American Red Cross
Work for Belgium
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Summary of Activities of Commission for Belgium September, 1917—December, 1918

54, Rue des Colonies
Brussels, Belgium
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FOREWORD

The Commission for Belgium of the American Red Cross, acted on the principle that the Belgian governmental authorities and the Belgian leaders in private life were better prepared to administer the relief activities necessary to the interests of their people. Accordingly, the Red Cross from the beginning of its work for Belgium avoided setting up administrative relief units of its own. It said in substance to the Belgian authorities and leaders:

"Yours is the chief responsibility; you know your people, their language, their customs and their needs. This knowledge is essential to the wisest and most effective conduct of relief operations. The American Red Cross does
not possess this knowledge, nor can it relieve you of your responsibility to your own. Therefore, the Red Cross will not attempt to replace you or assume your duties of administration. It wishes to establish sympathetic and cordial relations with you, to become a partner with you in your works, to advise with you, and to help you bear the load wherever it becomes too great for your strength and resources."

The response of the Belgian leaders to this proposal was wholehearted and prompt. An effective co-operative relationship between the Commission for Belgium and the Government of Belgium was established through which the Commission was in constant communication with the several Ministers composing the government.

Daily personal contact between the Ministers and the representatives of the Red Cross simplified and expedited operations. Requests or suggestions from the Ministers or from the
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Red Cross were communicated mainly in personal conferences. Conclusions were reached quickly and were followed promptly by action.

While the Belgian Commission kept its American personnel down to some thirty-five people, it has had its own representatives in the field in close personal touch with all of its varied activities.

King Albert of Belgium in accepting, on behalf of the Queen, a gift of a million francs from the American Red Cross to the Belgian Red Cross, said:

"Your own representative lives here in Belgium with us under constant danger from shelling and bombing. He is sharing our lot with us. It is this spirit of assistance which makes all of your efforts doubly helpful."

To the leaders of the Belgian people, both in official and private life, to their courage, their co-operative spirit and their fine sense of responsibility, is due a large measure of the
credit for whatever success the Commission for Belgium achieved.

Certainly, nowhere in Europe has a stronger bond of friendship between the United States and a foreign nation sprung up as a result of the war, than in Belgium. The "Croix-Rouge Americaine," as the Belgians call the Red Cross, is known wherever there are Belgians as an agency through which the American people endeavored to show their gratitude for the magnificent struggle which Belgium made in the war.

The following pages contain a summary of work done by the Commission for Belgium of the American Red Cross. This can scarcely be called a report; it is rather an enumeration of activities. No attempt has been made to give to the items space or emphasis according to their relative importance. The reader, however, will know that the establishment and support of a colony of 750 children meant more
in thought, effort and expense than was required in supplying copies of the "Star Spangled Banner" to a lot of eager little Belgians, who were keen to know and sing this National song, and who, by the way, learned by thousands to sing it well in good, plain English.

**Part One**

1

The work for Belgium as a separate entity was established September 1, 1917, at the request of the Belgian Government, who presented the matter to Major Grayson M.-P. Murphy, at that time Commissioner for Europe of the American Red Cross. At the beginning it formed a department of the Commission for France, but as it grew in importance it soon became evident that it should have an independent
status. Accordingly, it was converted into the Commission for Belgium on January 1, 1918.

Establishing its headquarters at Sainte-Adresse, Le Havre, the seat of the Belgian Government, the new organization began in September, 1917, an immediate investigation of the field before it. This was made comparatively simple, as a result of the systematic work of the Belgian Government during the preceding three years, in keeping in direct touch with the Belgian people wherever they were.

The Red Cross found that approximately 75,000 people—among them the brave King and Queen—still remained in what then was known as Free Belgium, while approximately 600,000 citizens of Belgium had been forced to leave their homes and become refugees in England, France, Holland and Switzerland. These unhappy people were widely scattered in these countries, in groups ranging from isolated families in small villages to colonies of some
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60,000 to 70,000 in both London and Paris, and perhaps 30,000 in Le Havre.

