

Champions of Charity



*War and the Rise
of the Red Cross*

John F. Hutchinson

Champions of Charity

SERVICE

DRAINS

TAMPON

COMPRESSES

BED SOCK

BATH MITT

BANDAGES

ELBOW REST

FRACTURE
PILLOW



SURGICAL DRESSINGS
FOR
WAR RELIEF

Champions of Charity

*War and the Rise
of the Red Cross*

John F. Hutchinson



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The desire to consecrate one's self to a sublime mission, the transcendent attraction that a holy cause possesses for noble hearts, and which makes the chords of religious virtue and military valor vibrate in unison to the very depths of the soul, the seductions of danger and warlike enthusiasm, will every day produce champions of charity upon the field of battle.

—C. Frégier, *Le droit du sang, ou de l'organisation d'une Société internationale d'hospitaliers volontaires pour le secours du blessés militaires*, 1864



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Preface and Acknowledgments

My interest in the historical role of the Red Cross began a decade ago. How it was sparked is explained in the Introduction; here I will say only that it has never flagged and that I finish this book acutely aware of how much more remains to be said. I will be delighted if this book persuades others to take up a subject that is far richer and more complex than many people would suspect. The history of philanthropy and humanitarianism, indeed of the Red Cross itself, is still in its infancy. I suspect this is because so many philanthropic institutions have conceived of writing their histories as a matter of recording their (often impressive) achievements. An uncritical approach, however, precludes serious analysis: It becomes unnecessary, if not ill-mannered, to question motives or to ask why some causes succeed in attracting support while others do not. To be sure, I am not suggesting that the critical historian of philanthropy must run to the other extreme, mean-spiritedly assuming the worst about the people and institutions involved or cynically dismissing the rhetoric of altruism as mere cant. The plain fact is, however, that all charitable and philanthropic activity takes place in a particular social, political, and cultural context and, like every other aspect of the past, cannot be properly understood outside that context. What is necessary, therefore, is to bring to this subject the same degree of healthy skepticism and curiosity that one finds in other areas of contemporary historical analysis.

Over the years my efforts to place the Red Cross in the context of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century international history have been assisted by numerous individuals and institutions. Pride of place must be given to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, which over many years provided the financial support necessary to undertake the research on which this book is based. My first blundering efforts drew encouraging responses from two scholars who have done much to increase our understanding of humanitarianism, Geoffrey Best and David P. Forsythe, and from two others who have themselves contributed much to our knowledge of the medical and social aspects of philanthropy, James H. Cassedy and Adele Lindenmeyr. At various stages in the project, I have benefited from the advice, comments, and criticisms of Leo van Bergen, Roger Cooter, Dan Fox, Gordon Martel, Angus McLaren, Allan Mitchell, Ellen More, John Norris, Stuart Robson, and Jim Winter. Bill McAllister willingly shared with me his work on military medicine in Germany, and Dr. Alexander Sudahl kindly took time from his own research on the history of emergency medical services to furnish me with copies of scarce items about the history of the Red Cross in Germany. Obtaining any material at all on the Ottoman Red Crescent

Society proved to be a special challenge; without the help of Inci Bowman at the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston and Dr. Nil Sari, head of the Departments of the History of Medicine and Medical Ethics at the University of Istanbul, I would have had an almost fruitless search.

Librarians, archivists, and curators in many different places assisted my research at every turn. I am particularly indebted to the librarians of the ICRC Library in Geneva, Madames Gonset and Meriboute; the latter's unrivaled knowledge of the contents of the *Ancien Fond du CICR* is one of the scholarly wonders of the world. All of the staff in the two Red Cross documentation centers—at the ICRC and at the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (formerly the League of Red Cross Societies)—were remarkably helpful to an inquisitive outsider. Daphne Ann Reid cheerfully gave me the benefit of her special knowledge of the archives of the League of Red Cross Societies. Margaret Poulter, archivist of the British Red Cross Society, helped to make my visit to Barnett Hill both efficient and profitable. In London, Shirley Taylor of the Wellcome Tropical Institute and Pamela Willis, curator of the museum and library of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, made it possible for me to consult the papers and letters of Sir Thomas Longmore and Sir John Furley. In Paris, Madame Simone Bellenger and the documentation staff of the French Red Cross not only permitted me to use their library but also brought several uncataloged items and some splendid illustrations to my attention. In Brussels, Luc de Munck, archivist of the Flemish Red Cross, enthusiastically shared with me his unique knowledge of the earliest days of the Red Cross movement. At the National Headquarters of the American Red Cross in Washington, D.C., the once proud Historical Division has long since fallen to the budgetary ax, but both Jackie Berry and Patrick Gilbo did their best to locate materials that a recent reorganization had apparently put out of reach: The Davison Papers, for example, had to be rescued from the attic! At the National Archives and Records Administration, Aloha South led me through the complexities of "RG 200"—the hundreds of boxes that contain the pre-1950 records of the American National Red Cross. In California, Alice Phillips Rose was a helpful guide to the materials on the League of Red Cross Societies held by the Hoover Institution. During these various trips, friends kindly helped with accommodation: Russell Maulitz in Paris, Katherine Archibald in New York City, and Janet and Bob Joy in Washington, D.C.

Several of my colleagues at Simon Fraser University have read and commented on parts of the manuscript or otherwise offered useful advice. These include William Cleveland, Michael Fellman, Don Kirschner, Mary Lynn Stewart, and Andrea Tone. Two graduate students, Sharon Hall and Alexander Freund, contributed much to the project as energetic and industrious research assistants; another, Gul Civelekoglu, translated some Turkish-language material on the Ottoman Red Crescent. Letia Richardson helped me to see Red Cross pictorial art in a broader context. A special word of thanks goes to Fred Kyba of the Instructional Media Center; his talents in

the “digital darkroom” are responsible for the quality of many of the illustrations reproduced in the book. The Inter-Library Loan staff were undaunted by my many requests, despite the fact that obtaining five items on microfilm from the National Library of Medicine in Bethesda took nearly three years, surely a record though hardly an enviable one.

I must also thank my editor at Westview Press, Peter Kracht, who from the very first has been an enthusiastic supporter of the project. I am very grateful to the two “anonymous” external readers of the manuscript; their suggestions for improvements and corrections greatly improved the work, as did the careful editing of Jon Howard. All three did their best to save me from myself, but for whatever errors remain, I am of course solely responsible. During the months and years when this book was taking shape, Virginia Hayes and Julia Hutchinson provided support and companionship to a frequently preoccupied, and often itinerant, author.

A preliminary version of Chapter 1 appeared as John F. Hutchinson, “Rethinking the Origins of the Red Cross,” in *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* © 1989 Johns Hopkins University Press; it is used here by permission of the editors and of the Johns Hopkins University Press. A segment of Chapter 5 appeared as “The Nagler Case: A Revealing Moment in Red Cross History,” in *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 9 (1992):177–190. I gratefully acknowledge the editors’ permission to draw upon this copyright material. Part of Chapter 6 appeared as “Custodians of the Sacred Fire: The ICRC and the Postwar Reorganisation of the Red Cross,” in Paul Wendling (ed.), *International Health Organisations and Movements, 1918–1939*, © 1995 Cambridge University Press; reprinted with the permission of Cambridge University Press. Excerpts from the novels of Evelyn Waugh are reprinted by permission of Peters, Fraser, and Dunlop, Literary Agents, on behalf of the Estate of Evelyn Waugh. Permission was granted by International Creative Management, Inc., to reprint an excerpt from “Beyond the Fringe,” © 1963, copyright renewed by Alan Bennett, Peter Cook, Jonathan Miller, and Dudley Moore.

* * *

Finally, I wish to pay tribute to the one person who, since the inception of this project, has always encouraged me, often challenged me, sometimes nagged me, and occasionally infuriated me; moreover, he has filled almost an entire drawer in my filing cabinet with letters, photocopies, and bibliographic references, testimony to his constant—not to say relentless—interest in this book. That person is Bob Joy, who will soon retire as head of the Section of Medical History at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland. His unique role as an impresario of scholarship has already been recognized by others, but I still take pleasure in dedicating this book to him as my personal festschrift for his retirement.

