

THE EARLY YEARS OF THE RED CROSS

The Russians say that one must not go to Tula with a samovar, because it is there that samovars are made. The English avoid taking coals to Newcastle. In the same way, the Dutch would not go to Gouda with a clay pipe. To speak about the Red Cross before an assembly such as this, composed of loyal friends of the International Committee and distinguished servants of the institution, is rather like flying in the face of the wise counsel of so many nations. In such tricky circumstances, I have only one recourse and that is to take refuge in a past as distant as possible. Fortunately, the Centenary which we are celebrating today invites me to do just that. It was in fact a century and a day ago that five gentlemen, as unlike each other as it is possible to be, met together for the first time.

Let us name first of all the old General Guillaume Henri Dufour, the victor of the Sunderbund, a strategist admired throughout Europe. Experienced in the exact sciences, he allied precision of thought to the finest qualities of heart. He presided over this small meeting.

By his side was Henry Dunant, the youngest of the five. He spoke with passion and the others listened, fascinated because it was difficult to resist his charm. Perhaps, though, he was inclined to let his imagination run away with him.

Then there was Gustave Moynier, a philanthropist by profession. He was President of the Public Welfare Society of Geneva and of countless other charitable committees. He was interested in schools, prisons, alcoholism, urbanism and orphans. He always showed great lucidity of intelligence and a highly developed sense of organization.

Two doctors took part in the discussion: Dr. Louis Appia, whose passion was war surgery. In 1848, during the revolutionary movements he had already tended the wounded. In 1859, during

Napoleon IIIrd's war against Austria, he hurried to the military hospitals in the North of Italy. He had written a small work entitled "The Surgeon in the Ambulance". His friends spoke of him as wrapped in byronic gloom and it was said he was a ladies' man.

Dr. Théodore Maunoir, a remarkably fine surgeon, was outstanding for his finesse and his sprightliness. His numerous patients loved him as a friend.

These five pioneers lit a lamp which went one better than Aladdin's, since it gave birth to two giants.

The first is the Red Cross with its ninety National Societies, today grouping more than 157 million members.

The second giant from the lamp of the Committee of five is a paper giant. Its members are the Geneva Conventions, but it is as vigorous as its flesh and blood relative. It is impossible to say how many thousands and millions of men it has saved from death.

The ancestor, the first of these Conventions, is the "Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field", signed in Geneva on August 22, 1864.

It is to this Convention that I would particularly like to draw your attention. We are going to look closely at these provisions to find out what need they meet. We are going to interrogate this Convention as one would do a crystal ball, not to find out the future but to bring to life the events which preceded it. But, let us begin by reading it. This will not take long since it has only ten articles . . .

No, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am not going to read it to you. I cannot after all. I was wrong, it seems, to speak about a crystal ball, because the text is becoming blurred, forms are detaching themselves and pictures are coming into view. Ah ! There is a small carriage moving at top speed ; to the coachman's intense dismay, apparently, since he turns to his passenger and cries : " I am frightened, Mr. Dunant. Mr. Dunant, I am frightened ". " So, you are frightened, my friend, well then, give me the reins and the whip, because we are going to go faster still ". Look, here is a town, I can make out its name : " Castiglione ". What a strange place ! The streets and the squares are packed with wounded soldiers who are losing their blood. There are more men lying down in this town than standing up. Dunant stops, dumb struck. He asks questions and he learns that a big battle has just finished quite near there at Solferino, and he understands why he has been hearing the sound of gun-fire. He climbs the hill and approaches a church : the Chiesa

Maggiore. There were wounded everywhere there as well. A stream of blood flowed down the drain running along the road and did not stop for days and days. Night fell but the heat was still torrid, the air buzzed with thick swarms of flies which stuck to the open wounds in black clusters. The church was full to overflowing. Cries could be heard from all sides : " Water ! " " Doctor ! " " Nurse ! ". But unfortunately they were operating in another church at San Luigi and there were only six doctors to look after 9,000 wounded, which is as good as saying that they were never seen. Dunant was here, there and everywhere, fetching water and bathing wounds. He also listened to the last wishes of men in agony. Often he heard this phrase : " Oh ! Sir, we fought well and now we have been abandoned . . ." Dunant spent several days in this hell, then shaken in his senses as well as in his physical resistance, he returned to Switzerland and spent some time in the mountains to recover.