Necessarily, therefore, the work of the Commission for Belgium could not be limited by strict geographical lines, but was intended to assist Belgians, both soldiers and civilians, wherever they were in need of it, whether in Free Belgium, in allied or neutral countries, and to the extent possible in occupied Belgium.

When the Red Cross came among the Belgians, it found a Government established per force in an alien land, its usual revenues entirely cut off and dependent wholly on money loaned to it by its allies. Many necessary relief services, which ordinarily would be supplied by the Government, could not be furnished by the Belgian Government because of lack of resources and facilities. The Red Cross endeavored to meet these needs for the Belgian Government.
II

Work of the Belgian Commission for soldiers, not in hospitals, extended from the men in the trenches to those behind the lines who had been sent back to recuperate from the hardships of the trenches or were convalescent from wounds or illness or were stationed on lines of communication.

The Belgian Army, while holding one of the worst sectors of the front, was cut off from its own country. The families of most of the soldiers were in occupied Belgium. The soldiers, in many thousands of instances, had had no word from their families for more than three years. When they got permission to leave the front for a short rest, they could not go home, but were forced to go among strangers who, in many instances, did not understand their language. Eighty per cent of the army is Flemish.

The Belgian soldier received pay amounting
approximately to nine cents a day. This did not permit him to accumulate any savings. He could not pay the expenses involved in going away from the front for rest, even when he had permission to do so. The result of this was that thousands of these men had had no furlough since the war began; no chance to get away for a taste of normal life, rest or enjoyment. Yet these soldiers should have an occasional opportunity to get away from the monotony and the rigors and privations of life at the front, if they were to retain their spirit and their health.

The American Red Cross did, in a number of ways, what it could to remedy this unhappy situation among the Belgian soldiers. The work of amelioration was aimed first at making easier the lot of the soldier in active service behind the lines, and second to make it possible for the soldiers to take and enjoy the furloughs to which they were entitled from time to time.

This effort of the Red Cross to soften the hard
conditions under which the Belgian soldier lived took many forms.

Food was supplied through two types of organization; canteens, which served meals and hot drinks at centers where the clientele was constantly changing; and messes where small regular groups took two meals a day.

Rest and recreation were provided in reading and writing rooms, recreation barracks and tents; theatrical entertainment and moving pictures, music, libraries, both stationary and circulating; educational classes, athletic fields, equipment and contests, games, prizes for excellence in athletics and class work, etc.

Individual gifts were made to men who had been decorated or cited for especially courageous or meritorious conduct. Gifts were also made to severely wounded men in hospitals to cheer and comfort them. Substantially 6,000 men a month shared in these gifts which included the most varied articles.
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For soldiers on permission and for soldiers stationed on lines of communication and at munition centers the work of the Red Cross in the past year took the form of rest homes (usually fine chateaux with spacious grounds and farm lands); comfortable and cheap lodgings in cities with economical restaurants; club rooms provided with reading matter, writing materials, games, theatrical entertainment; assembly halls for lectures, concerts, etc., and in some instances a small sum in cash for pocket money while resting.

The American Red Cross worked on behalf of Belgian soldiers alone, through 82 canteens, including an extensive system of recreation camps. Altogether they provided entertainment and refreshment for upwards of 55,000 men a day.

The Red Cross contributed toward the support of educational work for Belgian soldiers, 7,650 of whom took advantage of the different courses offered.
It provided cinema outfits for the entertainment of the Belgian soldiers.

It obligated itself to pay for losses sustained by the canteen service of the Appui Belge as a result of any act of war. This action was taken so that the Appui Belge, which operated without any capital and paid for its supplies after they were sold, would be warranted in carrying a sufficiently large surplus stock to enable it to meet emergencies.

