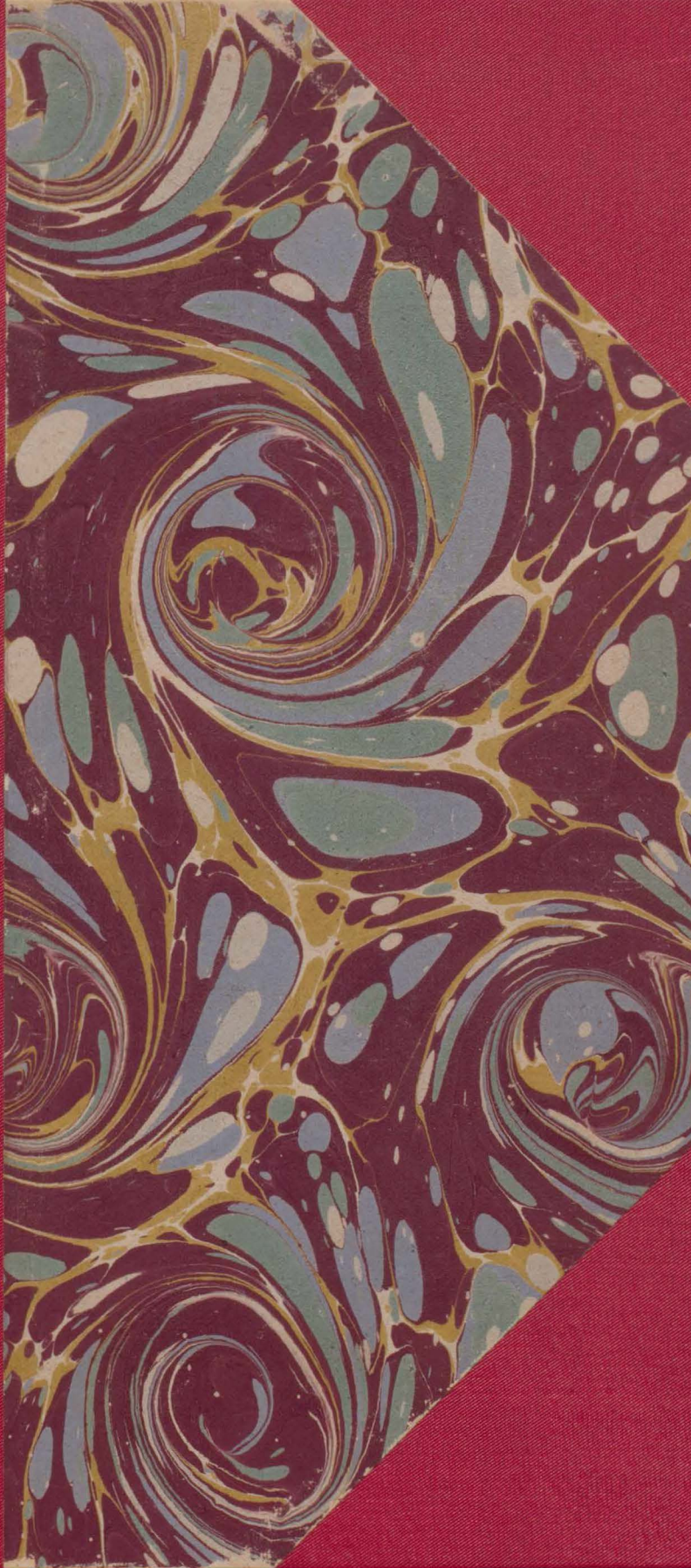

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# INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

## *PRINCIPAL ITEMS OF INTEREST*

During October the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross had for its principal objects :

*Greece.* — On being informed of the catastrophe which devastated the islands of the Ionian Archipelago, the International Committee, through its Athens Delegation, immediately placed at the disposal of the Greek authorities and Greek Red Cross, for emergency relief on behalf of the stricken populations, 500 blankets, twelve tons of foodstuffs, a ton of clothing and half a ton of medical supplies, drawn from its stocks in Athens. At the same time 2,250 doses of anti-tetanic serum, antibiotics and dressings were sent from Geneva. This consignment was forwarded by the most rapid means available thanks to the kind offices of the League of Red Cross Societies which shipped it by the aircraft allocated for its own relief action.