Once this had been achieved, he returned to Paris where business called, but the scenes which he had witnessed at Castiglione dogged him and obsessed him. After two years he could hold out no longer. He returned to Geneva, shut himself in his room, and with an inspired pen wrote an extraordinary book : " A Memory of Solferino ".

" It is finer ", the Goncourts said, " a thousand times finer than Homer, than the ' Retreat of the Ten Thousand,' than anything. One puts this book down cursing war ".

This is exactly what Dunant wanted first and foremost. That is why he dared to throw light on something that it was the custom to hide from view. He uncovered the reverse side of the coin, the horror of the battlefield, and, above all, the monstrous indifference shown to those who had given their blood and who in return did not even obtain a glass of water.

He then went on to relate that he was not alone in nursing the wounded of Castiglione. Chance had brought there other men who, with him, gave themselves without counting the cost : a young Swiss by the name of Suchard, a Belgian, an old French naval officer and some British and Americans. " But," cried Dunant, " how valuable it would have been in those Lombardy towns to have had a hundred experienced and qualified voluntary orderlies and nurses ! "

One sees here the dawning of Dunant's idea and some pages further on he adds : " Would it not be possible in time of peace and

quiet to form relief societies for the purpose of having care given to the wounded in war-time by zealous, devoted and thoroughly qualified volunteers ? ” The seed of the whole institution of the Red Cross is contained in these few lines.

Victorious on the battlefield, the French army collected and brought back to Castiglione the wounded Austrians who were there. How were they cared for ? Dunant makes a very clear reply to this question. He affirms that enemy wounded were cared for on a basis of equality with the French wounded. He lays great stress on this fact. Nine times he speaks of the Austrian wounded and always to say that they were treated like the French wounded, if not better. He observes however that they sometimes suffered more, but he takes care to say why. Because they did not understand the language of those who were looking after them, or because defeat had added to their depression and their sadness. Remember these observations. Already they show that the principal aim of the future Geneva Convention, contrary to what is normally believed, would not be to make it the duty of armies to care for the enemy wounded as their own.

Dunant then goes on to speak of the attitude of the civilian population, which was in no way the same as that of the army and he tells a rather revealing story on this subject. Some French soldiers were leading a detachment of Austrian prisoners on the outskirts of Castiglione. Immediately, the rumour went round that the Austrian army was returning in force. In a few minutes the French flags hanging from the windows were torn down everywhere and destroyed. The French wounded who had been taken in were thrown into the street. If the Austrians were going to occupy the town again, their favour had to be sought.

After a great deal of difficulty, Dunant ended by being helped by a small group of charitable women. He had to convince them to look after all the wounded without distinction and he won a victory over their minds when they began to repeat “ tutti fratelli, tutti fratelli ”.

One of Dunant's last observations deals with the Austrian surgeons. In its triumphant march, the French army had captured enemy ambulances. The surgeons attached to these ambulances were immediately considered as prisoners of war and placed in captivity. Thus, at the very time when the wounded of both armies, packed in Castiglione, were dying for lack of care, qualified men

were immobilized and incapable of bandaging the slightest wound. Dunant was most indignant about this and he asked for these Austrian surgeons to be taken from their camp immediately and enabled to look after their wounded compatriots.

And here we have Dunant's second conclusion. He hoped that a military congress would "formulate some international principle sanctioned by a convention inviolable in character, which, once agreed upon and ratified, might constitute the basis for societies for the relief of the wounded". Dunant did not indicate the precise object of this agreement. His intuition, which was never lacking, was responsible for these lines. But something was still missing which might give to his thought a more concrete form.

