

RELIEF WORK IN IOWA DURING THE CIVIL WAR

The American Red Cross, the Army Y. M. C. A., and the Knights of Columbus are recognized as vital factors in the conduct of the present World War. Similarly during the Civil War there were such organizations as the United States Sanitary Commission, the Western Sanitary Commission, and the United States Christian Commission, which undertook the work of looking after the health, comfort, and general morale of the soldiers. In addition to the generous contributions which the people of Iowa made to these organizations, they formed local relief agencies through which they worked. It is the purpose of this paper to present a general discussion of the three large national commissions, and afterwards a more detailed account of the activities of the people of Iowa in the interests of the welfare of the soldiers and their families.

I

THE UNITED STATES SANITARY COMMISSION

The Civil War had scarcely begun when, during the last days of April, 1861, there was held in New York City what was up to that time probably the largest council of women ever assembled in the United States.¹ It was at this meeting, called by the women of New York, that the Women's Central Association of Relief was organized for the purpose of assisting in caring for the soldiers in the Union armies so rapidly being raised. The organization proposed

¹ *The United States Sanitary Commission* in *The North American Review*, Vol. XCVIII, p. 154.

to furnish "comforts, stores, and nurses in aid of the Medical Staff" of the United States Army and to so organize the benevolent efforts of the women of all the loyal States that these efforts might result in the greatest possible advantage to the Union cause. To accomplish this purpose a plan was evolved to establish definite relations with the medical staff, which plan, when eventually achieved, resulted in the formation of the United States Sanitary Commission.²

AGITATION FOR A COMMISSION

This result, however, was not brought about without overcoming many difficulties. When the members of the medical staff were approached by a committee of New York citizens representing the women of the city with the proposal to establish a civilian commission to aid and advise them, they at once expressed their disapproval and made it evident that they would not look with favor upon any aid or interference from the outside. They replied that the "government was ready and willing to supply everything the soldiers needed or could need; that the Medical Department was fully aroused to its duties, and perfectly competent to them; and that it would be an uncalled-for confession of delinquency and poverty to admit that the army needed, or would need, anything that the government and the Medical Department were not able and willing to furnish."³ The medical staff "thought the zeal of the women and the activity of the men assisting them, superfluous, obtrusive, and likely to grow troublesome", and believed that the part of the general public in contributing to the relief of the soldiers would be small.⁴

² Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, pp. 42, 43.

³ *The United States Sanitary Commission in The North American Review*, Vol. XCVIII, p. 159.

⁴ Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, p. 44.

The New York organization was not discouraged, however, and reënforced by the support of certain medical societies of the city, continued the agitation which had been begun. A delegation of physicians was sent to Washington to investigate the matter and see what they could accomplish. After convincing themselves that some commission to aid the medical authorities was a dire necessity, the delegation offered various proposals for the creation and operation of such a body.⁵ Sanitary commissions had been organized during the Crimean and Indian wars, and these men were convinced that such a commission should be formed for service during the Civil War.⁶ They met many rebukes and setbacks. Their patriotic and unselfish motives were not always appreciated: often it was insinuated that they were aiming at selfish ends. One secretary "begged" them "to state frankly, precisely what they wanted, as it was evident to him that they could not want only what they seemed to be asking for." President Lincoln himself characterized the plan as adding a "fifth wheel to the coach".⁷ One writer suggested that it was during long waits in "anterooms" for interviews with various government officials that members of the commission first conceived the idea, which they later carried out, of providing meals for the disabled soldiers waiting their turn at the paymaster's office.⁸

ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMISSION

In spite of many discouragements the advocates of a commission finally obtained the approval of all the necessary

⁵ Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, pp. 50-53.

⁶ *The United States Sanitary Commission in The North American Review*, Vol. XCVIII, p. 372.

⁷ Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, p. 58.

⁸ *The United States Sanitary Commission in The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. XIX, p. 420.

authorities to a plan which they had submitted. The plan, as set forth in a letter of May 18, 1861, addressed to the Secretary of War by the New York delegation, proposed "that a mixed Commission of civilians distinguished for their philanthropic experience and acquaintance with sanitary matters, of medical men, and of military officers, be appointed by the Government, who shall be charged with the duty of investigating the best means of methodizing and reducing to practical service the already active but undirected benevolence of the people toward the Army; who shall consider the general subject of the prevention of sickness and suffering among the troops and suggest the wisest methods, which the people at large can use to manifest their good-will towards the comfort, security, and health of the Army."⁹ Mr. Woods, the acting Surgeon-General, consented to the plan and in a letter to the Secretary of War expressed his opinion that the "Medical bureau would derive important and useful aid from the counsels and well-directed efforts of an intelligent and scientific commission, to be styled, 'A Commission of Inquiry and Advice in respect to the Sanitary Interests of the United States Forces,' and acting in co-operation with the Bureau in elaborating and applying such facts as might be elicited from the experience and more extended observation of those connected with armies, with reference to the diet and hygiene of troops and the organization of military hospitals". He made it clear that the Commission was not to interfere with the existing organization of the medical department, but was intended merely to strengthen it, and suggested that its particular field of service would be with the volunteers.¹⁰

⁹ *Documents of the U. S. Sanitary Commission*, Vol. I, No. 1, p. 2.

¹⁰ *Documents of the U. S. Sanitary Commission*, Vol. I, No. 2, p. 2.

The Secretary of War issued an order on June 9, 1861, appointing Henry W. Bellows, A. D. Bache, Jeffries Wyman, W. H. Van Buren, Wolcott Gibbs, Samuel G. Howe, Surgeon-General R. C. Wood, G. W. Cullum, and Alexander E. Shiras, as "A Commission of Inquiry and Advice in respect to the Sanitary Interests of the United States Forces". These men were to serve without pay, and a room in Washington was given to them free of charge for use as headquarters. The order read that the Commission should "direct its inquiries to the principles and practices connected with the inspection of recruits and enlisted men; to the sanitary condition of the volunteers; to the means of preserving and restoring the health, and of securing the general comfort and efficiency of troops; to the proper provision of cooks, nurses, and hospitals; and to other subjects of like nature".¹¹ The hopes of the men and women who proposed the Commission had been realized, but there "can, it is feared, be little doubt that the appointment of the Commission was at last consented to as if it had been a 'tub thrown to the popular whale.'"¹²

The members of the Commission met in Washington on June 12, 1861, organized, and formulated plans for conducting their work.¹³ At this first meeting Dr. Elisha Harris and Dr. Cornelius R. Agnew were added to the membership.¹⁴ The Rev. Henry W. Bellows was elected president

¹¹ *Documents of the U. S. Sanitary Commission*, Vol. I, No. 2, pp. 6, 7; Reed's *The Heroic Story of the United States Sanitary Commission, 1861-1865*, p. 5.

¹² Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, p. 58.

¹³ Professor Wyman declined his appointment and consequently was not present at this meeting.—Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, p. 64.

¹⁴ Those added during the war were Rt. Rev. Bishop Clark, R. W. Burnett, Mark Skinner, Joseph Holt, Horace Binney, Jr., Rev. J. H. Heywood, Fairman Rogers, J. Huntington Wolcott, Chas. J. Stillé, E. B. M'Cagg, and Frederick Law Olmsted.—Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, p. 64.

and Frederick Law Olmsted became secretary. The secretary, with headquarters at Washington, was made the chief executive and to him fell the work of directing the organization.¹⁵ Mr. Olmsted was at that time the superintendent of the Central Park in New York and "his appointment was universally regarded as a sure guarantee of the success of the Commission's plans."¹⁶

PLAN OF OPERATION: PURPOSE

A plan of operation was drawn up by President Bellows, adopted by the Commission, and approved by the Secretary of War and by President Lincoln. It called for a division of the Commission into two main committees or branches, one of inquiry, the other of advice, with sub-committees under each. The first branch was to conduct an inquiry as to "the condition and wants of the troops". Its duty was to discover "what *must* be the condition and want of troops gathered together in such masses, so suddenly, and with such inexperience? What *is* their condition?", and "What *ought* to be their condition, and how would Sanitary Science bring them up to the standard of the highest attainable security and efficiency?" The object of the second branch was "to get the opinions and conclusions of the Commission approved by the Medical Bureau, ordered by the War Department, carried out by the officers and men, and encouraged, aided, and supported by the benevolence of the public at large, and by the State governments."¹⁷

The main purpose of the Commission from the beginning was to furnish a preventive service, and the plan of operation adopted was largely along such lines. At the same time

¹⁵ *Documents of the U. S. Sanitary Commission*, Vol. I, No. 3, pp. 4, 5, 6.

¹⁶ Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, p. 76.

¹⁷ *Documents of the U. S. Sanitary Commission*, Vol. I, No. 3, pp. 1-4; Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, pp. 64, 65.

it was realized that some plan must be devised by which the contributions of the people of the whole country could be directed into proper channels and made to do the greatest possible amount of good. Thus one of the sub-committees of the advisory branch of the Commission was instructed "to agree upon a plan of common action in respect of supplies, depots, and methods of feeding the extra demands of the Medical Bureau or Commissariat". Another sub-committee was to secure the necessary funds "through solicitation of donations, either from State treasuries or private beneficence."¹⁸ In spite of the fact that relief work occupied a comparatively small part in the original plans for the Commission, the great good accomplished in directing the organization of aid societies and in distributing contributions from the people at large soon caused it to become the main agency through which such contributions were directed, and it became a "popular error that it was only a relief association upon a grand scale". The Commission never departed, however, from its true scientific conception of rendering preventive service, always considering the relief work as secondary in importance.¹⁹

FINANCES

Created by an order of a government official and working only for the good of the Nation, the United States Sanitary Commission received and asked for no help from government funds. All it asked "was permission to work".²⁰ It was necessary for the Commission to secure the support of the public and this object was soon accomplished. The first appeals were made to life insurance companies and brought a generous response. Soon donations were secured from all

¹⁸ *Documents of the U. S. Sanitary Commission*, Vol. I, No. 3, p. 4.

¹⁹ Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, p. 68.

²⁰ Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, p. 80.

over the United States.²¹ A committee of influential business men handled the finances for the first year. During the early history of the Commission numerous appeals were issued for funds and barely enough money was received to meet demands. In 1862 it appeared that the undertaking would have to be abandoned for lack of funds — in fact a motion to that end was actually considered by the members of the Commission, but by a unanimous vote they decided to continue the struggle as long as possible.²²

These financial difficulties came at about the time when the war was beginning in dead earnest and when the fact that there was great suffering among the soldiers was becoming known at home. A new interest then sprang up and the cash receipts of the Commission began to increase. In September over \$200,000 was received from the people of the western coast. This was a new source of revenue and furnished an example which stimulated an increase in the returns from other sections of the country. In reality this timely aid marked the turning point and practically ended the "financial infancy of the Commission." In December, 1863, the funds again became somewhat low and resulted in the last public appeal which it was necessary to make. The characteristic feature of all the appeals was the fact that no attempt was made to arouse the emotions of the people and work upon their sympathies, but instead the emphasis was placed entirely upon the real economic value of the constructive work accomplished.²³

One of the greatest sources from which funds poured into the treasury of the Commission was the sanitary fairs held throughout the country. The first of these fairs was held at Chicago in November, 1863, and the sum of \$79,000 was

²¹ Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, p. 84.

²² Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, Chapter XVIII.

²³ Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, Chapter XVIII.

raised. Thereafter fairs were held in many cities and large amounts of money and supplies were obtained. Through this means Boston raised \$153,000; Cincinnati, \$263,000; Albany, \$80,000; Brooklyn, \$425,000; New York, \$1,100,000; Philadelphia, \$1,200,000; Cleveland, \$60,000; Buffalo, \$40,000; and Honolulu \$5,500.²⁴ The proceeds from the fairs were in many instances used directly by the local organizations conducting them, as was the case in Chicago, but in other cases a part of the proceeds was turned over to the central treasury of the Commission. The first money from fairs came to the central treasury in January, 1864, when \$50,000 was received from Boston. Thereafter other amounts were received until the total receipts of the central treasury from this source reached \$2,736,868.²⁵

PREVENTIVE SERVICE OF THE COMMISSION

A brief summary of the work of the Commission will be sufficient to show what it accomplished in relieving and preventing disease, in caring for the sick and wounded, and in collecting and distributing supplies — all of which services played an important part in increasing and maintaining the general efficiency of the army. Preventive measures which, as has been seen, were the primary aim of the Commission, were the first to be undertaken. Army camps and military hospitals were inspected and recommendations were made for their improvement. At first, members of the Commission undertook to make inspections themselves, but in order to keep a more careful watch over conditions in all the camps and hospitals it was soon necessary to secure addi-

²⁴ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, November 26, 1864; Fite's *Social and Industrial Conditions in the North During the Civil War*, p. 282.

²⁵ Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, Chapter XVIII. It was stated by officers of the United States Sanitary Commission that the fairs actually resulted in loss rather than gain. Instead of guaranteeing the future of the Commission they tended, in the end, to lessen the income.

tional inspectors. Plans proposed by the Commission for better sanitary conditions were at first largely disregarded, but were gradually accorded greater and greater recognition until finally many of them were put into operation with gratifying success. Its plans for new hospitals were accepted by the government officials without change, and additional hospitals were constructed upon their recommendations. As a result of its insistence the medical department of the army was completely reorganized and put upon a much more practical and efficient basis.²⁶

Physicians, at work on the battlefields and in the hospitals, early met with many diseases which were new to them and which, because of the lack of proper information, they were handicapped in treating. When this situation came to the attention of the Commission, it secured specialists in various lines to prepare medical and surgical monographs covering particular branches, and these monographs were furnished to the physicians and surgeons in the service of the army for their instruction. The good accomplished by the preventive work of the Commission can not be measured, but it is at least certain that it was an important factor in determining the final outcome of the war.²⁷

RELIEF WORK

The relief work carried on by the Commission is of the greatest interest, since it was with this phase of the work that Iowa was connected. When the Commission first began operations there was a feeling that the assumption on its part of any of the burdens of relief work would tend to weaken the responsibility of the government in that work. But when it soon became evident that many of the needs of the soldiers would not be supplied without assistance from

²⁶ Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, Chapters IV, V.

²⁷ Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, Chapter V.

the Commission, that organization did not hesitate to enter upon the task of gathering and distributing stores and supplies of all kinds. So strong was the desire of the people to aid the soldiers that this desire was sure to find expression in many and valuable donations; and realizing this fact, the Commission undertook to direct and control the nature of the supplies and their distribution.²⁸

SYSTEM OF COLLECTING STORES

The perfection of a system for collecting and controlling public contributions was at once begun. Depots to which supplies could be sent and from which they could be forwarded to the places of need were established in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Chicago, and Louisville, and came to be known as branches of the United States Sanitary Commission. Men in various sections of the country were appointed as associate members of the Commission, their duties being "to promote the establishment of auxiliary associations and so to direct the labors of those already formed, for the aid and relief of the army, that they might strengthen and support those of the Commission." The associate members also took charge of the supply depots and managed them on behalf of the Commission.²⁹

The burden of raising supplies fell largely upon the women. They were urged to form societies in every neighborhood, to solicit donations, and to hold weekly meetings for the purpose of preparing articles for the use of the men in

²⁸ Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, pp. 167, 174, 175, 176.

²⁹ *The Sanitary Commission Bulletin*, Vol. I, No. 1, 1863, p. 2; Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, p. 180. Associate members of the United States Sanitary Commission in Iowa, as listed in the *Documents of the U. S. Sanitary Commission*, Vol. II, No. 74, pp. 1-22, were Dr. Charles Clark, Robert L. Collier, and John B. Elbert.

service. As a result, during the war more than seven thousand local Aid Societies were organized, composed solely of women who devoted much of their time and energy to work for the cause of the Commission, and who were responsible, in a large measure, for the success of the whole movement. Many Aid Societies had been organized before the Commission began its campaign and although the majority of them were eventually included in the national organization, this consolidation did not come about without a certain amount of strife.

Each community felt, at first, that its duty was to care for its own soldiers. To send supplies by friends and townsmen "who should see these comforts put upon the very backs, or into the very mouths, they were designed for, was the most natural plan in the world". "Nothing had been more difficult, at first, than to divert the warm impulses of the hearts of the women from efforts to minister to the necessities of those, who, going from their own households, seemed to have peculiar and special claims upon their sympathy." Many of the States undertook to care for their own troops, no matter where they might be;³⁰ and as "South Carolina said she could take better care of her own commerce and her own forensic interests than the United States government, so Iowa and Missouri and Connecticut and Ohio insisted that they could each take better care of their own soldiers, after they were merged in the general Union army, than could any central or federal or United States commission, whatever its resources or its organization."³¹

³⁰ Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, pp. 169, 172, 180, 186, 189, 190; Reed's *The Heroic Story of the United States Sanitary Commission, 1861-1865*, p. 11.

³¹ *The United States Sanitary Commission in The North American Review*, Vol. XCVIII, pp. 181, 183.

The position taken by the Commission was that since all the men were fighting for a single purpose and represented, not single States, but the entire Union, they should all be accorded the same treatment regardless of the State from which they might have enlisted. This stand by the Commission and the great difficulties that faced those States which tried to care for their own troops after they once became widely scattered, served to hasten the abandonment of independent State action.³² By January, 1864, Missouri was the only State which had failed to unite and coöperate with the United States Sanitary Commission.³³

When the Aid Societies had been organized and put into operation contributions began to pour into the headquarters in large amounts. To stimulate and maintain interest among the Aid Societies, the Commission established a system of canvassing by agents, who frequently visited the local societies, presenting to them the needs of the army and keeping their enthusiasm aroused by descriptions of the Commission's work and its gratifying results. Bulletins and letters were regularly issued and served to keep all parts of the organization in close touch and fully informed of the progress being made. As the war progressed it was rather expected that the women's interest in the movement would gradually decline, but time proved that such was not the case. Instead of decreasing, the number of Aid Societies and the amount of supplies which they forwarded increased and large quantities of stores continued to pour in

³² Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, pp. 189, 190.

³³ *The United States Sanitary Commission in The North American Review*, Vol. XCVIII, pp. 183, 184. The reason why the people of Missouri did not cooperate with the United States Sanitary Commission was because the headquarters of the Western Sanitary Commission were at St. Louis, and this Commission had charge of all the work in the State. That the people of Missouri did their share in relief work will be seen in the account of the Western Sanitary Commission in the following section.

until the close of the war. It is estimated that three-fourths of the total supplies received by the Commission were collected by the women in this manner.³⁴

GENERAL RELIEF

Relief as administered by the Commission was of two types — general relief and special relief. General relief had to do with the work in the hospitals, in the camps, on marches, or upon the battlefield, and was administered according to definite rules, which were always closely followed. All work was carried on through the army surgeons or other officers, nothing being undertaken without their knowledge and consent. This course, it was realized, was necessary in order to maintain the proper army discipline. Before any supplies were issued the Commission made sure that a real need existed for them, and even then a written statement or voucher was required of the surgeon applying for assistance. All the general, field, and regimental hospitals were supplied with visitors representing the Commission, who had access to supplies and sanitary stores. When there was need for their assistance, which was almost constantly, they did all in their power to furnish both the things needed and the necessary personal service.³⁵

To each army sent on distant expeditions, and usually to each column of the main armies, was assigned an inspector, who was always a medical man, and a staff of assistants called relief agents. Connected with each of these units was a depot of supplies, and wagons or boats were provided to transport such stores as might be required on the marches. A moderate compensation was paid to these and

³⁴ Stille's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, pp. 187, 188.

³⁵ Stille's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, pp. 244, 246, 249.

other agents of the Commission.³⁶ There were many who opposed the policy of paid agents, believing that voluntary service should be used exclusively, but the Commission soon learned that the work which agents were forced to undertake was a "hard, continuous and prosaic one", which demanded patience and, above all, permanent service. Experiments showed that volunteer helpers did not meet these requirements, and since the aim of the Commission was to secure the best possible service, they decided to pay their agents and thus increase the probability that they would remain in the work. Moreover, with paid agents it was possible to maintain a discipline that could not be hoped for with volunteers.³⁷

As has already been noted, supplies were forwarded by the local Aid Societies to a sub-depot in one of the larger cities. Here the stores were sorted and repacked, and held subject to the requisitions of the persons in charge of the two central depots at Washington and Louisville, where the reserve stores were held until needed. From these central depots the inspectors in the field secured the necessary supplies; and whenever they needed anything it was immediately forwarded to them. In cases of a demand for articles not on hand, they were purchased or special appeals to the people were issued. For example, when scurvy began to invade the armies, appeals known as "Onion Circulars" and "Potato Circulars" were sent out, and in response thousands of barrels of onions and potatoes were secured from the farmers of the Northwest and quickly dispatched to the places of need. A military officer of high rank de-

³⁶ *The Report of the United States Sanitary Commission for 1864-1865*, p. 807, states that the Commission employed two hundred agents at an average of two dollars per day or a total of \$12,000 per month.

³⁷ Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, pp. 250, 251, 258, 259.

clared that the Sanitary Commission, by this means, had saved the army engaged in the siege of Vicksburg.³⁸

One of the most interesting departments of general relief was that known as Battle Field Relief. Immediately after a battle the agents of the Commission rushed supplies to the field and all that was possible was done to relieve the wants and sufferings of the soldiers. Special groups of men, known as the Relief Corps, were trained for this task, which proved to be difficult. An account of the Commission's activities after the battle of Gettysburg shows the nature of battlefield relief. Within two weeks after the battle, according to an estimate of Mr. Bellows, the sum of \$75,000 was devoted to relief work at that particular place. Much of this money went to purchase supplies which were hurried to the army by express-cars and independent wagon trains. Sixty tons of fresh vegetables were carried forward in refrigerating cars, and vast amounts of clothing, food, fruits, and many other things which would promote the welfare and comfort of the sick and wounded were distributed.³⁹

Included in the items of food and delicacies distributed were 11,000 pounds of fresh poultry and mutton, 6430 pounds of fresh butter, 8500 dozen eggs, 675 bushels of fresh garden vegetables, 48 bushels of fresh berries, 12,900 loaves of bread, 20,000 pounds of ice, 3800 pounds of concentrated beef soup, 12,500 pounds of concentrated milk, 7000 pounds of prepared farinaceous foods, 3500 pounds of dried fruits, 2000 jars of jellies and conserves, 750 gallons of tamarinds, 116 boxes of lemons, 46 boxes of oranges, 850

³⁸ Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, pp. 191, 249, 250.

