

CLARA BARTON

A Story Of The Red Cross



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COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED Introduction by Francis R. Gemme

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Red Cross



AIRMONT

AIRMONT PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.
22 EAST 60TH STREET • NEW YORK 10022

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THE SPECIAL CONTENTS OF THIS EDITION

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PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY IN THE DOMINION OF CANADA
BY THE RYERSON PRESS, TORONTO

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BY THE COLONIAL PRESS INC., CLINTON, MASSACHUSETTS

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Introduction

Clara Barton was one of those diminutive New England women of the nineteenth century who was determined to make the world a better place. What Susan B. Anthony was to women's suffrage and Harriet Beecher Stowe was to the cause of abolition, Clara Barton was to the humanitarian impulse of the American people to help the unfortunate victims of wars and disasters. In 1881, Clara Barton founded the American Red Cross; she served as its president from 1882 to 1904. The American Red Cross of today stands as a living memorial to the lifelong efforts of this valiant lady.

In the present volume, *A Story of the Red Cross*, Miss Barton tells the story of the first twenty-five years of the organization which she founded. Her approach is to review the heroic activities of the Red Cross during these years. The relief offered by the organization in the Texas Famine, the Mount Vernon Cyclone, the Johnstown Flood, the Sea Island Hurricane, and the Galveston Tidal Wave is discussed in detail. The style is marked by Miss Barton's characteristic humility. It is obvious, however, that her commitment, efficient direction, and personal philanthropy were inherent in

the successful relief freely given the victims of these disasters.

The tales of charity which make up this book are not limited to merely the relief of the suffering in natural and domestic disasters. There are also chapters about relief projects in foreign lands: the Russian Famine of 1891, the Armenian Relief of 1896, and the Cuban Campaign of 1898 all benefited from the attention of the Red Cross.

In each heroic episode, the philosophy of Miss Barton and her organization is evident. It is best summed up in her own words: "The wreckage has been cleared away, the stricken people have been wisely, tenderly, and calmly guided out of panic and despair on to the road of self-help and cooperative effort to restore their shattered homes and broken fortunes; and then the Red Cross has retired as quietly as it came, and few, outside of the people immediately concerned, have realized the beneficent powers of help and healing that have fallen like a benediction upon the stricken wherever that sacred symbol of humanity has made its way." While the work of the Red Cross is more widely known today, its purpose is essentially the same as that of eighty years ago.

Clara Barton was born Clarissa Harlowe Barton in Oxford, Massachusetts, on Christmas Day, 1821. At the age of fifteen she began teaching school and later attended the Liberal Institute of Clinton, New York. In 1851, she organized a system of free public schools in Bordentown, New Jersey. From 1854 until 1861, she worked in the United States Patent Office in Washington, D.C. With the outbreak of hostilities in the Civil War, Clara Barton launched the philanthropic career which would occupy the rest of her life.

At first, using her own money, she solicited supplies for needy soldiers. Later she became supervisor of nursing for the Army of the James. Her heroic efforts,

even under battlefield fire, on behalf of the wounded earned her the epithets, "Angel of the battlefield," and "America's Florence Nightingale." She spent the years after the war supervising a search for missing soldiers and bringing relief to thousands of anxious relatives. Her income was derived from her popular lectures and, as always, she freely diverted these funds to charitable endeavors.

In 1869, Miss Barton traveled to Europe where instead of recuperating and regaining her health, she was soon involved in more charitable work in the Franco-Prussian War. She became associated with the International Red Cross and in 1873 brought the ideas of that organization home with her. Largely through her efforts the United States Senate confirmed the Geneva Convention in 1882. She had founded the American Red Cross years before and her writings emanated from her activities with that organization. *An Official History of the Red Cross* (1882), *America's Relief Expedition to Asia Minor* (1896), *The Red Cross in Peace and War* (1899), and *A Story of the Red Cross* (1904), were her most popular books. She died on April 12, 1912, at her home in Glen Echo, Maryland.

