

ments' representatives signed the great Convention of 1864 which for all time, laid down that it is the duty of warring nations to collect and care for sick and wounded soldiers, irrespective of nationality.

In five years the horrors of the battle of Solferino had been outlawed by the first modern treaty to stand even when the signing powers went to war against one another.

From the days of the original committee of five, the International Red Cross Committee in Switzerland has continued to guide the Red Cross movement. It is called international, not because it has sixty-two national societies, with over 20,000,000 members throughout the world, but because it acts as an intermediary between the nations. It is independent of all Governments. It has no standing in international law. Yet this committee of twenty-five Swiss citizens is the only existing body which attempts to keep Governments up to their Red Cross pledges. And it is through this vigilance that the Red Cross symbol continues to protect not only the surgeons, nurses, orderlies, drivers, and clerical and administrative staffs, but also all buildings, camps, ships, trains, and vehicles connected with humane medical work.

This is a privilege without which Florence Nightingale and her first band of thirty-eight nurses (half of them nuns) set out for the Crimean War. It is an extension of the ideals of the Order of the Knights of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem—militant monks who tended and protected pilgrims to the Holy City in the twelfth century. The English Order of St. John (in wartime working in partnership with the British Red Cross as the Joint War Organisation) values these ancient traditions more highly than its title deeds contained in the charter granted in 1888, by Queen Victoria. But it is the Red Cross which has given the medical services a place and a mission apart from the armies in which they serve.

Although its first great concern is for the wounded, International Red Cross aid at once becomes available the moment a man officially is listed prisoner of war.

Delegates regularly inspect and report upon camps by authority of the Hague (1899) and Geneva (1929) Conventions, which, while providing international laws for the treatment of prisoners, also place them under the protection of the International Red Cross.

This, alone, made it possible for a vast supply of food and medical parcels to reach prisoners, who otherwise would have had to exist on a meagre diet supposedly equal to that of the captor's second-line troops.

From Great Britain (which sent out more than 12,000,000 parcels to the end of 1943), the Empire and the United States of America, parcels were shipped to the neutral port of Lisbon. From there specially chartered neutral vessels, paid for from the Joint War Organization funds, but sailing under the supervision of the International Red Cross, carried the parcels to Marseilles. Still under the same supervision, the stores were either sent in sealed trucks to bulk distributing centres in Germany, or to the main store at Geneva, from where the Red Cross guaranteed their delivery to the camps themselves.

That's the way New Zealand's food parcels went. That's how our countrymen, in enemy European cages, still managed, now and again, to make a stew of New Zealand lamb, to spread a little New Zealand honey on their bread.