John F. Hutchinson



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Acronyms

AARC	American Association of the Red Cross
ADF	Association des Dames Françaises
ANRC	American National Red Cross (see note 74 in Chapter 5, explaining the distinction between the ANRC and the ARC)
ARA	American Relief Administration
ARC	American Red Cross
BRCS	British Red Cross Society
CBRCC	Central British Red Cross Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
JRCS	Japanese Red Cross Society
LRCS	League of Red Cross Societies
ORCS	Ottoman Red Crescent Society
POWs	prisoners of war
RAMC	Royal Army Medical Corps
SEC	Supreme Economic Council
SGUP	Geneva Society for Public Utility, the Society
SSBM	Société de Secours aux Blessés Militaires des Armées de Terre et de Mer
UFF	Union des Femmes de France
VADs	voluntary aid detachments



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Introduction:

The Sacred Cow & the Skeptical Historian

THANKS TO THE PUBLIC QUESTIONING of the role of the Red Cross in the “tainted blood” scandals in France and Canada, the AIDS-conscious generation now coming of age will never be likely to regard the Red Cross as a sacred cow. Half a century ago, however, the climate of opinion was entirely different. As World War II came to an end, the Red Cross was expected to play a beneficent role in the peacetime world by caring for veterans, teaching children about hygiene and international friendship, and providing useful community services such as first aid training and swimming lessons. As a boy in Toronto in the late 1940s, I can remember our school choir singing at the dedication of a Red Cross Lodge at Sunnybrook Hospital for veterans; the distinctive red and white flag was as familiar to us as any national flag and almost as frequently seen. In 1952, the International Red Cross held a conference in Toronto, and we schoolchildren were told what an important event this was; we may even have been told something about the Geneva Convention, but if so, we quickly forgot. I clearly remember “Junior Red Cross time” in the classroom, when the teacher distributed little cards surmounted by a Red Cross, containing the ten rules of good hygiene that we were expected to observe. At summer camp, the standards for swimming tests were set by the Red Cross, and the badges on our bathing suits bore its familiar symbol. However, like most of my generation, once I grew up I had little more contact with the organization, apart from occasional visits to blood donor clinics. One knew that the Red Cross existed and that its existence was a good thing, but one took it and its goodness entirely for granted.

The enduring legacy of this childhood experience, I discovered years later, was an implicit belief that the Red Cross was beyond criticism. It was as unthinkable to make negative comments about the Red Cross as it was to desecrate the graves of fallen soldiers. I was thus amazed and wholly unprepared when, many years later while doing research for a book on health reform in revolutionary Russia, I discovered a group of people who had little good to say for their country's Red Cross society. These were the public physicians of tsarist Russia, most of whom were employed by county councils

and municipalities; they were well educated and obviously knowledgeable about matters of health. Despite the fact that they were all advocates of preventive medicine, popular enlightenment, and health reform, they clearly did not regard the Russian Red Cross as their ally.¹ Indeed, there were times when they treated it almost as an enemy. For example, during the cholera epidemic in South Russia in 1910, the Red Cross was sent in by the government to make up for inadequacies that had produced the epidemic in the first place and then went quietly away without pointing a finger at those whom contemporary epidemiological knowledge might have held to be negligent: the local mine-owners and the health bureaucracy of the tsarist regime. These criticisms stuck in my mind, leading me to wonder whether the Russian Red Cross—tsarist or Bolshevik, for that matter—was atypical in being tied so closely to the interests of the regime of the day.

I could have answered my question about the Red Cross and its relations with governments elsewhere if I could have found a historical evaluation of what might be called the political economy of the Red Cross, but I soon discovered that no such book existed. Professional historians of medicine, war, and philanthropy seem to have ignored the Red Cross; one suspects that like their fellow citizens they have largely taken it for granted.² Consequently, the vast majority of the hundreds of books about it fall into two categories: laudatory and didactic biographies of Henry Dunant, and self-serving institutional histories written to describe and record the charitable work of the Red Cross in this or that war or disaster. The sort of book that I sought, however, was not one that asked *what the Red Cross did* but rather *what the Red Cross was*: what explained its emergence and remarkable growth in the period between the 1860s and World War I? How and why did it survive “the war to end all wars”? What light does its history shed on relations between states, philanthropy, war, and medicine? Eventually my frustration with the available literature led me to try to answer these questions myself.

As this project began to take shape, my previous training in Russian history stood me in unexpectedly good stead. It had never occurred to me that the archives of a benevolent international organization would not be open to scholars, but I soon learned otherwise when I requested access to the archives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Geneva. The first ominous sign was that archival inquiries were dealt with by the ICRC's Department of Principles, Law, and Relations with the Movement—rather like the old Soviet archival administration, which was administered under the supervision of the politburo. It was explained to me that unrestricted access to the archives was out of the question but that some limited access might be possible if I was prepared to sign a document pledging to submit my manuscript to be vetted by the ICRC and promising to remove any passage that it considered not to be in the best interests of the movement. This was not an option that I chose to pursue. Failing this, a kind of indirect access was possible: If I would submit detailed questions, a research officer would endeavor

to supply the answers. This route was scarcely promising because no inventories or finding aids were available and because I was told that the minutes (*procès-verbaux*) of ICRC meetings were off limits no matter how early the meeting date. (National archives usually observe thirty-year and fifty-year rules of confidentiality, so the ICRC has probably set a record here.) Most of my attempts to gain information by this route were met with what can only be described as courteous stonewalling. Although the ICRC is today a part of the International Red Cross, it is also an autonomous, self-perpetuating private organization that has the right to make its own rules, as it has done since its foundation. Courteous stonewalling, I soon discovered, has been one of its favorite tactics.

How could a history of the first half-century of the Red Cross be written without free access to the ICRC archives? If I had not been trained in Russian history—and therefore accustomed to closed archives, lack of finding aids, uncooperative officials, and the like—I might well have given up at this stage. Instead, the closed door became a challenge, one that has meant pursuing the inquiry by circuitous rather than direct routes. To be sure, the ICRC Library and its staff were both cooperative and helpful, unlike the custodians of the ICRC archives. This book literally could not have been written without access to the contents of the *Ancien Fond du CICR*, the huge collection of books, pamphlets, and press clippings initially assembled by Gustave Moynier (president of the ICRC from 1864 until his death in 1910), maintained intact after his death, and now housed in the library of the ICRC. Its riches will be apparent in almost every chapter that follows. Most of the pre-1939 archives of the League (now Federation) of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies were lost or destroyed during World War II, but what survives is a useful supplement to materials available in other repositories. (It is a curiosity of Red Cross history that the origins of the League can now be better studied at the National Archives in Washington and at the Hoover Institution in Palo Alto than in Geneva.) The ICRC has always been in communication with the national Red Cross societies, and the latter either maintain their own archives or, in the case of the United States, have given their early records to the public archives; the interested researcher can thus observe, albeit at a distance, the priorities and concerns of the ICRC. Outside Geneva there are manuscript collections such as those of Lord Wantage and Sir John Furley in England, and of Clara Barton, Mabel Boardman, and Henry P. Davison in Washington, that have been of considerable use. An unexpected treasure-house for the student of this aspect of the history of philanthropy is the library of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in London. Nevertheless, at certain moments I have felt keenly the lack of access to the ICRC minutes and to the papers of Gustave Moynier and Louis Appia. Where necessary, I have tried to explain ICRC behavior by using other sources, in some cases documents that I have not myself seen.³ In a very few instances, I have been forced into speculation about motives and actions; if I have erred, I hope that

the ICRC will be encouraged to review its position on archival access so that other scholars will be able to set the record straight.