³⁹ Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, pp. 260, 261, 262; *The United States Sanitary Commission in The North American Review*, Vol. XCVIII, pp. 403, 404.

pounds of coffee, 831 pounds of chocolate, 426 pounds of tea, 6800 pounds of white sugar, 785 bottles of syrup, 1250 bottles of brandy, 1168 bottles of whiskey, 1148 bottles of wine, 600 gallons of ale, 134 barrels of crackers, 500 pounds of preserved meats, 3600 pounds of preserved fish, 400 gallons of pickles, 42 jars of catsup, 24 bottles of vinegar, 43 jars of Jamaica ginger, 100 pounds of tobacco, 1000 tobacco pipes, 1621 pounds of codfish, 582 cans of canned fruit, 72 cans of oysters, and 302 jars of brandied peaches. In the list of clothing and hospital supplies were 7143 drawers, 10,424 shirts, 2144 pillows, 264 pillow cases, 1630 bed sacks, 1007 blankets, 275 sheets, 508 wrappers, 2659 handkerchiefs, 5818 pairs of stockings, 728 bed pans, 10,000 towels and napkins, 2300 sponges, 1500 combs, 200 buckets, 250 pounds of castile soap, 300 yards of oiled silk, 7000 tin basins and cups, 110 barrels of oil linen, 7 water tanks, 46 water coolers, 225 bottles of bay rum and cologne, 3500 fans, 11 barrels of chloride of lime, 4000 pairs of shoes and slippers, 1200 pairs of crutches, 180 lanterns, 350 candles, 300 square yards of canvas, 648 pieces of netting, 237 quires of paper, 189 pieces of clothing, and 16 rolls of plaster.⁴⁰

Even greater was the battlefield relief administered after the Battle of the Wilderness in Virginia in 1864. At that time two steam barges and four hundred and forty wagons carried to the field over two hundred tons of stores, which were distributed by two hundred of the Commission's agents.⁴¹

The following description of the general relief work, as given by Stillé, shows the remarkable possibilities of the Commission's organization:

⁴⁰ Fite's *Social and Industrial Conditions in the North During the Civil War*, pp. 277, 278.

⁴¹ Fite's *Social and Industrial Conditions in the North During the Civil War*, p. 278.

Whether the wants of the Army of the Potomac were confined to suitable Hospital clothing and Hospital diet, whether General Rosecrans' army before Chattanooga, or that of General Grant before Vicksburg was wasting away from the terrible effects of scurvy, whether General Gilmore's army on Morris Island was perishing of disease aggravated by the use of brackish water, or that of General Weitzel in Texas was suffering from a total deprivation of vegetable food, the stores of the Commission were always found abundant for supplying the particular necessity, and were conveyed to the sufferers with a promptness and with an abundance, which never failed speedily to restore their shattered strength. It seemed indeed just as easy with the means at the disposal of the Commission, and with the thorough organization of its system to forward cargoes of ice and anti-scorbutics to South Carolina or Texas, or to transport thousands of barrels of onions and potatoes from the distant Northwest to the Armies of General Rosecrans or General Grant, as to send a few cases of shirts and drawers, and of Hospital delicacies from Washington to the Army of the Potomac.⁴²

SPECIAL RELIEF

The other type of relief — that is, special relief — was provided for "the care of sick and needy soldiers in the vicinity of military depôts, discharged men, paroled prisoners, and that vast class of sufferers known as soldiers in 'irregular circumstances' or, in other words, those that had no legal claim upon the ordinary provisions of the government for assistance." Homes for the men formed one of the greatest items in this branch of the work. Here care was given to soldiers who were not sick enough for the hospitals and who were not well enough to return to service, and to those who needed aid in many other ways. Forty such homes, from Washington to Brownsville, Texas, were maintained by the Commission, in which over four and a half million meals were served, and a million lodgings given to deserving soldiers.⁴³

⁴² Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, p. 252.

⁴³ Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, pp. 244, 294, 295.

Another kind of special relief took the form of feeding stations conducted for the benefit of soldiers going from the battlefields to the hospitals. Owing to the great number of wounded men and the difficulties of travel, much suffering often resulted, and in order to furnish relief as far as possible these stations were maintained along the routes of travel. Convalescent camps, where men might recuperate their strength after leaving the hospitals and before returning to service, were also established, more than two hundred thousand men passing through a single one of these camps in 1863 and 1864.⁴⁴

Under a special bureau there was conducted a hospital directory, with headquarters at Washington and branch offices at Philadelphia, Louisville, and New York, by means of which there was kept a complete record of the names of men in hospitals. In these four offices were contained the names of over six hundred thousand men, with the latest procurable information in regard to the position and condition of each man, which furnished an invaluable service in keeping the people informed of the whereabouts and condition of relatives and friends. Through a Pension Bureau and War Claim Agency the sum of over two and a half million dollars was secured for soldiers by examining and perfecting the papers which represented their claims upon the government.⁴⁵ The branches of this agency in Iowa were at Dubuque, Davenport, Des Moines, and Burlington.⁴⁶ This department continued to operate for some time after the war and helped to collect back pay and pension money due to the soldiers.⁴⁷

Other forms of special relief consisted of providing

⁴⁴ Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, pp. 298-303.

⁴⁵ Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, pp. 307-314.

⁴⁶ *The Sanitary Commission Bulletin*, No. 40, 1865, pp. 1277, 1278.

⁴⁷ Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, pp. 310-314.

homes at the military centers where the wives and mothers of sick and wounded soldiers could be cared for while visiting their kin. Detectives were also employed to protect soldiers from sharpers; and couriers were provided on the trains to minister to traveling soldiers who might be in need of, or could be aided by, their services.⁴⁸ The many phases of the relief work show upon what a large scale the Commission was operating, and what a wide field of activities it embraced. As expressed by a writer in an English periodical, the principle upon which the Commission proceeded seems to have been "never to find a want of any kind without striving to supply it."⁴⁹

VALUE OF RELIEF WORK

The total value of the supplies collected and distributed by the Commission was estimated to be \$15,000,000. The cash receipts were \$4,962,014. These totals, it must be remembered, were for the goods and money actually handled by the central body. In addition each local Aid Society raised money for local work which never passed through the hands of the Commission. After an unsuccessful attempt to obtain a statement from all the local societies concerning their work, the Commission estimated their aggregate contributions to be more than half of that of the Commission and its branches. Many of the railroads, telegraph, and express companies gave their services free of charge or at greatly reduced rates. At least three-fourths of the cost of transportation of all supplies was given free of charge. The newspapers printed advertisements for the Commission without charge, and many stores and companies from which goods were purchased lowered their prices so as to

⁴⁸ Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, pp. 314, 315.

⁴⁹ Cobbe's *The American Sanitary Commission and Its Lesson in Fraser's Magazine*, Vol. LXXV, p. 405.

barely cover the cost to themselves. All these services were of great money value, and an estimate of all of the services of the Commission, which includes the supplies, the cash, and other items, places the total at not less than \$25,000,000.⁵⁰ The efficiency with which this vast supply of stores was handled is suggested by the report of the western department for the two years ending September 1, 1863, during which time this department distributed stores of an estimated value of \$2,250,000, at an expense of \$35,000, or one and one-half per cent of their valuation.⁵¹

CONCLUSION

The great success of the United States Sanitary Commission has been attributed to the genuineness with which it carried out its pledge to act strictly as a subordinate and auxiliary body to the medical staff. It was always "loyal to the Medical Department, — its fearless critic, but never its rival or supplanter, — its watchful spur, but never its sly traducer or its disguised enemy." After the Commission had been in operation for some time, the officers of the Medical Bureau realized that it was possible for it "really to aid and not embarrass them" and they entered with hearty coöperation into the work. The relief work undertaken by the Commission is also generally considered to have been a great factor in its success, and historians have questioned whether it would ever have succeeded without it. The material aid rendered appealed to the public; it aroused popular interest and brought funds into the treasury which could be used for preventive service.⁵²

⁵⁰ Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, pp. 487-490.

⁵¹ *The United States Sanitary Commission in The North American Review*, Vol. XCVIII, p. 407.

⁵² *The United States Sanitary Commission in The North American Review*, Vol. XCVIII, p. 194; Cobbe's *The American Sanitary Commission and Its Lesson in Fraser's Magazine*, Vol. LXXV, p. 409; Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, pp. 185, 255.

When the Commission was organized its members "had nobody to help them and everybody to thwart them. Before they had done, they had imitators without number, eager to do their work, and glad to take their name."⁵³ An English writer speaks of the United States Sanitary Commission as "worthy of the closer study of English philanthropists" and affirms that "the Sanitary Commission effected a greater amount of good than had ever before been done in time of war".⁵⁴

II

THE UNITED STATES CHRISTIAN COMMISSION

ORGANIZATION AND PURPOSE

About four months after the opening of the war Vincent Colyer of New York conceived the idea "of bringing religious influences to bear" upon the men serving in the army. The general public, however, was slow to fall in line with his suggestion, and it was not until November 16, 1861, that representatives of Young Men's Christian Associations met in New York and established the United States Christian Commission,⁵⁵ the purpose of which was "to promote the spiritual and temporal welfare of the officers and men of the United States army and navy".⁵⁶

The men named to serve upon the Commission were Rev. Rollin H. Neale of Boston, George H. Stuart of Philadelphia, Charles Demond of Boston, John P. Crozer of

⁵³ *The United States Sanitary Commission* in *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. XIX, p. 418.

⁵⁴ Cobbe's *The American Sanitary Commission and Its Lessons* in *Fraser's Magazine*, Vol. LXXV, pp. 401, 405.

⁵⁵ Mr. Moss's "Christian Commission" in *The Nation*, Vol. VI, pp. 214, 215.

⁵⁶ *First Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission*, 1863, p. 5.

Philadelphia, Bishop E. S. Janes of New York, Rev. M. L. R. P. Thompson of Cincinnati, Hon. Benjamin F. Mannierre of New York, Col. Clinton B. Fisk of St. Louis, Rev. Benjamin C. Cutler of Brooklyn, John V. Farwell of Chicago, Mitchell H. Miller of Washington, and John D. Hill of Buffalo. Immediately after their appointment these men met in Washington and perfected an organization by electing George H. Stuart as chairman, B. F. Mannierre as secretary and treasurer, and George H. Stuart, Bishop E. S. Janes, Rev. Benjamin C. Cutler, Charles Demond, and Benjamin F. Mannierre as an executive committee. Headquarters were established in New York and work was immediately begun.⁵⁷

Considerable time elapsed, however, before anything of importance was accomplished. "For a good many months — seven or eight — the work languished, and at times it seemed as if it would never be even well begun." In July, 1862, Mr. Morrison, the secretary in charge of the headquarters, wrote "that the property on hand consists of a mahogany table with two drawers, two oak chairs, some books and stationery in a desk — the desk apparently a borrowed one — a lot of pamphlets, miscellaneous books,

⁵⁷ Later the offices of secretary and treasurer were separated, Rev. A. M. Morrison becoming secretary. During the first year B. F. Mannierre and Rev. B. C. Cutler resigned from the Commission and Jay Cooke of Philadelphia and Rev. James Eells of Brooklyn were named to succeed them. J. P. Crozer and Jay Cooke filled the vacancies on the executive committee; Joseph Patterson of Philadelphia assumed the duties of treasurer. After several months of gratuitous service, Rev. A. M. Morrison resigned as secretary, and was followed in that office by Rev. W. E. Boardman. At this time the headquarters were moved from New York to Philadelphia.—*First Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission*, 1863, pp. 5, 6.

During the third year of the Commission's activities its membership was increased from twelve to forty-eight; the executive committee from five to fourteen; and two secretaryships were established, one for home organization, the other for field organization.—*Third Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission*, 1865, p. 15.

newspapers, and magazines; a coal scuttle, coal-scoop, hammer, box-opener, and marking-pot; some paper, nails, and twine; eighty-four three-cent stamps and fifty blue ones in a buff envelope, and a less number of the same value in a box of pens in the back part of a drawer. The only thing, in fact, to which Mr. Morrison was able to look back with pleasure when he afterwards reflected on his administration was that, daily, there was held in his office a pretty united, earnest prayer-meeting of one." Like the founders of the United States Sanitary Commission, the members of the Christian Commission met many rebukes from government officials, and it was some time before they could secure any coöperation from them.⁵⁸

Early in 1863, the affairs of the Commission began to develop more favorably. Rebuffs from those in authority became less frequent and eventually "the approbation and commendation" of the President of the United States and of the higher army officials were secured. The first report issued by the Commission, in February, 1863, stated that "the United States Christian Commission, under full sanction of the President, the Secretaries of War and of the Navy, the Generals commanding the armies of the Union, and the Admirals commanding its squadrons, is prepared to minister, by its own volunteer, unpaid delegates,—Christian gentlemen of the highest respectability,—to the wants, religious and temporal, of every man, on land and on sea, wearing the national uniform."⁵⁹ Already, the report stated, 356 delegates had been sent to work among the soldiers and to preach the gospel; 3691 boxes of stores and publications, valued at \$142,150, had been distributed; aid

⁵⁸ Mr. Moss's "Christian Commission" in *The Nation*, Vol. VI, pp. 214, 215; Moss's *The Christian Commission* in *The Nation*, Vol. VI, p. 272.

⁵⁹ *First Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission*, 1863, pp. 5, 117.

had been given to many thousand sick and wounded soldiers; and many letters had been written and sent for the soldiers to their families and friends.⁶⁰

The aim of the originators and founders of the Christian Commission was to exert a spiritual influence upon the men in the national service. But just as the United States Sanitary Commission had found it essential to undertake the collection and distribution of supplies, so the Christian Commission found it necessary to minister, not only to the spiritual needs, but likewise to the physical needs of the men whom they wished to serve. Thus in February, 1863, the Commission announced that its purpose was "to arouse the Christian Associations and the Christian men and women of the loyal States to such action towards the men in our army and navy, as would be pleasing to the Master; to obtain and direct volunteer labors, and to collect stores and money with which to supply whatever was needed, reading matter, and articles necessary for health not furnished by Government or other agencies, and to give the officers and men of our army and navy the best Christian ministries for both body and soul possible in their circumstances."⁶¹ The Commission did not propose to supersede the regular chaplain system as it then existed in the army and navy, but hoped to coöperate with and aid it.⁶² Eight principles, including catholicity, nationality, voluntary service, combination of benefits for body and soul, reliance upon unpaid delegates, personal distribution with personal ministrations, respect for authorities, and coöperation, were adopted as rules to guide the Commission in its undertakings.⁶³

⁶⁰ *First Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission*, 1863, pp. 13, 14.

⁶¹ *First Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission*, 1863, p. 6.

⁶² *First Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission*, 1863, p. 5.

⁶³ *Second Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission*, 1864, pp. 15-21.

WORK OF THE COMMISSION

The work of the Commission was divided into two general divisions, one including the work carried on at the seat of war and the other the work conducted at home or away from the seat of war. The latter department was under the direction of the Young Men's Christian Associations in places where such organizations were to be found and were willing to assume the duty; otherwise army committees were formed to do the work. The Commission and the many delegates representing it performed the services at the seat of war. The Young Men's Christian Associations and the army committees distributed religious matter and necessary supplies, and relieved and counselled the sick and wounded in the hospitals and camps, besides collecting stores to be forwarded to the men working near the battle lines. The work of supplying religious services, distributing reading matter, religious and otherwise, administering bodily comforts, and promoting intercourse between the soldiers and their families was known as "General Work". The relief and care of the wounded during and after battles, the relief given in parole and convalescent camps, and other emergency relief was designated as "Special Work".⁶⁴

Supplies, upon being collected, were forwarded to headquarters of the Commission established near the field of action, whence they were apportioned to delegates for personal distribution among the soldiers. For work upon the battlefields, a trunk was furnished to each company of three, five, or six delegates, according as conditions demanded, packed with articles for the immediate use of men suffering upon the field. These trunks were taken by the delegates as personal baggage, to insure their being on hand upon the delegates' arrival. In cases of emergency

⁶⁴ *First Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission, 1863, p. 11.*

whole car-loads of special stores were bought and gathered together in a very limited time, and sent by express trains to the field of battle. When the Commission's agents were forewarned of a battle an effort was made to have stores sent in advance so that they might be on hand the instant they were needed.⁶⁵

Just as many gratuitous services were granted to the Sanitary Commission by railroads, telegraph companies, and similar agencies, so the Christian Commission was given free transportation for their goods and representatives by the railroads; free service was accorded by telegraph companies; and the best hotels in many cities opened their doors free of charge to the Commission's delegates.⁶⁶

The voluntary service of agents and delegates was a feature of the Commission's policy which was continually emphasized. With the exception of a few paid agents, all services were performed without compensation, thus forming a striking contrast to the Sanitary Commission which preferred paid rather than voluntary help. The men representing the Christian Commission were "ministers, merchants, lawyers, surgeons and others" who "offered their services freely, in numbers ample to distribute all the stores and publications contributed, and all the Commission has had means to purchase."⁶⁷ The men were chosen from all denominations so as to minister, without preference, to men of all creeds.⁶⁸ Likewise no lines were drawn between the

⁶⁵ *First Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission, 1863, p. 12.*

⁶⁶ *First Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission, 1863, pp. 6, 7; Second Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission, 1864, pp. 24, 25.*

⁶⁷ *First Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission, 1863, pp. 6, 7.*

⁶⁸ *Second Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission, 1864, pp. 15, 16.*

soldiers of different States or sections of the country. All men were treated alike, even the enemy wounded being aided in many cases.⁶⁹ The members of the Commission aimed to send their supplies and render their services where the need seemed to them to be greatest, and they guarded carefully against flooding one department of the army with supplies to the neglect of another.⁷⁰

Since all stores and publications distributed by the Commission were taken directly to the soldiers by delegates or those "known by them to be worthy of all confidence", the Commission was assured that all goods would reach their proper destination without being lost or misused. This system of personal distribution by voluntary agents and delegates, aided by the free transportation and communication granted them, permitted the Commission to perform its many and valuable functions with but little outlay of money.⁷¹

A phase of relief work which is of special interest, since it was proposed by and carried out under the direction of Mrs. Wittenmyer, who played such an important part in the relief work of Iowa, was the establishment and operation of diet kitchens. Special diet kitchens, separate from the general kitchens of the hospitals, were conducted for the benefit of "low diet" patients. These were government kitchens and were controlled and supplied by the medical authorities of the hospitals, except that the Commission furnished certain necessities not furnished by the government and further provided and maintained women to manage them.⁷² All patients in the hospitals who were not in

⁶⁹ *First Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission*, 1863, p. 13.

⁷⁰ *Second Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission*, 1864, pp. 15, 16.

⁷¹ *First Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission*, 1863, p. 7.

⁷² *Third Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission*, 1865, p. 24.

condition to go to the general table or eat the food prepared in the general kitchens, had their meals ordered by the surgeons from the special diet kitchens.⁷³ First adopted early in 1864 for the western branch of the army, these diet kitchens proved so successful that in the following year they were extended to the armies in the east.⁷⁴

COLLECTION OF STORES

The Christian Commission proceeded in much the same way as the Sanitary Commission had done in its efforts to secure contributions of goods, money, and services. In one of its earliest appeals to the public the Commission wrote: "Let every city, town, and village form and report to us its Army Committee, to hold meetings, collect and forward money and supplies, and to select and recommend men to go as delegates." Although formed by representatives of Young Men's Christian Associations, the Commission emphasized the point that it was unnecessary to belong to such associations in order to assist and help them in their work.⁷⁵

Little money was spent in the effort to interest the people in the activities of the Commission or to secure their aid and coöperation. In an early report of the Commission it is stated that the "Christian men who have gone without pay as delegates to relieve, supply, and instruct the soldier, in hospital and camp, have just as freely told the story of their work, and of the soldier's necessities, which has served to interest the people, and secure their prayers, money, and stores better than any paid agency could possibly have

⁷³ *Third Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission*, 1865, p. 44.

⁷⁴ *Third Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission*, 1865, p. 24; *Fourth Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission*, 1866, p. 16.

⁷⁵ *First Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission*, 1863, pp. 122, 123.

done".⁷⁶ The second annual report again emphasized this system of raising supplies, and the remark was made that "there never was such another agency to move the people." The report added, however, that in "two or three instances indeed, returned delegates, under the pressure of constant and earnest demand for them to address public meetings, had been retained", but their compensation was only "necessary sustenance", and this was provided for largely by special contributions. Without any urging, many communities had organized committees which acted as local Christian Commissions, while the people had "sent in their money and stores to these various centers of supply, which in turn have poured in their streams into the general work of the Commission." Twice, on Thanksgiving days, large contributions had been made for the Commission, the second contribution alone amounting to nearly ninety thousand dollars. Not only did the Commission choose to perform its work without special agents for raising funds, but it aimed to employ "no outside means, or indirect appliances, combining personal pleasure with public beneficence, to draw money which would not be given directly",⁷⁷ a policy which again was almost directly opposite to that pursued by the United States Sanitary Commission and its branches and local societies.

These policies in regard to raising money and supplies operated satisfactorily for the Christian Commission until the third year of its work, when new difficulties were encountered. The interest of the general public was centered in the sanitary fairs which were being held throughout the country, and the people "appeared to be pressed into forgetfulness of the Christian Commission and its wants."

⁷⁶ *First Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission*, 1863, p. 7.

⁷⁷ *Second Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission*, 1864, pp. 22, 23.

Some step to overcome this lack of interest had to be taken. Two plans were suggested and both were accepted. An eastern clergyman proposed that in each evangelical congregation there should be formed an auxiliary of the Commission, including, so far as possible, "every man, woman, and child as contributing members". To this was added the idea of uniting the women of the land more firmly with the Commission. The result was a scheme to organize Ladies' Christian Commissions — one in every evangelical congregation — embracing all sexes and all ages, with a membership fee of one dollar a year, to solicit contributions in money and stores and to prepare clothing and delicacies for distribution in the field. A second plan, to take a national subscription on behalf of the Commission, was suggested by a western merchant who gave \$5000 to inaugurate the movement. As a result of this suggestion a meeting was held in Philadelphia at which \$50,000 was raised; \$30,000 was pledged at Pittsburgh, and in many other cities large sums were subscribed.⁷⁸

The good accomplished by the Ladies' Christian Commissions was emphasized in the final report of the Commission. Although they were late in being organized and had only a short time to operate before the war closed, a great deal was accomplished by them. The reports to the central Commission were very incomplete, only two hundred and sixty-six local organizations reporting, of which eighty were in Philadelphia, with the remainder scattered over seventeen States. Nearly \$200,000 was received by the Christian Commission from local agencies.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ *Third Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission, 1865*, pp. 18, 19, 20.

