

HELPFUL AIMS OF AMERICAN WOMEN BASIS OF RED CROSS

Red Cross of Today Outgrowth of United States Sanitary Commission of Civil War Days—Names of Clara Barton; Dorothy Dix and Rev. H. W. Bellows Recalled.

BY ADDISON BENNETT.

WHEN all of the moral forces in Oregon are united for the purpose of raising funds for the Red Cross Society, my mind carries me back to the beginning of the Civil War to that fateful day, the 15th of April, 1861, when President Abraham Lincoln issued his proclamation calling for 75,000 volunteers, their period of enlistment to be for 90 days. How little we realized that for more than four years we would be fighting our brothers of the South.

I find by looking at the histories of the '60s that on the very day that President Lincoln issued his call for volunteers the women of Bridgeport, Conn., organized a society for the support and relief of our soldier boys, and on the same day Miss Almena Bates, of Charlestown, Mass., took a step in the same direction, and four or five days later the women of Lowell, Mass., did the same. Yes, the good women of New England lost not a day in setting on foot steps towards caring for the "sojer boys." And, remember, it was the women and not the men!

Here is what the Lowell women decided they would do to the best of their ability—in other words, this was their declaration of intentions: "To supply nurses, provisions, clothing, medicines and other comforts and necessities, such as are not furnished by the Government, and to send books, newspapers and periodicals to the various camps, and to assist in keeping up a correspondence between the soldiers and their friends at home."

On April 19, but four days after the call for troops, the women of Cleveland took their places with their New England sisters—and very, very soon the movement swept like an avalanche from Maine to the Rockies.

Rev. H. W. Bellows, of New York, called a meeting of earnest workers and formed what they termed the Women's Central Association for Relief, and Dorothy Dix—long may we revere her memory—offered her services to the Government.

On June 9 the great movement then having taken shape all over the country, Dr. Bellows and his co-workers held a meeting in New York City for the purpose of appointing a "commission of inquiry and advice in relation to the sanitary interests of the United States troops," and at that meeting was formed "The United States Sanitary Commission." A sort of charter was issued by the President and signed by him and the Secretary of War (Stanton), Dr. Bellows was elected president (and he served until long after the close of the war. Frederick Law Olmstead was elected secretary—and the Sanitary Commission was ready for work.

Historically, those are the facts as to the birth of the Sanitary Commission, the forerunner of the Red Cross Society—with the same aims, the same objects, and, practically, dominated by the good women of the land.

The Sanitary Commission had no

funds, no equipment of any kind. But cash and goods began to pour in almost at once. Twelve depots were established for the receipt of donations and packages arrived by the thousand within a very short time and from the offers of professional services it seemed as though half of the physicians and trained nurses of the country were anxious to give their services.

But the chief way of getting cash was through what were called sanitary fairs. The name may sound strange now when everything and everybody is "sanitary!" But there was nothing strange about it 56 years ago let me tell you. We took the name and the movement in dead earnest and every loyal citizen did his bit. These fairs were held in pretty near every city and town and village in the land. Practically everything was donated, even the rent, light and heat of the buildings where the fairs were held and a great portion of the stuff sold was returned and sold over—and often over and over for several times. I remember that a barrel of flour in a little town in New York was sold for \$25—and donated and resold some 20 times. Many towns and cities gave \$1 for each of its inhabitants.

So let us with pride look back to New England, to the beautiful little city of Bridgeport, to Miss Almena Bates, and say, "there was born the Sanitary Commission, which set the example and blazed the trail for the Red Cross Society." And let us give all honor and praise to Dr. Bellows, to Dorothy Dix, to Frederick Law Olmstead and to Clara Barton and say it was they and the other good women and men of the land that started a movement in this new republic that eclipsed all of the work done for the benefit of the soldier since time began until the Civil War.

I said at the start the Sanitary Commission was the forerunner of the Red Cross Society; and so it was. It was at the battle of Solferino, in Italy, fought June 24, 1859, that Henry Duman, of Geneva, Switzerland, got the material for his book, published in 1862. And it was this book that stirred many of the good men of the world, for Duman told in a wonderful story of the sufferings of that battle that might have been and ought to have been remedied or overcome by the assistance of lay workers. Duman advocated the forming of a society along the lines of the Sanitary Commission of that time, whether he had heard of it or not, and those lines were the same as the Red Cross of today. In October, 1863, the first meeting or convention was held, but the Red Cross Society was not born until August 22, 1864. Remember I am taking nothing away from the great name of Duman, nothing away from the bright record of the society he formed. I am only trying to bring home to the good women of our own land the credit that belongs to them for starting and carrying on for years the greatest work ever undertaken for the relief of the suffering. That is all. And it is right to do this.