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A Memory of Solferino appeared in November 1862. Some weeks later, Dunant received a visit. The man to whom he opened the door was unknown to him. He was still young, but his dress was severe. He had a high forehead, a somewhat aquiline nose and was clean shaven except for a thick moustache, which stretched from one sideburn to the other, like a bolt. His look was piercing and he did not waste words. One could immediately sense the man of action who had not come for an inconsequential conversation. This visitor was Gustave Moynier. He had read Dunant's book, had been bowled over and struck also by the absurdity of leaving so many wounded to die through mere lack of organization and he felt that Dunant was right. Action must be taken, but how? That is what he had come to ask Dunant. To his great surprise he did not get the details which he was expecting. Having written his book, Dunant did not seem to want to do anything more. He had exposed the evil and indicated the remedy. It was now up to the great powers to do something about it. This was an attitude totally foreign to Moynier and he hustled Dunant into action. He immediately suggested to him that the conclusions of *A Memory of Solferino* should be submitted to the Public Welfare Society.

To tell the truth, Moynier had some doubts over the success of the step he was taking. The Public Welfare Society was accustomed to act on a strictly local level and it had never extended its field of action beyond the frontiers of the Republic. He felt that he might

be risking the reply that such a subject was no concern of the society and he therefore took his precautions. In convening the Public Welfare Society for February 9, 1863, in the hall of the Casino, he took care to slip the question of "the attachment of a voluntary nursing corps to the belligerent armies" between two other and more familiar subjects: the publication of a popular edition of the French classics and the foundation of an agricultural colony for defective children.

On the day of the meeting, Moynier manœuvred with consummate tactical skill. He read some passages from *A Memory of Solferino*, showing the way in which the wounded had been abandoned and the necessity of coming to their aid, but in order not to frighten his colleagues, he added immediately that it was not for the Public Welfare Society to start out on this adventure. A large welfare congress was due to be held in Berlin in November. It could take the matter in hand. A detailed memorandum would have to be presented to this congress showing clearly the necessity for these relief societies and this is why Moynier suggested to his colleagues that they should appoint a small committee for this work. No sooner said than done. General Dufour, Mr. Moynier, Mr. Dunant, Dr. Appia and Dr. Maunoir were appointed. Without knowing it, the Public Welfare Society had just given birth to the International Committee of the Red Cross.

This Public Welfare Society is still in existence. Its President has done us the honour of attending this lecture and I am requested to say that the International Committee asks him to convey to his venerable company the friendly greetings of our institution.

On February 17, the five members of the Committee set up some days earlier, met for the first time. This is the meeting about which I spoke a short while ago and it marks the true beginning of the International Committee. It is this event, small in appearance, but vast in its far-reaching consequences, which we are celebrating today.

During this first meeting, Dunant recalled the wish which he had expressed in *A Memory of Solferino*, "that", as the minutes say, "the civilized Powers would subscribe to an inviolable international principle that would be guaranteed and consecrated in a kind of concordat between governments". It can be seen that Dunant was still rather vague on this point. Too vague, without any doubt, because it aroused no interest among his colleagues.

What did interest them was to find out the rôle which the future relief societies would play and they wished to give a precise picture of them to the Berlin congress. As General Dufour said, volunteer helpers were required who would place themselves at the disposal of the general staffs ; they did not want to take the place of the quartermaster's department or of the medical orderlies. He also added that a badge, uniform or armlet might usefully be adopted, so that the bearers of such distinctive and universally adopted insignia would be given due recognition.

The following month, during the Committee's second meeting, the ideas took shape. Dr. Maunoir summarized them in three proposals :

- 1) The Committee and their delegates should be officially recognized and approved by the authorities.
- 2) The voluntary corps of male nurses should be subject to the jurisdiction of the military authorities, to whose discipline they would rigidly conform from the beginning of any campaign.
- 3) The corps should consist of helpers who would remain in the rear of the armies ; they would cause no embarrassment, create no hindrance, nor involve the least expense for the armies concerned. In short, the voluntary workers would cost nothing and would be engaged and dismissed whenever necessary.