It need hardly be said that because this is an unauthorized history it differs in purpose, tone, and content from the official and popular histories published by the Red Cross itself. I have, for example, found it neither helpful nor appropriate to canonize Henry Dunant; and I have treated Gustave Moynier, his successor Gustave Ador, and their ICRC colleagues as active participants in their own history, as intelligent people who pursued goals that may have shifted in response to events and who shrewdly adopted strategies and tactics that would enable them to disarm critics, outwit opponents, and generally further their aspirations. This approach will, I fear, hardly commend itself to the Red Cross, which regards itself as much more than an international charity or welfare society: It is a *movement* that has aspirations for the future of humanity. Therefore it promotes particular ideas about voluntary service, neutrality, the prevention of war, and the law of nations.⁴ Like a religion, the Red Cross movement has its doctrines and dogmas, and their guardian is the ICRC's Department of Principles, Law, and Relations with the Movement. It therefore makes sense that this department also controls the archives because many of the elements of this doctrine are based upon versions of its past that might be open to interpretation and debate among historians. I am well aware that some of the arguments and conclusions advanced in this book will be seen to conflict with current Red Cross doctrine and dogma. It has never been my intention deliberately to cast doubt on what are unquestionably deeply held beliefs; it is, however, no more than realistic to expect that an outsider will ask different questions from someone who is initiated into the movement and who therefore feels compelled to put its interests first.

Historical understanding of the Red Cross has not benefited from the fact that its past has been explored either too cautiously by members of its inner circle or too enthusiastically by well-meaning but naive admirers of Henry Dunant and of the institution they conceive to be his creation. "Great Man" biographies and simplistic whig epics abound;⁵ they are at best superficial, at worst full of sentimentality and legend. Many of the histories produced by the various national societies replicate these shortcomings, adding for good measure a strong dose of patriotism. Yet in a sense it is pointless to judge these books as one would judge the works of academic historians: For its own purposes, the Red Cross may have, and indeed will have, whatever history it chooses. Those involved in its day-to-day work would probably argue that an inspiring legend or two is a good thing for an organization that has so many tasks more urgent than promoting research into its history. Be that as it may, I am convinced that if one puts the legends, doctrines, and dogmas aside, the history of the Red Cross can help us to a clearer understanding of the relationship between organized charity, war, and the state. This understanding will help to provide the historical context that is usually missing in the many books that have faithfully recorded countless individual acts of charity per-

formed by Red Cross volunteers who have assisted—often in the most difficult circumstances—sick and wounded soldiers, prisoners of war, refugees, and needy children.

It is important to establish here that this book is not a history of the Geneva Convention. From the outset, Gustave Moynier had to contend with the fact that people confounded the Red Cross societies with the Geneva Convention. As he wrote in 1883, “There is a vague notion that because they had the same origin, that they cooperate for the same object, and that they have the same flag, people are willingly led to imagine that they are one and the same thing.”⁶ Of course they are not, and never have been; the negotiation and revision of the Geneva Convention are part, but only part, of the story told here. There is still a need for a critical history of the Convention that would pick up where earlier authors such as C. Lueder and Louis Gillot left off.⁷ If some readers are saddened by this disclaimer, I can only plead that I have no expertise in international law and so have chosen to concentrate on assistance to the sick and wounded rather than on the protection of prisoners of war. Here again, there is a substantial topic awaiting its historian. Finally, it need hardly be said that this is not a comprehensive examination of the first six decades of Red Cross history; such an enterprise would involve incorporating the history of some four dozen national societies that were in existence by 1914 and of the many more that were founded in the 1920s.

The subject matter of this book is the international Red Cross movement from the first Geneva conference in 1863 until the Tenth Conference in 1921. The 1863 conference began to organize charity in wartime; in the wake of the Great War, the 1921 conference tried to reorganize the Red Cross as a force for peace. This book is not intended as a history of the ICRC: To do full justice to the subject of war, charity, and the state, the net must be cast rather more widely. Nevertheless, my starting point was determined by the fact that the Genevan “committee of five”—the ancestor of the ICRC—and the first central committees—the ancestors of the national societies—all date from 1863–1864. The creation of the League of Red Cross Societies (LRCS, see Chapters 6 and 7) in 1919 was largely an American effort to reshape Red Cross priorities; its brief and limited success necessitated some lengthy and complex maneuvering to make room for a new arrival that was not entirely welcome, indeed not fully legitimized until 1928. In that year, and for the first time, a legal entity called the International Red Cross came into existence, composed of the national societies, the League, and the ICRC, each element of which was deemed to have its own peculiar sphere of action; since then, all three elements have continued to meet at international Red Cross conferences. However, international conferences had begun long before then, and the idea of an international Red Cross has had a much longer history than many people realize.

It may be helpful to include here a word about Red Cross terminology, in particular the many references to the *International Committee*. From October,

1863, until the early 1880s, the group of Genevan citizens who spearheaded the entire enterprise was known as the *International Committee for the Assistance to Sick and Wounded Soldiers* (shortened titles included the Comité International, the International Committee, the Geneva committee, or simply the Genevans). The word *international* was intended to refer not to the composition of the committee itself but rather to the scope of its activities. The several *central committees* formed in various states during these years usually, but not always, adopted some variation of the name *Society for Assistance to Sick and Wounded Soldiers*. The Dutch society was the first to become known popularly by its nickname, the *Red Cross* society. In a conscious effort to give the movement greater coherence and visibility, the Geneva committee decided, at the end of the 1870s, to encourage all of the national central committees to adopt the term *Red Cross society* as part of their name; most of them soon complied. By 1884, the Geneva committee had itself become the *International Committee of the Red Cross*, and meetings of delegates from all the national societies had become known as *international Red Cross conferences*. In this work, the Geneva committee will be referred to as the Comité International prior to 1880 and as the ICRC after that date. Despite sporadic efforts to change the ICRC into an agency that is international in composition as well as mission, the ICRC remained, and remains, a body made up exclusively of Swiss citizens. Why that is so forms part of the story that is told here.

Part 1 of this book introduces the first champions of the cause of charity toward the sick and wounded: the Genevan philanthropists and physicians who banded together to capitalize on the wave of sentimentalism that swept Europe after the publication of Dunant's *Un Souvenir de Solferino*. Motivated by religious conviction joined with enlightened humanitarianism, they promoted a civilizing mission for the Red Cross, the full implications of which were elaborated in the writings of Gustave Moynier and Louis Appia. Their plans could go nowhere, however, without acceptance by governments and armies, a fact they recognized from the beginning by associating with their enterprise the Swiss war hero General Dufour. Yet their very success in 1864 created the basis not for failure but rather for a selective and distorted realization of their ideas by the national governments of the day. Hence Part 2 examines the process by which organized charity, instead of making war more civilized, became militarized and adapted to the needs of belligerent nations, who soon became champions of this different conception of wartime charity. In these chapters I have employed the definition of militarism offered by political sociologist Michael Mann: "an attitude and a set of institutions which regard war and the preparation for war as a normal and desirable social activity."⁸ A bizarre consequence of this development was the flowering during the Great War of the notion of "Red Cross patriotism"; in the 1860s, the true test of philanthropy had been assisting wounded enemy soldiers, but now it had become helping your own soldiers and those of your allies. In 1919, there were fresh efforts to rekindle a conception of fraternity that had

been nearly extinguished during the war, but it proved not as easy as some enthusiasts had supposed to fashion a new peacetime Red Cross with substantially different priorities. Neither the ICRC nor the national societies were unanimous in welcoming these new champions of a broader conception of charity toward civilians, and Part 3 examines the labor pains associated with this rebirth, some of which continued to be felt throughout the 1920s. I hope to treat in a future study the efforts of both the ICRC and the LRCS to promote internationalism in the fields of health and welfare during the 1920s.



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Part One

The Civilizing Mission

There's nothing wrong with war except the fighting.