⁷⁹ *Fourth Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission, 1866*, p. 202.

SUMMARY OF THE WORK OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMISSION

An enumeration, somewhat detailed, of the services rendered by the Commission will help to indicate the exact nature of its activities. For the four years of the war 4859 delegates were commissioned, giving an aggregate of 181,562 days of service. These delegates distributed 95,066 boxes of stores and publications, 1,466,748 Bibles, Testaments, and portions of the scriptures, 1,370,953 hymn and Psalm books, 8,308,052 knapsack books, 296,816 bound library books, 767,861 magazines and pamphlets, 18,126,002 religious newspapers, 39,104,243 pages of tracts, and 8572 "Silent Comforters"; they preached 58,308 sermons; held 77,744 prayer-meetings; and wrote 92,321 letters for sick and disabled soldiers.⁸⁰

The cash receipts of the central and branch offices amounted to \$2,524,512.56; stores distributed were estimated to be worth \$2,839,445.17; the value of the books and literature of all kinds was placed at \$299,576.26; the services of delegates were estimated to be worth \$344,413.69; while the free accommodations granted by railroads, telegraph companies, and similar agencies amounted to \$283,160. The total value of the Commission's work, including cash, stores, and the many services rendered, amounted, according to the Commission's own estimate, to \$6,291,107.68.⁸¹ But the material wants supplied do not measure the full value of the Christian Commission's efforts, for "there were deeper wants than those of the body — other comfort and help to be given besides the physical. The gospel of clean clothes, of food that was not 'hard-tack,' of encouraging words, was but the entering wedge of a

⁸⁰ *Fourth Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission, 1866, p. 27.*

⁸¹ *Fourth Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission, 1866, p. 28.*

higher message, whose proclamation was the Delegate's dearest privilege."⁸²

There can be no doubt that from the work of the Christian Commission great benefits were derived by individual soldiers and by the army as a whole. The nature of these benefits is well stated by a historian in setting forth General Grant's reasons for permitting the Commission's delegates to work within the limits of his army, before they had received any sanction from government authorities. He granted this permission because of his realization "that the distribution of newspapers and books among his fellow-citizens in arms; the presence among them of men and women who revived in their minds the best ideas connected with home; who supplied them with reading matter that called them away from euchre and bluff and corrupting conversation; who set them singing hymns and hearing sermons when they might otherwise have been breaking guard or smuggling whiskey into camp; who nursed and fed men for whose death too often the hospital stewards were waiting with a natural but discouraging impatience; who wrote thousands of letters that brought back to sick men thousands of comforting letters; who, in short, made able-bodied soldiers less disorderly and able-bodied and disabled soldiers more happy and comfortable — such persons, he perceived, were persons that might properly be used by the general of a volunteer army"⁸³

III

THE WESTERN SANITARY COMMISSION

ORGANIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Unlike the United States Sanitary Commission, the Western Sanitary Commission did not find its beginning in any

⁸² *The Christian Commission in Lippincott's Magazine*, Vol. I, p. 151.

⁸³ *Mr. Moss's "Christian Commission" in The Nation*, Vol. VI, p. 215.

preconceived and prearranged plan of operation, but "sprang from sudden exigency for relief of suffering".⁸⁴ After the battles of Boonville, Carthage, Dug Spring, and Wilson's Creek the sick and wounded soldiers were brought into St. Louis in great numbers and in the absence of any adequate existing accommodations, the city was confronted with the task of developing means by which the men could be cared for.⁸⁵ The "House of Refuge", a large, uncompleted structure some four miles from the city had been taken over as a hospital, but as "neither stoves, nor bedsteads, nor beds, nor bedding, nor food, nor nurses, nor anything else" had been provided, much remained to be done before the building was suitable for hospital purposes.⁸⁶ Even when this building had been properly equipped, the number of men demanding medical care had become so large that still additional hospitals were a necessity.⁸⁷

To aid in relieving this situation, early in September, 1861, General Frémont appointed a commission of civilians to cooperate with the medical department in obtaining and furnishing buildings for hospital use.⁸⁸ The men named as members of the commission, which was designated as the Western Sanitary Commission, were James E. Yeatman, C. S. Greely, J. B. Johnson, George Partridge, and Rev. William G. Eliot, all of St. Louis. The first of these men was a retired Tennessee planter, Greely and Partridge were

⁸⁴ *Loyal Work in Missouri* in *The North American Review*, Vol. XCVIII, p. 523.

⁸⁵ Anderson's *The Story of a Border City During The Civil War*, p. 288; *Loyal Work in Missouri* in *The North American Review*, Vol. XCVIII, p. 526.

⁸⁶ *Loyal Work in Missouri* in *The North American Review*, Vol. XCVIII, p. 526.

⁸⁷ Anderson's *The Story of a Border City During The Civil War*, p. 288.

⁸⁸ *Loyal Work in Missouri* in *The North American Review*, Vol. XCVIII, pp. 526, 527; Anderson's *The Story of a Border City During The Civil War*, p. 288.

prosperous merchants, Johnson a physician, and Eliot the pastor of the only Unitarian church in St. Louis.⁸⁹ Mr. Yeatman assumed the presidency of the body and devoted his entire time to the work, the remaining members meeting with him daily "except Sunday" for consultation.⁹⁰ The members, who served without pay,⁹¹ decided at the first meeting that they would advance the small amount of money needed for office expenses and determined to proceed without the services of a clerk.⁹² A little later it was found necessary to employ one man, who "acted as storekeeper, porter and clerk for thirty dollars a month."⁹³

With this meager beginning the Commission found itself called upon to perform additional functions, one after another, until ultimately the work, although not quite so broad nor so extensive, corresponded closely to that of the United States Sanitary Commission. It "not only sent surgeons, nurses, and supplies into the field, but strove by hospitals, soldiers' homes, agents, and advisors, to succor the convalescent, aid the injured to return home, and to do, in short, for anyone, Union or Confederate, white or black, free or slave, any service of mercy which he needed." Beginning in St. Louis, the field covered by the Commission gradually spread to the surrounding territory and to neighboring States until soon practically "the whole burden of ministering to the Union (and in some cases to the Confederate) armies in the Mississippi Valley fell upon the West-

⁸⁹ *War of the Rebellion: Official Records*, Series III, Vol. II, p. 947; Anderson's *The Story of a Border City During The Civil War*, p. 290.

⁹⁰ Anderson's *The Story of a Border City During The Civil War*, pp. 289, 290.

⁹¹ Anderson's *The Story of a Border City During The Civil War*, p. 290.

⁹² *Loyal Work in Missouri* in *The North American Review*, Vol. XCVIII, p. 523.

⁹³ Anderson's *The Story of a Border City During The Civil War*, p. 291.

ern Sanitary Commission."⁹⁴ A member of the Commission writing in 1864 said that the organization "has had, with trifling exceptions, exclusive (sanitary) care of all the armies west of the Mississippi, from the beginning of the war. . . . For the first year of the war, the time of greatest difficulty, it had almost a monopoly in fitting up and supplying hospital steamers and all other Western river work, including supplies to the gunboat flotilla on the Mississippi, and has kept its agents and stores of hospital supplies at every important point in the Western department."⁹⁵

The United States Sanitary Commission early recognized the existence of the western organization and at first attempted to absorb it as one of its branches. Dr. J. S. Newberry, the secretary of the Western Department of the United States Commission, was instructed to confer with the Western Commission relative to a union of the two organizations. He met the members of the latter body on September 23, 1861, and submitted to them his proposition, but after due deliberation they rejected it, choosing to remain independent.⁹⁶ About the first of November a remonstrance against the work of the Western Sanitary Commission was filed at Washington by the United States Sanitary Commission, requesting the Secretary of War "to vindicate his own authority" by requiring General Frémont to rescind his order, and put the Western Sanitary Commission in "its proper place of subordination." Secretary Cameron "had no objection to the Western gentlemen being

⁹⁴ Usher's *A Bibliography of Sanitary Work in St. Louis During the Civil War* in the *Missouri Historical Society Collections*, Vol. IV, p. 73; Usher's *The Western Sanitary Commission in the Proceedings of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association*, 1908-1909, pp. 219, 220.

⁹⁵ *Loyal Work in Missouri* in *The North American Review*, Vol. XCVIII, p. 520.

⁹⁶ Newberry's *The U. S. Sanitary Commission in the Valley of the Mississippi*, p. 18.

as independent as they pleased, so long as they were under the Medical Department." Accordingly he approved the order of General Frémont and gave to the Western Commission the privilege of "extending its labors to the camps and hospitals of any of the Western armies, under the direction of the assistant surgeon-general, Col. R. C. Wood, or the senior medical officer of the Medical Department."⁹⁷ The action of the United States Sanitary Commission was probably taken under misapprehension of the real facts and in the later years of the war the two Commissions coöperated on very friendly terms.⁹⁸

GENERAL WORK OF THE COMMISSION

Although its work was, on the whole, similar to that of the United States Sanitary Commission, the workers for the Western Commission, because of their position, had their own particular problems to solve. The provision of hospitals, which was their first task, proved to be one of the greatest. Within two months after opening the first hospital, they had five more completely equipped and filled to overflowing. At the end of the war fifteen hospitals had been established in and around St. Louis with accommodations for six thousand patients. Of these the largest, which in two years had received eleven thousand patients, was situated at Jefferson Barracks. In addition to these the Commission joined with the United States Sanitary Commission in founding and equipping ten hospitals in Memphis, Tennessee.⁹⁹ "Floating Hospitals" were operated on

⁹⁷ *War of the Rebellion: Official Records*, Series III, Vol. II, p. 947; *Loyal Work in Missouri* in *The North American Review*, Vol. XCVIII, p. 528.

⁹⁸ *Loyal Work in Missouri* in *The North American Review*, Vol. XCVIII, p. 528.

⁹⁹ Anderson's *The Story of a Border City During The Civil War*, pp. 291, 292, 297, 298.

the Mississippi River. These were boats, fitted out as hospitals, which cruised up and down the river so as to be close to the armies which they served. Thirteen such boats, each accommodating from five hundred to a thousand patients, were operated by the Commission. To give service on the immediate field of battle and upon marches, "flying hospitals" or wagons furnished with cots and medical stores were maintained.¹⁰⁰

The first soldiers' home to be established by the Western Commission was opened in March, 1862, at St. Louis, and during the war housed more than seventy thousand soldiers. Subsequently five additional homes were opened in which as a daily average six hundred guests, mostly invalids and convalescents, were cared for, fitted out with necessities, and sent on to their destinations. Up to December, 1865, the homes altogether had housed, free of charge, 421,616 soldiers, had furnished them 982,592 meals and 410,252 lodgings.¹⁰¹

A new problem was faced by the Western Sanitary Commission in dealing with the freedmen and refugees from the southern States. These people became very numerous in St. Louis and the adjacent territory and were often in most urgent need of assistance. Many thousands of white refugees from the South gathered in Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee, and Mississippi, and the Western Commission was the first of the sanitary organizations to undertake systematically to provide for them. Ten centers were established where temporary hospitals and schools were opened and where all possible aid was given to these people. The

¹⁰⁰ Anderson's *The Story of a Border City During The Civil War*, p. 297; Usher's *The Western Sanitary Commission in the Proceedings of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association*, 1908-1909, p. 223.

¹⁰¹ *Loyal Work in Missouri in The North American Review*, Vol. XCVIII, p. 520; Anderson's *The Story of a Border City During The Civil War*, pp. 292, 300.

Commission "fed, clothed, taught and nursed them, and, so far as practicable, put them to work."¹⁰² The Commission also sent food and clothing for temporary relief of the freedmen, and later founded hospitals for their care and opened schools to educate and prepare them for their new life.¹⁰³

COLLECTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF SUPPLIES

Not long after the establishment of the Western Sanitary Commission, notices asking for assistance in carrying on its work were inserted in the St. Louis newspapers. In addition a few lines were sent for publication in the *Boston Transcript*, asking the New England women for donations of "knit woolen socks". Such notices continued to be published thereafter about every six months, this being the only means used by the Commission to reach the people of the Nation and secure contributions. No regular system of raising and collecting money and stores was maintained. No local societies were organized as auxiliaries, and no agents were sent out by the Commission to work in its behalf.¹⁰⁴ The Commission was, however, absolutely dependent upon public support for money and supplies, and although the movement which brought this support was "spontaneous and self-directing", it resulted in a "continued, uninterrupted stream of gifts" which kept the Commission's warehouses full and its treasury replenished.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Usher's *A Bibliography of Sanitary Work in St. Louis During the Civil War* in the *Missouri Historical Society Collections*, Vol. IV, p. 77; Anderson's *The Story of a Border City During The Civil War*, p. 300.

¹⁰³ Anderson's *The Story of a Border City During The Civil War*, pp. 298, 299.

¹⁰⁴ *Loyal Work in Missouri* in *The North American Review*, Vol. XCVIII, pp. 523, 524.

¹⁰⁵ *Loyal Work in Missouri* in *The North American Review*, Vol. XCVIII, pp. 523, 524.

Early in the life of the Commission the State legislature of Missouri granted seventy-five thousand dollars for the relief of Missouri troops, which sum was by special arrangement placed in the general fund of the Commission. In January, 1863, several men in Boston raised thirty-five thousand dollars for the Western Commission, and in St. Louis, during the "frozen week" of January, 1864, collections of thirty thousand dollars were made. A New England woman set aside one of the rooms in her house, designating it as the "Missouri Room," in which she received donations for the Western Commission. The supplies which she collected were valued at seventeen thousand dollars, and these, with nearly an equal amount in cash, were forwarded to St. Louis.¹⁰⁶

At the close of the year 1863 and early in 1864, the funds of the Commission were running low, and in order to increase them it was decided to hold, at St. Louis, a sanitary fair such as had been held in many places by branches of the United States Sanitary Commission. Arrangements were soon made and during May the fair, which proved a great success, was held. The net proceeds amounted to \$554,591 — the result of contributions of money and goods from all over the United States and abroad.¹⁰⁷

Like the other Sanitary Commissions, the western organization was granted railroad and transportation facilities and many similar services, free of charge, which meant a great saving in expenses. "From St. Louis to New Orleans, from Pea Ridge to Chattanooga, by every commander of the Department of the Missouri and every general in the field, by the head of the Western Medical Department and

¹⁰⁶ *Loyal Work in Missouri* in *The North American Review*, Vol. XCVIII, pp. 522, 523.

¹⁰⁷ Anderson's *The Story of a Border City During The Civil War*, pp. 309-314.

the various medical directors, by quartermasters and transportation-masters, and all other officers, the Commission and its agents have been most kindly recognized, and have scarcely ever solicited a favor in vain."¹⁰⁸

In the performance of its work, the Western Sanitary Commission, whenever possible, coöperated with the United States Sanitary Commission and its branches, with the Christian Commission, and with local Aid Societies.¹⁰⁹ No attention was paid to State or sectional lines. As expressed at that time, it was "the soldier of the Union . . . not the citizen of Missouri or Massachusetts" whom the Commission served. Supplies and contributions came from all sources and they were distributed upon the same broad basis.¹¹⁰ Donations came from all the northern States, especially from Michigan and the Northwest; but Philadelphia, New York, Providence, and Boston were specially lavish in their gifts. "By January, 1864, more than two hundred thousand dollars in cash had been received, of which St. Louis and Missouri had donated more than half; while the distant States of California and Massachusetts had each contributed fifty thousand dollars."¹¹¹

The outlay of the Western Sanitary Commission in money and goods for the years 1862 and 1863 averaged \$50,000 per month. This money went towards the prevention and relief of suffering, with a reduction of only one and one-half per cent to cover the total cost of salaries, agencies, and

¹⁰⁸ *Loyal Work in Missouri* in *The North American Review*, Vol. XCVIII, p. 521.

¹⁰⁹ *Loyal Work in Missouri* in *The North American Review*, Vol. XCVIII, p. 528.

¹¹⁰ *Loyal Work in Missouri* in *The North American Review*, Vol. XCVIII, pp. 522, 523.

¹¹¹ Anderson's *The Story of a Border City During The Civil War*, pp. 295, 296.

distribution.¹¹² From the beginning to the close of its activities \$3,500,000 worth of supplies and nearly \$1,000,000 more in cash were received by the Commission.¹¹³ "No sanitary work undertaken during the war, East or West, North or South, was more efficiently performed than that directed from St. Louis", says a recent writer. "And all this vast amount of work was performed, millions of dollars' worth of supplies distributed and used, thousands of meals provided for the hungry, hundreds of thousands of sick and homeless men temporarily lodged, by an organization of some half a dozen private citizens of St. Louis, none of whom were paid or had had previous experience."¹¹⁴

IV

THE ORGANIZATION OF RELIEF WORK IN IOWA

The people of Iowa were not behind the citizens of other sections of the country in shouldering their share of the burdens occasioned by the outbreak of the Civil War. No sooner had the men of the State begun to answer the call to arms than those who remained behind commenced to plan and to work for the purpose of making army life as agreeable as possible.

THE KEOKUK LADIES' AID SOCIETY

The first movements were unorganized, separate communities attempting to make provision for their own troops. Large quantities of supplies were collected and sent by in-

¹¹² *Loyal Work in Missouri* in *The North American Review*, Vol. XCVIII, p. 521.

¹¹³ Anderson's *The Story of a Border City During The Civil War*, p. 296.

¹¹⁴ Usher's *A Bibliography of Sanitary Work in St. Louis During the Civil War* in the *Missouri Historical Society Collections*, Vol. IV, p. 73.

dividuals directly to their friends and relatives in camps and hospitals; and in many places local soldiers' aid societies were organized to supply the company or regiment which represented those particular localities. An effort to systematize and unite the work of the whole State was first made by the women of Keokuk, under the leadership of Mrs. Annie Wittenmyer. The Keokuk society, organized during the summer of 1861, at once entered upon the work in behalf of the men who were serving their country in the army.¹¹⁵ One of the first steps taken by the organization was to send Mrs. Wittenmyer, the corresponding secretary, to visit Iowa soldiers in their camps and ascertain their greatest needs in order that the work at home might be directed along the most efficient lines. The first of August found Mrs. Wittenmyer in St. Joseph, Missouri, whither she had gone to visit the Second Iowa Regiment; but not finding the regiment there, she followed it to St. Louis.¹¹⁶ That the women at Keokuk were busy is shown by the report of an entertainment given during August by the Aid Society in order to raise funds for their work, at which the net proceeds amounted to something over one hundred and fifty dollars.¹¹⁷

Once the work at Keokuk was well under way, the Aid Society reached out in an effort to obtain the coöperation of the women of the entire State. Soldiers' Aid Societies had already been formed in some other towns and they were urged to work with the Keokuk forces. Where no steps had as yet been taken to launch such enterprises the people were asked to do so. On the thirtieth of August, Mrs. Wittenmyer, acting for the Keokuk organization, sent a letter to the women of Des Moines inviting them "to effect a similar

¹¹⁵ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, November 6, 1863.

¹¹⁶ *Des Moines Valley Whig* (Keokuk), August 5, 1861.

¹¹⁷ *Des Moines Valley Whig* (Keokuk), August 19, 1861.

organization, and co-operate with them in supplying articles of comfort to the Iowa Volunteers, and especially in providing their hospitals with such comforts and conveniences as the Government does not provide."¹¹⁸ Early in September a Keokuk paper carried a message addressed "To the Ladies of Iowa", with a request that it be copied by papers throughout the State. In this address the women were urged to organize societies in their respective districts and work in conjunction with the Keokuk society. It explained that the members of the latter organization would be in direct communication with the State troops and could keep their auxiliaries posted concerning all items of interest. Packages were to be sent, express prepaid, to the Soldiers' Aid Society of Keokuk, whence they would be forwarded free of charge to their destinations.¹¹⁹

THE ARMY SANITARY COMMISSION

Early in October, Governor Kirkwood "conceived the idea of an organized and united action that should excite and direct the whole work of the State." The existing situation, the Governor thought, "was attended with so much expense and large losses of goods, and was so uncertain in its operations" as to need strengthening.¹²⁰ Accordingly on October 10, 1861, he sent the following letter to Rev. A. J. Kynett of Lyons:

I have observed with pleasure that at various points in this State voluntary associations are being organized with a view to provide our sick and wounded soldiers with articles essential to their comfort and not furnished by the Government, while in hospitals. In order to encourage the formation of such societies and make them efficient, I request that you will form such societies in the various

¹¹⁸ *Council Bluffs Nonpareil*, September 14, 1861.

¹¹⁹ *Des Moines Valley Whig* (Keokuk), September 16, 1861.

¹²⁰ *Report of the Iowa Sanitary Commission*, 1866, p. 3.

communities in the State, and perfect a system by which contributions thus made will reach those of our citizen soldiers who may be in need. I desire that societies already formed, and hereafter organized, will co-operate with you in your mission.