At the third meeting, there was some unexpected news. It was learnt that the Berlin congress would not take place. However, the members of the Committee did not take refuge in regrets. Instead, Moynier launched a bold plan. The fact that the Berlin congress would not take place did not matter. " We will call a conference ", he said. " We will ask States to send delegates and experts in military problems to Geneva, and we will see if they consider that the voluntary relief societies can do a useful job of work and be accepted by the military authorities." Moynier and Dunant were instructed to draft a concordat and they were also made responsible, as the minutes go on to say, for its circulation throughout Europe.

During the same meeting, Dunant announced to his colleagues that he would be going to Berlin, where a statistical conference was

due to take place. One of the sections of this congress would be dealing with military questions and it would be composed of officers and doctors. Dunant was convinced that he could win them over to the ideas of the Committee and that several of them would come to the conference planned.

This idea of going to Berlin came to Dunant from a letter which a Dutch military doctor, Dr. Basting, had just sent him. Basting had read *A Memory of Solferino*. He was captivated by it and had immediately translated the work into Dutch. He was longing to meet the man who had had the wonderful idea of creating relief societies for the wounded. Why did they not go to Berlin together ?

This journey was to be of capital importance and we must now follow Dunant in this singular adventure. He found Basting in a small hotel in Berlin, bearing a name familiar to us all, " Hôtel Toepffer ". The two men developed an immediate understanding. They had the same faith, the same enthusiasm. Their passionate discussions opened up completely new horizons for Dunant because Dr. Basting, much better than he, knew what war was and he taught him things which had never crossed his mind.

For the purposes of clarity, let us sketch the picture : two armies are locked in battle. Victory is in sight. One advances and the other withdraws. What will happen in the ranks of the latter ? What will become of the surgeons and male-nurses of this army compelled to retreat ? Dunant, who had found himself caught up by a victorious army, had no idea. Let us go further : There are three possibilities : The army command can order that the ambulances, lazarets and field hospitals be hastily withdrawn. In this way, the wounded and the medical personnel will not fall into enemy hands. This is the worst solution and the one least often adopted because for the most part the wounded cannot be transported. Numbers of them would die en route. Moreover, the necessary equipment is usually lacking.

The second solution consists in leaving the wounded on the spot together with medical personnel looking after them. This is not at all a good solution either, because as was the custom, surgeons and male-nurses will be imprisoned as soon as the victorious adversary arrives on the spot. The wounded will see them no more and the beaten army will have lost a number of male-nurses and surgeons which it will still need urgently during a forthcoming battle. That is why, and this is the third solution, the surgeons and male-nurses are generally ordered to abandon the wounded on the spot and to

fall back with the retreating army. From all points of view, this is the wisest move and it is this which is almost always adopted.

In a flash, the light dawned in Dunant's mind. The international and inviolable principle, the concordat of which he had been speaking in such vague terms, suddenly took on a new meaning. States must agree to give medical personnel a particular status. Surgeons and male-nurses must no longer be considered as combatants. When a victorious army captured them, they must no longer be imprisoned, they must be returned to the army to which they belonged. In this way they would be able to continue to serve and to save human lives. The solution was there for the asking.

Electrified, Dunant and Basting feverishly prepared their speech for the next day at the statistical conference. They would not confine themselves to proposing the creation of relief societies, they would also ask for a convention to be signed between the States of the world, which would give medical personnel this new status which they called *neutrality*. Thus, the army chiefs in retreat would no longer give their doctors the terrible order to abandon the wounded. On the contrary, they would say to them: "Remain at the bedside of the wounded! You will be seized by the enemy, but that is of no consequence because you will then be released and returned to your army and your work."

The next morning, after a night's work, the text was ready. Basting and Dunant jumped into a cab and went to the congress, shaking with nerves. On the way, Dunant was hurriedly re-reading his notes when a gust of wind blew away the precious pages just as the cab was crossing the river Spree. They were saved from falling into the water by a beggar who caught them and returned them to their owners. He received a generous tip. Perhaps he had saved the future Geneva Convention.

