

flag and that of the Red Cross were so much alike—the design being exactly the same, with the colors reversed—the Swiss flag a white cross on a red ground, and the Red Cross flag a red cross on a white ground. Here, in Bern, where the two flags are so frequently seen it is really quite confusing. When I first came here I thought the whole town was a Red Cross Hospital, so many flags with crosses on were flying from buildings, and so many autos marked with the same cruciform design were tearing through the streets. And just the other day I learned the reason for this multiplicity of crosses in Switzerland.

It seems the Red Cross originated in Switzerland. It was the idea of a philanthropic and wise gentleman living in Geneva. The first society was organized there, and for its banner adopted the Swiss flag, simply reversing the colors—the red cross typifying courage and devotion, and the white ground, the flag of truce.

Three years ago at the International Congress of the Red Cross in Washington, a special branch was created to deal with all matters connected with prisoners of war. This Agency for Prisoners of War has its headquarters in Geneva, and since the present war began the offices there are simply swamped with work. The men and women who are giving their services are slaving away there from morning till night reading the mountains of letters that come in—over 8,000 letters and 3,000 telegrams are received daily. Think of such a pile!

The object of the Agency is to establish communication between prisoners of war and their families. It undertakes to locate missing soldiers, find out facts concerning them, and forward to them letters, packages, and money. The amount of work done is stupendous, and every week it is growing appallingly larger.

The correspondence that comes in is first sorted out according to nationality, and then letters are distributed to different tables to be read. And such tragic letters! The eyes of the readers are sometimes so blinded by tears they cannot see the lines.

The work is done in this way: The important facts in the letters are noted and underscored, and the letters then passed on to a corps of typewriters to be copied. The name, grade, battalion, company, number, date and place of disappearance, and any other items of importance, and also the address of the correspondent is placed on a card which is filed for reference. A heart-breaking letter ending perhaps in such a sad paragraph as this: "We don't know where he is. We heard that he was frightfully wounded in the battle of —, that he lost one arm, and that his eyes were injured. But we don't know for certain. Oh, find him for us! He is the only son of his mother, who is a widow. She is nearly crazed with grief and anxiety"—would be boiled down to this passionless report:

"Parker, John.  
Captain 3rd Infantry, Territorial.  
2nd Battalion.  
10th Company.  
No. —.  
Wounded in battle of —, where he disappeared.  
Reply to Mrs. —."

These cards are compared with the long lists of prisoners of war which are constantly being sent in to the Agency from the nations at war. Very often information can be procured immediately in this way, but only too often many weary weeks elapse before any clue can be found, or any news sent to the sorrow-stricken relatives. Already there is a correspondence of over 4,000 letters a day for which the Agency acts as intermediary. All letters between the prisoner and his family must be left unsealed, and written when possible in the language of the country where the prisoner is confined, as all letters are strictly censored.

One department of the Agency is devoted entirely to inquiries concerning civil prisoners of war—those innocent victims of this terrible war who are detained in the enemies' country for various reasons, such as lack of money, illness, etc. Many of them are invalids in sanatoriums; many of them are students; many of them are held as hostages, and many of them are old and feeble and

helpless. These people are cut off from all knowledge of what is happening, and they have no communication with their relatives or friends. The only way they can be reached is through the personal kindness of the military official in charge of the particular section of the country where they happen to be marooned.



The Old Lady Who Shines Shoes and Knits Between Shines.

### Toronto W. I. Convention.

There was a fine crowd in Ottawa, a larger crowd in London, and still there was the usual big crowd in Toronto. Forester's Hall was filled to overflowing. It was the climax of the Conventions, and there was a freedom of speech, a feeling of at-homeness which comes from a long-established order of things. Mrs. Huestis, President, National Council of Women, welcomed the delegates to the city, and Mrs. Geo. Herron, West Hill, made a happy reply. The work of the Red Cross Society was of paramount interest on Wednesday morning. Mr. Noel Marshall, Chairman, Executive Canadian Red Cross Society, gave first hand information concerning what has been done. He had been "Dear Mr. Marshall" by many of the women before him, and the result was that the W. I. women had, up to date, contributed \$30,000, or one-twelfth of all that has been contributed. This did not include, of course, the countless bales and parcels of red cross supplies. But then, others are doing something, too, and we must not get round-shouldered with what we have done.