It is common knowledge that the International Committee of the Red Cross has since 1947 been carrying on a relief action for the victims of disturbances in Greece, whether military personnel, civilians accused of various offences or men and women interned on account of their political beliefs. Of these persons, 550 were among the victims of the destruction of prisons in Zante and Cephalonia, who had to be transferred to other places of detention in Greece. Thanks to the permanent stock of relief supplies held by the ICRC in Athens for such emergencies (which had been built up from gifts in kind from abroad or by supplies sent by the International Committee itself) it was possible to give each detained person thus transferred a parcel of clothing and a blanket from the quantity placed at the Committee's disposal by the Greek Red Cross.

In addition a head-nurse of the International Committee, sent from Geneva to Greece, proceeded to the stricken areas accompanied by members of the ICRC Delegation in Athens. This mission was requested by the authorities in command of the devastated islands to organise the setting up in Zante of a vast camp for sheltering 1,500 persons. This camp, consisting of over 80 tents and a dispensary for first aid, was set up within a very short time. The army undertook to provide food supplies for the camp ; and a medical officer arrived to help the Committee's nurse, who had set up an assembly and welfare centre for about a hundred children next to the main camp.

When conveying their gratitude for this relief action in favour of the Greek people in their great distress, the Greek authorities and Greek Red Cross, as well as the Military Command of the devastated islands, expressed the hope that the International Committee of the Red Cross would continue to carry out its relief action in Zante for as long as possible.

*Disabled.* — The Disablement Section has continued its work of collective and individual relief.

The last action referred to on behalf of amputated "Volksdeutsche" in camps in the German Federal Republic was terminated in Bavaria by a further gift of prostheses.

In Greece prostheses have been obtained for amputated persons under detention.

*Reuniting of families.* — Eight years after the close of hostilities in Europe the consequences of the war are still felt. It is well known how many civilians, in addition to the armed forces, were the innocent victims of the combats, and how many families were broken up and scattered.

In order to remedy these individual and collective misfortunes as far as possible, the International Committee of the Red Cros has for some years past undertaken work on a vast scale for the reuniting of families. It is now in a position to announce that the Jugoslav Red Cross in effective contribution to this work has just organised its eighth transport of *Volksdeutsche* children, which has recently arrived at the Austrian frontier. The convoy

consisted of 34 children who will remain in Austria, 3 others who will go to England, one who will go to France, one to Venezuela and 160 to Western and Eastern Germany.

This convoy brings up to 75,217 the total number of persons "reunited" in connection with this humanitarian work of the International Committee of the Red Cross, carried out in cooperation with a number of different National Red Cross Societies and with the understanding and support of the authorities of the countries from and to which the transports take place.

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*LUCIE ODIER*

*Member of the International Committee of the Red Cross*

# *MEDICAL PERSONNEL ASSIGNED TO THE CARE OF THE WOUNDED AND SICK IN THE ARMED FORCES*

(Training, Duties, Status and Terms of Enrolment)

## INTRODUCTION

*The International Committee of the Red Cross submitted to the Health, Medical Personnel and Social Aid Commission of the XVIIIth International Red Cross Conference (Toronto, July-August 1952) a Report entitled* Training, Duties, Status and Terms of Enrolment of the Medical Personnel Assigned to the Care of the Wounded and Sick in the Armed Forces.

*The findings of this Report, after being discussed point by point, were unanimously approved.*

*Nevertheless, all National Societies not having been represented on the various Commissions, the International Committee thinks it proper to recall to the Central Committees of National Red Cross Societies, and more particularly their Nursing Sections, certain conclusions of this Report and to comment thereon.*

## 1. Duties of Red Cross medical personnel in Wartime

The general work of assistance to military war victims concerns the competent authorities of each State; but these authorities usually entrust part of this work to relief agencies and especially to their National Red Cross Society which, according to the Geneva Conventions, becomes an auxiliary of the Army Medical Services in wartime.