Dunant had great success at the congress. His two ideas aroused general approval and he left the congressional palace with tears of joy in his eyes. Dunant and Basting immediately set to work again. They drafted a supplement to the International Committee's convocation for the conference which was to be held in Geneva in October. They hurried to a printer and by next morning their circular had left for all the capitals.

Dunant stayed in Berlin for a few days more, and had some useful talks. He met the Minister of War, von Roon, who was the

first statesman to approve the idea of an international convention conferring a status of neutrality on medical personnel.

Continuing his journey, Dunant went to Dresden, where he was received by the King of Saxony, then to Vienna, where he saw the Archduke Rainer, and finally to Munich, where he confronted General Frankh, the Bavarian Minister of War. He was moved by such conviction that all his listeners were convinced and promised to send a representative to the forthcoming conference.

Dunant then returned to Geneva, not without some anxiety, because this circular which he had sent from Berlin in the name of the International Committee had been drafted by him without consulting his colleagues. He had forced their hand and had engaged them upon a completely new line of development. The process had been audacious, to say the least. How would he be welcomed? He was not long in finding out. "Well", he asked Moynier, "What did you think of my idea of asking for neutralization?" Moynier replied drily: "We thought you were asking the impossible".

Finally, the great day arrived. On the morning of October 26, 1863, the five members of the International Committee set out for the Palais de l'Athénée which Mrs. Eynard had placed at the disposal of the conference. Moynier was later to say what their state of mind had been. They had never before felt so small, so weak in the presence of the grandiose aim which they proposed to achieve and the obstacles which they saw before them seemed to them to grow by virtue of their proximity. They were also most perplexed as to the composition of the assembly with which they were going to deal. They had decided neither on the number nor the capacity of the persons who would be coming to take part and this uncertainty justified their apprehensions. Moynier added this characteristic comment: "Much as the Committee hoped for an influx of chosen men imbued with a practical spirit and possessing specialized knowledge, it feared the presence of a crowd which would skate over things, content to examine them superficially and waste time in humanitarian phraseology." But scarcely had they crossed the threshold of the Athénée than the members of the International Committee felt they had achieved a "resounding success". Thirty-one people had responded to their appeal, which fully met Moynier's hopes. There were delegates from sixteen States and from four philanthropic institutions. With them great work could be done.

General Dufour spoke first of all to recall the object of the conference. He then ceded the presidential chair to Moynier, who directed the discussion in a masterly fashion. This was not always easy. The Prussian delegate, Dr. Loeffler, followed by the Spanish delegate, Dr. Landa, approved of the creation of societies of voluntary relief workers. But the Englishman Rutherford was of the opposite opinion : welfare societies appeared to him to be a bad remedy for the evil which they were seeking to cure. Care of the wounded was the responsibility of governments and of governments alone. If the medical corps was insufficient, it must be reinforced, but there should be no question of calling on civilians. The French delegates, the Junior Intendant de Préval and Dr. Boudier then spoke. Even more vigorously they attacked the Committee's plans. They refused to admit that the affairs of the Quartermaster General's department should be meddled with. For a moment the International Committee seemed to be in a bad position. But Dr. Maunoir was to save the situation. With warmth, he took the part of the wounded and with humour he refuted the arguments of those who seemed to fear an annoying intrusion of doctors and voluntary male-nurses. The Conference concurred with the proposals put to it and unanimously passed a certain number of *resolutions*.

Each country shall have a Committee whose duty it shall be, in time of war and if the need arises, to assist the Army Medical Services by every means in its power. (...)

In time of war, the Committees of belligerent nations shall supply relief to their respective armies as far as their means permit ; in particular they shall organize voluntary personnel and place them on an active footing and, in agreement with the military authorities, shall have premises made available for the care of the wounded. (...)

Voluntary medical personnel shall wear in all countries, as a uniform, distinctive sign, a white armlet with a red cross.

These resolutions, the most important of which I have just read to you, constitute the fundamental charter of the Red Cross institution. It is on this corner-stone that the National Societies for relief to the wounded of the armed forces were to be built one after the other. This is why the Conference of October 1863 marks the foundation of the Red Cross, which will be celebrated this autumn in Geneva and throughout the entire world.