### THINGS NEEDED AT THE FRONT.

Mr. K. J. Dunstan, Treasurer, Toronto Red Cross Society, gave a brief history of the Red Cross movement. At a dinner-party given during the Crimean war, several officers present told of the horrible suffering endured by the wounded soldiers. This so impressed a young woman, Miss Florence Nightingale, who was present, that she volunteered to go out to the Crimea and help to alleviate the prevailing distress. She found chaos and the darkness of death. She became known as the Lady with the Lamp, and was the first "angel of mercy." At the Geneva Conference, the different nations represented agreed to draw a distinct line between the well man and the wounded man. A symbol of mercy was adopted, which was the red cross, out of compliment to Switzerland. All nations agreed to respect this cross wherever seen. To-day there are angels of mercy on the battlefields. We who stay at home have a duty to perform. There is no higher call than humanity and mercy, and it is not enough to get up on your hind legs and sing "God Save the King!"

Money is the prime necessity. Seventy or eighty per cent. of wounded will recover if they get prompt attention, which prevents blood-poison. Hospital-kit bags, wash-cloths, towels, bed-socks,

night-shirts, are all needed, also colored handkerchiefs and gray shirts. A man is always re-equipped when leaving the hospital. The Red Cross Society have bought twelve field ambulances at a cost of \$5,000 each. These are all stamped Red Cross of Canada.

### THE "UNFIT."

Dr. Helen McMurchy made a touching plea for the unfit, and she pleaded for the necessity of educating those who are deaf or blind or lame or mentally deficient along some lines which will make them able to earn an independent living. We should have auxiliary classes for these children. These classes could be established at central points, and different municipalities would have the privilege of sending pupils there. A baby that is deaf can learn to talk, and it is wicked to deprive the physically or mentally deficient of the chance which all should have.

Mrs. L. A. Hamilton has been interested in a movement which sought to supply the need of the country districts for competent help in the home. Two hundred applications had been received from outside points for domestic help, and sixty girls, who are temporarily out of employment in Toronto, have been sent to these homes. Only seven girls have failed to make good, and all are happy.

### SOME INTERESTING THINGS IN TORONTO.

Wednesday afternoon was devoted to visiting city schools, and afterwards attending a very enjoyable reception in the Royal Ontario Museum, Bloor street. In the schools, the Domestic Science Classes, the Little Mother Classes, and Medical and Dental inspection work, all proved intensely interesting. Mr. Noel Marshall, as host, and Mrs. Gooderham and the other ladies connected with the Hospital Ship Fund, who assisted him in receiving his many guests at the Museum, won the hearts of the Institute workers. The Museum itself proved very interesting, the women's work of all ages and all nations taking chief place with the visitors. The baby clothes of James the Pretender, the mummies, the tapestries unearthed from the grave of one Ah Kim, the Indian relics, the ancient armor, swords and guns, and many more things were there. Refreshments were served, and a very happy time was spent chatting with old friends and new friends over the tea-cups.

The Lillian Massey School, connected with Toronto University, was then visited, and the song, "I Dreamed I Dwelt in Marble Halls," became a reality. The Lillian Massey School of Household Science is a beautiful place, and its marble pillars, tiled walls, dear little cupboards and hardwood floors, will haunt the memory for years to come, and will, we trust, be reproduced in many a rural home.

The Wednesday evening meeting in Convocation Hall found Miss E. J. Guest, B. A., of Belleville, in the chair, and was addressed by three of the leading citizens of the Province. Hon. W. H. Hearst, Premier of Ontario; President Falconer, of Toronto University; and Dr. C. C. James.