It undertook to provide civilian clothes for Belgian soldiers discharged from the army who were not able to obtain them for themselves. Three hundred soldiers a month took advantage of this service.

It arranged for supplying books to Belgian soldiers in rest billets, in the lines directly back of the front, and in the trenches. Approximately 30,000 books were in use every day.

It helped establish and supported a home near Paris to be used by mutilés among the Belgian
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soldiers, who were out of the army and looking for work. While in this institution, the soldiers worked on the surrounding farms. An employment agency sought to provide permanent work for these men.

It largely supported a special organization known as "Gifts for Belgian Soldiers," organized by the Minister of Intendance, to look after welfare work among the soldiers.

It founded and supported two agricultural institutions where soldiers "on rest" could go and earn money. Two hundred and fifty men could be accommodated at these two places at one time.

It provided, for the instruction of the blind, a building in the institution where Belgian mutilés were taught trades. In all, instruction in fifty-six different trades was given in this place.

It established a refectory and bath for Belgian soldiers who worked on the doeks in Le Havre.
III

While Belgium was forced in the beginning of the war to send a proportion of her sick and wounded soldiers into French hospitals, she nevertheless maintained in the last three years of the struggle a system of first, second and third line hospitals under the direct charge of the Sanitary Service of her army or her Red Cross Society. The American Red Cross gave these hospitals important electrical apparatus, surgical equipment, halls of recreation for the hospital patients, water and bathing installations and other hospital supplies.

It aided Belgian military hospitals at La Paune, Wulveringhem, Beveren, Hoogestade, Cabourg, Le Havre, Auberville, Angerville, Bourbourg, Rouen, Port Villez, Sainte-Adresse, Auvours and Cap-Ferrat. These hospitals accommodated about 10,000 patients.
The Commission for Belgium gave 500,000 francs toward the construction of a new hospital at Wulveringhem for the Belgian Red Cross Society. This was apart from the gift of 1,000,000 francs to the Queen of Belgium, for the support of the Belgium Red Cross.

It also assisted in providing advanced surgical posts near the front line trenches for the care of those suffering from wounds and who could not be immediately transported to hospitals.

At a cost of 40,000 francs, it provided a recreation hall at one of the large Belgian military hospitals, where there had been no facilities for recreation.

The Commission maintained a convalescent home where Belgian nurses suffering from overwork or recovering from illness could enjoy a few weeks of rest and quiet with good food.

Belgian nurses in military hospitals received compensation at the rate of seven francs a day. From this pay, five francs a day were deducted...
to cover the cost of room and food. The nurse, therefore, had two francs a day with which to pay for clothing and all incidental and personal expenses. Like the Belgian soldier, the nurse could not save money enough to take her away from the hospital for rest and vacation when her opportunity came; nor could the convalescent nurse afford the period of rest and extra diet which her condition demanded.

The American Red Cross made it possible for every nurse to take her vacation when her turn came, by giving her a small cash grant sufficient to meet her necessary expenses. This arrangement applied to six hundred nurses.

IV

CIVILIAN HOSPITAL WORK

The American Red Cross participated in creating or maintaining nine civil hospitals which have a combined capacity of 1,200 patients.
It is an established fact that the health of the civil population has a direct relation to the health of the army, and doubly so when the army is operating and billeting its men in the midst of the civil population. Tuberculosis, typhoid, diphtheria, pneumonia, smallpox, measles, mumps—the whole familiar list—have a multiplied horror in their effect upon the army. For this reason, apart from the humanitarian and economic aspects of the problem of health conservation among the civil population, every effort was made to curb these contagious and infectious diseases.

Belgian civilians, who had taken refuge in neighboring countries, had been separated from their hospitals, physicians and other accustomed guards to health. They had had great difficulty in finding healthful living accommodations especially in cities. Their resources were gone, and they were compelled to pay high prices for wretched living accommodations. They found
it most difficult to provide enough nourishing food for their families.