These resolutions having been secured, the International Committee, with the exception of Dunant, imagined that the Conference had reached its limit. But Dr. Basting, representing Holland, then got up and requested that they now move on and examine the point raised in the famous Berlin circular. He was more than astonished to hear Moynier reply that the Geneva Committee did not think that the question of neutralization of medical personnel would be discussed. Basting did not hide his indignation. He feared, he said, that the honourable Geneva Committee had not fully understood why the delegates to the Conference were there. The Netherlands Minister of War had told him that the point which interested him most was precisely the Berlin proposal. What could Moynier do except fall in with such an energetic summons and to his very great surprise the Conference took a new direction. Enthusiasm overcame the delegates and such was their approval of the neutralization of medical personnel that the Conference added three recommendations to the resolutions, the principal one of which is as follows :

That in time of war the belligerent nations should proclaim the neutrality of ambulances and military hospitals, and that neutrality should likewise be recognized, fully and absolutely, in respect of official medical personnel, voluntary medical personnel, inhabitants of the country who go to the relief of the wounded, and the wounded themselves.

The Conference ended with a twofold triumph. Basting addressed these words to the assembly : " I propose that the Conference declares that Mr. Henry Dunant, bringing about by his persevering efforts, the international study of the means to be applied for the effective assistance of the wounded on the battle-field, and the Public Welfare Society, by its support of the generous thought of which Mr. Dunant has been the mouthpiece, have done humanity a great service and have fully merited universal recognition ". The whole assembly stood and associated itself with this tribute and applauded long and loud. The moment had come to leave and the delegates now turned towards Moynier. " I remember ", he wrote later, " and I shall never forget the end of the 1863 Conference, after the last word had been spoken, when those taking part left their seats and pressed around the presidential chair which I was occupying, stretching out their arms, trying to seize my hand,

trying to clasp it with indescribable emotion. Each one, looking towards the future, believed in the effectiveness of the decisions which had just been taken and felt that the future held great things in store."

Twenty-eight years later, Moynier, still President of the International Committee, remembered the beginning of the Red Cross and he described it to his younger colleagues who had not been present at the time :

Mr. Dunant then deployed a remarkable zeal to make the planned meeting a success. He travelled, particularly in France and Germany, in order to obtain the assistance of governments and it was in large part due to the steps which he took that an élite of official delegates was present in Geneva in October of 1863.

It should be remembered that while in Berlin during September, Mr. Dunant had had printed there on his own authority, but "on behalf of the Geneva Committee", a supplement to the programme drawn up by his colleagues for the conference to be held in Geneva. Proposals of outstanding importance were contained in this supplement, because it was no less than the substance of the Geneva Convention.

At first, the Committee considered their nature such as to compromise the success of its enterprise and it would only have been confirmed in its opinion if it had known, as it learnt later, that various publicists had already called for a treaty of this type in vain. However, things turned out better than it dared to hope and it could only applaud the temerity of its Secretary when it saw the success of the conference.

Moynier did not always see eye to eye with Dunant, but loyalty was one of the traits of his character.

The Conference of October 1863 terminated with resolutions and recommendations. In almost every country of Europe small groups of enthusiastic men set about forming these committees for relief of the wounded, which were later to be called Red Cross Societies. But who was going to fulfil the recommendations made by the conference ? Who would act in such a way that the States bound by a treaty of international law would agree to give medical personnel this new status of neutrality ?

Once more the International Committee felt that it was up to it to act. I will not go into the negotiations of every sort and the ingenious means which the Committee used to achieve its ends. Suffice it to say that the Swiss Federal Council agreed to convene a new conference, which would be diplomatic this time, and which

would be held in Geneva in August 1864. Its assistance, however, would be confined to this: "You want a conference", it told the International Committee "You can have it, but you take care of everything". The only thing which the President of the Confederation did was to come to Geneva to order the menu for the official luncheon!