Mr. Kynett, after consulting friends who were interested in the movement, recommended the creation of a State Sanitary Commission, similar to the United States Sanitary Commission. To avoid the loss of time and to eliminate the necessary expense attached to the holding of a convention of citizens of the State, and since both the United States Sanitary Commission and the Western Sanitary Commission had been established by appointment, Mr. Kynett advised that the Governor appoint the members of the Iowa Commission. Accordingly on October 13, 1861, Governor Kirkwood named as members J. C. Hughes, M. D., of Keokuk, president; Rev. Geo. F. Magoun of Lyons, secretary; Hiram Price of Davenport, treasurer; Rev. A. J. Kynett of Lyons, corresponding secretary and general agent; Hon. Elijah Sells of Des Moines; Rev. Bishop Lee of Davenport; Hon. George G. Wright of Keosauqua; Rev. Bishop Smyth of Dubuque; Hon. Caleb Baldwin of Council Bluffs; Rev. G. B. Jocelyn of Mt. Pleasant; Hon. Wm. F. Coolbaugh of Burlington; Ezekiel Clark of Iowa City; and Hon. Lincoln Clark of Dubuque. In his letter appointing these men, the Governor styled the new organization the Army Sanitary Commission for the State of Iowa, but it was usually referred to thereafter as the Iowa Sanitary Commission.¹²¹

Mr. Kynett at once commenced the organization of local societies. On the 25th of October he issued through the press an appeal to the women of Iowa in behalf of the sick and wounded soldiers, in which he stated that, although the United States Sanitary Commission had served the East very effectively it did "not seem to have been intended" to

¹²¹ *Report of the Iowa Sanitary Commission, 1864, p. 3.*

bring relief to the sufferings of the men in the armies of the West. There was, however, great need for relief, as some of the Iowa regiments had already been declared unfit for service; and it was the plan and purpose of the State Commission to see that the soldiers from Iowa were cared for. The appeal recommended that societies be formed immediately "in every town, village and neighborhood in the State"; that committees be appointed to solicit subscriptions of cash and supplies "from every loyal citizen"; and that a portion of time in each week be set apart for the making of such articles as might be needed. A uniform constitution for such societies was proposed, and the secretary of each local organization was requested to report to the State Commission, as soon as organized and each month thereafter, the amount of money in the treasury and the number and value of articles on hand. Each society was instructed to hold its money and supplies subject only to the order of the president and secretary of the State Commission to be forwarded from time to time as directed by them.¹²²

TWO FORCES IN THE FIELD

Soon after the issue of this call by Mr. Kynett of the Army Sanitary Commission there was sounded the first note of the discord which later hampered the sanitary work of the State. The call had made no reference to those local societies already at work, nor to the broader activities of the Keokuk organization, the supporters of which resented this neglect and voiced their criticism of the new body through the public press. An article appeared in one of the Keokuk papers, reviewing the accomplishments already achieved by the women of Keokuk and the State, and containing a severe

¹²² *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, November 1, 1861.

criticism of the Army Sanitary Commission. For three or four months, the article stated, the women had been devoting their time and energy to organizing Soldiers' Aid Societies and collecting and preparing sanitary goods. As a result of these efforts, societies had gradually been formed all over the State and a general interest created in the work, until at the time when the Army Commission was established the local aid associations were "in very fair working order, and, in the hands of the benevolent women who initiated them and rendered them effective, gave promise and assurance of being equal to the work they had taken in hand." Under the patronage of these societies delegates had been sent to the hospitals in Missouri and at Cairo, where they investigated the conditions and wants of the Iowa soldiers and reported the situation by correspondence to the Aid Societies of the State. As a result "very considerable supplies of all articles needed" were forwarded to the hospitals in Missouri. "The women were all earnestly interested and were doing up matters in their own way, without sounding a trumpet before them or magnifying their efforts by eliciting the services of the Honorables of our State in order to blazon them abroad."

Then, continued the article, "an idea seems to have struck our State authorities. This thing must be stopped; there is a great deal of glory running to waste in this matter; and we must make haste to bottle it up for distribution amongst our HONORABLES. Besides, there is a chance for salaries and fees in carrying out this benevolent measure which may be parceled out to the wealthy men of the State, and then there are printing jobs for which the State can pay and thereby secure the services of the editors of Iowa to puff our Honorables and glorify our tardy benevolence to our sick and wounded soldiers.

“A Sanitary Commission has been constituted, two Bishops, two or three Reverends, three or four Honorables and three or four Bankers constitute the corporators and ostensible members of this Commission and they are to take control and direction of the entire subject matter.” In issuing their appeal to the women of Iowa, declared the article, the members of the Commission ignored “the existence of any Soldiers’ Aid Societies and *scold* because nothing has been done in the State by the ladies to relieve the sick and wounded soldiers. And we presume that the gentlemen constituting that Commission have taken so little interest in the subject that they were substantially in entire ignorance of what has been done.” In closing, the article referred to the Army Sanitary Commission as being “without a parallel in the annals of peace or war in the history of the world, ancient or modern” in that not a single medical man was named as a member of the body.¹²³

Such a criticism represented a prejudiced view rather than the actual circumstances. It is true that the appeal issued by the Army Sanitary Commission did not refer to the societies already in operation, but in the letter of Governor Kirkwood, in which Mr. Kynett was asked to systematize the sanitary work of the State, reference was made to the societies which were then under way. Since the Army Sanitary Commission was created for the purpose of collecting and distributing supplies, and not for the rendering of preventive service as was the United States Sanitary Commission, it does not seem essential that the medical profession should have been represented; and yet the president of the Commission, Dr. J. C. Hughes, was at the time Surgeon-General for the State of Iowa.

As a matter of fact another representative of the press

¹²³ *The Weekly Gate City* (Keokuk), November 25, 1861.

of Keokuk expressed a more favorable view of the Commission. This writer announced the appointment of the Commission, giving as its duty the investigation of "all things connected with the condition, position and general welfare of the regiments". The success of the Commission was also predicted by the writer. "It seems to be expected", he declared, "that this movement will have important results in its influence upon soldiers, officers, and the State authorities."¹²⁴

Thus the formation of the Army Sanitary Commission, instead of centralizing all the relief work of the State under a single head, introduced a new agency without absorbing the organization already in existence at Keokuk under the leadership of Mrs. Wittenmyer. As a result there were for the next ten months two distinct organizations in the State working for the same cause, but not always working in harmony. Soldiers' Aid Societies were organized in nearly all the large cities and towns, some sending their contributions to the soldiers through the Commission and others through the Ladies' Aid Society of Keokuk.¹²⁵

That Mrs. Wittenmyer and the Keokuk society had exerted considerable influence over the State is shown by the reports from various local branches. The reports made by Mrs. Wittenmyer upon the condition of the camps and the needs of the soldiers were sent over the entire State and brought many returns. The first report of the Cedar Rapids Soldiers' Aid Society stated that the women of that city had sent their first box of stores on November 23rd "to the parent Society at Keokuk". The report also contained the following statement:

¹²⁴ *Des Moines Valley Whig* (Keokuk), November 4, 1861.

¹²⁵ *Anamosa Eureka*, November 22, 1861; Newberry's *The U. S. Sanitary Commission in the Valley of the Mississippi*, p. 239.

We know that these articles will reach those for whom they are intended as the Keokuk Society is in correspondence with the proper authorities at the hospitals and has arrangements for sending them to the places where they are most needed.

We are in correspondence with the agent of that Society, who has lately returned from a visit to the hospitals, and are thereby directed what way to make our labors most effective.¹²⁶

Early in December the Council Bluffs Society, which had been in operation since August under the name of the Mite Society, held a meeting to consider the organization of an auxiliary to the State Sanitary Commission. A proposition to merge the Mite Society into a society to assist the Army Sanitary Commission was presented and defeated. It was decided to continue the Mite Society as formerly conducted, except that future proceeds were to be sent to the society at Keokuk "for the benefit of all the regiments, instead of remitting direct to the 4th, as heretofore".¹²⁷

The importance of relief work among the soldiers was recognized by Adjutant General Baker, as is shown by the following statement from his report of 1861:

More soldiers are lost by death from disease, by sickness in the Hospitals, by discharges from service on account of disability, occasioned by exposure in camp, and on the march, and for the want of sufficient protection and proper care, than by deaths and wounds on the battle field.

Anything and everything that can be done for the benefit of the soldier, to make him comfortable on the march, in the camp, or in the hospital, are of the highest importance, and should be promptly attended to by National and State Legislators.¹²⁸

Three days after the Army Sanitary Commission had issued its appeal to the people of Iowa, asking for coöperation, the Adjutant General appointed a committee to visit the Iowa volunteers wherever they might be found, to report

¹²⁶ *The Cedar Valley Times* (Cedar Rapids), December 5, 1861.

¹²⁷ *Council Bluffs Nonpareil*, August 24, December 7, 1861.

¹²⁸ *Report of the Adjutant General of Iowa*, 1861, pp. 5, 6.

upon their sanitary condition, and to ascertain their needs. The men composing the committee were Surgeon-General Hughes, president of the Sanitary Commission, and James J. Lindley and George H. Parker of Davenport. These men set out immediately to visit the Iowa regiments stationed in Illinois and Missouri. A careful survey was made of the conditions surrounding all the Iowa soldiers and a full report was made to the Adjutant General. Although this committee was created by order of the Adjutant General, it was very generally considered as an agent of the Sanitary Commission. In many cases the press of the period referred to its work as a part of that of the State Commission. This idea was probably due to the fact that Surgeon-General Hughes, president of the Commission, was chairman of the committee.¹²⁹

In November, 1861, Mrs. Wittenmyer visited the hospitals in the West as agent for the Keokuk society. Upon her return she made a report to the women of Iowa, telling of the poor condition of the troops and giving suggestions for more effective work.¹³⁰ Chief among her recommendations was that two experienced women nurses should be sent to each regiment to assist in caring for the sick and wounded. She criticised the work of the Army Sanitary Commission, complaining that "some of the Surgeons are intemperate, lacking in moral character, overbearing, and exhibiting but little concern for the comfort and cleanliness of the sick."¹³¹ Some of the surgeons, she declared, would "best secure the interest of themselves and their fellowmen by *resigning immediately*."¹³² People were urged to

¹²⁹ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, November 1, 1861; *Report of the Adjutant General of Iowa*, 1861, pp. 481-487.

¹³⁰ *Council Bluffs Nonpareil*, November 30, 1861.

¹³¹ *Anamosa Eureka*, December 13, 1861.

¹³² *The Cedar Valley Times* (Cedar Rapids), December 5, 1861.

forward their contributions to the Aid Society at Keokuk, from whence they would be taken immediately to the place of greatest need.¹³³

Towards the close of November Mrs. Wittenmyer again set out to visit the troops in the field, this time going to Missouri and Illinois, where she distributed supplies valued at \$785, which were not nearly sufficient to relieve the great destitution existing among the soldiers. The report of the Keokuk Ladies' Aid Society for the period from November 15 to December 15, 1861, again suggested that women all over the State should organize societies and coöperate with the women of Keokuk, since the latter had the advantage of being situated on the Mississippi River and through their corresponding secretary kept in close touch with the needs of the army. The report acknowledged the receipt of supplies from Council Bluffs, Warren, Bentonsport, Des Moines, Indian Prairie, Muscatine, Davenport, Cedar Rapids, and Dubuque.¹³⁴

Upon her return from visiting the hospitals at Helena and Vicksburg in March, Mrs. Wittenmyer was asked by Governor Kirkwood for a report on the conditions which she had found to exist. The condition of most of the Iowa troops she reported as being "very unfavorable". The absence of vegetables in the food supply had resulted "in scurvy, debility and a general depreciation of the strength" of the forces and it was urged that steps be taken to supply the men with "vegetables, stimulants and antiscorbutics." The articles most needed were "potatoes, onions, sour-kroot, corn meal, pickles, dried fruit, cranberries, molasses, soda crackers, toasted rusk, butter, eggs, condiments and stimulants.—Cider vinegar would also be acceptable."

¹³³ *The Weekly Gate City* (Keokuk), November 25, 1861.

¹³⁴ *The Weekly Gate City* (Keokuk), December 2, 23, 1861.

Upon receiving this report the Governor appealed to the State to supply these necessities, stating that the report of Mrs. Wittenmyer had been more than corroborated by other reliable testimony. He proposed that "every locality see to the good work through their own local agencies, and do it at once", and directed that goods from any part of Iowa put on board any of the lines of transportation, and addressed to Mrs. Wittenmyer, in care of Partridge and Company of St. Louis, would be sure to go where most needed, all charges being paid by the government.¹³⁵

The report of the Keokuk organization for June, 1862, showed that goods had been received from Salem, Bentonsport, Keosauqua, Kirkville, Des Moines, and Denmark, which indicated that the Keokuk society was receiving the support of many local societies.¹³⁶

Early in May, 1862, a call was issued for the local Aid Societies of the State to send delegates to a convention to be held at Davenport on the 28th, in connection with a meeting of the Army Sanitary Commission. At that time but little interest in relief work was manifested in the State, and it was the purpose of this convention to awaken a greater response. The call for the convention was distributed in circular form and through the newspapers, so as to cover the whole State, but the attendance was small, only the counties of Des Moines, Louisa, Scott, Clinton, Dubuque, Jackson, and Delaware being represented. The Iowa Soldiers' Relief Association was formed with Col. William B. Allison of Dubuque, president; John Collins, vice president; and D. N. Richardson and Edward Russell, secretaries. Mr. Kynett made a full report of the work of the Army Sanitary Commission and requested the convention

¹³⁵ Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. II, pp. 507-511.

¹³⁶ *The Weekly Gate City* (Keokuk), June 25, 1862.

to establish an executive committee to have control of the business of the Commission. It was hoped that by thus giving the people a part in the direction of the work, their interest would be greater. The convention, however, declined to take such action, but passed a resolution expressing their confidence in the Commission, stating that they considered it indispensable and recommending all the Soldiers' Aid Societies in Iowa to "assist and facilitate its operation."

The report given at the convention by Mr. Kynett showed that supplies and stores for the army, contributed by Soldiers' Aid Societies of the State, had been distributed by the Army Sanitary Commission to the amount of \$18,600, in addition to \$589.66 in cash which had been received. Before the convention adjourned a committee on hospitals, consisting of Dr. S. O. Edwards, Rev. A. J. Kynett, and John G. Foote, was elected and an address to the people of Iowa was sent out by a committee composed of Rev. R. W. Keeler, Hiram Price, and Dr. J. Cleaves. The address stated the purpose of the Commission and described what it had accomplished. It pointed out that while several societies, such as those at Keokuk, Dubuque, and Davenport, had done much to relieve the wants of the soldiers, they had evidently "labored under disadvantages to which they would not have been subjected, had they operated" in connection with the regularly authorized State Commission. A recommendation was made that all local Aid Societies work through the Army Sanitary Commission. The *Muscatine Journal* in commenting upon the convention concluded after a careful examination of the proceedings "that it appears to have been a very lame affair."¹³⁷

¹³⁷ *Report of the Iowa Sanitary Commission*, 1864, p. 19; *The Weekly Gate City* (Keokuk), July 9, 1862; *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, June 8, 1862.

UNION OF THE TWO FORCES

During the first week in July, 1862, upon returning from a six weeks tour among Iowa regiments in Tennessee, Mrs. Wittenmyer called a convention to be held at Davenport to devise a plan for uniting the relief agencies of the State. The result was the appointment of a delegation, including Mrs. Wittenmyer, to request the Governor to appoint someone to assist her in her work — someone who might act as agent of all the sanitary interests in the State, and go into the field to take charge of supplies and assist in their distribution. A few days after the close of the convention, when speaking before the Iowa City Ladies' Aid Society, Mrs. Wittenmyer described the relation which then existed between the Army Sanitary Commission and the Aid Societies of the State. They had not been coöperating thus far, she said, and while many of the contributions from the principal towns of the State appeared in the Commission's report as having been sent out by its auxiliaries, they were in fact sent to her to be distributed. Mrs. Wittenmyer further stated that while the Commission received funds from the State, they kept no agent in the field, while she had more work than she could do and received no compensation in any way. She was recognized by both State and Federal governments as a sanitary agent; had free conveyance for herself and goods; and enjoyed the confidence and assistance of the General Medical Directors.¹³⁸

As a result of the Davenport convention the opposing factions seem to have agreed upon a plan of coöperation. In a letter from Mrs. Wittenmyer, the public was informed that the Iowa Army Sanitary Commission and the Ladies Soldiers' Aid Societies had united their efforts, and that

¹³⁸ *The State Press* (Iowa City), July 12, 1862. The Iowa City Ladies' Aid Society voted their confidence in Mrs. Wittenmyer and decided to continue to distribute their goods through her organization.

thereafter the correspondence would be carried on by Mr. Kynett, corresponding secretary of the State Commission and Miss L. Knowles, corresponding secretary of the Ladies Soldiers' Aid Society of Keokuk.¹³⁹

In August, 1862, Governor Kirkwood assigned Lieutenant Colonel Ira M. Gifford of Davenport, one of his special aids, to the duty of looking after the wants of the Iowa soldiers. Gifford, who had already been in the field and was acquainted with the conditions and needs of the troops, was to visit the camps for the purpose of distributing stores and caring for the general comfort of the soldiers. According to the Governor's instructions he was to cooperate with or act as an authorized agent of the "different Sanitary Commissions, Aid Societies, or other benevolent associations throughout the State, having in view the relief of our citizen soldiery."¹⁴⁰ A law was passed on September 11th, authorizing the Governor to appoint two or more agents, one of whom was to be Mrs. Wittenmyer, as sanitary agents to visit the troops in the field for the purpose of furnishing special relief.¹⁴¹ For some time Mrs. Wittenmyer was the only State agent in the field, and it was not until early in 1863 that Dr. Ennis of Lyons, was named by the Governor to work with her. He was later succeeded by Mr. John Clark of Cedar Rapids, who served for three or four months, followed by Dr. A. S. Maxwell of Davenport. They spent their time among the men in camps and hospitals, where they acted as agents of the various organizations, although they were paid by the State. A big field was open to them and their labors were "well received in the army, and their

¹³⁹ *The Weekly Gate City* (Keokuk), August 6, 1862.

¹⁴⁰ Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. II, p. 503.

¹⁴¹ *Laws of Iowa* (Extra Session), 1862, pp. 47, 48.

efforts in behalf of our sick and wounded soldiers have proved invaluable."¹⁴²

For about a year the various factions continued to cooperate. There were many demands for fresh vegetables because of threatened attacks of scurvy. At Harrison's Landing, where some Iowa soldiers were in camp, ten cents was the price of a single onion, so great was the demand for these vegetables.¹⁴³ At the soldiers' hospital at Keokuk there were over thirteen hundred patients from many States and they were constantly in need of supplies.¹⁴⁴ Mrs. Wittenmyer visited the regiments in Arkansas and reported that there were four thousand soldiers sick and unprovided for.¹⁴⁵ A letter from Governor Kirkwood to State Agent John Clark, written near the close of the year 1862, stated that Mr. Gifford had just returned from Missouri and reported a deplorable condition among the troops at Springfield. The Governor ordered Clark to stay in Missouri as long as necessary in order to see that the soldiers were given proper care. "See the Medical Director, Gen. Curtis, Gen. Herron", he directed. "You need not be backward or mealy-mouthed in discussing the state of affairs, and in cursing everyone who wont do his duty. Talk right hard, and have our boys cared for."¹⁴⁶

In August, 1863, Mr. Kynett recommended to the Governor that a branch of the Iowa Army Sanitary Commission be established at Dubuque, to direct the work in the northern part of the State. The Governor followed this suggestion and appointed Mrs. P. H. Conger, Mrs. J. Clement, and

¹⁴² *Senate Journal*, 1864, p. 200; *The State Press* (Iowa City), August 9, 1862.

¹⁴³ *The State Press* (Iowa City), August 9, 1862.

¹⁴⁴ *The Weekly Gate City* (Keokuk), October 15, 1862.

¹⁴⁵ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, September 1, 1863.

¹⁴⁶ Lathrop's *The Life and Times of Samuel J. Kirkwood*, p. 235.

Mrs. S. Root to take charge of the branch. All towns west and northwest of Dubuque were requested to send their contributions to Dubuque, from whence they were shipped to the central depots with less delay and fewer mistakes.¹⁴⁷

V

ATTEMPTS AT UNIFICATION OF RELIEF AGENCIES

From the beginning of the relief work in Iowa, many complaints concerning the work of the various agencies were made and circulated by soldiers and others who visited them in their camps. Soldiers wrote letters home stating that they never received supplies which were supposed to have been sent; and the charge was frequently made that such goods were either used by the army officials and men higher up or were given to their favorites. Such charges did much to discourage donors and caused many people to ignore the State organizations and endeavor to send their donations directly to the soldiers.

COMPLAINTS CONCERNING RELIEF WORK

Early in the year 1863 Father Emonds of Iowa City visited the Catholic soldiers in the hospitals with a view to administering relief. In a letter from Arkansas he charged that Mrs. Wittenmyer had tried to sell butter and eggs to the Sisters of Charity, who were caring for a great number of sick and wounded soldiers, and when they would not buy she refused them sanitary supplies, although there was great need for them. Mrs. Wittenmyer answered that there was no foundation for such charges; that she had never offered to sell butter or eggs or anything else; and

¹⁴⁷ *Report of the Iowa Sanitary Commission, 1866, p. 7; Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times, October 23, 1863.*

that she had never refused to give the Sisters sanitary stores. Father Emonds did not drop the matter, but in a second letter reiterated his previous charges. He declared that Mrs. Wittenmyer had declined to give aid to the Sisters' hospital at Memphis, when the Sisters refused to buy butter and eggs. Furthermore, he said that Mrs. Wittenmyer had furnished military stores to the Third Iowa Cavalry only after they had bought a liberal share of butter and eggs from her. When the Captain had asked how she could sell these articles, she explained that there was a slight margin of profit which went to the Sanitary Commission. Father Emonds declared that many of the Iowa regiments never received "a cent's worth of sanitary stores", and many did not know who Mrs. Wittenmyer was.¹⁴⁸

A Chicago paper stated in June, 1863, that "the many favors of our Iowa women", about which so much was written in the newspapers were never received by the Iowa troops. The supplies were either given to favorites or someone was "practicing rascality for their own benefit." The writer advised that in the future supplies be sent personally or kept at home and used for the benefit of soldiers' families.¹⁴⁹ In March, 1863, the *Muscatine Journal* contained a notice that "as there are so many scoundrels in the hospitals . . . the ladies will send some one in charge of the articles, to see them properly used."¹⁵⁰

On the other hand, many letters were written by men in the army denying the misuse of sanitary stores and praising the work of the women at home. One Iowa soldier, in writing on the subject, gave as his opinion that the Aid Societies were supplying all the hospitals alike as far as possible,

¹⁴⁸ *The State Press* (Iowa City), February 7, March 14, 28, 1863.

¹⁴⁹ *The State Press* (Iowa City), June 27, 1863.

¹⁵⁰ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, March 6, 1863.

and although improper use might be made of some of the stores, sufficient good was being accomplished by the sanitary work "to encourage all its friends to give it all the support they can."¹⁵¹ A letter written by General Grenville M. Dodge in answer to a criticism of the relief work of the State can probably be accepted as a true representation of the actual conditions. General Dodge stated that he had had command of many of the Iowa regiments, and that very few regiments had left the State with which he had not come in contact. He declared that of all the regiments which he had observed he had not seen one that "did not receive great and lasting benefit from the noble efforts of the Ladies of Iowa through the Sanitary Commission." Moreover, General Dodge had met most of the field agents of the Commission and was positive that they were honest. They had worked long and hard, he said, and could never be repaid for the good which they had done.¹⁵²

Undoubtedly a large quantity of the contributions sent to the armies never reached their destinations, and thus it was often assumed that they had been misused. One explanation was that many times donations were sent by river, by express, or by freight directly to hospitals, officers, or private soldiers. As there were no government permits or persons to vouch for them, these contributions were often stopped enroute and confiscated by United States officers employed to prevent smuggling. Goods were in some cases sent out marked as sanitary goods when intended for speculators or for the Confederate forces, and this fact led to the seizure of all goods not properly vouched for. Again, many things were sent by express and the charges were so high that the men refused to accept them. Large amounts of

¹⁵¹ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, August 7, 1863.