—Evelyn Waugh, *Unconditional Surrender* (1961)





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A Happy Coincidence

ONE DAY IN 1862, Genevan philanthropist Gustave Moynier received in the mail a small book entitled *A Memory of Solferino*. Moynier knew nothing of its author, a young businessman named Henry Dunant, but as president of the Geneva Society for Public Utility (SGUP) he was used to being approached with requests to support various good causes. On reading this book, he discovered that Dunant's cause was that of caring for wounded soldiers. The author, it seemed, had been an involuntary witness to the human carnage caused by the battle of Solferino in 1859, when French and Sardinian armies fighting to liberate Lombardy from Austrian rule had clashed with the armies of Emperor Francis Joseph. Moynier read with growing interest and concern Dunant's harrowing descriptions of soldiers grievously wounded and then seemingly abandoned to a gruesome fate by armies that lacked sufficient doctors, nurses, dressings, and field hospitals to care for them properly. In a few paragraphs at the end of the book, Dunant appealed to his readers to take up the cause of the war wounded by promoting the formation of voluntary aid societies that could furnish supplies and trained nurses to remedy the deficiencies of the official army medical services.

Thinking this a cause worthy of support, Moynier asked Dunant to call on him to discuss what plans the young author had made to bring the proposed aid societies into being. Apart from having his book printed at his own expense and having sent it around Europe to influential persons such as Moynier himself, Dunant had done nothing; as he had written in *A Memory of Solferino*, he hoped that his book would "attract the attention of the humane and philanthropically inclined."¹ Moynier, quickly sizing up Dunant as an idealist rather than an organizer, offered to help; he would be happy, he said, to raise the subject of voluntary aid societies at the next meeting of the SGUP, in order to gauge by the reaction of its members—all of them men of affairs—whether such a proposal was feasible and worth pursuing further. Delighted by this promise of support Dunant took his leave, convinced that his cause would find immediate and unwavering sympathy among everyone

who heard about it. The more practical Moynier, meanwhile, began to wonder whether men who knew more about armies and medicine than himself or Dunant would be receptive to the idea.

Two more unlikely collaborators than Dunant and Moynier could scarcely have been imagined. On the face of it, they shared a good deal: Genevan upbringing, respectable bourgeois backgrounds, the Protestant religion, and a desire to improve the lot of suffering humanity. Yet they were as different in their temperaments as they were in their ideas of how to achieve this goal. The impulsive Dunant was a fervent evangelical Christian who, like an Old Testament prophet, sought to bring himself and others closer to God through acts of repentance and contrition; Moynier, on the other hand, was an austere and high-minded Calvinist who had found in utilitarian philanthropy the path to a new moral world of rationality, sobriety, and self-discipline. Their collaboration would be brief, awkward, even strained; for each soon found the other extremely difficult to work with.

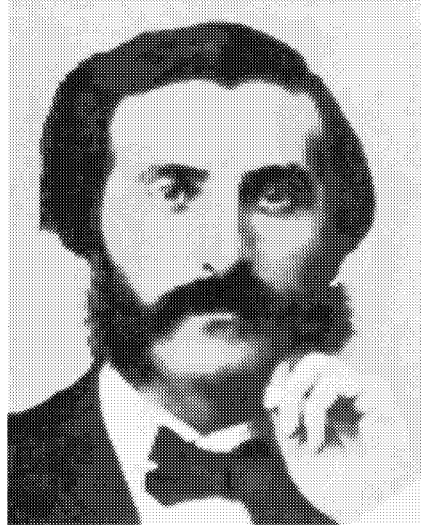
However, their first meeting was one from which, “by a happy coincidence,” as Moynier later put it, momentous consequences were to flow.² The coincidence lay in the fact that the 1860s happened to be a decade when the European powers—for their own good reasons—were prepared to give some attention, in a concerted way, to the care of wounded soldiers. In these peculiarly favorable circumstances, Moynier and Dunant were able to influence, in their very different ways, both the birth of the Red Cross and the signing of the Geneva Convention. Because of this happy coincidence—and only because of it—Moynier’s interview with Dunant became a memorable event in the history of both war and charity.

Dunant and Solferino

Henry Dunant was a devotee of Christian pietist philanthropy. He was raised in a family that had been heavily involved in the religious revival that swept Geneva after the turmoil of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. An enthusiastic volunteer even as a youth, Dunant had joined a charitable society whose members visited and gave small allowances to the city’s poor and sick and distributed moral tracts to prisoners.³ He was also a promoter of the “Christian Unions” that appeared in France in the 1850s, organizations that have been regarded as the forerunners of the Young Men’s Christian Association. Dunant took his religion very seriously and very personally. When he sat down to write about what had happened at Solferino, he later confessed, he believed himself to be an instrument of God: “I was as it were, lifted out of myself, compelled by some higher power and inspired by the breath of God. . . . In this state of pent-up emotion which filled my heart, I was aware of an intuition, vague and yet profound, that my work was an instrument of His Will; it seemed to me that I had to accomplish it as a sacred duty and that it



1.1 Henry Dunant, author of *A Memory of Solferino*.



1.2 Genevan philanthropist Gustave Moynier was the real architect of the Red Cross, although in the twentieth century members of the movement have, for their own reasons, preferred to accord this role to Henry Dunant.

was destined to have fruits of infinite consequence for mankind. This conviction drove me on.”⁴

Dunant’s notion that he had been chosen to accomplish a divine mission attracted to his cause those who wanted to believe in him; for more practical souls such as Moynier, this belief in divine inspiration was one of the things that made Dunant a difficult collaborator.

It was, however, not evangelical religion but business that had taken Dunant to Lombardy in the summer of 1859. He was, in fact, searching for Napoleon III, in the hope that an appeal to the sovereign himself could cut through the red tape that threatened to block a business deal in which Dunant was involved in French Algeria. The details of the enterprise may be passed over; what matters is that Dunant, anxious to overcome these bureaucratic obstacles, had gone to Paris to find the emperor but had been told that Napoleon III was already on his way to Piedmont.⁵ Dunant was disappointed, not least because he had hoped to present the emperor with two of his writings, one a memorandum concerning his Algerian company (the Société anonyme des Moulins de Mons-Djémila) and the other a tract on the

reestablishment of Charlemagne's empire by Napoleon III—an extraordinary piece of pseudoreligious nonsense in which Dunant claimed that the restoration of the Holy Roman Empire had been foretold in the Book of Daniel.⁶ Swallowing his disappointment, Dunant set out for Italy in the hope of tracking down the emperor. Thus it was that he happened upon the scene of the battle of Solferino on 24 June to find the many wounded from both armies who had been brought to an improvised field hospital in the church building and churchyard of nearby Castiglione.

Appalled by the plight of so many untended wounded soldiers, Dunant forgot the purpose of his trip and spent several days doing what he could to relieve their misery. In the absence of adequate supplies, this often meant simply comforting them or saying a prayer because there was little water available to clean a wound or relieve parched lips. Only after he had done everything he could for the wounded did he proceed to the encampment of the French army to resume his search for the emperor. There were others in Castiglione as well—many local women, an Italian priest, a journalist from Paris, a couple of English tourists—but it is Dunant's perception of these terrible days that has survived in *A Memory of Solferino*. He was far too busy on the days in question to keep a diary, so the book was composed from memory two or three years after the event. Despite this, it is as vivid and immediate as if it had been written at the time; reading it, one can easily believe that Dunant was driven to write it by the nightmare visions that must have stayed with him after such an experience.