The complete uprooting of these ultra-conservative, home-loving people, their bewilderment, their separation from friends, the necessity of adjusting themselves to unfamiliar occupations, all these tended to break down morale and to create conditions unfavorable to good health. It was for this reason that the American Red Cross, in its work for the Belgians, endeavored to do everything possible to relieve the suffering among the civilian population.

In this work, the Commission for Belgium met the emergencies that arose from time to time. When Madame Liouville’s French and Belgian civil hospital was shelled out of Hazebrook, the Red Cross helped re-establish it at Ebblinghem. When it was shelled out of Ebblinghem, the Red Cross helped re-establish it at Lumbres.

When the civil hospital was shelled out of St. Idelsbald, the Red Cross helped build a new hospital in the Dorntje near Leysele.
When the Friends’ Ambulance hospital was shelled and bombed out of Dunkerque, the Red Cross helped re-establish it at Pt. Synthe.

When the maternity hospital was shelled out of Rosebrugge, the American Red Cross helped re-establish it at Leysele. When it was shelled out of Leysele, the Red Cross turned over to it the Colonie Scolere in the open country, a mile away.

The lot of the Belgian children was hard in the four years and more of the war. With their families refugees, and their fathers in the army, the means and facilities for giving them proper care were meager. Especially in Free Belgium were the children subjected to great hardship and constant danger.

While it was tragic to see men wounded by shells and bombs, it was still more pathetic to find little children torn and mangled by the shells and bombs which the enemy constantly threw into Belgian territory. Many children and mothers were killed and wounded.
The Commission for Belgium undertook work for children, principally in four ways:

Evacuating them from zones of gas and shell attack.

Evacuating them from the semi-famine conditions in occupied Belgium.

Baby-saving work in congested refugee centers.

Baby-saving work at the front.

The Belgian Government, through the Minister of the Interior, early in the war evacuated over six thousand children from places of danger in Free Belgium, and cared for them in school colonies in old Normandy, along the coast from Calais to Dieppe, and in Southern France.

This burden long ago became too heavy for the Belgian Government to bear, and the Red Cross stepped in to help. It provided buildings, clothing, blankets, shoes, extra food, games, etc., for the children in these colonies.

The Queen of Belgium was active and generous in the rescue of children at the front, and the
Commission for Belgium built an additional pavilion for her colony at Vinekem to care for very young children.

The evacuation of children from occupied Belgium likewise was undertaken. In 1916, the Rockefeller Foundation undertook the support of 500 of these children. Later, the supervision of this effort, by arrangement with the Foundation, was assumed by the Commission for Belgium of the Red Cross. The Commission extended its work in Switzerland to partial support of the Belgian children not included in the Foundation's group of colonies. The total number of these children under care in Switzerland at one time was approximately 2,000.

Another 1,000 were placed at Le Glandier, in Correze, under Captain Charles Graux, the personal representative of the Queen.

The Commission for Belgium also undertook to assist in bearing the burden of the agencies in Holland caring for Belgian children.
It helped support 151 Belgian boys and girls, either abandoned or orphans, who were formerly cared for by Dutch families.

With the aid of the Red Cross, 10,000 children were taken from Belgium to Holland to build up their strength. More than a thousand of them remained in Holland, some rejoining their families and others staying at the Sante a l'Enfance Belge.

The Red Cross gave 10,000 francs for the support of the work of the Croix-Mauve in Holland to care for Belgian boys in Holland.

It assisted young Belgian girls in Holland to learn shorthand, typewriting, dressmaking, embroidery and lace-making.

It gave funds to aid in the support of the children of Ypres at Wisque.

It supplied cows to other colonies of Belgian children.

It constructed a barracks at Chartreuse to be used as a children's hospital.

It built a children's nursery near the front to
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take care of the children of mothers who were engaged in mending the clothes of Belgian soldiers.