¹⁵² *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, September 25, 1863.

sanitary stores collected in express offices and depots because they were never delivered to the camps, and the soldiers receiving no notice that they were at the office, never called for them and they were finally sold at auction.¹⁵³

Mrs. Wittenmyer pointed out that it was not surprising that complaints should arise, when consideration was given to the large number of troops in the field and the comparatively small supply of goods furnished for their use. The demand for sanitary stores had always greatly exceeded the supply, and the absence of such articles as the Commission furnished was often taken as evidence that they had been misused before reaching the soldiers. Furthermore, potatoes, onions, fruit, and pickles were sometimes furnished by the commissaries when conditions were favorable and hence, when such things were furnished by the Sanitary Commission, the soldiers often supposed them to be government goods.¹⁵⁴

RELATION OF IOWA ORGANIZATIONS TO NATIONAL COMMISSIONS

The Iowa Army Sanitary Commission had not been long in operation before it realized the impracticability of attempting to maintain separate relief service for the Iowa soldiers, and almost from the first it coöperated with the Federal commissions. For the first year the Iowa Commission operated through the Western Sanitary Commission, for the reason that most of the Iowa soldiers were located west of the Mississippi, in the territory covered by the Western Commission. Moreover, the stores could be sent from Iowa to St. Louis by the Northern Line Packet Company, free of charge. When navigation was closed, however, it was necessary to turn to other channels of distribution, and the Iowa Commission then placed itself in the relation of

¹⁵³ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, September 15, 1863.

¹⁵⁴ *Senate Journal*, 1864, pp. 201, 202.

a branch of the United States Sanitary Commission, through which it thereafter operated. Supplies were shipped to Chicago and from there were sent out, under the care of agents, free of charge on all railroads and on river boats furnished by the government and devoted exclusively to sanitary work. The United States Sanitary Commission made no distinctions along State lines, but treated all soldiers alike, since they were all engaged in a single common cause — the preservation of the Union. To cooperate with the United States Sanitary Commission, said the *Dubuque Times*, was “the only feasible manner for the people of Iowa to act”.¹⁵⁵

Mrs. Wittenmyer, on the other hand, although supposed to be working with the Army Sanitary Commission, seemed to favor distribution through the Western Sanitary Commission at St. Louis, and with Mr. Maxwell, the only other State agent at that time, was cooperating with the latter association as far as possible. The attitude of Mrs. Wittenmyer tended to favor the personal distribution of supplies directly to the Iowa soldiers. Although the Western Sanitary Commission put all goods into a single fund to be distributed without regard to State lines, yet the territory over which it operated was small and it dealt only with the troops of a few States. Thus goods sent from Iowa were more likely to reach Iowa soldiers through the Western Commission than through the United States Sanitary Commission. The development of this division of opinion concerning methods finally led Mrs. Wittenmyer to issue a call to the women of the State to meet and organize a new association for the handling of relief work.¹⁵⁶ “Sanitary and

¹⁵⁵ *Report of the Iowa Sanitary Commission*, 1864, p. 11; *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, September 15, November 3, 1863.

¹⁵⁶ *Report of the Iowa Sanitary Commission*, 1866, p. 24; *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, September 15, 1863.

Relief Societies, Union and Loyal Leagues, Good Templars' Lodges and all other organizations that have lent assistance to the good work" were urged to send delegates.¹⁵⁷

THE IOWA STATE SANITARY COMMISSION

Muscatine was chosen as the meeting place of the convention because it was the "banner war county" and "the Ladies' Aid Society the banner society of the State". The women met on October 7, 1863, the papers referring to the gathering as the convention of the "loyal ladies of Iowa". Soon after the opening of the meeting a discussion arose as to "the precise object of the convention, from which it appeared that many entertained vague and conflicting views in regard to it." One delegate from northern Iowa declared that the society which she represented and other organizations in that region had pledged their aid to the Northwestern Sanitary Commission of Chicago and she thought all the supplies from Iowa should be distributed in that manner. Another woman, from the southern part of the State, took an entirely opposite view and favored the formation of an independent State organization. "She thought Iowa was able to take care of its own soldiers, and that Illinois should not meddle with us, especially when it is a well known fact that Illinois has tried to rob Iowa soldiers of honors won on battle-fields".

Mrs. Wittenmyer then stated her views and offered the following resolution which was adopted: "That we unite ourselves into a State Sanitary Organization, for the purpose of promoting the Sanitary interests of the State and of building an orphan asylum." The new body was named the Iowa State Sanitary Commission, to distinguish it from the Army Sanitary Commission, a constitution and by-laws

¹⁵⁷ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, September 25, 1863.

were adopted, and officers were elected, Mrs. Wittenmyer being made president.¹⁵⁸

The preamble of the constitution stated that the organization would work to secure "a large and constant supply of Sanitary goods, and a faithful application of the same," and for the establishment of a Soldiers' Orphans' Home. The approaching "Northwestern Fair" at Chicago was discussed and it was decided that any auxiliary societies wishing to contribute to the fair might do so. Mrs. Ely of Cedar Rapids and Mrs. N. H. Brainerd of Iowa City were named as the Iowa committee for the Fair. A resolution was also adopted requesting all the churches to take up collections on Thanksgiving Day for the use of the new Commission, and a committee was appointed to ask the State legislature for further aid.

Mr. Kynett of the Iowa Army Sanitary Commission, who had been referred to as being opposed to the organization proposed by this convention, was present and asked permission to speak, which after some debate was granted. He said it was impracticable to distribute supplies in the field to Iowa soldiers only, and therefore the Commission which he represented, turned their donations over to the Chicago branch of the United States Sanitary Commission. He denied being opposed to the object of the convention, but regretted that the two organizations could not unite their efforts. Mrs. Wittenmyer in reply stated that she had reason to feel offended because of Mr. Kynett's conduct towards her as State agent. She claimed to have higher authority than Mr. Kynett, inasmuch as she was appointed by authority of the legislature, while he was chosen by the Governor. In addition, her appointment was made subsequent to the appointment of Mr. Kynett.¹⁵⁹ There were

¹⁵⁸ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, October 2, 9, 16, 1863.

¹⁵⁹ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, October 16, 1863.

now two organizations in the field once more, both aiming at the same end; and the two Commissions and the two agents seemed "to be in competition".¹⁶⁰

Such a situation soon caused dissatisfaction among the people who were supporting the relief work. Early in November one of the State papers commented upon the complicated status of sanitary affairs in Iowa, and attributed the unsatisfactory conditions "to the conflicting interests of different organizations having the same object in view." Such inharmonious action, it pointed out, tended "to alienate the sympathies of the people from the good cause which all have in view." It recommended that everyone should support the Iowa State Sanitary Commission.¹⁶¹ Not only was there general dissatisfaction in the State over the unsatisfactory situation due to the opposition of the various factions, but for some time there had been a growing sentiment that even when there had been but a single organization, it was not so constituted as to secure the desired results. With the added drawback of two competing associations this complaint became more insistent.

Mrs. James Harlan, who had from the beginning of the war been caring for the sick and wounded in the hospitals and upon the battlefields, summed up these defects in a letter to the *Dubuque Times*. Many times she had ministered to the soldiers upon the field "before the smoke of the conflict had passed away", having had permission from the Secretary of War to visit the armies and the field hospitals. Thus she was in a position to observe the work and relative efficiency of the various organizations. In many instances she had distributed goods for them and was in touch with their agents. In this published communication Mrs. Harlan

¹⁶⁰ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, October 16, 1863.

¹⁶¹ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, November 6, 1863.

stated that she had at an early period noticed defects in the system of distributing supplies. There was no real head to the system; no home office at which accounts could be kept; no arrangements for the regular visitation of the Iowa regiments; and no business arrangement for the shipping of goods. "The friends of the soldiers in the State," declared Mrs. Harlan, "who have contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of stores, demanded a more perfect system."¹⁶² So complicated had become the relief work of the State that Governor Kirkwood himself admitted that the situation was very discouraging. In a letter written on November 13th to Rev. C. G. Truesdell of Davenport, who was later made secretary of the Iowa Sanitary Commission, the Governor wrote that at times he felt "almost disheartened in regard to sanitary affairs. There seems to be so much jealousy and ill will among those engaged in the matter that it discourages me and will I fear discourage those who have been contributing so liberally for this purpose."¹⁶³

VI

THE IOWA SANITARY COMMISSION

Many of the most active supporters of the relief work, realizing the difficulties which had arisen and fearing that a complete break-down might result if the existing situation should continue, decided after much consultation to issue a circular, calling a convention with a view to securing greater harmony and efficiency. The call issued early in November, was addressed to "the 'Soldiers' Aid Societies,'

¹⁶² *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, December 4, 1863.

¹⁶³ *Kirkwood Military Letter Book*, No. 4, p. 173; Clark's *Samuel Jordan Kirkwood*, pp. 237, 238.

Societies under the Auspices of the 'Iowa Sanitary Commission,' 'Loyal Leagues,' and 'Soldiers' Christian Commission,' and all other Aid Societies in the State of Iowa'', and was signed by sixty-five women of the State, representing nineteen different cities and towns and who in most cases were officers of local aid societies. The names of sixty-eight men, including many of the leading citizens of the State, were appended as approving the proposed convention and hoping for its success.¹⁶⁴

CALL FOR CONVENTION

The following statement from the appeal concerning the status of relief work is interesting and presents a very good summary of the existing conditions:

The undersigned, rejoicing in the success that has attended the efforts of the friends of the soldiers, in sending supplies to the sick, wounded, and destitute in field and hospital, have, nevertheless, observed that their efficiency might be very greatly increased, if perfect harmony, and a better understanding could be secured between the different organizations and leading citizens. One of our State agents advises that all contributions sent from the State should be consigned to some house in St. Louis, where, we learn, they are delivered to the 'Western Sanitary Commission,' are merged into the common stock, and are sent to the army and hospitals, wherever in the judgment of *its agents* supplies are most needed, without reference to their origin. The officers of the Iowa Sanitary Commission advise that all contributions from Iowa should be forwarded to the Chicago Branch of the 'National Sanitary Commission,' and through their officers and agents to the army and hospitals. When sent through this channel, we learn that our goods are, as in the other case, merged into the common stock at Chicago,— and are never afterwards known as Iowa goods. Others, ignoring these arrangements, have been carrying supplies

¹⁶⁴ *Report of the Iowa Sanitary Commission, 1866*, pp. 23-26, *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, November 6, 1863; *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, November 6, 1863.

directly to the field and hospitals under permits from the Secretary of War.

And others, of high social position and commanding influence, of undoubted benevolence and large means, have stood aloof from all organizations and individual efforts, believing that selfish motives and personal interests have promoted too many of those who have been most active in these enterprises. On these accounts many of those, the most efficient at the beginning of the war, have become lukewarm, and many societies have suspended operations.¹⁶⁵

In view of this situation it was proposed that a convention, made up of delegates from all organizations in the State contributing to the relief work, should be held at Des Moines commencing on November 18, 1863.

The purposes of the convention were stated under twelve separate heads: (1) to devise means to secure harmony among the relief agencies within the State; (2) to consider the question of whether supplies should be forwarded to the Western Sanitary Commission, or to the United States Sanitary Commission, or directly to the armies in the field; (3) to consider the advisability of establishing a central depot within the State; (4) to consider the increased efficiency which might be secured by the appointment of an agent to travel within the State, thus permitting the regular State agents to spend their whole time in the field; (5) to decide whether it would be advisable to ask for greater aid from the legislature or to sever, as far as practicable, all connections with the State government and rely solely upon the generosity of the people; (6) to discuss whether women or men made the more efficient agents for carrying goods "near the enemy's lines, and other exposed positions"; (7) to consider the possible advantages of employing women nurses in the hospitals; (8) to devise means to secure "a regular, as well as constant supply of hospital goods"; (9)

¹⁶⁵ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, November 6, 1863.

to devise an adequate system of accounting for goods and "securing care and fidelity on the part of the agents entrusted" with supplies and money; (10) to discuss the necessity of paying salaries to the agents; (11) to undertake plans to provide for the comfort and welfare of the families of the soldiers, especially the widows and orphans; (12) "to consider such other pertinent business" as might be presented at the convention. Each local society was requested to send, if possible, from two to five delegates, and it was suggested that men as well as women be admitted to honorary seats on the floor of the convention.¹⁶⁶

PROCEEDINGS OF CONVENTION

Mrs. James Harlan and Mrs. Samuel McFarland traveled over the interior of the State in an effort to arouse interest in the convention;¹⁶⁷ and in response to the call more than two hundred delegates, representing all parts of the State, met at Des Moines on November 18, 1863. A newspaper account of the convention reads as follows:

The Women's Sanitary Convention convened to-day It is largely attended by delegates from every part of the State. The morning session was somewhat spicy, rival parties throwing out scouts and sustaining picket lines to find the position of the enemy and guard against attack.

There are two parties in the convention, one of which is headed by Mrs. Annie Wittenmyer, the present State Sanitary Agent, and the other by Rev. Mr. Kynett, of Davenport, claiming to represent a separate State Sanitary Agency. A test vote this morning, as well as the report on permanent officers this evening, would seem to indicate that Mrs. Wittenmyer and her friends are in the minority.

Colonel William M. Stone, Governor-elect, addressed the meeting and his remarks, according to one report, "were

¹⁶⁶ *Report of the Iowa Sanitary Commission*, 1866, pp. 24-26; *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, November 6, 1863; *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, November 6, 1863.

¹⁶⁷ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, November 6, 1863.

like oil poured upon the troubled waters, and caused harmonious action when the convention seemed to be upon the point of hopeless disagreement."¹⁶⁸

After a full discussion of sanitary affairs the convention decided to organize a Commission to take charge of all the relief work in the State. A constitution was adopted which proposed that the new association should be known as the Iowa Sanitary Commission and should be composed of one member from each local sanitary organization in the State. Furthermore, it provided that the Iowa Sanitary Commission should coöperate as far as practicable with both the United States Sanitary Commission and the Western Sanitary Commission. An attempt was made to pass a motion to operate exclusively through the United States Sanitary Commission, but it was defeated by a vote of one hundred and fifteen to fifty-five — a result which was considered a triumph for the friends of Mrs. Wittenmyer. The officers designated in the constitution were a president, six vice presidents, one from each Congressional District, a recording secretary, a treasurer, and a board of control to be composed of six members, one from each Congressional District. These officers were to be chosen by the convention and were to serve until the next annual meeting. The treasurer was required to give bond, and moneys could be disbursed by him only under the direction of the board of control on orders issued by the president and countersigned by the recording secretary. Annual meetings were to be held, but special meetings could be called by the board of control or by the written request of the presidents of thirty local societies. The board of control was to meet every three months, at which times the executive officers were to submit full reports of their operations, and these reports

¹⁶⁸ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, November 27, 1863.

were to be published in the newspapers of the State. Two or more agents were to be appointed to take charge of sanitary matters in the field and visit the camps and hospitals.

The officers elected were Justice John F. Dillon of Davenport, president; Mrs. S. R. Curtis of Keokuk, Mrs. D. T. Newcomb of Davenport, Mrs. P. H. Conger of Dubuque, Mrs. William M. Stone of Knoxville, Mrs. W. W. Maynard of Council Bluffs, and Mrs. J. B. Taylor of Marshalltown, vice presidents; Rev. C. G. Truesdell of Davenport, secretary; Ezekiel Clark of Iowa City, treasurer; Rev. E. Skinner of De Witt, corresponding secretary; and Mr. G. W. Edwards of Mt. Pleasant, Mrs. J. F. Ely of Cedar Rapids, F. E. Bissell of Dubuque, N. H. Brainerd of Iowa City, James Wright of Des Moines, and Mrs. W. H. Plumb of Fort Dodge, members of the board of control.¹⁶⁹

Mr. Kynett of the Army Sanitary Commission announced that he would turn over to the officers of the new body all the "effects and business of the Commission lately represented by him." A resolution was adopted to petition the legislature to enact a law creating a State fund to be distributed in the several counties in proportion to the number of soldiers enlisted from each county, to be used for the relief of destitute families of soldiers. Miss Lawrence of Keokuk, Mrs. D. T. Newcomb of Davenport, and Miss L. Knowles of Keokuk were named to draft an address to the people of Iowa "as to the nature and claims" of the new enterprise. The reports given at the convention by Mrs. Wittenmyer and Mr. Kynett showed that the organizations which they represented had distributed goods to the value of \$150,000.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ *Report of the Iowa Sanitary Commission, 1866*, pp. 26, 27, 28; *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, November 27, 1863; Gue's *History of Iowa*, Vol. II, p. 421; Newberry's *The U. S. Sanitary Commission in the Valley of the Mississippi*, pp. 239, 240.

¹⁷⁰ *Report of the Iowa Sanitary Commission, 1866*, p. 28; *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, November 27, 1863.

In commenting upon the convention, the *Burlington Weekly Argus* stated that its purpose was to secure harmony and efficiency among all the organizations engaged in ministering to the needs of the soldiers. "It was proposed to organize a system that would secure the responsibility of agents," said the editor, "as by the present system, or rather the want of system, it is impossible for agents to account fully for what went through their hands. The blame was not due to the agents, but to the defective system." Because of the strife and discord evidenced at the meeting, and the "private animosity and personal ambition to be gratified", the Burlington newspaper declared that "it is questionable, on the whole, whether it has not resulted in doing more harm than good. The truth is, that the management of the sanitary matters of the State has grown into an importance, in a pecuniary point of view, sufficient to attract the cupidity of the speculative, and hence much of the strife in the convention."¹⁷¹

Mrs. Harlan, on the other hand, considered the outcome of the convention to be very satisfactory and one which met with "the approval of nearly all who were present, and which it is believed will secure the harmony, efficiency, and accountability of agents, so much desired." She pointed out that the new arrangement would not interfere with the work of the agents appointed by the State, the aim being only "to improve the system; to classify the labor — to provide for a division of work — to require security and safety, and to put more laborers in the field."¹⁷²

ORGANIZATION OF THE WORK OF THE COMMISSION

In his second biennial message on January 12, 1864, Governor Kirkwood characterized the sanitary work as being

¹⁷¹ *Burlington Weekly Argus*, November 26, 1863.

¹⁷² *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, December 4, 1863.

well arranged and systematized and consequently much more effective than before. The Governor was convinced that the work could be done much better by the Aid Societies than by the State and recommended that it be left in their hands. The State should, he advised, make a liberal appropriation for a contingent fund, to be at the disposal of the Governor for use in emergencies to aid the societies in caring for the sick and wounded and to send agents of the State whenever necessary for the comfort and well-being of the soldiers.¹⁷³

The first meeting of the board of control of the Iowa Sanitary Commission was held early in December, 1863. At this time Mr. Kynett formally delivered to the new society all books and papers of the Army Sanitary Commission and the balance of their funds — about \$800. Mrs. Wittenmyer also, in a letter to the president of the new Commission, relinquished all claims to the organization which she had represented and turned over all her facilities for shipping and conducting relief work. She likewise expressed her desire to coöperate with the Iowa Sanitary Commission in the endeavor to unite all the relief agencies of the State.¹⁷⁴

Provision was made for the establishment of depots, one at Chicago in connection with the United States Sanitary Commission, and one at St. Louis in connection with the Western Sanitary Commission, where the stores from Iowa could be received, repacked, and prepared for the field, and marked with the Iowa mark in order that, as far as possible, they could be turned over to Iowa regiments. The people sending donations were requested to put their names, marks, or mottoes upon the goods so that those receiving them

¹⁷³ Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. II, p. 349.

¹⁷⁴ *Report of the Iowa Sanitary Commission*, 1866, pp. 28, 31; *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, December 11, 1863.

would have the satisfaction of knowing that they were using goods from their own State and often from their own friends. Each local aid society was to decide for itself to which of these two depots its contributions should be sent.¹⁷⁵

Articles of incorporation were drawn up and adopted at this first meeting of the board of control, and the headquarters were located at Davenport. The objects of the new organization were stated as follows:

The general business of the association shall be to furnish aid, assistance, and comfort to sick, wounded, and suffering soldiers, and this both within and beyond the State. The particular objects and business of this Association shall be to stimulate and encourage, by the organization of voluntary societies and otherwise, the people of the State of Iowa to contribute money and sanitary supplies for the use and purpose aforesaid; to gather these together and distribute them in such mode as the Board of Control . . . shall, from time to time direct and authorize, but until these articles are altered this Commission or Association shall co-operate, as far as practicable, with the United States and Western Sanitary Commissions.¹⁷⁶

The State was divided into districts and Rev. E. S. Norris, Mrs. M. J. Hager, and Mrs. C. W. Simmons were named as agents to canvass the State in behalf of the new organization. Mr. Norris and Mrs. Hager served without expense to the Commission being paid from the funds of the United States Sanitary Commission. The army was also divided into four departments and the board of control or the general agent, acting with the Governor, were authorized to appoint agents for each department. Memorials were presented to the General Assembly asking for an appropriation to cover the expenses of the Commission, in-

¹⁷⁵ *Report of the Iowa Sanitary Commission, 1866*, p. 28; *The State Press* (Iowa City), December 23, 1863; *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, December 11, 1863.

¹⁷⁶ *Report of the Iowa Sanitary Commission, 1866*, pp. 29, 30.

cluding the expenses of the agents, and also for a fund to be placed at the disposal of the Governor to be drawn upon in cases of emergency.¹⁷⁷

In order to acquaint the public with the new arrangement N. H. Brainerd and James Wright were appointed at this meeting to issue an explanatory statement to the various local societies. When issued, this statement pointed out that the operation of the organization rested in the hands of the executive committee. Rev. E. Skinner, the corresponding secretary, was the general agent. All agents of the State were made agents of the Commission and were to work with it, Mrs. Wittenmyer, however, being the only State agent in the field at the time. The desire of the Commission to serve the people is shown by the sentiment expressed in this address, that if "the officers of the Commission do not manage to your liking, you will soon have a chance to fill their places with others. The whole matter is in your hands and you can control it." Accompanying the address was an endorsement from Governor Kirkwood, in which he spoke of the good work which had been done. "I know", he wrote, "the supplies furnished are, in the main, faithfully applied. I know hundreds and thousands of precious lives have thus been saved, and a vast amount of suffering relieved."¹⁷⁸

ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Sanitary affairs in Iowa were undoubtedly better organized at this time than they had been at any previous period. All efforts were united under a single head capable of pro-

¹⁷⁷ *Report of the Iowa Sanitary Commission*, 1866, pp. 32, 33; *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, December 11, 1863; Newberry's *The U. S. Sanitary Commission in the Valley of the Mississippi*, p. 240.