Among the many tributes accorded her at her death, the following three can be considered representative:

"Surely, in all fields relating to the humanitarian side of life, the nineteenth century produced no finer figures than Florence Nightingale and Clara Barton."

New York Post

"Her religion ran to the whole of mankind. She was a true cosmopolite, although in visible aspect seemingly a New England provincial. She not only preached but practiced the new internationalism. She represented the

spirit that knows not race, nor color, nor country, nor creed, nor sex, nor any other thing when the cry of human need is heard . . .”

New York Globe

“She was perhaps the most perfect incarnation of mercy the modern world has known. She became the founder of the most significant and widespread philanthropic movement of the age, a movement that already has become an intrinsic part of world civilization.”

Detroit Free Press

The eight stories of the early work of the American Red Cross which make up this book became all the more dramatic because they are told in Clara Barton's own words and from her point of view as an eye witness and as President of the Red Cross. She lived much she did not write, but she wrote nothing she did not live.

FRANCIS R. GEMME

Northampton, Massachusetts

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I

Early History

1880-1884

"I have lived much that I have not written, but I have written nothing that I have not lived."

It was a little blue-eyed girl of ten who sat on a low hassock at my feet, slowly drawing the soft auburn curls between her fingers, when, suddenly lifting her head and looking me earnestly in the face, she exclaimed: "What is the Red Cross? Please tell me about it; I can not understand it."

There was a pleading earnestness in the tone not to be resisted, and laying down my pen I commenced to explain to her the principles, history, and uses of the Red Cross. She listened anxiously, the pretty brow knitted; she seemed more and more perplexed, until, as if a light had broken over her, she exclaimed, half impatiently:

"Not that—not that, tell me something it *does*—it and you, I can understand it better then."

A light had broken over me. It was a story the child wanted to illustrate the principle and bring it home to her. A story she must have.

In a half hour she felt that she knew it all and was an ardent devotee even of its principles. But she had given me more than I had given her. Here was food for thought.

For twenty-five years I had labored to explain the principles and uses of the Red Cross; had written enough for a modest library of what it was and what it meant, but, lest I seem egotistical, not a page of what it did. The child had given me an idea that I

would for once put into practice, and write a few pages of what the Red Cross had done, leaving principles to present themselves.

I will commence even back of itself.

Forty years ago, before most of you were born, a great war had been fought in America, in which thousands died from battle and hardship, and thousands more still left alive were worn out in the untried and unsystematized efforts at relief that had been made through nearly five years of continuous war. Of these latter, many were women who dragged out weary lives in their own homes, some went to hospitals and retreats for rest and care, and some were sent abroad. One of these latter I knew personally, for, as Patrick would say, "It was me-self."

To me it seemed a hard sentence that our physicians imposed. I had grown to love the country we had so toiled for, and did not want to leave it. Its very woes had made it dear to me. It had quiet once more, and a peace that was not all a peace. It had its early soldier homes, its fast-filling cemeteries, and the tender memory of a martyred President resting over us like a pall. These had come to seem like a heritage to me, and in my weakness I clung to them. Still, the order was obeyed and I went.

Then followed travels in strange and foreign lands, other wars, illness and suffering of my own, until eleven years later I came almost a stranger again to our Government with another work, which I believed to be for its good and the good of our people.

This time I brought the idea of the treaty of Geneva, asking our Government, at the request of other Governments, to examine and to unite with it, if found desirable. This effort with the Government covers five years of hard, continuous labor, during which was sought the aid of friends known in other years. At the end of this time, by advice of our sec-

ond martyred President and three members of his historic cabinet—James G. Blaine, William Windom, and Robert T. Lincoln—a national society was formed, known as the Association of the American Red Cross, and, by desire and nomination of President Garfield, I was made its president, and requested to name my officers.

The association was formed during the winter of 1880-'81, with the view on the part of President Garfield of facilitating the adoption of the treaty which he would name in his next message, which message was never written.