Left to its own devices, the Committee began by seeing to the organization of the conference. It obtained the use of a room in the Town Hall, which was later to be called the Alabama room. But that was not all. The plenipotentiaries coming to Geneva must also have an instrument of work.

Moynier and Dufour set to work. They drew up a draft convention with the greatest care. Everything was then ready.

The Diplomatic Conference opened on August 8, 1864 and General Dufour presided with his customary benevolent authority. Moynier was there as the representative of Switzerland. The text which they had prepared was so well thought out that the Conference followed it step by step almost without making any changes to it and fifteen days later, on August 22, the Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field was signed. The delegates of twelve States approached in turn the table on which the precious document lay. They signed and affixed their seal. Others hesitated, among them the delegate of Great Britain, who stated that he could not sign as he did not have the necessary seal. "You have not got a seal?" replied General Dufour. "Well, here is one!" and taking a knife from his pocket, he cut a button of the diplomat's tunic, saying: "Here is Her Gracious Majesty's coat of arms!" There was nothing to do but affix the seal.

Shall we now try to read this Convention? Yes, this time the text is clear, and I think you will probably find it more lucid than if I had read it earlier. Here are the first three articles:

ART. 1. — *Ambulances and military hospitals shall be recognized as neutral and, as such, protected and respected by the belligerents as long as they accommodate wounded and sick.*

(. . .)

ART. 2. — *Hospital and ambulance personnel, including the quartermaster's staff, the medical, administrative and transport services, and the chaplains, shall have the benefit of the same neutrality when on duty and while there remain any wounded to be brought in or assisted.*

ART. 3. — *The persons designated in the preceding article may, even after enemy occupation, continue to discharge their functions in the hospital or ambulance with which they serve, or may withdraw to rejoin the units to which they belong.*

(. . .)

This is the great thing! Here is the provision which was to enable military surgeons and male-nurses to abandon their wounded no longer. This is the heart and soul of the Convention.

You will doubtless remember the incident which Dunant recounted. The population of Castiglione mistakenly thought that the Austrians had taken the offensive again and the French wounded were immediately thrown into the street, since prudence made it advisable to seek the favour of the new victor. Such a scene would never again occur. Article 5 of the Convention stipulates in fact that:

ART. 5. — *Inhabitants of the country who bring help to the wounded shall be respected and shall remain free.*

(. . .)

The presence of any wounded combatant receiving shelter and care in a house shall ensure its protection. An inhabitant who has given shelter to the wounded shall be exempted from billeting and from a portion of such war contributions as may be levied.

As we have seen, Dunant laid great stress on the fact that the Austrian wounded were cared for by the French army in equality with its own wounded. This was a rule always observed by the armies which were honour-bound to make no distinction between the wounded of either side. It was not without hesitation that the Conference decided to frame this custom in an article in the Convention. This is Article 6, which reads as follows :

ART. 6. — *Wounded or sick combatants, to whatever nation they may belong, shall be collected and cared for.*

(. . .)

In much of his writing, Moynier was to make the point with great force that this was a simple reminder of a long-established custom. Moreover, this article has not always been well received. Certain publicists have tried to see in it some sort of insult to the armed forces, and the first International Conference of the Red Cross, which was held in Paris in 1867, wondered very seriously if

this provision should not be deleted in a future revision of the Convention.

Article 7 of the Convention deals with the emblem and reads as follows :

ART. 7. — A distinctive and uniform flag shall be adopted for hospitals, ambulances and evacuation parties. It should in all circumstances be accompanied by the national flag.

An armlet may also be worn by personnel enjoying neutrality but its issue shall be left to the military authorities.

Both flag and armlet shall bear a red cross on a white ground.

Why must medical personnel of all armies wear the same sign ? For a very simple reason. So that every soldier knows who are the persons and which are the vehicles and installations covered by neutrality. Up till 1864, the various armies of Europe designated their ambulances by the most varied signs. France used a red flag, Austria a yellow. This great disparity was now to cease and enemy ambulances would be designated by the same sign as friendly ambulances. In any case, were they not all friends of man ?