¹⁷⁸ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, January 1, 1864; *The State Press* (Iowa City), December 23, 1863.

viding an efficient working system. A letter to the *Muscatine Journal*, however, indicates that there were still some people in the State who were not in sympathy with the arrangement. This letter referred to the Iowa Sanitary Commission as "conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity" and declared that the Commission was "begging" the legislature for \$80,000, of which \$13,000 was to pay the salaries of its agents and officers. The United States Sanitary Commission, the writer stated, distributed \$100,000 worth of goods at a cost of \$2,000, or on the whole at an expense of about two per cent.¹⁷⁹ The new arrangement, however, soon resulted in increased activity. Many new societies were organized and organizations that had been dormant for some time again entered into the work with new vigor.¹⁸⁰

A bill was passed by the House of Representatives in February, 1864, to take the place of the act of 1862, which had authorized the Governor to appoint two or more sanitary agents, one of whom was to be Mrs Wittenmyer.¹⁸¹ Immediately remonstrances were sent to the Senate by people all over the State, objecting to the repeal of the earlier act and expressing confidence in Mrs. Wittenmyer. Petitions of such a nature were introduced into the Senate from the citizens of Burlington, Muscatine, Mt. Pleasant, and Henry County. The petition which was circulated in Muscatine received over three hundred signatures, only one person having refused to sign it. Partly as a result of these petitions the bill was indefinitely postponed by the Senate.¹⁸² The *Muscatine Journal* in commenting upon the movement stated that the only opposition Mrs. Wittenmyer had ever encountered was "at the hands of a petty, despicable clique,

¹⁷⁹ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, February 19, 1864.

¹⁸⁰ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, March 4, 1864.

¹⁸¹ *Senate Journal*, 1864, p. 358.

¹⁸² *Senate Journal*, 1864, pp. 398, 402, 416, 437.

who have private ends to serve, and not the good of the service in view."¹⁸³ A later issue declared that the opposition to Mrs. Wittenmyer "originated in a heartless political scheme, and has ever since been carried on by its originators with the heartlessness characteristic of political schemers. By which we do not mean to say that all who oppose Mrs. W. are political schemers. We refer only to the heart-diseased, don't-expect-to-live-long 'anti-Wittenmyer' set."¹⁸⁴

The second annual meeting of the Iowa Sanitary Commission was held at Des Moines on June 1, 1864. Mr. F. E. Bissell of Dubuque became president; Mrs. James Baker of Davenport, recording secretary; Ezekiel Clark of Iowa City was reelected treasurer; and Rev. E. S. Norris of Dubuque was made corresponding secretary and general agent. A resolution was passed at this meeting asking that all supplies be sent to the United States Sanitary Commission at Chicago. The reasons given were that the Western Sanitary Commission did not reach all the Iowa soldiers and the Christian Commission was designed to attend particularly to the spiritual needs of the men, while the United States Sanitary Commission possessed superior facilities and operated in every part of the country.¹⁸⁵

The first meeting of the board of control of the Commission for 1864 was held at Dubuque on June 22-24, during the progress of the Northern Iowa Sanitary Fair at that place. The officers of the local aid societies who were at the Fair attended the meeting of the board in large numbers. Mrs. D. P. Livermore of Chicago, representing the United States Sanitary Commission was present and told of the condition and sufferings of the Iowa troops, and explained

¹⁸³ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, March 4, 1864.

¹⁸⁴ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, March 11, 1864.

¹⁸⁵ *Report of the Iowa Sanitary Commission*, 1866, pp. 33, 34.

the working of the Commission which she represented. The chief object of the meeting was to arouse an interest among the visitors at the Fair; and according to the report "all present were inspired with renewed determination to work with increased zeal".¹⁸⁶

Mrs. Wittenmyer had proposed the establishment of a special diet kitchen service for the benefit of those patients in need of special food which could not be obtained from the regular army allowances; and early in 1864 she laid her plan before the United States Christian Commission, by which body it was accepted after having been commended by the medical authorities of the army. The Christian Commission decided to put the plan into operation in its western branches, and agents were authorized to carry it out under the direction of Mrs. Wittenmyer. In June, therefore, Mrs. Wittenmyer resigned her place as State agent for Iowa in order to take up her new work with the Christian Commission, which she considered to be a field of much greater service.¹⁸⁷

With her resignation Mrs. Wittenmyer gave an account of her activities as State agent since September, 1862. This report showed that she had received from the Aid Societies of the State 2723 packages, barrels, and boxes of sanitary stores. The Des Moines convention estimated the average value of these packages to be forty dollars, thus making \$108,920 the estimated total value of the stores which Mrs. Wittenmyer distributed. This amount added to the cash received made a total of \$115,876.93 for the work which she had performed. She estimated that this sum included nearly five-sixths of all the supplies furnished

¹⁸⁶ *Report of the Iowa Sanitary Commission*, 1866, p. 34.

¹⁸⁷ *Report of the Iowa Sanitary Commission*, 1866, p. 33; *Third Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission*, 1865, p. 24; *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, June 3, 1864. See above Chapter II.

by the people of Iowa during that period. At the time of her resignation Mrs. Wittenmyer reported the condition of the local Aid Societies to be very flourishing financially, many of them having from two to four hundred dollars in their treasuries.¹⁸⁸

The reports of the officers of the Iowa Sanitary Commission made at the meeting of the board of control on September 29, 1864, at Burlington, showed that the relief work carried on by the people of the State was greater than ever before. From March 1 to September 1, 1864, the United States Sanitary Commission at Chicago had received from Iowa 2059 packages, which was 474 more than were furnished by the whole State of Illinois. During the same period of six months the Chicago branch received in cash a total of \$61,788.06, of which Iowa furnished \$43,920.15, while Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota combined furnished only \$17,788. At the next meeting of the board held at Cedar Rapids on March 27, 1865, there was given a report for the year from March 1, 1864, to March 1, 1865, which revealed the fact that the Chicago branch during that year had received 3340 packages from Iowa. For the same period Minnesota had contributed 210; Wisconsin 3165; Illinois 3918; and Michigan 1457 packages. The cash receipts from Iowa had been \$50,935.85; while \$38,931.64 had been the total amount received from Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Michigan.¹⁸⁹

In April 1865, Mr. Norris reported that between seven and eight tons of sanitary goods were stored along the Dubuque and Sioux City Railroad and the Dubuque Southwestern Railroad ready to be shipped. The interest throughout the State was very great, between sixty and

¹⁸⁸ *Senate Journal*, 1864, pp. 197, 206.

¹⁸⁹ *Report of the Iowa Sanitary Commission*, 1866, p. 35.

seventy county agents, appointed by Mr. Norris, being engaged in a canvas of their various counties.¹⁹⁰

A branch of the United States Christian Commission had been established in Dubuque towards the close of 1864. It was an auxiliary of the Chicago branch of the Christian Commission and was in charge of John H. Thompson. A meeting was held by the members at Dubuque in March, 1865, and delegates were appointed to visit surrounding towns to solicit contributions and organize local committees to supervise their respective districts.¹⁹¹ Another auxiliary of the Christian Commission was located at Keokuk, with Col. William Thompson as president and treasurer, this organization being connected with the St. Louis branch of the Commission.¹⁹² Many supplies sent from Iowa during the closing months of the war were delivered by the Christian Commission. *The Third Annual Report* of the Christian Commission acknowledged "valuable and timely donations" from Keokuk, Davenport, Oskaaloosa, Camanche, and "other places in Iowa, of noble-hearted, liberal people". Southern and central Iowa contributed more than one-half of the entire funds and stores of the St. Louis branch of the Christian Commission for the year 1864.¹⁹³

On Wednesday, June 7, 1865, the Iowa Sanitary Commission met for its third annual meeting at Des Moines. The war was over, however, and all that remained to be done was to wind up the affairs of the organization. Resolutions were adopted recommending that the local societies

¹⁹⁰ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, April 28, 1865.

¹⁹¹ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, November 15, 1864, March 31, 1865.

¹⁹² *Third Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission*, 1865, p. x.

¹⁹³ *Third Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission*, 1865, pp. 94, 95.

which had so well supported the relief work should now give their support to the Orphans' Asylum; and the existing officers were reelected.¹⁹⁴

No report was ever made covering the work for the whole State during the full period of the war, and it would probably have been impossible to do so, as supplies were distributed through so many different agencies. The reports published by the different agents and commissions often contained duplications in that they listed the same supplies and funds, so that it would be impossible to estimate or place any total money value upon the contributions of the people of Iowa. The reports covering specific periods, however, are sufficient to furnish an idea of the great magnitude which the relief work attained. One writer says that every Iowa town "had its Soldiers' Aid Society, or later its local branch of the state sanitary commission, and the value and blessed use of the sanitary and hospital supplies sent to the front by them was almost beyond computation"; while another historian declares that in "almost every town and county throughout the State the women of Iowa earnestly coöperated in this humane work. . . . The aid thus given to the soldiers in the field was estimated to amount to more than half a million dollars."¹⁹⁵

VII

SANITARY FAIRS IN IOWA

Encouraged by the success of the so-called "sanitary fairs" in many other States, people in various parts of Iowa, early in 1864, conceived the idea of raising money

¹⁹⁴ *Report of the Iowa Sanitary Commission*, 1866, pp. 35, 36.

¹⁹⁵ Byers's *Iowa in War Times*, p. 456; Gue's *History of Iowa*, Vol. II, p. 421.

by similar means in this State. The movement soon took definite shape and in the course of the year three very successful fairs were held.

THE NORTHERN IOWA SANITARY FAIR

A public meeting was held in Dubuque in January, 1864, to consider the advisability of holding a large and extensive festival of some sort on Washington's Birthday to raise the money and supplies so badly needed at that time for the army. It was proposed that the Ladies Soldiers' Aid Society should arrange for the affair, but as the members of that organization felt that they had all they could attend to, the matter was dropped temporarily.¹⁹⁶

The proposal was revived a few months later and plans were laid for holding a large mass meeting to discuss the proposition. This meeting was held on March 10th in the Congregational church, which was well filled with the people of Dubuque. Mrs. D. P. Livermore of Chicago, a representative of the United States Sanitary Commission, was present and "for two hours addressed the meeting elegantly and eloquently". At the conclusion of her address it was decided to undertake the holding of a fair in Dubuque; and a committee of sixteen, composed of an equal number of men and women, was appointed to draw up plans for an organization and to select officers. A resolution was also adopted providing that a subscription should be taken at the meeting, and that the proceeds should be used for the immediate purchase of vegetables for the armies. The sum of eleven hundred dollars in cash was secured, a large part of which was used to purchase sauer kraut for the troops.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, January 15, 19, 1864; *The Northern Iowa Sanitary Fair*, p. 3. This pamphlet contains a list of donations to the Fair, the treasurer's report, and a brief sketch of the Fair. It was published in Dubuque in 1864.

¹⁹⁷ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, March 15, 18, 1864; *The Northern Iowa Sanitary Fair*, pp. 3, 4, 63.

Two days later the committee made its report. The organization was designated the Northern Iowa Sanitary Fair, and Mr. H. A. Wiltse was named as its president. Three vice presidents, five secretaries, a treasurer, and an executive committee of ten were also appointed. In addition, the plan provided that the presidents of organizations which might be formed in the various counties of the State for the purpose of cooperating in the enterprise should be vice presidents of the Fair. This plan ultimately resulted in the selection of thirty-four men and women, from as many different counties, as vice presidents.¹⁹⁸

Work was immediately begun to arrange for the large undertaking. An appeal was sent out to the people of the State urging their assistance and cooperation. Contributions of cash, of vegetables, of sanitary supplies, and of articles for sale at the Fair were solicited.¹⁹⁹ Persons representing the Fair visited counties throughout the State, urging the cooperation of the public and of all relief organizations. Mr. Norris, an agent of the Iowa Sanitary Commission, spent the month previous to the Fair in traveling over the State, for the purpose of arousing popular interest and assistance. It was his hope that the results of the Fair should not be measured by the amount of money that would be raised, since he believed the Fair would be instrumental in reviving an interest and activity in the relief work of the whole State.²⁰⁰ Appeals for contributions were not limited to Iowa. With a view to making the affair as large and profitable as possible, people throughout the loyal States were asked to help.

As plans and work progressed the citizens entered more

¹⁹⁸ *The Northern Iowa Sanitary Fair*, p. 4.

¹⁹⁹ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, March 18, 1864.

²⁰⁰ *The Sanitary Commission Bulletin*, Vol. I, No. 19, 1864, pp. 577, 578; *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, April 29, 1864.

fully into the spirit of the Fair and each was desirous of doing his part. The reports of agents and letters from numerous counties showed that practically the whole State was interested in the success of the undertaking. Governor William M. Stone was active, and early in April he wrote to the managers of the Fair that "nothing short of sickness or unavoidable business engagements" would keep him from attendance.²⁰¹ At a meeting of the executive committee on May 3rd "communications from nearly every county in the State were read."²⁰² Originally it had been planned to hold the Fair in the City Building and Turner Hall, but because of the proportions the enterprise was assuming, the promoters soon realized that these buildings would not be sufficient. Therefore, in order to give time for the construction of an additional building to house the machinery and implements, the date of the opening of the Fair, which had been set for May 24th, was postponed to June 21st.²⁰³

Agreements were early reached with various transportation companies for transporting goods for the Fair free of charge. Twenty-four different railroads and the Northwestern Packet Company agreed to haul all goods free, while the American Express Company promised to carry free all packages weighing under thirty pounds and all packages above that weight at cost.²⁰⁴ In May a committee on "Labor, Incomes and Revenue" was appointed and instructed "to solicit a day's labor or its earnings, or a day's income from each individual in the State, also a day's revenue from all employing establishments, firms, corporations and companies".²⁰⁵ In response to the untiring ef-

²⁰¹ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, April 8, 1864.

²⁰² *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, May 6, 1864.

²⁰³ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, April 29, 1864; *The Northern Iowa Sanitary Fair*, p. 6.

²⁰⁴ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, April 26, 1864.

²⁰⁵ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, May 10, 1864.

forts of the workers, supplies and donations early began to pour in, and long before the opening day of the big event had arrived, hospital goods valued at twenty-five thousand dollars had been received and shipped to the men in the field.²⁰⁶

At two o'clock on June 21st the Fair was thrown open to the public, there being no procession or public display to mark the opening. "The officers and committees assembled in the Fancy Department shortly before the hour for public opening. The Germania Band performed 'Hail Columbia.' Rev. D. M. Reed addressed the Throne of Grace in a fervent prayer. The President of the Fair, on behalf of the managers, in a brief address, turned over the donations to the committees, and this address was responded to in a few well chosen remarks, by W. L. Calkins, Esq., of McGregor, on the part of the committees."²⁰⁷ Two dollars was the price of a season ticket good for a lady and gentleman; single season tickets sold for a dollar and a half; admission for a single day was fifty cents; and children under twelve years of age were admitted at one-half the regular rate.²⁰⁸

The first floor of the City Hall was occupied by booths, where every county that so desired was represented. Fourteen Iowa counties occupied separate booths; Jo Daviess County in Illinois and Grant County in Wisconsin shared one booth; the Good Templars conducted four booths, the City of Dubuque seven, the Catholic ladies of Dubuque two, and the German ladies of Dubuque two. Contributions from other localities were distributed among and sold at the different booths.²⁰⁹ The library and floral departments, the

²⁰⁶ *The Northern Iowa Sanitary Fair*, p. 8.

²⁰⁷ *The Northern Iowa Sanitary Fair*, pp. 5, 6; *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, June 21, 24, 1864.

²⁰⁸ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, June 21, 1864.

²⁰⁹ *The Northern Iowa Sanitary Fair*, p. 8.

packing room, the appraisers' room, and the officers' headquarters were located on the second floor of the City Hall; the third floor housed the children's amusement department; and the basement served as a store room. The first and second stories of Turner Hall were used for the refreshment department, with sitting rooms and lounging rooms on the ground floor and dining room and kitchen above. "Both buildings were ornamented with American flags, with evergreens, flowers, mottoes and pictures in profusion and with the highest effect." The building which had been constructed especially for the occasion adjoined the City Hall, and was filled with "hardware and agricultural and household implements and machinery".²¹⁰

The Fair continued for eight days, the doors being open from ten o'clock in the morning to ten o'clock at night. As many as twenty-five hundred people were present at a single time. In the evenings special entertainments were given, consisting of "Tableaux, Pantomines, and the drama of Cinderella at Turner Hall; two dramatic entertainments at Julien Theatre, of a choice character, by an amateur company of ladies and gentlemen from Madison, Wisconsin, under the management of Jas. L. Stafford, Esq., given entirely at their own expense; two concerts by Prof. Lascelles, and a lecture by Mark M. Pomeroy, Esq., also at Julien Theatre."²¹¹

In order to stimulate interest in the Fair a national flag was offered as a prize to the county, outside of Dubuque County, making the largest contribution to the Fair in proportion to its population.²¹² About the middle of May, over a month before the opening of the Fair, the vice president

²¹⁰ *The Northern Iowa Sanitary Fair*, pp. 5, 6.

²¹¹ *The Northern Iowa Sanitary Fair*, pp. 8, 9; *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, June 28, 1864.

²¹² *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, April 12, 1864.

of Kossuth County stated in a letter to the president of the Fair that Kossuth County was "going to get that flag" or make some of the other counties "pile it up big."²¹³ When the Fair opened Kossuth County, in addition to a valuable collection of goods, had contributed more than a dollar for every man, woman, and child in the County.²¹⁴ This amount proved to be sufficient to win the contest and the prize flag is to be found to-day in the care of the Kossuth County Historical Society.²¹⁵

The aim of the promoters of the Fair had been to obtain a response from as many people and from as many parts of Iowa as possible, thus making the enterprise a state-wide movement. That this aim was realized is shown by the fact that donations were received from about three hundred Iowa towns and cities, in sixty-two different counties. These donations were in a large part composed of supplies such as vegetables and other foods, clothing, and hospital stores, that could be used directly for the benefit of the soldiers in camps and hospitals; but among the contributions there was also a great quantity and a great variety of articles to be sold at the Fair.²¹⁶

Heading the list of such articles was one "silk quilt, by eight young ladies" from Allamakee County, representing, as did numerous gifts of fancy-work and art, the handiwork of the women of the State. Even the unfortunate inmates of the Asylum for the Blind at Vinton responded to the appeal with a contribution of fancy bead work. From Dubuque County, where of course the interest in the Fair was greatest, came such a variety of articles as a piano, a cannon, an opera cloak, a harness, five boxes of toilet soap, a

²¹³ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, May 17, 1864.

²¹⁴ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, June 21, 1864.

²¹⁵ Reed's *Our Historic Flag* in the *Algona Courier*, December 13, 1917.

²¹⁶ *The Northern Iowa Sanitary Fair*, pp. 10-37.

“fancy dress ball, revolving figures”, a saddle, one garden vase, forty-five Mexican dollars, two “transparencies”, bread baskets, specimens of minerals, an ottoman, one “Daughter of the Regiment”, and a sketch entitled the “Bathing Scene”.

A fine silver set which sold for five hundred dollars was received from the ladies of Keokuk; and a less expensive set was received from Burlington. The people of Clinton County forwarded, among other things, one pump and a quantity of sheet music; while from Linn County came two pumps, two pieces of pump pipe, and two lightning rods. A shirt and a clothes-wringer formed part of Mt. Pleasant's donation, and citizens of Webster City responded with three dollars worth of “French chalk” and some specimens of Colorado gold quartz. Waterloo was very ably represented by such gifts as a “case of birds”, two town lots, and a whatnot valued at forty dollars. Perhaps one of the most novel and striking gifts of all, certainly one of the most enlivening to those coming in contact with it, was that received from a citizen of Clayton County — a hive of bees.²¹⁷

Iowa, however, was not the only source from which aid flowed to the Fair. From all over the country came large donations of money and goods. Cash received from Chicago amounted to \$3508, from New York City came a total of \$3165, from Boston \$2735, and from Milwaukee \$1,262.16, besides many smaller subscriptions from numerous other places. The articles from the country at large, contributed for sale at the Fair, like those from various parts of this State, included goods of all degrees of value and usefulness. Farm machinery proved a popular gift, and a great variety, such as reapers, mowers, hay rakes, plows, fanning mills, a sugar cane mill, buggies, and a cutter came from several

²¹⁷ *The Northern Iowa Sanitary Fair*, pp. 10-37.

districts. Other individuals or communities sent household equipment, including sewing machines, washing machines, furniture, clothes dryers, a cook stove, a tea urn, and a clock. Citizens of Pennsylvania, as their contribution, forwarded clothing, copper bottomed and brass kettles, glass, two gross of "vermifuge", and a steel cannon. From a regiment in Texas came carved work, a blanket, a scarf, shells, boots, slippers, and a Mexican saddle. Connecticut's offerings included skates, patent garters, hoop skirts, and door knobs. Massachusetts added five carriage robes, head dresses, one school melodeon, part values on a piano and organ, "two gross bronchial troches", and an afghan. Among the receipts from New York were twenty pounds of black tea, a camp stool, a dozen razors, twenty bunches of rope, two boxes of tin, one baby tender, pocket companions, cologne bottles, one self-operating swing, a tent, one spring rocking horse, six cistern pumps, a box of artificial flowers, six boxes of "Green", and two dozen bottles of "psychogogue". A guitar, two barrels of crackers, "one tidy, by a lady seventy years old", one mineral grotto, and six very old coppers helped to make up the contribution from Wisconsin.²¹⁸

Soon after the Fair was organized the executive committee passed a resolution to prohibit the disposition of goods at the Fair by raffling or selling chances.²¹⁹ Apparently the rule was not enforced, and as a result the president and managers were severely criticized. A religious newspaper published in Dubuque at the time, although chronicling the success of the Fair from a financial point of view, considered it a "moral failure". Many ministers had worked and served as agents for the Fair with the under-

²¹⁸ *The Northern Iowa Sanitary Fair*, pp. 38-44, 51, 52, 61, 62, 64.