It gave a monthly contribution of 5,000 francs toward supplying layettes and baby clothing to poor mothers among the Belgian refugees. Approximately 400 of these baby outfits were distributed throughout France each month.

It established a children's colony at Le Glandier, France.

It provided copies of the Star Spangled Banner for Belgian children in refugee colonies.

It constructed barracks for a colony of 400 children at Reeques, and supported the institution entirely.

It later installed a storage battery plant in this children's colony, so that light would be available at all hours of the day and night.

It established a children's day nursery near a large Belgium munitions plant to take care of the small babies of women workers.
It established a Dispensary and Consultation Service for the children of refugees at Rouen.

The Red Cross established a children’s health center in Le Havre, under Dr. Edwards A. Park of Johns Hopkins Hospital.

Altogether, the work of the American Red Cross for Belgian children is now being carried on in co-operation with the Queen, with the Minister of the Interior of Belgium, and with private agencies, in seventy-five colonies in France, Free Belgium, Switzerland and Holland. In these colonies twelve thousand children are given care.
V

The Commission for Belgium of the Red Cross endeavored to enter into the lives of the refugee colonies as sympathetically as possible. Particular care was taken to respect the activities, customs and institutions which the colonies had established during their years of exile. The Red Cross endeavored to avoid upsetting or confusing any local situation. It carried on its work through the agencies which the Belgians themselves had set up, supplementing their activities by means of money, supplies, or friendly counsel. It always acted in co-operation with the Governmental authorities, both local and national.

In all parts of France, England and Holland these refugees were to be found. As the chief exodus from Belgium occurred in the first months of the war, most of them had become settled in the communities into which they were distributed
at that time. Some had moved to points where employment was more available. *It should be said, and greatly to their credit, as it was accomplished under conditions most trying, that a majority of the refugees solved their own problems and assumed full responsibility for their own lives.* Many found self support in munitions factories, or on farms or roads or as domestic servants. Ordinarily, the Belgians in any community formed a sort of national colony with their own relief committees, and often their own schools and doctors.

Military offensives, in the spring of 1918, however, drove other thousands of refugees into exile from Free Belgium, while a varying number, forced out in earlier evacuations, had failed to get settled and moved from place to place. Thus there were constant problems of transportation and readjustment to be solved.

Evacuation of refugees was made necessary by every advance or withdrawal of the armies at the front. Generally these movements of
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armies found the civil populations who were occupying the territory involved quite unprepared for departure. The people clung to their homes always in the hope that nothing would happen to force them away. Then when the necessity for evacuation came it allowed no deliberation or study of a plan of action; the people were forced to fly at once, taking with them such small articles as could be carried on their backs or trundled in wheelbarrows or handcarts.

The American Red Cross was of material assistance in softening the distress and hardship of these evacuations. Co-operating with the Friends' Ambulance Unit along the Flanders front, it provided large motor trucks, which worked at top speed day and night removing the refugees from their places of danger to designated railway stations. Ambulances carried the sick; food supplies and clothing were provided at the assembly points on the railroad; supplies of food, with doctors, interpreters and
nurses, were put on board the trains on their departure. Within the period from the middle of March to the middle of April some 30,000 refugees from this small part of the front were thus sent away to distant places of safety. The American Red Cross was, of course, not alone in this work; the representatives of the Belgian and French Governments were active, and the Friends’ Ambulance Unit of Dunkerque gave most efficient service. This ambulance unit and the Red Cross worked as a single agency, all the ambulances and motor trucks of both organizations being directed by a single head.

The Belgian Commission of the American Red Cross distributed food and clothing to refugees chiefly through the established relief agencies of the Belgian people themselves in their refugee colonies and through certain general, governmental, and private organizations. This work was widespread, extending into scores of communities and reaching many thousand people.
A stock of food and clothing was established near the front, especially for the assistance of the civilians affected by military operations, and at the clearing houses near the front where the dislocated people were cared for temporarily, pending their despatch to safer regions.