In order to organise its relief sections each National Red Cross Society should be informed as to what its future duties will be as an auxiliary of the Army or the Civilian Medical Services in a national or international conflict. It is therefore essential that, prior to any organisation, it should come to an arrangement on this subject with the competent official services of its Government. The duties entrusted to Red Cross Societies by Governments vary greatly in the different States. In some countries the number of military hospitals is not sufficient to meet war-time needs, and the Red Cross is responsible for the preparation and operation of complete hospital units. In other countries it has more limited duties such as the training and enrolment of medical or auxiliary personnel for the military hospitals. In other cases it is in charge of the blood transfusion service, or organises occupational therapy for convalescent patients. Sometimes it is also in charge of a special category of military or civilian sufferers such as the tuberculous, the blind, amputees or paralytics.

It should be borne in mind that social and moral assistance to hospital inmates has become an indispensable complement to modern therapy, and that in the tragic circumstances of war this form of assistance is of most particular importance for the military wounded and sick who suffer constant anxiety not only for their health but also for their families, who may be far away and in difficult circumstances. When in military medical units this social assistance and intellectual and moral solace is not supplied by the Army Medical Services, there is a specific demand for Red Cross work, which National Societies should keep in mind.

But physical or moral assistance to the wounded and sick are not the only duties which may be entrusted to National Societies in war time : they may also be called upon by their Governments to set up official information bureaux as advocated by the Conventions, or to undertake certain relief action for prisoners of war and civilians of enemy nationality interned in their own territory. On many occasions they have also been entrusted with the preparation of relief parcels for their own troops in enemy hands.

These few examples, and many others could be given, prove that the activities of National Societies as the auxiliaries of Medical Services are most varied in nature ; and the carrying out of each of the duties mentioned calls for careful planning beforehand, efficient management, a numerous and qualified personnel and important stocks of all medical or other equipment essential for the successful issue of the undertakings concerned.

It should also be recalled that the setting up and functioning of relief sections, especially where National Societies assume wide-spread activities, will need considerable financial support, which should be immediately available in case of emergency. National Societies would be well advised to make the necessary arrangements beforehand. Some National Societies do not have sufficient financial reserves for financing out of their own means the duties they may be called upon to perform in the event of war. In most cases they solicit grants from their State for this purpose. This means of financing is justifiable ; but it must not affect the moral independence that National Societies should always retain, even in relation to their own Governments. In the case of a conflict in particular they have to apply the essential and primordial principles of impartial assistance to suffering persons, whether friends or foes, without any distinction of a national, racial, political, religious or economic nature.

## II. Training of medical personnel

1. *Male and female nurses.* — Modern therapy requires that nursing personnel should be given full training, both in theory

and in practice, for the care of the wounded and sick. Whereas in the past hospital establishments had to make shift in wartime with a more or less improvised voluntary personnel, this is not the case today. Well-organised Medical Services make certain of the collaboration of the best specialists and of highly qualified professional nurses and orderlies. If the country has not sufficient numbers of qualified personnel for the Red Cross to enrol a proper quota of nurses and orderlies in the hospital services, the Red Cross should take the necessary measures to meet this deficiency in good time. In case of need it may be called upon to set up and manage a school, or schools, for nurses male or female. In assuming such responsibility the Red Cross should take care that the training of personnel in such schools is on the highest possible professional level, for it is in duty bound to set an example in this connection. It is constantly reminded of this by the International Red Cross Conferences.

In time of war medical personnel have to assume heavy responsibilities ; and the men or women who hold important posts in hospital establishments should not only have received excellent technical and practical training in the care of the sick, but should also have capacities for leadership.

In order to develop their training and to improve their knowledge, it is desirable that in the course of their work nurses should from time to time take refresher courses in the various branches of medicine and surgery. When moreover the Red Cross enrols nurses in its emergency services, who have worked for many years in hospitals or clinics endowed with all modern improvements, it would be advisable for such nurses to take regular courses in practical first aid with a view to developing their initiative and aptitude for organisation. In time of war these nurses may not always have at their disposal the instruments, utensils or apparatus which are available in well-equipped clinics, and it will be necessary for them to be capable of giving the best treatment with improvised means.