²¹⁹ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, March 15, 1864.

standing that the resolution against raffling would be enforced and they would not have backed the project under any other conditions. "In the face of all this," declared the editor, "the President of the Fair had scarcely concluded his excellent and eloquent opening address, before the sale of lottery-tickets was begun, and during the whole of the seven days that the Fair continued, one could not spend five minutes in any portion of the vast building devoted to it, without being beset and besought by men, women and children, to 'take a chance,' 'try your luck,' 'buy a ticket,' and so on *ad nauseam*, until his ears were fairly made to ring with the whole vocabulary of a regular lottery office."²²⁰

Numerous contests were arranged to increase the interest of those attending the Fair. An opera cloak was presented by Mrs. H. A. Wiltse to be donated to either Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Frémont, or Mrs. McClellan, as the people decided. Votes were sold at fifty cents and patrons were urged to vote "early and often."²²¹ A St. Louis firm donated a "magnificent regimental flag" to go to the regiment receiving the highest number of votes at the Fair. The votes sold at fifty cents each²²² and on the last evening, as the time for closing the polls drew near the contest grew very exciting. The Fifth Iowa Cavalry was at first declared to be the winner, but a recount gave the flag to the Ninth Iowa Infantry by a single vote.²²³

By the time the Fair closed the total receipts had almost reached ninety thousand dollars, and many goods still remained unsold. Such materials as could be converted into hospital clothing were turned over to the Soldiers' Aid So-

²²⁰ *Iowa Religious News-Letter* (Dubuque), July, 1864.

²²¹ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, June 24, 1864.

²²² *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, June 21, 1864.

²²³ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, July 1, 1864.

ciety of Dubuque. Many other things were given to the sanitary fairs at Rockford and Warren, Illinois, and to similar enterprises at Marshalltown and Burlington, Iowa. When the final report was made by the managers a few articles still remained undisposed of, among which were "an embroidered chair, a gold watch, a hive of bees, two town lots and one hundred and twenty acres of farming land."²²⁴

The proceeds of the Fair had, upon its organization, been pledged to the United States Sanitary Commission,²²⁵ and besides the supplies forwarded to this Commission as a result of the Fair nearly \$50,000 in cash was added to its funds. About \$1500 of the proceeds of the Fair was spent by the management for vegetables; the sum of \$250 was given to the Soldiers' Home in Dubuque; and between \$7000 and \$8000 was spent in maintaining agents, in fitting up the buildings, in buying goods, and in defraying advertising and operating expenses.²²⁶

Compared with the other sanitary fairs held throughout the country the Northern Iowa Sanitary Fair made a favorable showing. It was pointed out by the *Dubuque Times* that the contributions per inhabitant of Dubuque County averaged \$2.88, which was higher than a similar average for any of the larger fairs. St. Louis was next to Dubuque with an average of \$2.75, after which came Philadelphia County with \$2.10 per inhabitant of the county; but all other communities fell below two dollars. In total receipts the Northern Iowa Sanitary Fair equaled the fair held in Chicago in October, 1863.²²⁷ While many of the larger fairs

²²⁴ *The Northern Iowa Sanitary Fair*, p. 6.

²²⁵ *The Sanitary Commission Bulletin*, Vol. I, No. 19, 1864, p. 578; *The Northern Iowa Sanitary Fair*, p. 23.

²²⁶ *The Northern Iowa Sanitary Fair*, p. 63; *The Sanitary Commission Bulletin*, No. 26, 1864, pp. 824, 825.

²²⁷ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, November 25, 1864.

received large contributions, some running into many thousands of dollars, no cash subscriptions to the Dubuque Fair exceeded one hundred dollars. The success of the enterprise was due to the wide-spread support which it received and the small gifts from a great number of persons. In some townships and counties almost every man, woman, and child gave something.²²⁸ In commenting upon the Fair a bulletin of the United States Sanitary Commission made the following statement:

If the value of services were measured by the extent of the sacrifice made in rendering them, it would probably be found that no State in the Union had done so much for the war as Iowa it is doubtful if there is on record any other so splendid example of the heroism, farsightedness, and self-abnegation with which freedom long enjoyed, can gift a whole community.²²⁹

OTHER FAIRS IN IOWA

Following the Northern Iowa Sanitary Fair, two additional fairs of more than local importance were held in the State; the Iowa Central Fair at Muscatine, held during the first week in September, 1864, and the Southern Iowa Fair at Burlington near the close of the same month.²³⁰ These fairs, although somewhat smaller, were conducted along similar lines and received enthusiastic support from their own communities. A list of the contributions to the Southern Iowa Fair, according to townships, shows that Yellow Springs Township in Des Moines County, with a population of 1604, averaged \$2.15 per capita; while Denmark Township in Lee County, with 843 people, averaged \$1.42.²³¹

²²⁸ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, November 25, 1864.

²²⁹ *The Sanitary Commission Bulletin*, Vol. I, No. 19, 1864, pp. 577, 578.

²³⁰ A fair was held at Marshalltown in August, 1865, but since the purpose of this fair was to raise money for the Soldiers' Orphans' Home it will be considered under that subject.

²³¹ Quoted from the *Burlington Hawk-Eye* in the *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, October 21, 1864.

The total receipts of the Burlington Fair were between \$20,000 and \$25,000, including \$6000 worth of sanitary stores. These proceeds were donated partly to the United States Sanitary Commission, partly to the United States Christian Commission, and the remainder was expended under the supervision of the Burlington Soldiers' Aid Society.²³² The Christian Commission received as its part \$2500 in cash; forty barrels of onions, pickles, and dried apples; nine boxes of clothing, linen, and bandages; forty-nine boxes and kegs of canned fruit and apple butter; and several boxes of books.²³³

From the Iowa Central Fair about \$20,000 was realized by the managers, the greatest share of which was turned over to the United States Christian Commission,²³⁴ which received \$10,000 in cash; 1920 bushels of potatoes; 998 bushels of onions; twenty barrels of crackers; twenty-two barrels and kegs of pickles; six barrels of flour; eight boxes of clothing and linens; and fifty boxes and four barrels of canned, dried, and preserved fruit.²³⁵

Politics seem to have entered somewhat into the Fair at Muscatine, and at least one Democratic editor advised his readers to send their contributions directly to the soldiers rather than to the Fair. The stand taken in this particular case was the result of a meeting held at Iowa City to arouse enthusiasm for the Fair. Mr. Henry O'Connor of Muscatine addressed the meeting which, according to the *Iowa State Press*, was turned "into an abolition love feast". O'Connor's address, as "long as he confined himself to the

²³² *Report of the Iowa Sanitary Commission*, 1866, p. 71; quotation from the *Burlington Hawk-Eye* in the *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, October 21, 1864.

²³³ *Third Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission*, 1865, pp. 94, 95.

²³⁴ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, September 23, 1864.

²³⁵ *Third Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission*, 1865, pp. 94, 95.

object for which he professed to be speaking", declared the editor, was "exceedingly dry and uninteresting; but when he branched off upon the negro, and alluded to the vengeance which his party propose wreaking upon Democrats in the North, his dullness vanished, and all the malignity of his shallow soul flowed in a stream of dirty slang from his lips." Hence the advice which was given—"don't drop a single dime into the maw of this abolition shark."²³⁶

VIII

RELIEF OF SOLDIERS' FAMILIES

When the men from the North began to respond to the call to arms the people remaining at home were in many cases confronted with the problem of providing for the families of soldiers. All through the war it was necessary for many fathers and husbands to leave their homes without any adequate provision for the maintenance of those dependent upon them. There were three sources from which aid came to these families: from the State, from the county, and from private individuals and organizations.²³⁷ In some instances, as in Massachusetts²³⁸ and North Carolina,²³⁹ money was appropriated directly by the State for the purpose. In many of the States county aid was given; while private help was no doubt given to some extent in every community.²⁴⁰

²³⁶ *The Iowa State Press* (Iowa City), August 10, 1864.

²³⁷ Fite's *Social and Industrial Conditions in the North During the Civil War*, p. 288.

²³⁸ *Council Bluffs Nonpareil*, May 4, 1861.

²³⁹ Fisher's *The Relief of Soldiers' Families in North Carolina During the Civil War* in *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, January, 1917, pp. 60, 61, 62.

²⁴⁰ Fite's *Social and Industrial Conditions in the North During the Civil War*, p. 288.

LEGISLATION RELATIVE TO RELIEF OF SOLDIERS' FAMILIES

No aid was given to soldiers' families in Iowa directly from the funds of the State; provision for their care was left to the county boards of supervisors and to private agencies. Early in the war, however, there was some agitation for the use of State funds for this purpose. In his message to the special session of the legislature in 1861, Governor Kirkwood referred to the matter and stated his belief that, since troops would not come from all counties of the State nor would they be equally distributed among those counties which were drawn upon, it would be more equitable and just if the expense of caring for the families of the volunteers should be assumed by the State, and the burden thereby equally distributed among all the people.²⁴¹

In the same message the Governor mentioned the fact that in "most or all of the counties in which companies of volunteers have thus far been accepted, the Boards of Supervisors or public spirited citizens have raised means for the support of the families of volunteers who have left families dependent on them for support."²⁴² It was necessary that such action of the supervisors should be sanctioned by the State legislature, and this was done by a law passed on May 27, 1861.²⁴³ At the same time a movement was started to enact a statute which would authorize the county boards, in the future, to give such relief. There was some opposition to the bill which was introduced. A letter, written from Des Moines to the *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, stated that it was unlikely that such a law would be enacted, because so many of the counties of the State had no volunteer

²⁴¹ Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. II, p. 261.

²⁴² Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. II, p. 261.

²⁴³ *Laws of Iowa (Extra Session)*, 1861, p. 3.

companies, and hence the people did not appreciate the importance of such a provision.²⁴⁴ On May 29, 1861, however, a law was enacted giving power to the board of supervisors to make appropriations out of county funds for the support of families of volunteers who had been living in the State at the time of enlistment and whose residence was still in Iowa.²⁴⁵

The subject of support for soldiers' families was again revived at the special legislative session in 1862, and more efficient provision for county aid was made. By an act of September 11th county supervisors were authorized to levy a special tax for the payment of bounties for enlistments, and for the support of families of persons in the military service of the State or the United States. Any previous taxes that had been levied for this purpose were also legalized by this act.²⁴⁶

Conditions, however, were not yet satisfactory to those interested in the work. At the formation of the Iowa Sanitary Commission in November, 1863, a resolution was adopted asking the legislature to pass a law creating a general State fund for the relief of the destitute families of soldiers, to be distributed in proportion to the number of soldiers enlisted from each county. It was also recommended that the law authorizing counties to levy taxes for that purpose be repealed.²⁴⁷ An address sent out by the Commission in December called attention to the fact that many soldiers' families all over the State were "in want of the common necessaries of life." The Ladies' Aid Societies were urged to give the men at home no peace until they supplied them with the means necessary to relieve the suffer-

²⁴⁴ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, May 31, 1861.

²⁴⁵ *Laws of Iowa* (Extra Session), 1861, p. 31.

²⁴⁶ *Laws of Iowa* (Extra Session), 1862, pp. 37, 38, 39.

²⁴⁷ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, November 27, 1863.

ing among soldiers' families. They were especially asked to urge the county supervisors to provide assistance.²⁴⁸

In his biennial message of January, 1864, Governor Kirkwood again gave attention to the matter. He "very earnestly" recommended that "some systematic mode of furnishing aid to the needy families of our soldiers be adopted." Instead of advising State aid, as in his earlier message, he was undecided as to whether it was best for the State to furnish the money and appoint agents to distribute it, or to leave the matter to local aid societies.²⁴⁹ The action taken by the law-makers left the care of the families in the hands of county authorities, but strengthened the law by which it was accomplished. Previously the supervisors had had the power to levy taxes for the purpose, but a law of March, 1864, contained the provision that "there shall be levied in each county not less than two (2) mills on the dollar, in the years 1864 and 1865," for the "relief of the families of privates and non-commissioned officers and musicians who have heretofore been, now are, or may hereafter be in the military or naval service of the United States from this State". Thus the assessment of the tax was made compulsory instead of being left to the choice of the authorities of each particular county.²⁵⁰

RELIEF BY COUNTIES

The total amounts paid out by the counties of the State during the Civil War, according to reports made to the State Auditor, were \$1,083,901.34 for bounties and \$1,122,247.76 for the relief of soldiers' families. In 1861, the first year of the war, Johnson County, where a total of \$3,384.36

²⁴⁸ *The State Press* (Iowa City), December 23, 1863.

²⁴⁹ Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. II, pp. 349, 350.

²⁵⁰ *Laws of Iowa*, 1864, pp. 99, 100, 101.

was appropriated, was the only county reporting the use of any public funds for relief purposes. The reports, however, could not have been complete, as the supervisors of Muscatine County on June 12, 1861, appropriated \$2000 for the support of the families of volunteers.²⁵¹ In 1862 and 1863 no expenditures for relief were reported by any of the counties, although in some instances money which had been so spent was included in the funds used for bounties, which for the two years amounted to \$461,179.47. The amount devoted to relief work in 1864 was \$604,607.78; in 1865 it was \$487,863.16; and in 1866 it amounted to \$26,392.46.²⁵²

RELIEF BY PRIVATE AGENCIES

That there was much left for private charity to do is a matter of little doubt. Perhaps the best idea of the part played by private individuals and organizations can be secured by a study of the activities which were carried on by certain communities of the State, and which are representative of private relief work in the State as a whole. These instances illustrate the fact that in addition to the great amount of sanitary work which was carried on all over the State, the people of Iowa also did much to relieve the distress and suffering at home.

In Muscatine, at the first mass meeting which was held to secure volunteers for the army, a relief committee of citizens was appointed to adopt measures to the end that the families of any men who might volunteer should not suffer in their absence.²⁵³ This was in April, 1861, and a few days later a notice was inserted in the newspapers stating that the families of any volunteers who desired or needed as-

²⁵¹ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, June 14, 1861.

²⁵² Pollock's *State Finances During the Civil War* in THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XVI, p. 88.

²⁵³ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, April 19, 1861.

sistance, or even cared to have some member of the relief committee call, should send their names and addresses to one of the members.²⁵⁴

A little later, on June 12th, the county board of supervisors took action and appropriated \$2000 for the support of volunteers' families, to be distributed in the following manner. The clerk of the board of supervisors was to pay out warrants whenever he was presented with a certificate, signed by the secretary and chairman of the citizens' relief committee, stating that the bearer was a member of the family of one of the volunteers, and indicating the amount to which the bearer was entitled. Of the amount appropriated, \$880 was to be used to meet obligations which the committee had already contracted.²⁵⁵ A statement issued two weeks later indicated that the committee was caring for between forty and fifty families, which were receiving allowances of from one dollar and a half to four dollars per week, the amount being based upon the written statements made by each volunteer before he left.²⁵⁶ On September 4th the supervisors ordered \$341.42 to be paid to cover additional claims of the relief committee.²⁵⁷ During the following year, at a special meeting of the board of supervisors, another appropriation was made for the support of the soldiers' dependents.²⁵⁸

Coöperation with the county officers in distributing county funds was not, however, the only part played in Muscatine by the benevolent public. The Relief Society of the first and second wards was organized early in December, 1861, for the purpose of caring for the families of volun-

²⁵⁴ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, April 26, 1861.

²⁵⁵ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, June 14, 1861.

²⁵⁶ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, June 28, 1861.

²⁵⁷ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, September 6, 1861.

²⁵⁸ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, August 15, 1862.

teers. The third ward Relief Society was organized at about the same time and a committee was appointed to ascertain where relief was needed in the district and report to a soliciting committee.²⁵⁹ The Union Benevolent Society decided in April, 1862, to meet once a week and sew for the needy people of the community, and all the ladies of the city were invited to attend.²⁶⁰ The report of this society for the winter of 1862 and 1863 stated that it had raised the sum of \$258.18, which had been used to furnish wood, flour, and other necessities to the families of fifty soldiers. Of this amount eighty-five dollars went for wood, seventy-five dollars for flour, and the balance for groceries, clothing, and medicines. The funds of the society, according to the report, were at that time exhausted, and unless assistance was given soon many families would suffer.²⁶¹

In November, 1863, the *Muscatine Weekly Journal* published an appeal for assistance for many needy families in the community. Because of the high cost of fuel and other necessities, the article pointed out, it was impossible for many families to supply their wants for the winter, which promised to be very severe: there were at least one hundred families who needed help and must have fuel and food. The writer proposed that a public meeting be held at once to appoint committees in each township to visit everyone in their neighborhood and secure contributions of wood, flour, meat, vegetables, or anything that a family could use.²⁶² Collections of money and provisions were taken in the Methodist and Congregational churches of Muscatine at Thanksgiving time, amounting to \$175.95.²⁶³

²⁵⁹ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, December 13, 1861.

²⁶⁰ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, April 11, 1862.

²⁶¹ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, February 20, 1863.

²⁶² *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, November 20, 1863.

²⁶³ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, December 4, 1863.

These various activities, it must be borne in mind, cover only short periods and are discussed merely to indicate the manner in which the work was carried on, and not as a summary of the work done. In addition to the organizations mentioned, other agencies were in the field. All through the war the Muscatine Soldiers' Aid Society did much to mitigate the sufferings of the families of soldiers as well as to supply the needs of the soldiers themselves.

In many instances and in a great variety of ways private individuals undertook to do something in behalf of those at home who were in need. Soon after the first soldiers departed from the State Dr. William Carus of Iowa City requested the press to announce that he would be glad to give medical attendance free of charge to the families of volunteers during the war.²⁶⁴ At another time a notice appeared in an Iowa City paper announcing that Mr. Stonehouse had at his saloon on Clinton Street a barrel of corned beef which he would distribute gratis to the poor.²⁶⁵ Dr. J. S. Horton of Muscatine offered to donate forty cords of wood, upon the condition that the men of the city would cut it and haul it to town.²⁶⁶ An interesting instance of private benevolence occurred in Dubuque in October, 1864, when a score or more of needy families "were made happy and tenderly grateful" by visits from three unknown women. The women arrived with well-filled baskets, prepared a meal for the families, ate with them, and then departed, their identity remaining unknown. In each case a supply of food and other goods was left for future use, and in most instances a ten dollar bill was found after the visitors had departed.²⁶⁷

In August, 1863, the Dubuque Aid Society was reported

²⁶⁴ *The State Press* (Iowa City), May 1, 1861.

²⁶⁵ *The State Press* (Iowa City), January 27, 1864.

²⁶⁶ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, November 20, 1863.

²⁶⁷ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, November 4, 1864.

to be "overwhelmed with calls for assistance".²⁶⁸ At Christmas time of that year this society furnished basket dinners to more than forty families — the baskets containing turkeys, chickens, geese, ducks, beef, apples, bread, cake, pies, and many additional delicacies which had been donated by citizens.²⁶⁹ According to a report of the society in March, 1864, it had during the previous four months spent \$1100 for the relief of eighty families. Sixty of these families had received constant aid, and most of them were entirely dependent upon such support. The assistance had all been given in supplies and grocery orders and none of it in cash.²⁷⁰ At Christmas the following year an appeal was again made to the people to furnish dinners for soldiers' families, as there were one hundred families that were badly in need of such gifts.²⁷¹ During the winter of 1864 and 1865 the Dubuque Aid Society expended \$1141.70 in caring for sixty-three needy families whose natural supporters had been called to war.²⁷²

Many other communities were likewise called upon to aid those who had been left in their midst without means of providing for themselves. In Keokuk near the close of the year 1863 there were between one hundred and fifty and two hundred families dependent in varying degrees upon the Ladies' Aid Society for their maintenance.²⁷³ About the same time the *Burlington Weekly Argus* called public attention to the fact that there were many families in the community who should be remembered at Christmas, as there was much "hunger, misery, sickness and want" in

²⁶⁸ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, September 1, 1863.

²⁶⁹ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, December 29, 1863.

²⁷⁰ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, March 15, 1864.

²⁷¹ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, December 23, 1864.

²⁷² *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, May 23, 1865.

²⁷³ *The Weekly Gate City* (Keokuk), December 16, 1863.

their midst.²⁷⁴ For the year ending October 3, 1864, the Iowa City Soldiers' Aid Society distributed to families of soldiers goods valued at \$747.84. The things given out included "252 yards print, 676 yards muslin, 61 yards flannel, 83 yards jeans, 21 lbs. yarn, 60 pair shoes, 16 socks and mittens, 6 comforts, 850 lbs. flour, 300 lbs. soap, groceries, wood, money; &c."²⁷⁵

IX

THE SOLDIERS' ORPHANS' HOME

As Mrs. Wittenmyer, in her sanitary work, labored among the soldiers in the hospitals and on the battlefields, she received constant appeals from dying soldiers to provide in some way for their children. To meet this situation she conceived the idea of establishing, somewhere in the State, a home in which all such children could be cared for and educated. At a meeting of the Soldiers' Aid Society of Iowa City on September 23, 1863, which Mrs. Wittenmyer attended, the subject was brought up for discussion²⁷⁶ and soon afterwards a convention of the Aid Societies of the State was arranged for October 5th, at Muscatine. It was at this meeting that the Iowa State Sanitary Commission²⁷⁷ was organized "for the purpose of securing a large and constant supply of Sanitary goods, and a faithful application of the same, and for the purpose of building an Orphan Asylum."²⁷⁸

One of the first steps taken in behalf of the movement was

²⁷⁴ *Burlington Weekly Argus*, December 31, 1863.

²⁷⁵ *The State Press* (Iowa City), December 14, 1864.

²⁷⁶ Downer's *History of Davenport and Scott County, Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 663.

²⁷⁷ See Chapter V above.

²⁷⁸ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, October 16, 1863.

the issuance of an appeal to all the people of Iowa to remember and aid the cause of the orphans upon Thanksgiving Day. "Many of our mighty men", read the appeal, "have fallen — many a brave, true heart has been pierced, and the little eyes at home have looked and wept for the soldier that shall never return. The windows are darkened, the hearthstone has lost its warmth, and the little bare feet must start out on life's thorny and perilous way, alone. . . . Let us, therefore, remember the orphan children of our soldiers, and offer to the Almighty Father on that day, a tribute of gratitude that will be well pleasing in His sight." Ministers were urged to present the cause in their pulpits on Thanksgiving Day, and it was suggested that Soldiers' Aid Societies, Good Templars, and all other benevolent organizations arrange public entertainments to raise money for the enterprise. "Land, town lots, stock in railroads, or other corporations, money, or anything that will bring money" were listed as acceptable gifts.²⁷⁹

When, late in November, the Iowa Sanitary Commission absorbed the Iowa State Sanitary Commission,²⁸⁰ it was deemed advisable to separate the orphans' home project from the sanitary work, and it was placed in the hands of leading men and women of the State who formed a new association which on December 30th was incorporated as the Iowa State Orphan Asylum.²⁸¹ The officers of the new

²⁷⁹ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, November 20, 1863.