Before the message, he, too, had joined the martyred ranks, and his gentle successor, Arthur, filled his chair and kept his promise, and through action of his own executive department the treaty was adopted; indorsed by action of the Senate; proclaimed by the President to our people; later ratified by the International Powers in the Congress of Berne, with the pledge to render relief to unfortunate victims of war, and the privilege, by my request, of rendering similar relief to the victims of great national calamities or disasters.

All this had been accomplished by the kindly help of a few personal friends, tireless and unrewarded, and while the news of the accession of the Government of the United States, to the treaty of Geneva, lit bonfires that night (for I cabled it by their request) in the streets of Switzerland, France, Germany, and Spain, a little four-line paragraph in the congressional doings of the day in the *Evening Star*, of Washington, alone announced to the people of America that an international treaty had been added to their rolls.

No personal distinction had been bestowed, no one honored, no one politically advanced, no money of the Government expended, and, like other things of like nature and history, it was left in obscurity to make its own way and live its own hard life.

Thus the spring of 1882 found us—a few people, tired and weak, with five years of costly service, a treaty gained, with no fund, no war nor prospect of any, and no helpful connection with or acknowledgment by the Government.

Soon the news of "Half the State of Michigan on Fire" called us to action on our own laws of civil relief. A little draft on the purse of the new, inexperienced president of the association paved the way for an agent to go to the field. Others generously joined, all reported to our friend and advocate, Senator Omar D. Conger, of Michigan. Some supplies were sent, a society or two formed to provide and forward them. The agents remained until the suffering was relieved, and thus the first field relief work of which we have any record in the United States was commenced.

Meanwhile, I had been asked by the Senate to write the history of the Red Cross, and show the official action taken by our Government on the acceptance of the treaty, which history the Senate would have printed at the Government printing-office. This volume I prepared as requested. A thousand copies were printed for information to the public, to be circulated by the society; but with no frank or other means provided, and with a postage of some ten cents a volume, we were compelled to limit the circulation to the means.

The following year, 1883, a disastrous rise in the Ohio River called for our aid. Dr. J. B. Hubbell, who had been our agent the year before, was called from Michigan University, where he was completing a course, to examine the needs of the inhabitants and take such relief as we could provide. There was little loss of life, and the destruction of property lay largely in the loss of stock, and washing away of the soil, vegetation, and the means of reproduction.

A remarkable provision for this latter loss was made

by the gift of Mr. Hiram Sibley, the noted seed dealer of Rochester—who had become associated with the Red Cross, being an old-time friend of the family of its president—of ten thousand dollars' worth of seed, to replant the washed-out lands adown the Mississippi. As the waters ran off, the mud immediately baked in the sunshine, making planting impossible after a few days. Accordingly, Mr. Sibley's gift was sent with all haste to our agent at Memphis, and in forty-eight hours, by train and boat, it was distributed in the four States—Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi—and planted for the crops of the coming season.

Besides this generous gift of material, a little money had been raised and sent by the three societies of the Red Cross which had been formed, viz.: Dansville and Syracuse, a few hundreds—something more from the Red Cross at Rochester—always thoughtful and generous, which served to help in the distribution of clothing and supplies promiscuously sent. And at the finish of the work, when every donation had been carefully acknowledged, one thousand dollars and some cents were left in the treasury unexpended.

A cyclone occurring within a few months in Louisiana and southern Alabama, cutting a swath from New Orleans to Mobile, decided us to send eight hundred dollars of this reserve to the secretary of the Red Cross Society of New Orleans, which sum was forwarded by our vice-president, Mr. A. S. Solomons. This left a sum of two hundred dollars and some cents in the treasury with which to commence another field.

This was the commencement of 1883. In May, at the solicitation of General Butler, then Governor of Massachusetts, I took the superintendence of the Massachusetts Woman's State Prison at Sherborn, at the customary salary of fifteen hundred dollars a year.

To this duty the Legislature added, after my arrival, those of secretary and treasurer, without increase of salary, discharging the former incumbent, a man, at three thousand dollars a year. I accepted the new duties, became my own bondsman for ten thousand dollars, by transfer of that amount of bonds from my bankers, Brown Brothers, New York, to the Massachusetts State Treasury at Boston—remaining in charge of the prison until the close of the year, and the retirement of General Butler as Governor.