2. *Voluntary Aids.* — In countries engaged in a conflict there is sometimes a sudden influx of a large number of wounded and sick. In such tragic moments the professional medical

personnel will be overwhelmed with work, and should be assisted by voluntary aids, who take over part of their work and in particular the small daily duties of such great importance for the well-being of the wounded and sick. In order to give the valuable help which nurses expect from voluntary aids, the latter should have elementary theoretical and practical training in the care of the sick ; they must however be aware of their limited knowledge, and of the dangers to which their patients would be exposed, should they attempt too much. Voluntary aids must be prepared to submit to the hierarchical and very strict discipline which is essential to the efficient work of Red Cross services in time of war. The training of voluntary aids varies greatly in the different countries. It is usually compressed and of short duration, in order that it may be followed by a great number of persons of different professions who have little spare time available.

If National Societies have large numbers of certified nurses at their disposal it is evident that the role of the voluntary aids will in proportion be of less importance, and that their training will be of a somewhat more elementary nature. But in countries where a shortage of professional nurses already exists in normal times, provision must be made for training large numbers of voluntary aids. The latter will perforce be called upon to give more complicated treatments, and their training should therefore be less elementary and of longer duration. No standard syllabus of training courses would therefore be suitable for voluntary aids of several nationalities. It is however highly desirable that the Red Cross in every country should, after consultation with professional nurses, set up training courses for practical and theoretical care of the sick, and social assistance, embracing all the specific tasks which would fall to the voluntary aids in the event of a conflict. It is most desirable that nurses should take an active part in training voluntary aids. These two groups of medical personnel, whose respective spheres should be clearly defined, will be called upon to work together in time of emergency and to give equal devotion to their duties. In the difficult and tragic moments of a conflict, the efforts of the medical personnel (which may be most arduous) are greatly

facilitated by the spirit of mutual help and goodwill which prevails among all members of a well-organised medical unit.

3. *Social Workers.* — The personnel, who will be called upon to give social and moral assistance to victims of conflicts, should also have previous training in work which entails so much responsibility. In order to assume functions which may sometimes be of a very delicate nature, National Societies would be wise to secure the services of professional social workers, at least as regards important posts and for the direction of these sections. If the country has not sufficient numbers of fully trained social workers, provision should be made for the enrolment and training of auxiliary personnel to assist them. It is vital that social, moral and spiritual aid to war-wounded should be dispensed by persons of high moral value, who are open-minded and fully aware of the difficulties of life. Such persons should also be well informed of the social laws of their country and the relief agencies to which the wounded and sick can turn in case of need.

4. *Teaching of Red Cross principles.* — All members of a Red Cross unit, employed as doctors, orderlies, nurses, voluntary aids, social workers or for other duties, should be duly taught the principles of the Red Cross whose emblem they wear. They must pledge themselves to respect these principles and to assume the obligations they imply. At the Toronto Conference the Delegates placed emphasis on the importance of teaching Red Cross principles, which they judged to be essential for all persons enrolled by National Societies. In time of war the fundamental Red Cross principles, to which the Conventions make ample reference, require that medical personnel under Red Cross protection should remain as it were detached from the conflict, and that all their efforts should be devoted to the care of the victims (whether friends or enemies) with equal solicitude and without distinction as to nationality, race, religion or political opinions. This, the most noble task of National Societies, draws direct inspiration from the highest of Red Cross ideals. This principle of humanitarian and impartial aid predominates over national interests and animosities ; but it must be said

that in total warfare it is sometimes misunderstood by public opinion, and both courage and abnegation are required to defend it and to give it prevalence. All Red Cross personnel should be aware of these difficulties and of the moral responsibility they assume on their enrolment.

In addition, medical personnel assigned to the care of military wounded and sick are subject to military laws and regulations. Members of medical units must therefore be informed of these laws in order to comply with them, as any infraction might involve them in very serious difficulties.

The personnel under Red Cross protection in time of war is also under the obligation to conform to the provisions of the First Geneva Convention, signed and ratified by its own Government. For this reason members of units are subject to rights and duties which they must strictly observe, to avoid compromising the full protection which the enemy is under obligation to grant to wounded and sick of armed forces.