The American Red Cross, through the Commission for Belgium, gave more than $125,000 worth of clothing to the Belgian refugees.

In order to meet emergency conditions among refugees, it supplied funds to certain Prefets for the help of individual cases of distress.

It gave 35,000 francs to the Official Committee for Refugees at Le Havre to aid in taking care of refugees.

It installed an electric light plant in the refugee colony at Chartreuse, and provided a saw mill there so that wooden shoes could be made with the minimum waste of wood and at the lowest cost.

It assisted in the construction of a complete village of 50 cottages, near Le Havre, to house
some of the larger families of Belgian refugees, who could not secure proper quarters in the crowded tenement districts of Le Havre.

It helped take care of tubercular Belgians in Holland.

It co-operated with the Belgian authorities in the operation of a Belgian folk house in London, which organized twenty-six activities, including clubs, an employment bureau, boy scout work and a plan providing insurance against illness.

It helped support "California House," in London, a home for the re-education of disabled Belgian soldiers.

It aided the Belgian agencies in furnishing lodgings, supplying clothing and finding work for Belgian refugees in the East End of London.

It provided sewing machines for the use of wives of Belgian soldiers in England, to enable them to secure remunerative work.
VI

The American Red Cross replaced personal effects of various relief workers at the Belgian front who lost all their belongings through bombing, shelling or hurried evacuation.

It established a fund known as the "Queen's American Red Cross Purse," for victims of the war. From this, Her Majesty supplied extra comforts and food for especially needy men whom she found in her visits to the hospitals.

It established funds in Calais and Dunkerque, to be used for relief of civilians injured by bombs and shelling, or whose belongings were destroyed by acts of war.

It helped provide food for 15,000 people a day in Brussels—people who before the war were in good circumstances, but who for various reasons could not be helped through ordinary channels of charity.
It gave a fund of 100,000 francs to help the Belgian peasant lace makers continue their industry and place it upon a co-operative basis.

It went to the people of La Panne when the Bains Militaire was shelled, and provided funds for the relief of its sixty civilian employes who where either killed or injured.

The appropriation for relief work of the Commission for Belgium for the year ending September 1, 1918, was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Supervision</td>
<td>171,135</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bureau of Supplies</td>
<td>847,725</td>
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<tr>
<td>Military Relief</td>
<td>3,278,250</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civilian Relief, Children</td>
<td>5,988,912</td>
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<td>Civilian Relief, Hospitals</td>
<td>1,039,100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civilian Relief, Refugees</td>
<td>11,519,877</td>
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The work of the Commission for Belgium at the beginning of the second year of its existence was running at full speed, and all of the varied activities, already outlined, were continued until the end of December. Some will be carried on even longer.

While the regular work of the Commission was continued, the outstanding American Red Cross feature in Belgium from September, 1918, until the signing of the armistice and the succeeding several weeks, was the work in the "forward areas." It was all carried out under the personal direction of Lt. Colonel John Van Schaick, Jr., Commissioner for Belgium, who for the greater part of the year had made his headquarters at La Panne, Belgium. Col. Van Schaick has written this account of the work during the famous drives when the Germans were pushed back from the Flanders coast.
By JOHN VAN SCHAIK
Commissioner for Belgium
American Red Cross

I

The last chapter of the work of the Belgian Commission of the American Red Cross began with the great Belgian advance in September.

From Dixmude, south to Ypres, the Belgians and British attacked and the Belgians alone made 4,000 prisoners. In a night the boundaries of free Belgium changed. Dixmude fell. In one death-defying dash the Belgians crossed the desolation of slime-filled shell holes between them and the dead forest of Houthoulst, captured its poison-soaked thickets and swamps and got on the firm ground beyond. But so sudden was the jump, so great the progress, so high the price, that commissary, canteen, and hospitals had thrown on them the heaviest burden of the
war. In this crisis the Croix Rouge de Belgique, and the canteens of "Gifts for Belgian Soldiers," and the Service du Sante showed their metal.