In the short and interrupted existence of our association—scarce two years—our few official advisers had formed some general regulations, relating to our course of procedure. Realizing that to be of any real service as a body of relief for sudden disasters, we must not only be independent of the slow, ordinary methods of soliciting relief, but in its means of application as well, it was decided:

First. To never solicit relief or ask for contributions.

Second. Not to pay salaries to officers—paying out money only to those whom we must employ for manual labor—and as our officers served without compensation they should not be taxed for dues.

Third. To keep ourselves always in possession of a stated sum of money to commence a field of disaster—this sum to be independent even of the closed doors of a bank which might prevent leaving for a field on a Sunday or holiday.

Fourth. To take this sum of our own, going directly to a field with such help as needed, giving no notice until there, overlooking the field, and learning the extent of the trouble and conditions of the people, making immediate and reliable report to the country through the Associated Press, some of whose officers were our own Red Cross officers as well. These reports would be truthful, unexaggerated, and non-sensational statements that could be relied upon.

Fifth. That if, under these conditions, the people chose to make use of us as distributors of the relief which they desired to contribute to the sufferers, we would do our best to serve them while at the field—make report directly to each and all contributors, so far as in our power, and proceed to carry out any directions and apply the relief at hand, in the wisest manner possible, among a dazed and afflicted community.

To inaugurate this method, I, as president, placed a sum of three thousand dollars, free of bank or interest, upon momentary call, at the service of the association. On more than one occasion it has been taken on Sunday, when every bank in the country was closed and charitable bodies were at their prayers. Even the relief of Johnstown was thus commenced. This provision has never for a day been broken. It is as good at this moment as it was in 1883, and from the same source. It may not have been a "business-like" method nor one to be approved by stated boards of directors nor squared by bank regulations. But the foes we had to meet were not thus regulated, and had to be met as they came; and so they always must be if any good is to be accomplished.

Until the Government and society can control the elements, and regulate a spring freshet, a whirlwind or a cyclone, they will find that red tape is not strong enough to hold their ravages in check.

It was well that these regulations had been formulated and their provisions acted upon, as the state of our treasury and the conditions immediately following will show.

I returned to Washington upon my retirement from the superintendence of the State Prison at Sherborn, accompanied by Dr. Hubbell, who, having completed his university course, had come to the Red Cross for permanent service. Before we had even time to un-

pack our trunks, the news of the fearful rise of the Ohio River, of 1884, began to shock the country with its loss of life and property.

I had never been present at a disaster in civil life. It had never occurred to me that they recurred so frequently. But if by virtue of my office as president I was liable to be called every year to preside over and provide for them, it was essential that I learn my duties experimentally. I accordingly joined Dr. Hubbell, who had been appointed general field agent, and proceeded to Pittsburg, the headwaters of the rise.

Telegraphing from there to our agents of the Associated Press, we proceeded to Cincinnati, to find the city afloat. Its inhabitants were being fed from boats, through the second-story windows. These conditions were telegraphed. Supplies commenced to flow in, not only from our own societies but from the people of the country. Warehouses were filled, in spite of all we dispensed—but there were four hundred miles of this distress—even to Cairo, where the Ohio, sometimes thirty miles in width, discharged its swollen waters into the Mississippi.

Recognizing this condition lower down the river as the greater need, we transferred our supplies and distribution to Evansville, Ind. Scarcely had we reached there when a cyclone struck the river below, and traveling up its entire length, leveled every standing object upon its banks, swept the houses along like cockle-shells, uprooted the greatest trees and whirled them down its mighty current—catching here and there its human victims, or leaving them with life only, houseless, homeless, wringing their hands on a frozen, fireless shore—with every coal-pit filled with water, and death from freezing more imminent than from hunger.

There were four hundred miles more of this, and no way of reaching them by land. With all our tons of