So much hagiography has been written about this man and his book that both have been seriously distorted. The reality is that Dunant was as impressed by the sight of armies in conflict as he was appalled by the human carnage that resulted. His account of the battle itself is full of examples of courageous officers who led charges, rallied their men, and inspired others to emulate their bravery. One such incident concerned Lieutenant de Guiseul, who

carrying his regimental flag, was surrounded with his battalion by a force ten times the size of his own. He was shot down, and as he rolled on the ground he clutched his precious charge to his heart. A sergeant who seized the flag to save it from the enemy had his head blown off by a cannon-ball; a captain who next grabbed the flag-staff was wounded too, and his blood stained the torn and broken banner. Each man who held it was wounded, one after another, officers and soldiers alike, but it was guarded to the last with a wall of dead and living bodies. In the end, the glorious, tattered flag remained in the hands of a Sergeant-Major of Colonel Abattuci's regiment.⁷

Such passages could have come straight out of a regimental history, so completely do they reflect an uncritical acceptance of the glory of war. Not only men but even beasts were affected by the quest for glory: Dunant describes cavalry horses who were so "excited by the heat of battle" that they "played

their part in the fray, attacking the horses of the enemy and biting them furiously, while their riders slashed and cut at one another." Even a goat, which had evidently attached itself to a regiment of sharpshooters, "pushed fearlessly forward in the attack on Solferino, braving shot and shell with the troops." Of his visit to French headquarters after the battle, he wrote, "The panoply of war which surrounded the General Headquarters of the Emperor of the French was a unique and splendid sight." In short, Dunant's romantic imagination was greatly stirred by this exposure to the battlefield.⁸

Nevertheless, it struck him forcefully that war produced enormous cruelty as well as great courage. The cruelty was most apparent in clashes between the Algerians, who fought on the French side, and the Croats, who fought with the Austrians. The Algerians, he wrote, "rushed at their enemies with African rage and Mussulman fanaticism, killing frantically and without quarter or mercy, like tigers that have tasted blood."⁹ The Croats, he was told, were notorious for killing all wounded prisoners, such as the luckless Captain Pallavicini, whose skull they crushed with building stones. "We have real barbarians in our army," one Austrian officer told him.¹⁰ Both the Algerians and the peasants of Lombardy (in whose fields the battle was fought) engaged in looting, particularly boots, which they took from the dead and dying.¹¹ However, despite the behavior of the Algerians, Dunant praised the French army not only for "the courage of its officers and men" but also for "the humanity of simple troopers."¹²

Dunant's description of the misery produced by the battle faithfully reflected the social outlook of a nineteenth-century bourgeois. More than half of his book is devoted to the sufferings endured on both sides of the conflict by the wellborn, who are identified by name as well as by regiment and rank. Dunant was particularly moved by the fate of the young Prince of Isenberg, who was found alive after the battle only because the return to camp of his riderless horse touched off a special search; if the Prince "had been raised sooner by compassionate hands from the wet and blood-stained earth on which he lay senseless, [he] would not be suffering still today from wounds which became serious and dangerous during the hours when he lay there helpless."¹³ If the men of the aristocracy endured danger and hardship, the women of this class were equal to the challenge: "The gracious and lovely ladies of the aristocracy, made lovelier still by the exaltation of passionate enthusiasm, were no longer scattering rose-leaves from the beflagged balconies of sumptuous palaces to fall on glittering shoulder straps, on silks and ribbons, and gold and enamel crosses; from their eyes now fell burning tears, born of painful emotion and of compassion, which quickly turned to Christian devotion, patient and self-sacrificing."¹⁴

On a different level altogether was Dunant's discussion of the sufferings of ordinary soldiers. Although he related several examples of the dreadful tortures undergone by the horribly wounded, including the most unforgettable description of a battlefield amputation ever written, it is clear that courage,

honor, and valor were for him the prerogatives of the aristocracy.¹⁵ The common soldiers that he liked best were those who bore their fate with fortitude. He was particularly taken by the "resignation generally shown by these simple troopers. . . . Considered individually, what did any one of them represent in this great upheaval? Very little. They suffered without complaint. They died humbly and quietly."¹⁶ He was especially moved by those who feared that their wounds might make it impossible for them to work again and that, as a consequence, they might become a burden to their families.¹⁷ As a devout evangelical Christian, Dunant was also upset by the fact that so many common soldiers died with curses and blasphemies on their lips, with no one beside them to bring words of consolation.¹⁸ Both virtue and industry among the lower classes threatened to become casualties of modern warfare.

If, in matters of class, Dunant expected the wellborn to display loftier emotions than the common people, in matters of nationality he found the "amiable . . . chivalrous and generous French" more admirable than the stolid and unremarkable Austrians. He quoted General von Salm's comment to the Chevalier du Rozel on being taken prisoner at the battle of Neerwinden (1793): "What a nation you are! You fight like lions, and once you have beaten your enemies you treat them as though they were your best friends."¹⁹ To be sure, in Italy local sentiment was strongly for the French, with the result that after the battle "the French met with kindness from everyone," whereas "the Austrians had no such good fortune."²⁰ The Lombard peasants also found that the French were willing to pay very high prices for the supplies that they requisitioned.²¹ Differences in national character were particularly evident, according to Dunant, in the response to misfortune: "For the most part . . . [the wounded Austrian prisoners] lacked the expansiveness, the cheerful willingness, the expressive and friendly vivacity which are characteristic of the Latin race."²² By contrast, "In the French soldiers could be noted the lively Gallic character, decisive, adaptable and good-natured, firm and energetic, yet impatient and quick-tempered. Worrying little, and showing hardly any emotion, their light-heartedness made them better operation patients than the Austrians who, taking things less lightly, were much afraid of amputations and inclined to fret in their solitude."²³ In a footnote, Dunant paid a generous tribute to the French Minister of War, Marshal Randon, and to the commanders of the army in Italy for the "excellent organization of the French Army from the humanitarian point of view."²⁴ Indeed, he had already pointed out that it was neither "bad organization [n]or lack of foresight on the part of the administrative services" that accounted for the chaos after Solferino but rather "the unheard-of and unexpected number of the wounded," for whom there were simply not enough doctors, helpers, and orderlies.²⁵

The situation of the wounded was worst at Castiglione, where Dunant himself worked, sometimes with help but often alone, to relieve their plight. Here everything was lacking: dressings, medical attention, water for drinking

and for washing wounds, food and drink, transport for the wounded so that they could be sent on to improvised hospitals.²⁶

On the Monday morning I sent my coachman into Brescia for provisions. He came back a few hours later with the carriage loaded with chamomile, mallows, elder-flower, oranges, lemons, sugar, shirts, sponges, linen bandages, pins, cigars and tobacco. This made it possible to give out a refreshing drink of lemonade for which the men had been pining—to wash their wounds with mallow-water, to apply warm compresses, and change their dressings.²⁷

Soldiers of the French garrison endeavored to help, but the spectacle of so much misery “told upon their morale”; in their place the French quartermaster authorized the use of able-bodied prisoners from the Austrian army, but their effectiveness was impeded by lack of training, the language barrier, and the hostility of the local population.²⁸

Only a few miles away, in Brescia, the situation was quite different. There the town council had created a committee of physicians to organize medical care and hospital beds, assisted by numerous auxiliary committees that received supplies and donations of all kinds of useful items and materials. It was here that Dunant met the “noble Brescian lady, Countess Bronna”; he was enormously impressed by “the splendor of her sacrifice” in caring for amputees at the St. Clement Hospital.²⁹ From Brescia many of the wounded were sent on for convalescent care to Milan, where another noblewoman, Countess Verri, provided effective leadership for the central relief committee and where “many other noble ladies forgot their usual habits of elegance and comfort, and spent months at a time beside those beds of pain, becoming the Guardian Angels of the sick.”³⁰ Ladies’ auxiliary committees were also active at Bergamo and Cremona. Just as Dunant found the sufferings of aristocratic officers more poignant than those of common soldiers, so he also found the “sacrifice” of these noblewomen more remarkable than that of ordinary women.