Nothing stopped the Croix Rouge, with Depage, the famous surgeon, charging ahead; Vandervelde, the Minister, who directed the canteens, gave his big tents for advance hospital posts, and Depage, and the Queen nursing under shot and shell, and his skillful surgeons did the rest.

"With American Red Cross help," said Depage, as he stood in the mud of Houthoulst forest, "without you it would have been impossible."

The canteens kept up with the armies. Lorries went over roads considered impassable. Soldiers swarmed over the camions before they stopped, and stolid Flemings actually hugged the modest Stoefs as he halted at the front line and began to supply the chocolate, tobacco, cigarettes and biscuits which the war-worn, exhausted soldiers craved.
II

It was the same story over again in the second attack of October 14th, when Belgians and French took Roulers, and Belgians and British took Courtrai. The losses were heavy, the toll in officers was terrific—the bravest fell. British and French, both fighting under the brave King of the Belgians, had nothing but praise for the army of the little nation which, with relentless fury, swept on to claim its own.

In the Roulers drive the building of the big hospital at Vinckem or Wulveringhem, for which the American Red Cross put up 500,000 francs, was more than vindicated. Laughed at formerly as extravagant, the wide corridors now served as wards. The "expensive railway switch" up to the rear entrance permitted the hospital trains to come to the very doors. The never resting personnel, by double hours, made up for
half-manned shifts. It was a stupendous achievement to handle the wounded of the great advance.

Meanwhile the executive office of the American Red Cross at La Panne was in constant touch with all hospital and canteen work.

Carload after carload of bandages and surgical dressings came up from Paris, camion loads of emergency foods were drawn from the stocks at Adinkerke, drugs and medicines were provided as needed.

III

For Belgium a great hour of the war was Wednesday, October 16th, the last night of the Germans on the Yser.

With 380's the Boche shelled La Panne. It was one of the worst bombardments of the war. From a great distance, without "coup de depart," falling from a great height, without siren or...
whistle, these huge missiles from north of Ostend, fell down on the little capital village of free Belgium, all around the villa of the King and Queen. For La Panne, bombed and shelled for four years, they were literally the last shots of the war.

The Germans left lights shining in their dugouts and under cover of the bombardment stole away.

IV

There came a host of new problems—with Ostend, Zeebrugge, Thielt and Iseghem, and then Bruges—with innumerable smaller villages, liberated.

There were the same rapid movements of the armies, the same necessary advance of hospitals and canteens, gigantic tasks of transport, with every bridge mined and every crossroads blown up. But the Belgian Red Cross went on from the forest of Houthoulst to Thourout, and from
Thourout to Bruges, and from Bruges to Waerschoote, almost up to Ghent.

And the American Red Cross followed on with camion loads of blankets in a country stripped of bedding, and camion loads of milk in a country denuded of cows.

When the tired soldiers stopped there were the canteens and the cinemas provided with the money of the American Red Cross run by the Belgians themselves, but with even the smallest article carrying an American message of sympathy and cheer.

Now came the hour of the Adinkerke warehouses of the American Red Cross. Like Depage's big hospital at Vinckem, these nine warehouses well up under shell fire had been ridiculed as "reckless projects," involving "unnecessary chances," "exposing valuable food to danger of capture or destruction."

But the Commission for Belgium of the American Red Cross was willing to take a chance on
Taking Chances to Save Lives

anything involving saving human life. It always said: "We must be ready when the lines change to feed the liberated peoples. Transport from the rear will be impossible. We must have the stuff well up." So it had tinned beef and salmon, condensed milk, beans and lentils, macaroni and rice, coffee and sugar, lard and bacon, with camions which had been hauling refugees out, ready to haul the food.