These Red Cross principles, and also the contents of the Laws and Conventions which are applicable in time of war, are often quite unknown to Red Cross workers themselves. This gap should be filled; and this could be done by interesting courses, which should form the basis of all training of medical personnel.

## III. Status of medical personnel

The results of the International Committee's survey among National Societies and Army Medical Services show that the status of nurses in wartime varies considerably from one country to another, and that these differences are harmful to international collaboration, and to cohesion in medical teams formed of nurses and voluntary aids of different nationalities. As however the status of women in the medical personnel incorporated with Army Medical Services concerns the military authorities, the International Committee of the Red Cross proposed to the XVIIIth International Red Cross Conference (Toronto) that the question should be submitted to them, in order that personnel of equivalent formations may have practi-

cally the same status in all armies. This proposal having been unanimously accepted by the delegates present, the International Committee referred the recommendation to the Chairman of the International Congress of Military Medicine and Pharmacy, which includes representatives of the Medical Services of various countries, and is pleased to state that this organisation immediately took up the study of the question.

As regards the status of Red Cross Voluntary Aids in wartime, it has been ascertained that these voluntary workers usually come under the supreme authority of their National Society, which assigns to them the status and living conditions which their position requires. However, as this question is also being examined by the International Congress of Military Medicine and Pharmacy, it should be held over until the results of the survey are known.

## IV. Terms of Enrolment of Red Cross personnel

In order that National Societies may carry out the work which may possibly be assigned to them in wartime, it is essential for them to make sure of the collaboration of nurses and voluntary aids in sufficient numbers, and with technical and moral qualifications of the highest order. The methods of enrolment greatly differ according to the country concerned. In some Societies the services of the entire staff are voluntary : in others certain allowances are given : in others again National Societies pay standard rates to the professional staff, and give allowances to voluntary aids. As a general rule the method of enrolment reflects the economic conditions prevailing in each country ; and it appears advisable for National Societies to retain the faculty of remunerating, or of not remunerating, their personnel, whichever method may be more appropriate, provided they are able to enrol qualified helpers in sufficient numbers, this being of course the most important point.

In countries where unpaid workers only are employed, it would be regrettable if persons possessing all the necessary qualities for giving useful Red Cross service should be prevented

from so doing, because their financial position does not allow them to take unpaid employment. The Red Cross services cannot be reserved for the privileged ; they should be open to all who can give efficient service in the Red Cross spirit, irrespective of their social standing.

National Societies have an obligation, at least on moral grounds, towards men or women who have contracted diseases or sustained accidents or wounds while in their service. Every Society should, if this has not already been done, examine the means of providing its personnel with whatever treatment may be required. If an infirmity resulting in disablement is the consequence of an illness or accident of an individual engaged in Red Cross duties, the unfortunate victim must be assured of decent living conditions without having to resort to public charity.

During a discussion on this special point at the XVIIIth International Red Cross Conference, one of the delegates said that the best means of helping a disabled person who can no longer ply his trade is to give him the possibility of taking up other remunerative employment compatible with his infirmity, and in that connection dwelt on the necessity for professional readaptation of disabled medical personnel, in order to enable them to revert to as normal and independent life as possible.

* * *

In the conclusion of its Report to the Health, Medical Personnel and Social Aid Commission of the XVIIIth International Red Cross Conference, the International Committee drew the particular attention of National Societies to the great dangers threatening the civilian populations of war-stricken countries. So long as war is not abolished and the use of atomic or blind weapons is contemplated, civilian populations in all countries are in danger. With this great peril in view National Societies cannot remain silent or inactive. In agreement with their Governments they should firstly take all practical steps for giving effective assistance to war victims, and secondly use all unpolitical means available to them for promoting goodwill among peoples and preventing future conflicts.

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For many years to come there will be works on Henry Dunant, promoter of the Red Cross movement and initiator of the Geneva Convention. With such rich material available to them, historians are being drawn in increasing numbers to the study of this noble life, of which some aspects were so romantic [1].