In one of the best-known passages in the book, Dunant eulogized the women of Castiglione, who “seeing that I made no distinction between nationalities, followed my example, showing the same kindness to all these men whose origins were so different, and all of whom were foreigners to them. *‘Tutti fratelli’* [all are brothers], they repeated feelingly. All honor to these compassionate women, to these girls of Castiglione! Imperturbable, unwearying, unfaltering, their quiet self-sacrifice made little of fatigue and horrors, and of their own devotion.”³¹ On the face of it, this is a generous tribute, but in his concluding pages, Dunant suddenly cautioned the reader against thinking that “the lovely girls and kind women of Castiglione” had saved many of the wounded from death. “All they could do was to bring a little relief to a few of them. What was needed here was not only weak and ignorant women, but, with them and beside them, kindly and experienced men, capable, firm, already organized, and in sufficient numbers to get to work at

once in an orderly fashion. In that case many of the complications and fevers which so terribly aggravated wounds originally slight, but very soon mortal, might have been avoided."³²

Weak and ignorant women? No such phrase came from Dunant's pen when he wrote about the "splendid sacrifice" of the noble ladies of Milan; yet can it be that they were stronger, or knew more of medicine, than the ordinary women of Castiglione? What the latter needed, apparently, was organization:

Oh, how valuable it would have been in those Lombardy towns to have had a hundred experienced and qualified voluntary orderlies and nurses! Such a group would have formed a nucleus around which could have been rallied the scanty help and dispersed efforts which needed competent guidance. As it was, there was no time for those who knew their business to give the needful advice and guidance, and most of those who brought their own goodwill to the task lacked the necessary knowledge and experience, so that their efforts were often inadequate and ineffective.³³

With organization and advance planning, it would have been possible to collect the wounded more quickly, to provide immediate assistance, and to arrange transport to the nearest improvised hospital.

What Dunant proposed in the last dozen pages of *A Memory of Solferino* naturally reflected his own experience at Castiglione:

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 wartime by zealous, devoted and thoroughly qualified volunteers?

Societies of this kind, once formed and their permanent existence assured, would naturally remain inactive in peacetime. But they would always be organized and ready for the possibility of war. They would have not only to secure the goodwill of the authorities of the countries in which they had been formed, but also, in the case of war, to solicit from the rulers of the belligerent states authorization and facilities enabling them to do effective work.

The societies, therefore, should include, in each country, as members of their governing board, men enjoying the most honorable reputation and the highest esteem. The committees would appeal to everybody who, for sincere philanthropic motives, would undertake to devote himself for the time to this charitable work. The work itself would consist in bringing aid and relief (in agreement with the military commissaries, i.e. when necessary with their support and under their instructions) onto the battlefield whenever battle was joined, and subsequently to continue to care for the wounded in the hospitals until their convalescence was complete.³⁴

This proposal obviously reflected his assumptions about war, class, and the role of women. In no sense did he regard these aid societies as pacifist organizations. On the contrary, he justified their existence on the pragmatic grounds that wars were unavoidable in the present state of Europe and were likely to become more bloody in future "since new and terrible methods of

destruction are invented daily, with perseverance worthy of a better object, and since the inventors of these instruments of destruction are applauded and encouraged in most of the great European states, which are engaged in an armament race."³⁵ Dunant fully accepted the proposition that alleviating the horrors of war was a humane and civilized task in an era when it seemed impossible to avoid war entirely. This position brought him very close to the outlook of generals who appealed to their men to fight the enemy in a disciplined, sober, and exemplary fashion. Indeed, he quoted with approval General Trochu's proclamation to his men in Alexandria, 1859: "We will wage war in a manner humane and civilized."³⁶ Given the enthusiasm he evinced when writing about the panoply of war and the courage of aristocratic officers, his acceptance of the idea of civilized warfare should come as no surprise.

Equally clear is his assumption that the relief effort would be led by the wellborn, those "lofty souls" whose "hearts . . . can be stirred by the sufferings of their fellow-men." Dunant claimed that, provided the opportunity existed to be of real use, "plenty of people . . . would certainly be prepared to go, *even at their own expense*, and undertake for a limited time such an eminently philanthropic task."³⁷ In a revealing passage, he extolled the opportunity this would provide: "In this age, which is often called selfish and cold . . . for noble and compassionate hearts and for chivalrous spirits to confront the same dangers as the warrior, of their own free will, in a spirit of peace, for a purpose of comfort, from a motive of self-sacrifice!"³⁸ History, he claimed, was full of examples of such compassion and sacrifice: bishops and archbishops who brought relief to plague-stricken cities, nuns who tended the wounded during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars; Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna of Russia, who led the Sisters of Mercy during the Crimean conflict; and, of course, Florence Nightingale, whose "passionate devotion to suffering humanity is well known."³⁹ Dunant evidently believed that Europe was full of "noble and compassionate hearts and . . . chivalrous spirits" who, with some encouragement, could be relied upon to seize the opportunity provided by the frequent, bloody wars of the mid-nineteenth century to realize their spiritual mission on the battlefield.

People who were motivated by such lofty emotions would be infinitely preferable to "paid help":

Only too often hospital orderlies working for hire grow harsh, or give up their work in disgust or become tired and lazy. . . . There is need, therefore, for voluntary orderlies and volunteer nurses, zealous, trained and experienced, whose position would be recognized by the commanders in the field, and their mission facilitated and supported. The personnel of military field hospitals is always inadequate, and would still be inadequate if the number of aid[e]s were two or three times as many, and this will always be the case. The only possible way is to turn to the public. It is inevitable, it will always be inevitable, for it is through the cooperation of the public that we can expect to attain the desired goal.⁴⁰

At this point, Dunant's rhetoric began to take flight:

The imploring appeal must therefore be made to men of all countries and of all classes, to the mighty ones of this world, and to the poorest workman: for all can, in one way or another, each in his own sphere and within his own limitations, do something to help the good work forward. Such an appeal is made to ladies as well as men—to the mighty princess seated on the steps of the throne—to the poor devoted orphan serving maid—to the poor widow alone in the world and anxious to devote her last strength to the welfare of her neighbor. It is an appeal that is addressed equally to the General and the Corporal; to the philanthropist and to the writer who, in the quiet of his study, can give his talents to publications relating to a question which concerns all the human race and in a more particular sense, concerns every nation, every district, and every family, since no man can say with certainty that he is forever safe from the possibility of war.⁴¹

Finally, in what is in retrospect the single most important passage in the book, Dunant envisioned that the activity of these volunteer aid societies might be sanctioned by an agreement among Europe's military leaders:

On certain special occasions, as, for example, when princes of the military art belonging to different nationalities meet at Cologne or Châlons, would it not be desirable that they should take advantage of this sort of congress to formulate some international principle, sanctioned by a Convention inviolate in character, which, once agreed upon and ratified, might constitute the basis for societies for relief of the wounded in the different European countries?⁴²

To his mind, opposition to such an agreement was inconceivable because "humanity and civilization call imperiously for such an organization as is here suggested . . . the cooperation of every man of influence, and the good wishes . . . of every decent person can be relied upon with assurance." To Dunant it was axiomatic that his proposal would gain the adherence of every ruler who cared about the welfare of his soldiers; every government that cared about the lives of its citizens; and every general, military commissary, or army doctor who would be "grateful for the assistance of a detachment of intelligent people, wisely and properly commanded and tactful in their work."⁴³ It was this conviction that no sensible person would disagree with his proposal that had led him to send copies of the book to people of influence all over Europe.