Compared with the quantities sent in by the Commission for Relief in Belgium for occupied Belgium, the stores were insignificant—only 300 or 400 tons. But 300 tons ready to use is worth 30,000 tons 100 miles back. It all worked out as foreseen. The first food went to Bruges and was turned over to the Belgian National Committee and to the civil hospitals of the Commissaire d'Arrondissement. Never have "pork bellies," as they are called by the trade, had a warmer welcome.

Little villages cut off by lack of transport
Feeding the Devastated Regions

were reached by American Red Cross camions. The King of the Belgians, all over the country in person, himself pointed out needs. To Waerschoote, to Aeltre, to Somergem, to stricken Audenarde, to Tournai, to Courtrai, to Roulers, and Iseghem, the food went by camion, by train and by vicinal tram.

The sister of the burgomaster of Loo-ten-Hulle sent a letter typical of the expressions heard on every side:

"I must thank you in the name of all the poor of the commune for the big, heavily laden car which will furnish food to the hungry. Just this morning the president of the Comite National was telling me his plight; some poor women had not had any bread in three days and the warehouses of the Comite are empty, as the whole Service de l'Alimentation has been held up for the past three weeks. What you sent me will permit us to help the poor. Many thanks from them, and thanks from me. Through your help I have been able to carry some milk to a poor, sick
woman. You will understand how happy one is to be able to help those more unhappy than oneself. I had been deprived of this consolation."

The Paris office of the American Red Cross, always at its best in every great emergency, sent several camion loads of drugs sorely needed, and stocks of clothing to a region were men's suits, worth $20, cost $150 to $200, with underwear and everything else in proportion.

V

When Bruges was liberated, the American Red Cross men went in with the first representatives of the Belgian Government.

The morning Ghent was freed, their ear was the first ear in and while the Belgian Minister of Supplies and the American Red Cross man were speaking to thousands from the steps of
the city hall, that Monday, November 11th, of the armistice, the Germans just across the stream fired a farewell volley into the town five minutes before eleven and killed a crippled shoemaker.

Before Brussels was freed, the American Red Cross men were in the capitol to watch the Germans out and welcome home first the Burgomaster, and then the King and Queen.

VI

So now, the American Red Cross in Belgium is working toward the end. No war relief work is worth while if it yields to the tendency to become permanent.

No higher tribute can be paid to the Belgians than to leave their own affairs speedily in their own hands. They are natural executives. They will receive justice when the final terms of peace are signed.
Give them an indemnity, assurance of quick financial help, first call on ships, cotton, machinery and other supplies, a continuance of the revictualing for which they pay all the bills, and Belgians themselves will rebuild Belgium as Belgians of other generations have rebuilt before.

There will be no sudden stop of the work of the American Red Cross. The canteens and hospitals even now are on the Rhine backed by the same American Red Cross help.

The people are being helped back. The war charities are being helped to shoulder their own loads. The problems like tuberculosis, children, mutilés, prisoners, and all the rest, are being studied with every desire to give our best thought, our deepest sympathy and our most effective help.

But the responsibility, as from the very beginning of the work of the Commission for Belgium of the American Red Cross, is on the people who will have to live with it through all the generations to come.
COMMISSION for BELGIUM

We have tried never to weaken that sense of responsibility, even in the darkest hours of the war.

We came with faith in the brave little people who made the great choice in the hour of destiny, who fought new Thermopoles at Liege and on the Yser, who gave their money and blood for us for three years before we came in, and who leaped to death and victory in the last great attacks of the war.

And we shall go with ten-fold greater faith in them and in their destiny.

ORGANIZATION OF
COMMISSION FOR BELGIUM
AMERICAN RED CROSS

Commissioner for Belgium, September, 1917, to October, 1918
Ernest P. Bicknell

Commissioner for Belgium, October, 1918, to date
John Van Schaick, Jr.

Deputy Commissioner, September, 1917, to October, 1918
John Van Schaick, Jr.

Deputy Commissioner, October, 1918, to date
J. W. Lee, Jr.

Public Information
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