Now an Englishwoman, Miss Ellen Hart, has in turn brought a stone to the monument. Miss Hart took advantage of her stay in Geneva to consult the documents of the International Committee of the Red Cross. She made a patient search among the letters and manuscripts of Henry Dunant donated to the Geneva Library by his heirs in 1937. Continuing her search outside Switzerland, she studied the archives of private collections in England and the United States. From the information thus collected Miss Ellen Hart has written an excellent book which gives a most touching picture of Henry Dunant. The prefaces are by Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal and M. Paul Ruegger, former Swiss Minister to the United Kingdom, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross,

The description of Dunant's childhood and youth, from May 8, 1828, the day of his birth, until his first departure from Geneva in 1852, gives an attractive picture of a happy life on the shores of Lake Léman with the Alps as a background. Later Henry Dunant has wistful memories of " the view of Mont Blanc rising in majesty opposite the balcony of the villa and the magnificent sunsets over the glorious glaciers which then belonged to the Kings of Sardinia ". His home circle, that of a good and ancient family living quietly and unostentatiously in a

[1] See *Revue internationale de la Croix-Rouge,* January and April 1952.

Geneva governed by the Calvinist Reformation and old civic traditions, coupled with an edifice of ideas based on the humanitarian movement which took shape in Europe with the birth of Romanticism, incited Henry Dunant to love his fellowmen.

After this period, which seems to be suffused with a poetical light, Dunant left for Algeria, where he dreamed of setting up important undertakings on behalf of Genevese business men. On reaching the shores of Africa where he found an exotic world, he soon imagined vast schemes for the exploitation of agricultural concessions, and sought for their successful conclusion the personal support of Napoleon III. To this end he left for Italy, where the Emperor was at the head of the French Army fighting against Austria.

On the battle-field Dunant was deeply affected by the sight of the wounded and dying. Moved by a powerful sentiment of compassion he gave rapid and direct assistance to the wounded. His book, " Un Souvenir de Solférino ", which he launched with stirring effect in 1862, is at the same time a summary of his recent tragic experience and a lesson. This booklet had such a great success that at the youthful age of thirty four (the age of Renan who at that time was writing his " Vie de Jésus ") Henry Dunant came into history as the apostle of peace and charity.

From that time this man of fervent soul had found his true vocation. He wished to substitute for the law of murder the law of love and goodwill.

The consciousness of his mission gave him new vigour in creating the life-saving work of the Red Cross. He successfully undertook to win the approval of sovereigns and governments to the notion of convening in his native city an international conference ; and this confirmed his views by adopting the Geneva Convention of 1864 for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in the Armed Forces in the Field. Many millions of wounded owe Henry Dunant their lives and their health as a result.

By his imagination and his action this genial visionary, the disciple of Pasteur Gaussen, resembles another prominent figure of the XIXth Century, his contemporary Ferdinand de

Lesseps, an adept of Saint-Simonism. Both left their mark on the sands of Time.

After success came failure. His African undertaking involved him in inextricable financial problems. Laden with debts he had to give up Geneva, and to take up residence first in Paris and then in London. He carried on the fight from abroad. For another twenty years he advanced abundant proposals for the relief of suffering and the improvement of man's condition. No humanitarian question failed to touch this great promoter of ideas, who interested himself in the conditions for prisoners of war and the victims of maritime warfare, who aroused public opinion in favour of the campaign against slavery, the return of the Jews to Palestine, disarmament and international arbitration.

Fatigue, illness and resentment against those who did not give credit to his generous intentions turned his thoughts to bitterness. In July 1887 Henry Dunand returned to Switzerland. He passed weary days in the solitary retreat of his old age at Heiden, a small town of Appenzell, on the border of the forest and the mountain. It was here that as an octogenarian he received the first tokens of admiration from a new generation. He was awarded the Nobel Prize ; and the flow of messages of gratitude from all parts of the world did not cease until October 30, 1910, when he passed away shortly after 10 p.m.

Miss Ellen Hart has the art of bringing her characters to life. She fully reveals the heroic aspect of the life of Henry Dunant, who tried to mould his destiny in line with his principles. She makes us aware of the crisis in the existence of this apostle, who was completely bound up with his work. If civilisation can be saved and humanity preserved from destruction, this will be due to men like Dunant, who have bequeathed to the world a noble and generous message of charity and salvation, which should be heard by the youth of all countries.

*Roger Boppe.*

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