their aid is offered to humanity without any racial or religious discrimination.

It can be placed on record that the Red Cross is the only international organisation which has safeguarded, and will continue to safeguard, the principles for which it works without submitting to political, racial or any other influence. It is an important element in the re-inforcement of the bonds of co-operation and friendship between people.

It is clear, from what we have said, that the mission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent is to ensure respect for the human being, to develop a spirit of understanding, tolerance and fellowship in all mankind. It is our duty to praise the great humanitarian work which it is accomplishing in all corners of the world. Its activities are continually developing and today, peoples and governments, as well as individuals, are endeavouring to support its action. Because there is no doubt that every progress that it makes, results in a better understanding of the principles of fellowship and peace among peoples. This conviction enables men to hope for the dawn of a new era. The Red Cross hopes that everything will be done to preserve future generations from the horrors of war and it affirms

its faith in the essential rights of humanity and in the dignity of the human being. It hopes that the peoples of this world will show a greater spirit of tolerance so that they can live together in peace.

Numan ABED AL DAYIM.

*

. . . Suddenly, I found myself in a room surrounded by strange faces. I was extremely afraid at seeing people dressed in white and wearing nurses' caps. One of the nurses came up to me and took my pulse and then I saw that my arm was surrounded by a rubber tube which descended from a rack, and that there was a needle in my arm. It was a horrible sight for me which I shall never forget. I fainted and when I came to, the Doctor said to me " How are you Mustafa ? ". I replied " Alright, thank God, Doctor " and I asked him what had happened to me.

He replied " It is nothing, you are alright ; you must not be afraid, Mustafa ". He closed his eyes a moment and turned his head away. It was then I realised that something serious was happening. I began to tremble and the Doctor tried to comfort me and said : " I hardly know how to tell you this, but I am afraid we will have to amputate your right leg, it is the only way and I am waiting for your reply ".

It was as if I had been struck by lightning and I have no recollection of what happened afterwards. When I came to again the Doctor was standing beside me and he repeated : " We are waiting for your reply, Mustafa ". I replied that I would rather die than be an invalid all my life, dependent on others ; I was not yet 20, I had been sent to prison at the age of 15 and had never had any happiness in my life. " I beg of you, do what you can to avoid that ", I said. His face was sad and he turned away, his eyes filled with tears. I thought about my past. After a silence, he said : " Look, I have done everything I possibly can to find another solution ; if we do not perform this operation, you will soon have gangrene in the leg and you won't have long to live ". Everyone present also urged me to have the operation otherwise my life would be in danger.

Finally, I agreed. I was taken to the operating theatre and given an injection which sent me to sleep. When I awoke, I knew that I only had one leg. I was sad and I began to cry ; the future seemed to hold nothing for me. Shortly afterwards, a policeman entered hurriedly and asked : “ Where is Mustafa ? ”. I signalled to him : then a man entered and came towards me smiling. Kindness and sympathy were reflected in his face. He said : “ I am a Red Cross delegate, I have come to visit you and hear your news ”.

From that moment I felt myself come alive again and I regained my confidence. He spoke to me with such kindness that it was as if I was listening to my brother or my father. I asked him to send a message to my family living in Gaza. Subsequently, he came back three times to see me in prison. He gave the prison director a sum of money which the Red Cross had forwarded to him and which was to pay for my artificial limb. He therefore kept the promise which he made me. I still wait for him as if I was waiting for someone I had not seen for years. He came back to see me and he brought me letters and presents which my family had given to him to give to me.

The Red Cross comes to the aid of all victims. I nearly lost my life in losing a leg, but the Red Cross protected me and helped me. These facts give confidence in the ideal of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which represents great progress in the history of humanity.

Mustafa Obaid FARAHAT.