Moynier and Genevan Philanthropy

Moynier was one of the few recipients of *A Memory of Solferino* who knew little about armies and wounded soldiers. The military officers and army surgeons who knew a great deal more praised Dunant's generosity but expressed skepticism about the idea of forming aid societies in peacetime. Most of them believed that only in wartime would patriotic enthusiasm stimulate volunteer

activity.⁴⁴ By contrast, Moynier's positive response to Dunant's vision was entirely the product of his interest in philanthropy. He was a typical utilitarian philanthropist of the mid-nineteenth century, concerned about alcoholism, child mortality, the morals and health of the working classes, and the "reclamation" of such potentially useful citizens as orphans and deaf-mutes. Trained in the law but disinclined to pursue a career at the bar, he enjoyed an income sufficiently large to devote himself, with relentless high seriousness, to improving the lot of the working classes. Moynier was also a devout Christian, although he lacked Dunant's evangelical fervor; as Pierre Boissier shrewdly observes, Dunant was fascinated by the Old Testament prophets, whereas Moynier was an admirer of St. Paul.⁴⁵

The Geneva Society for Public Utility, of which Moynier became president in 1858, had been founded thirty years previously. It brought together high-minded Genevan pietists, men of affairs who sought to improve both the moral and the material lives of the common people. Beginning with rather abstract discussions of how to reduce poverty, encourage industry, and improve public education, the members of SGUP had gradually begun to engage in practical philanthropic work. By 1863, their foundations included a house of industry, a society for the improvement of worker housing, a pension for convalescent girls, and a children's playground.⁴⁶ Moynier joined the SGUP in 1855 and represented it at the international welfare congresses held in Brussels in 1856 and Frankfurt in 1857. By the time he became president of SGUP in the following year, he had already developed a rudimentary network of contacts among leading European philanthropists.

Dunant's vision of voluntary societies appealed to both the Christian and the utilitarian dimensions of Moynier's philanthropy. On the one hand, aiding the wounded was a practical way to demonstrate individual Christian commitment to the unfortunate, to play the Good Samaritan in the face of the horrors of contemporary war, thus reasserting the dignity and worth of the individual human life. On the other, organizing such aid involved precisely the sort of provident activity in which utilitarians believed; discipline, efficiency, and preparedness were all crucial to its success. Moynier was also much attracted by the prospect that such societies could be a force for spreading more civilized standards of conduct. After all, he was the scion of a patrician family that had fled Geneva after the popular disturbances of 1846. Other young men may have been on the barricades in 1848, but Moynier was in Heidelberg, imbibing Schelling and Goethe, before proceeding to Paris to study law. While in France he must have become aware of Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (1835–1840), regarded by some European readers as a warning of what the coming mass age might be like. If voluntary societies to aid the wounded could teach armies—and through them the common people—more civilized standards of conduct, then there was hope that the advancing tide of popular government would not destroy the achievements of European civilization.

Once Moynier the philanthropist was convinced of the worth of the idea, Moynier the organizer set about realizing it; one meeting with Dunant had convinced him that the latter had no concrete plans for making his vision a reality. Using his position as president, Moynier raised with the members of SGUP the possibility of their endorsing a plan for the formation of voluntary societies to aid the wounded, a plan that could in turn be considered at the international congress on charity and social welfare scheduled to meet in Berlin in the autumn of 1863.⁴⁷

By involving SGUP, Moynier drew in as collaborators three of its most respected and influential members. General Guillaume Henri Dufour, hero of the Sonderbund War of 1847, enjoyed both an enviable reputation as a humane commander and a degree of influence with Emperor Napoleon III, whose tutor he had once been.⁴⁸ Dr. Théodore Maunoir, a distinguished surgeon who had been twice president of the Geneva Medical Society, possessed both a lengthy experience in medical philanthropy and an awareness of developments in the English-speaking world that the others lacked.⁴⁹ Maunoir's protégé, Louis Appia, the current president of the Geneva Medical Society,



1.3 This lithograph of General Guillaume Dufour by J. Heymann, entitled "When Father Dufour Calls," portrays the hero of the Sonderbund War as the conciliator of his nation. In a sense the founders of the Red Cross, with their plans for the civilizing of warfare, sought to become conciliators among nations.

had been brought up an evangelical Protestant; he shared both Dunant's enthusiasm for personal charity and Moynier's educational experience in Heidelberg and Paris.⁵⁰ Appia had drawn upon his experiences as a surgeon in the Italian War and his knowledge of gunshot wounds to write a textbook, *Le chirurgien à l'ambulance* (1859), and a prize-winning essay, *Aforismi sul trasporto de' feriti* (1862).⁵¹ Under Moynier's direction, these three plus Dunant himself drew up guidelines for the establishment of national societies to aid the wounded.

As he had promised Dunant, Moynier raised the matter of voluntary relief committees at a meeting of SGUP held on 9 February, 1863. Members agreed that the subject deserved to be pursued further and struck a committee of five—Moynier himself, General Dufour, Dr. Appia, Dr. Maunoir, and the hastily co-opted Dunant—to investigate the practicality of the scheme.⁵² The first meetings of this group, subsequently known to the Red Cross movement as the committee of five, took place almost immediately. Several important steps were taken at the very first meeting on 17 February. In the first place, at Moynier's urging, the five boldly decided to assume an independent existence, voting to continue as a permanent International Committee to Assist the War Wounded after the mandate given them by SGUP had expired.⁵³ After that, they resolved to press for the formation of similar committees throughout Europe and to use their influence to persuade governments to encourage and approve the formation of such committees. Everyone agreed that the best means of achieving this goal was to make it clear from the outset that there would be no pressure or dictation from Geneva; instead, they would encourage each nation, each region (*contrée*), even each city, to create whatever sort of committee seemed appropriate in the circumstances.

It is clear from the minutes, written in Dunant's own hand, that the participants each had their special concerns.⁵⁴ For Dufour, the most important thing was to secure the unanimous agreement of the rulers and governments of the states of Europe and to make it clear that the relief committees would work to assist, not displace, the appropriate military and medical authorities. Maunoir was thinking about the need for information and education in order to ensure that the idea found favor among the populace. Dunant, far more visionary than the others, was already conceiving of an enterprise (*oeuvre*) that went far beyond forming aid committees and included improving means of transport for the wounded, encouraging innovative treatments, and promoting the creation of museums and displays. He was asked by his colleagues to prepare a memoir on the subject for the forthcoming Berlin welfare congress.⁵⁵

A month later, members of the group met again to further clarify their plans and ideas. Eschewing for the moment Dunant's grandiose schemes, they all agreed to a more limited program: to work for the creation of committees that would be in a position to undertake practical relief measures in the event of a war involving the great powers of Europe. Maunoir advanced

three propositions that won unanimous approval: that the committees must be officially recognized; that the corps of volunteer nurses must be subject to military authority and discipline when employed in the field; and that the volunteers must be employed without creating expense or inconvenience for the armies themselves. Dunant was already thinking of the formation of a central directing committee that could keep a register of trained volunteers and to which generals could apply in the event of war in order to obtain auxiliaries for their sanitary corps. The others, however, insisted on the importance of each country being allowed to realize the common goal in ways that suited its own ideas and customs.⁵⁶ Even at this early stage in the proceedings, there was already a nascent tension between Dunant's vaulting universalism and his colleagues' unquestioning acceptance of the limitations imposed by the existence of nation-states.

When the group met again on 25 August, Moynier imparted the news, recently received, that the Berlin welfare congress had been canceled. What should they do now? His opinion, shared by Dunant, was that the committee of five should proceed on its own and convene an international conference in Geneva to discuss the whole matter of assistance to the war wounded. The others "warmly applauded this idea" and agreed that it ought to take place in October. Dunant enthusiastically announced that he would promote the idea at the International Statistical Congress, which was due to meet in Berlin in early September, and that he would visit a number of German capitals in order to arouse support for the proposed Geneva conference. He had already prepared a draft "concordat" of some ten articles embodying their thinking on the proposed aid committees, and this was discussed with great care; in the end it was agreed that Moynier and Dunant would prepare a circular that included this revised draft and send it to "all those persons who could be presumed to be interested in this question."⁵⁷ The work was quickly completed, and on 1 September circulars were sent out announcing the "convocation of an International Conference at Geneva, in order to examine the means of remedying the insufficiency of sanitary service in armies in the field."⁵⁸

"The Altered Circumstances of Our Times"