Such, Ladies and Gentlemen, is the first Geneva Convention. But we must now ask ourselves : how will it undergo the terrible and brutal shock of war ? Well, you may reassure yourselves. History is on our side, it is working for us, and it is going to show forth the merits of the Geneva Convention and those also of the Red Cross.

The first conflict in which the Geneva Convention was to play a rôle was the war between Prussia and Austria. Let us now look at the state of preparedness of the two belligerents before hostilities opened on June 15, 1866.

First of all Prussia. In this country, a relief society had been set up, which developed very quickly in a remarkable manner. It already had 120 local sections and it was to put into action 1,000 doctors and male-nurses. It possessed abundant equipment and even hospital trains. This society had been recognized by the military authorities, which realized that it was a very valuable auxiliary. It was the job of a senior officer to ensure liaison between the army medical corps and the society. In this way, private charity could be given when and where it was needed.

Prussia had signed and ratified the Geneva Convention and already the surgeons and male-nurses of the army wore the Red Cross armlet ; the same colours flew over the ambulances.

The situation in Austria was entirely different. There was no relief society which met the needs of the 1863 resolutions. In spite of repeated efforts by the International Committee, Austria had not signed the Geneva Convention.

Thus, there was a complete contrast and you are now going to see a true demonstration. If you have doubts about the Red Cross, if you have doubts about the Convention, just listen to this :

In Prussia, the army medical corps had an admirably efficient organization at its side. Frequently the voluntary aids arrived first on the field of battle. The Prussian society increased its ambulances, controlled hospitals and looked after the transport of the wounded. It was everywhere and ready for anything. In Austria, the war had given rise to the creation of countless charitable committees, but they were badly prepared, without contact between each other and without links with the army. Their consignments got lost, arrived too late and frequently where they were not needed. There is the difference between a country where there is a relief society and a country where there is none.

But let us now turn to the Convention. Prussia applied it unilaterally, while Austria conducted itself as belligerents had done during previous wars. That was its right ; it was not obliged in any way to sign the Convention. It conformed strictly to established custom. What is the difference ? The answer is, there is an enormous difference. At Langensaltza as at Sadowa, Prussia triumphed and the Austrians fell back. What was the order given to the medical personnel of the retreating armies ? We know it already : surgeons and male nurses had to abandon their wounded and withdraw. In their forward march, the Prussians found lazarets, ambulances and bandaging posts where the wounded had been left. Of course, the Prussians took them in charge, but how long afterwards ? I will give you a particular instance. Five days after the battle at Sadowa, aids of the Prussian society were advancing in a forest. They reached a clearing where the Austrians had installed a bandaging post. 300 wounded were still living, but 800 others were dead, dead because they had been abandoned.

This is precisely what would not have happened if Austria had applied the Geneva Convention. Surgeons and male-nurses would have been left in the clearing and the wounded would not have lacked indispensable care for one single moment. The Austrian

army would have lost nothing by this, since its surgeons and its male-nurses would have been returned to it immediately and hundreds of human lives would have been saved. The facts speak so well for themselves that even before the end of this short war, Austria advised the Swiss Federal Council of its accession to the Geneva Convention.

The effectiveness of the Convention had been proved. But it had also been proved that it was possible to codify the rules of war. Yes, even in a clash of arms, law could still act for the well-being of humanity. This lesson was not lost. The Geneva Convention founded a family. In 1899, in 1906, in 1929 and finally in 1949, other conventions, ever more detailed, were drawn up to protect wounded and shipwrecked sailors, prisoners of war, civilians and even victims of internal conflicts.

In 1870, during the Franco-Prussian war, some French surgeons and male-nurses who had fallen into the hands of the Prussians were released and returned to their country. At the moment when they crossed the frontier and regained French soil, they cried : " Long live the Geneva Convention and its authors ! ". It is on this note, Ladies and Gentlemen, that I would like to end, because the whole history of the wars which have occurred since 1864 invites us to repeat :

" Long live the Geneva Convention, long live its authors ! ".

PIERRE BOISSIER