### MISS E. J. GUEST, B. A.

The women of the Institutes are doing the work of moving this country along. For that reason they are interesting, for people who do things are always interesting. We have lost in Sir James Whitney a man who was reader to perform than to promise. Our country is at war fighting for the same principles and ideals of honor and integrity as our Institutes stand for. We who stay at home must stick to business and keep our heads. We must still think of nation-building. We must see that the home, the factory which turns out individuals, is kept running.

We women do not know our business. We need a Bureau of Child-welfare to teach us. The mother is the only woman who enters her profession without training. This is the State's business, because the child belongs to the State. Technical education is beginning to reach the mothers. We have demonstration courses in cooking, sewing, and home nursing. The University is opening up a research department for social service,

and this will help greatly. We must be ready to build up the country again when the war is over.

### PREMIER HEARST.

Hon. Mr. Hearst was introduced to the audience as a man, "fearless, progressive, eloquent, and red-haired." He said that he could, at least, plead guilty to the red hair, as that much was very apparent. He wished to extend a welcome to the Institute women on behalf of the Government. We have many organizations in Canada, but none does better work than the Women's Institute. Show me a man that has achieved, and I will show you a man with the influence of a good woman behind him. A woman's work cannot be measured by her own activities, for her influence is widespread.

The Premier then dealt with the question of greater food production, and thought that the consumer and producer should get together. In Northern Ontario the Institutes are giving splendid service along these lines. Transportation, co-operation, agricultural experts, municipal markets, and municipal storage, are all things to be considered if we are to get the best results.

The war we are engaged in is a just war. The women of Canada will be the right kind of mothers, and say to their sons, "Your country needs you more than I do." To the rural districts has come a sacred duty—the world must be fed. To increase our production of food-stuffs is as patriotic as to go to the front, and is just as necessary. The farmers are responding to the call for this service, and the acreage of fall wheat is double that of last year. Help is easier to obtain, and to furnish work for the unemployed is a patriotic duty.

### PRESENTATION TO MR. GEO. A. PUTNAM.

Mr. Putnam, Superintendent of Institutes, was called to the platform and presented with a purse of gold containing \$365 from the Institutes of Ontario. Miss Susie Campbell, of Brampton, read an address in which she spoke of the wonderful growth of the work, and of the tact and patience of the Superintendent. Mrs. Graham, of Brampton, made the presentation. Mr. Putnam replied briefly.

A solo by Mr. Stanley, soloist in Chalmers Church, was greatly appreciated. In response to a prolonged and hearty encore, Mr. Stanley sang "Mother Machree."

### PRESIDENT R. A. FALCONER.

"What the University can do for the People."  
We have so many blessings in Canada that we should receive them in awe and trembling. Coming in on the train to Toronto on an autumn morning, the bright sunshine, the beautiful foliage, the peaceful homes, all seemed too much. Why should our advantages remain intact? Why should we escape the awful fate which has overtaken other peoples. We should be happy. We should rise to our privileges. We have a country so richly endowed that we may well tremble as we take it.

If the women of Germany had the influence that is exerted by our women, the war might have been averted. Bismarck voiced the opinion of his country when he spoke contemptuously of the Empress Augusta as a "politician in petticoats." In Canada, women hold a powerful position, and can mould public opinion. When, in 1870, Bismarck ordered his armies to raise the siege and bombard Paris, he was balked because the Empress stood in his way with what he called her "cant ideas of humanity and civilization." Women still stand for these. But our influence should be intelligently directed. We should understand our country's needs, and our actions should be illumined by high ideals of human destiny.

The University is the rural peoples' institution. Twice as many students come from the country as come from the city. When they are trained they go back to the rural districts as medical men whom you can trust, as lawyers who can give a competent opinion on public problems and the larger functions of legislative life, and can take a wise part for democracy in our struggle with autocratic rule, engineers who can construct reliable public works, ministers who will lead aright in morals and religion, and teachers who will not impart information

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