Despite the fulsome praise that has been lavished on these events by Dunant's biographers, it is useful to bear in mind that this was by no means the first time that Europeans had been urged to devote special attention to the war wounded. In early modern Europe, the idea that the sick and wounded deserve special treatment was common enough to be included in the terms of surrender of many besieged towns.⁵⁹ During the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, opposing armies frequently made prisoners of enemy wounded, although this practice was less common in eastern Europe.⁶⁰ After the battle of Fontenoy in 1745, often considered a milestone in the history of

military medicine, the wounded received splendid treatment so long as they could survive the journey from the battlefield to the field hospitals some distance away.⁶¹ Two years earlier, at the battle of Dettingen, Lord Stair and the Duke de Noailles, the opposing commanders, agreed that surgeons and other hospital personnel would be treated as noncombatants and that the sick and wounded would not be made prisoners but rather receive appropriate medical care and be returned to their own forces as soon as practicable.⁶² At the beginning of the Revolutionary War, the Americans and the British agreed that medical personnel would be treated as neutrals.⁶³ Such ad hoc agreements were frequently resorted to in the eighteenth century, and soon the idea of a more permanent agreement was being canvassed.⁶⁴ In 1776, Prussian surgeon Jean Leberecht Schumucker advocated that belligerents should agree among themselves on how they would behave for the duration of a war.⁶⁵ In the 1780s, the idea of an agreement or convention among the sovereigns of Europe was advanced by the French philanthropist Piarron de Chamousset and (independently) by his compatriot Bernard Peyrilhe, professor of chemistry at the Sorbonne but better known for his *Histoire de la chirurgie*, published in 1780.⁶⁶ De Chamousset went on to propose the creation of a special order, modeled on the Knights of Malta, the members of which would be trained as “administrators, quartermasters, clerks, bursars, etc. and medical orderlies” and who would be distinguished by a special “uniform, ribbon or cross.”⁶⁷ In the early nineteenth century, the formation of an order of Hospitaller or Nursing Brethren was proposed by the great Napoleonic military surgeon P. F. Percy and revived in 1845 by Marshal Marmont, Duke of Ragusa, in his *Esprit des institutions militaires*.⁶⁸ Percy also proposed in 1800 a draft convention for the neutralization of hospitals and wounded, but Austrian General Kray refused to accept its terms.⁶⁹ Thus, all of the basic ideas later embodied in the Geneva Convention and the Red Cross movement were in circulation well before 1850. Indeed, it can be argued that de Chamousset’s proposal for a trained order of hospitallers was better thought out and more practical than the somewhat hazy vision propounded by Dunant in *A Memory of Solferino*.

Two matters demand investigation at this point: Why was there no concerted response from the rulers and governments of Europe to any of the proposals made before 1850, and why was there, as we now know, an overwhelming response to those that emanated from Geneva in 1863? If it had been simply a matter of adhering to the ethical maxims of Christianity, one might have expected Europeans to form aid societies long before the 1860s. If it had been the absence of concrete proposals for a convention, or for the formation of corps of trained nurses, one might have expected something substantial to have been undertaken during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. Yet because the political will was lacking, nothing of the kind was done. This inaction was, if anything, reinforced by the sheer scale and scope of Napoleonic warfare. After peace came to Europe in 1815, the

efforts of diplomats and statesmen were so fully directed at keeping the peace that these officials were scarcely disposed to discuss setting the rules for the next war. Not even the supporters of Tsar Alexander I's Holy Alliance scheme, who were usually keen on occupying the moral high ground, took up the cause of neutrality for field hospitals. As the horrors of war began to recede in the peaceful decades that followed the Congress of Vienna in 1815, there was little reason for Europeans to concern themselves with proposals to reduce battlefield carnage.

Half a century later, Europe was a very different place. In most states—Great Britain excepted—the introduction of conscription both signaled and fostered a different relationship between nations and their armies. Proponents of sanitary reform, such as Edwin Chadwick in England and Louis-René Villermé in France, insisted upon the relationship between political economy and public health, a lesson that was bound to extend rapidly from civil to military affairs.⁷⁰ Above all, the face of Europe was changed during the middle decades of the nineteenth century by what historians have called “the communications revolution”: the telegraph, the popular press, the railway, and the steam engine. These innovations revolutionized the way Europeans lived, the way they fought wars, and especially the way they thought about war. The effects of what English military surgeon Thomas Longmore was to call “the altered circumstances of our times”⁷¹ could be seen clearly in the public response to the Crimean and Italian Wars, most notably in the rapid growth of public concern for the sufferings of sick and wounded soldiers.

The Crimean War, though fought far away in “the East,” was literally brought to the breakfast tables of Western Europe by the telegraphed reports of journalists in their new role as war correspondents. Concern for the sick and wounded centered around the work of Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna, who organized Sisters of Mercy in the Russian field hospitals, and Florence Nightingale, whose work in the hospitals of Scutari has become the stuff of legend as well as history.⁷² Those who witnessed the soldiers' plight concluded that it was the duty of the state to reorganize its own military medical administration in order to provide soldiers with better diet, sanitation, and medical care. This became the burden of the lengthy and magisterial report written for the council of health of the French army by an eminent military surgeon, Dr. Jean-Charles Chenu, who had directed military medical operations in Turkey and the Crimea.⁷³ In Great Britain, Florence Nightingale took the same position; the campaign she waged to improve army hospitals and military medical administration has been described in detail elsewhere.⁷⁴ As John Keep has recently shown, the Russian army also made substantial changes in the operation of its military medical department in the wake of the Crimean War.⁷⁵

The horrific battles of the Italian War produced a spate of pamphlets, books, and lectures, of which Dunant's *A Memory of Solferino* was only one ex-

ample. In 1861, the Neapolitan professor Fernando Palasciano gave a lecture to the Accademia Pontaniana in which he advocated the neutralization of army field hospitals, and French pharmacist Henri Arrault wrote a pamphlet urging that field hospitals be supplied with better medical equipment.⁷⁶ On Palasciano's initiative, the Neapolitan academy sponsored an essay competition on the improvement of methods of treating the war wounded; the prize essays, one by Dr. Louis Appia of Geneva, were published in 1862.⁷⁷ Although lacking Dunant's grand vision of organized aid societies, each of these authors made specific and practical suggestions about improving the care of the wounded.

The Crimean and Italian Wars taught Europeans an important lesson about the changing relationship between armies, states, and peoples; namely, that information about battles and casualties could no longer be controlled or delayed as it had been in the past. The consequences of this simple fact were profound. As Thomas Longmore was to point out in a lecture to the Royal United Service Institution in 1866, "all of the machinery for the rapid diffusion of intelligence and personal observations, which exists in our epoch" had fostered such a degree of awareness "among all ranks of society" that states could no longer treat their soldiers as callously as they had done in the past.⁷⁸ He continued:

In former days, the general results of war were made public, the knowledge of personal circumstances was exceptional, and limited to a narrow sphere; now the personal are almost as widely known as the general results. No wonder, then, on the one hand, that in former days the evils of war, being regarded as incapable of mitigation, or being unknown until all power of affording aid was passed, were left to be dealt with entirely by the governing authorities; or, on the other hand, that in our time public sympathy has sought to lessen these evils by committees of relief, by volunteer assistance . . . and by various other means too numerous to be mentioned; or even that the mitigation of the rigors and sufferings of war should be thought worthy of being made an object of international concern.⁷⁹

When the telegraph and the press could quickly and easily arouse "the fears and hopes of thousands,"⁸⁰ states fighting wars with mass armies could no longer afford to appear indifferent to the fate of their soldiers. Russell's dispatches from the Crimea, as well as graphic descriptions of the battles in the Italian War, underlined the truth of Longmore's observation.⁸¹

Moynier and Appia advanced a similar argument about the impact of technology and the changing nature of war in the treatise that they published in 1867 under the title, *La guerre et la charité*.⁸² This work, destined to become the blueprint for the Red Cross movement, put the argument from necessity in even stronger terms than Longmore had done. Quoting with approval the Crimean veteran Chenu, they maintained that states that choose to fight wars with conscript armies have an obligation to take the place of the families of their soldiers to ensure "prompt and efficacious assistance . . . in order to