²⁸⁰ See Chapter VI above.

²⁸¹ *Senate Journal*, 1864, pp. 204, 205; Darwin's *History of the Iowa State Orphan Asylum* in *The Annals of Iowa* (First Series), Vol. III, p. 453. The incorporators were Caleb Baldwin, George G. Wright, Ralph P. Lowe, Samuel J. Kirkwood, William M. Stone, J. W. Cattell, N. H. Brainerd, C. C. Cole, Oran Faville, John R. Needham, S. S. Deming, Mrs. Hancock, Mrs. Newcomb, Isaac Pendleton, Mrs. Stephens, James G. Day, Mrs. S. Bagg, Mrs. Cadle, H. C. Henderson, Mrs. Andrews, Mrs. Crandall, Mrs. C. B. Darwin, E. H. Williams, J. B. Howell, Mrs. Shields, Mrs. Annie Wittenmyer, Miss Mary Kibben, Miss M. E. Shelton, Elijah Sells, Dr. Horton, and C. Dunham.—*Muscatine Weekly Journal*, January 28, 1864.

organization were a president, a vice president from each Congressional District, a recording secretary, a corresponding secretary, a treasurer, and a board of trustees composed of two members from each Congressional District. William M. Stone became president; Miss Mary Kibben, recording secretary; Miss M. E. Shelton, corresponding secretary; and N. H. Brainerd, treasurer.²⁸²

Under the rules of the new association benevolent and religious organizations and individuals were eligible to membership upon the payment of five dollars a year or twenty-five dollars for a life membership. Organizations enrolling as members were entitled to one delegate to all meetings of the association. All benevolent organizations and individuals, as far as possible, were urged to join.²⁸³

The first meeting of the board of trustees took place on the 4th of February, 1864, at Des Moines. The members discussed methods of financing the undertaking, and decided to appoint agents in each county and sub-agents in each town to solicit subscriptions. Another meeting was held at Davenport in March and as there was a considerable amount of funds in the treasury at that date as a result of the collections taken on Thanksgiving Day the trustees decided to take immediate steps to establish a home. A committee was appointed to lease a building and make arrangements for receiving children, and Rev. P. P. Ingalls was named as general agent to visit every county in the State

²⁸² The vice presidents were: first district, Mrs. G. G. Wright; second district, Mrs. R. L. Cadle; third district, Mrs. J. T. Hancock; fourth district, John R. Needham; fifth district, J. W. Cattell; and sixth district, Mrs. Mary M. Bagg. The board of trustees consisted of Mrs. Annie Wittenmyer and Mrs. L. B. Stephens from the second district, Oran Faville and E. H. Williams from the third district, T. S. Parvin and Mrs. Shields from the fourth district, Caleb Baldwin and C. C. Cole from the fifth district, and Isaac Pendleton and H. C. Henderson from the sixth district.—*Muscatine Weekly Journal*, January 28, 1864.

²⁸³ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, January 28, 1864.

and every regiment of Iowa men in the army for the purpose of soliciting subscriptions.²⁸⁴ The agents of the association were paid, not with funds taken from the donations to the home, but with money furnished by a voluntary association of a few individuals.²⁸⁵

A committee which had been appointed by the legislature to investigate the proposal that the State should establish an orphans' asylum, made a report in March, 1864. It described the formation and organization of the association, and stated that the Iowa State Orphans' Asylum Association proposed to provide immediately for the wants of orphans by renting a suitable building, until means could be raised to erect a permanent structure.²⁸⁶

It was estimated that the cost of maintaining two hundred inmates would be \$15,000 a year. The backers of the institution believed they could raise \$150,000 by voluntary subscriptions through their agents; they hoped to raise \$25,000 among the soldiers, while Aid Societies, religious organizations, the Odd Fellows, and the Masons were expected to give \$15,000. Of the total of \$175,000 or more it was proposed to invest a part in interest-paying bonds or stock as a permanent endowment, while the remainder was to be used in equipping a plant. The promoters hoped the State legislature would appropriate \$5000 or more for the yearly support of the institution.²⁸⁷

The committee declared that it was the solemn duty of the State to provide in some way for the support of soldiers' orphans, and the members believed that the organization which had already been formed was one in which

²⁸⁴ Darwin's *History of the Iowa State Orphan Asylum* in *The Annals of Iowa* (First Series), Vol. III, pp. 454, 455.

²⁸⁵ *The State Press* (Iowa City), July 20, 1864.

²⁸⁶ *Senate Journal*, 1864, p. 497.

²⁸⁷ *Senate Journal*, 1864, pp. 497, 498.

the legislature could safely place its confidence. Therefore the recommendation of the committee was that the General Assembly should make an annual appropriation of \$5000 to aid in the support of the enterprise. A bill to that end was introduced by the committee, but failed to pass the legislature.²⁸⁸

The project received abundant support from all parts of the State. Contributions of money, clothing, furniture, and other property which was convertible into cash flowed in from all over Iowa. Many of the prominent people of the State gave freely, and those in poorer circumstances gave what they could spare. One of the most significant contributions came from the soldiers in the field, who out of their small pay forwarded \$45,262 for the cause.²⁸⁹ Nine regiments pledged an average of \$2800 each. One regiment with only 428 men reporting gave \$3,855.50, while another regiment with eight companies present donated \$5239. Companies in various regiments contributed from \$200 to \$820, one company of twenty-nine men giving \$535; another of fifty-seven men gave \$710, another of thirty-seven men gave \$675, and one with seventy-three men gave \$820. In one company two men gave \$75 each, eight men gave \$25 each, one man gave \$15, sixteen men gave \$10 each, and two men gave \$5 each.²⁹⁰ "There has never been any one work in the State", declares one writer, "that has convened so many people in large and enthusiastic assemblies, filled so many churches and halls, thrilled so many hearts, awakened so much emotion, suffused with tears so many eyes, commanded such great liberality, elicited so many prayers, prompted so many praises, or enlisted so many great minds as the 'Soldiers' Orphans Home'."²⁹¹

²⁸⁸ *Senate Journal*, 1864, p. 498.

²⁸⁹ *Bulletin of Iowa Institutions*, Vol. II, 1900, p. 301.

²⁹⁰ *The State Press* (Iowa City), July 20, 1864.

²⁹¹ *Ingersoll's Iowa and the Rebellion*, p. 742.

On July 13, 1864, the committee which had been appointed to make arrangements for opening a home reported that a large brick building near Farmington in Van Buren County had been leased and was ready to receive children. Two rooms in the house were to be furnished by the "Young Ladies' League", two by the young women of Muscatine, one by women of Burlington, and one by the little girls of Muscatine, who had held a festival to secure the funds. Ten children were taken to the home before there were beds for them,²⁹² and within three weeks twenty-one orphans had been admitted.²⁹³ Reports submitted at the second annual meeting of the association at Des Moines in June, 1865, showed that during the first year the Home had "clothed, fed and instructed" ninety-seven children and that many more were waiting for admission.²⁹⁴ Steps were taken at this meeting to establish branch homes in other parts of the State, and a branch was opened at Cedar Falls on September 28th, with five inmates, in a building originally built for a hotel.²⁹⁵

It was also decided at the Des Moines meeting to hold a fair at Marshalltown, beginning on August 28, 1865, for the purpose of raising additional funds.²⁹⁶ The arrangements were made upon the same general plan as were adopted for the sanitary fairs which had already been held in the State. Contributions were solicited through all the surrounding territory and the response was very generous.²⁹⁷ When the fair had closed it was found that about \$50,000 had been

²⁹² *The State Press* (Iowa City), July 20, 1864.

²⁹³ Downer's *History of Davenport and Scott County, Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 663.

²⁹⁴ *Bulletin of Iowa Institutions*, Vol. II, 1900, pp. 301, 302.

²⁹⁵ *Report of the Committee to Visit Soldiers' Orphans' Home in the Iowa Legislative Documents*, 1866, Vol. II.

²⁹⁶ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, June 27, 1865.

²⁹⁷ Payne's *History of Story County*, Vol. I, p. 272.

realized in cash and from the sale of merchandise which had been contributed.²⁹⁸ Thus the enterprise was a great success although, according to the *The State Press*, it was "generally conceded to have been a grand humbug; not any credit to the State and rather discreditable to the managers".²⁹⁹

An interesting article regarding this fair appeared in the *St. Louis Despatch*, which serves to show the wide publicity which it received, as well as to indicate the preparations which were made for the event. "Marshalltown", according to the writer, "is a short ride by rail from Clinton on the Mississippi, and as the Fair will be open on the 28th of August, it will be a fine opportunity for some of our citizens to mingle benevolence with pleasure in a trip to the breezy prairies of Iowa. The town contains a population of about two thousand, and accommodation has been provided for visitors by procuring one thousand wall tents, and a large number of iron camp bedsteads. With such sleeping arrangements, and the fine shooting and fishing in the immediate neighborhood, there will be a good chance for enjoyment on the occasion."³⁰⁰

The quarters of the Home at Farmington soon became inadequate, and in the fall of 1865 the managers decided to move the institution to Davenport. The people of the latter city held a meeting for the purpose of raising funds with which to secure the transfer, \$5200 being raised in a short time.³⁰¹ The Camp Kinsman barracks were situated at Davenport, and since they were no longer needed to house the soldiers, a committee was dispatched to Washington

²⁹⁸ *Bulletin of Iowa Institutions*, Vol. II, 1900, p. 302.

²⁹⁹ *The State Press* (Iowa City), September 13, 1865.

³⁰⁰ Quoted from the *St. Louis Despatch* in the *Council Bluffs Nonpareil*, July 22, 1865.

³⁰¹ Downer's *History of Davenport and Scott County, Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 664.

and was successful in obtaining the comparatively new barracks as a home for the orphans. All the camp supplies, bed linen, pillows, mattresses, and blankets were included in the gift, which proved almost invaluable as a basis for the new institution.³⁰² On November 16th, the children, one hundred and fifty in number, were moved from Farmington to Davenport. They were met at the train by the citizens of the town, who first gave them a good breakfast and then escorted them to the old barracks in carriages.³⁰³

The number of orphans in both the home at Davenport and in the institution at Cedar Falls grew rapidly and thereby a great service was rendered to the people of the State. But as the institutions grew in size it became increasingly difficult to raise sufficient funds to meet the expenses of such a vast undertaking. The result was an appeal to the State for aid, and the appointment by the legislature in January, 1866, of a committee to visit and report on these two institutions. The visits were made in February, and the reports prepared and submitted to the General Assembly presented a survey of the conditions of the homes at that time.³⁰⁴

The Cedar Falls branch had been operating for about five months, and was caring for one hundred and two orphans. By finishing all the rooms in the building and making them available for use, one hundred and fifty children could be cared for. The report stated that the children would "compare favorably with an equal number of children gathered promiscuously anywhere. They are all plainly but comfortably clad, and in appearance are bright and

³⁰² *Bulletin of Iowa Institutions*, Vol. II, 1900, p. 302.

³⁰³ Downer's *History of Davenport and Scott County, Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 664; *Bulletin of Iowa Institutions*, Vol. II, 1900, p. 302.

³⁰⁴ *Report of the Committee to Visit Soldiers' Orphans' Home in the Iowa Legislative Documents*, 1866, Vol. II; *House Journal*, 1866, p. 188.

cheerful, and happy. We found none sick, and there had been no deaths at this Home."³⁰⁵

The committee found that three hundred and thirty-one soldiers' orphans were under care at Davenport. An epidemic of measles was then passing through the home, one hundred and thirty cases being reported, which had resulted in four deaths. The report stated, however, that this was a much smaller percentage of deaths than occurred from this disease outside of the institution. The estimated value of the property of the home was \$85,353. Its capacity could be extended to accommodate one thousand children by fitting up all the buildings on the premises.³⁰⁶

According to the estimate of the committee there would be six hundred children in the two homes within a year. This would mean an expense of \$60,000 or \$65,000. The available means of the corporation were \$37,400 in government bonds, about \$40,000 in subscriptions which "they hope to collect," and \$2223 in cash. Additional donations and subscriptions were hard to secure and, in the words of the report, "as a private enterprise, this institution cannot be maintained much, if any, to exceed another year; the question then arises, shall the institution be suffered to go down?" The committee recommended that the State "lend a helping hand," and tax the whole property of the State, in some judicious manner, for the support of the institution.³⁰⁷

This movement to secure State aid was followed by the presentation of several petitions to the legislature during

³⁰⁵ *Report of the Committee to Visit Soldiers' Orphans' Home in the Iowa Legislative Documents, 1866, Vol. II.*

³⁰⁶ *Report of the Committee to Visit Soldiers' Orphans' Home in the Iowa Legislative Documents, 1866, Vol. II.*

³⁰⁷ *Report of the Committee to Visit Soldiers' Orphans' Home in the Iowa Legislative Documents, 1866, Vol. II.*

March, from citizens of various counties, asking the State to take charge of the Iowa Soldiers' Orphans' Home.³⁰⁸ The result of the agitation was the passage of a law on March 31, 1866, providing for the transfer of the property of the corporation to the State, and for the support and regulation of the institution.³⁰⁹

A Board of Trustees of the Iowa Soldiers' Orphans' Home was created by this act. The board held its first meeting at Davenport in June, when the property of the homes was formally transferred and they became State institutions.³¹⁰ The association during its brief existence had built up an extensive organization, and had collected a large amount of money and property. According to the officers' reports they had obtained subscriptions of \$132,000, of which \$80,000 had been paid in.³¹¹ The property transferred to the State consisted of 273½ acres of land, personal property appraised at \$26,663.35, and \$5,833.69 in cash.³¹²

Soon after the State assumed control a third branch of the institution was established at Glenwood in November, 1866.³¹³ The three homes then continued in operation until 1876, when a radical change was made. The number of soldiers' orphans to be cared for was rapidly decreasing, and there was no further need of three homes. Consequently, the homes at Glenwood and Cedar Falls were dis-

³⁰⁸ *House Journal*, 1866, pp. 442, 456, 457, 482.

³⁰⁹ *Laws of Iowa*, 1866, pp. 83, 84, 85, 86.

³¹⁰ *Report of the Officers of the Iowa Soldiers' Orphans' Home*, pp. 5, 6, in the *Iowa Legislative Documents*, 1868, Vol. II.

³¹¹ *Report of the Proceedings of the Third Annual Meeting of the Iowa Soldiers' Orphans' Home*, p. 39, in the *Iowa Legislative Documents*, 1868, Vol. II.

³¹² *Report of the Officers of the Iowa Soldiers' Orphans' Home*, pp. 5, 6, in the *Iowa Legislative Documents*, 1868, Vol. II.

³¹³ *Report of the Officers of the Iowa Soldiers' Orphans' Home*, pp. 5, 6, in the *Iowa Legislative Documents*, 1868, Vol. II.

continued — the first being converted later into a school for the feeble-minded and the property of the latter being turned over to the new State Normal College.³¹⁴ All the children were removed to Davenport, and an act was passed which permitted the trustees to admit other destitute children besides the orphans of soldiers.³¹⁵

X

LOCAL AID SOCIETIES

Throughout the entire discussion of the relief work of the Civil War period, the part played by local Aid Societies has stood out most prominently. It was through these organizations that the work of the State Commission was made possible; from them the fairs received their most loyal support; the care of the soldiers' families fell heavily upon their shoulders; and in the establishment of the Soldiers' Orphans' Home their support was of the greatest importance. A description of war relief would not, therefore, be complete without at least a brief discussion of the work of these societies.

It has already been noted that local societies were organized in practically every community in the State; and although they operated under various names, such as Aid Societies, Soldiers' Aid Societies, or Ladies Soldiers' Aid Societies, they were all more or less similar in character, and all were working for the same great cause. In many places they were organized as soon as the first Iowa soldiers were called into service; in other localities they developed more slowly. Besides the societies representing each village or city, there were many cases in which county or-

³¹⁴ *Laws of Iowa*, 1876, pp. 119, 145.

³¹⁵ *Laws of Iowa*, 1876, pp. 76, 77, 78.

ganizations were formed to handle matters for the county as a whole, in which instances they usually coöperated with and often aided the smaller societies in their districts. The county relief societies were frequently composed of both men and women, with the latter taking a very active part; the smaller units were generally made up only of the women of the community, although they were enthusiastically supported in their activities by the men.

As revealed by an examination of the newspapers of that time, these societies were constantly busy in the interest of relief work. The women not only devoted their time to sewing and knitting and preparing articles needed by the soldiers, but they were always on the look out for and ready to take advantage of new ideas, by which to obtain additional supplies of sanitary stores and vegetables and raise money. All sorts of entertainments, festivals, and dinners were given, and in many places it seemed that one event had no sooner occurred than arrangements were begun for another. Sometimes these affairs were given for the benefit of the soldiers themselves, and at other times for the purpose of raising funds with which to relieve distress among soldiers' families. These numerous activities were not always carried on directly under the auspices of the Aid Societies, but in most cases the proceeds were turned over to them for distribution.

Many of the schemes used to obtain money and support were unique and interesting. At Iowa City, in January, 1862, the St. Vincent De Paul Society arranged for a grand supper at the Metropolitan Hall to raise funds for the poor of the city.³¹⁶ During the following March the Aid Society received thirty-four dollars as its share of the receipts from a performance of the Campbell Minstrels.³¹⁷ Later

³¹⁶ *The State Press* (Iowa City), January 22, 1862.

³¹⁷ *The State Press* (Iowa City), March 26, 1862.

in the year a festival was staged by the Aid Society, by means of which the sum of about two hundred dollars was cleared to purchase hospital supplies.³¹⁸ A fair was held early in 1863 by the ladies of Father Emond's church and it was announced that a liberal percentage of the proceeds would be donated to the relief of soldiers.³¹⁹ Another festival was arranged by the Aid Society in June which brought in over four hundred dollars,³²⁰ and toward the close of the year, when there was much distress among the families of soldiers, the same organization held a donation party to which people were requested to bring "Articles useful in a family". An admission fee of twenty-five cents was charged and "Subscriptions payable in wood, flour, meat, drygoods, groceries, boots and shoes, hats and caps" were requested.³²¹

The first event along this line in Iowa City for the year 1864 was a dance to raise funds for the relief of soldiers' families, at which the receipts were thirty-six dollars and the expenditures thirty-eight dollars and fifty cents, but undismayed by the deficit, the promoters proposed to hold another dance two weeks later, at which "a good supper and good music" were to be furnished and officers "secured to maintain good order."³²² Closely following the above unsuccessful attempt the Bohemian Relief Society gave a ball "for the benefit of the poor and needy among their brethren"³²³ and the German Supporting Society staged a masquerade ball to raise funds for aiding families among the German population.³²⁴ Mr. G. Folsom who operated a

³¹⁸ *The State Press* (Iowa City), October 4, 1862.

³¹⁹ *The State Press* (Iowa City), December 27, 1862, January 10, 1863.

³²⁰ *The State Press* (Iowa City), June 20, 1863.

³²¹ *The State Press* (Iowa City), December 9, 1863.

³²² *The State Press* (Iowa City), January 20, 1864.

³²³ *The State Press* (Iowa City), January 13, 1864.

³²⁴ *The State Press* (Iowa City), February 3, 1864.

toll bridge offered to set aside the tolls on one day each month for the Iowa City Ladies' Aid Society, and altogether he added one hundred and eighty-nine dollars to the Society's funds.³²⁵ Even the children seemed to catch the spirit of the time and in August, 1865, a fair and festival for the Orphans' Home was given by the little girls of the city.³²⁶

Dubuque was also the scene of much activity of a similar nature. While the State Fair was in progress in September, 1863, the ladies of the Aid Society conducted a dining room where they served "a desert as rich as was ever served at the St. Nicholas in New York", and realized a good sum for their work.³²⁷ The following week the Aid Society received over one hundred and forty-two dollars from a concert given at the Congregational church, and seventy-two dollars and fifty cents from a gymnastic exhibition.³²⁸ On Thanksgiving Day in 1863 and 1864, the churches took up collections for the soldiers' families, one hundred and forty-five dollars being realized the first year,³²⁹ and one hundred and sixteen dollars the second year.³³⁰ In January, 1864, a special case of destitution demanded special attention and relief, which was secured by taking a collection amounting to fifty dollars from strangers stopping at the Julien House.³³¹ At one time it was suggested by the press that arrangements for a "vegetable holiday" be made, as it was believed such an occasion would result in such "a turnout of men, women and children, with flags and

³²⁵ *The State Press* (Iowa City), February 17, December 28, 1864.

³²⁶ *The State Press* (Iowa City), August 2, 1865.

³²⁷ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, September 18, 1863, March 15, 1864.

³²⁸ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, September 29, 1863.

³²⁹ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, December 1, 1863.

³³⁰ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, November 29, 1864.

³³¹ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, January 8, 1864.

banners, potatoes, pickles, onions and kraut, as has never before been seen."³³²

On Christmas Day, 1863, citizens of Marion cut and split one hundred and fifty cords of wood for the benefit of "war widows".³³³ At Farley, about the same time, a festival netted the promoters seventy dollars, which with other contributions previously received was sufficient to relieve the wants of the soldiers' families at that time.³³⁴ A festival was also held by the Soldiers' Aid Society of Epworth during the following April, at which eighty dollars in cash was realized.³³⁵

Many soldiers' families in Keokuk were in need of fuel during December, 1863, and in order to supply this need a "wood procession" was arranged. Farmers from the surrounding country were asked to bring in a load of wood for the poor upon a certain designated day. Upon the appointed day one observer counted one hundred and eight farmers coming in over a single road between ten and twelve o'clock, with their wagons loaded with wood, and in many cases with large quantities of flour and vegetables. When all were formed into a procession they made a line over a mile in length and, headed by a band and banners, the parade passed through the streets of the city. About one hundred cords of wood were received by the Aid Society, which at the existing price was valued at five hundred dollars.³³⁶

From one of the smaller towns comes an interesting report of a "Mush-and-Milk-Festival". This affair occurred at Washington, and was described as "one of the richest

³³² *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, November 1, 1864.

³³³ *The State Press* (Iowa City), February 3, 1864.

³³⁴ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, January 1, 1864.

³³⁵ *Dubuque Semi-Weekly Times*, April 15, 1864.

³³⁶ *The Weekly Gate City* (Keokuk), December 16, 1863.

and raciest occasions we ever attended. . . . The repast, consisting of mush-and-milk, was then partaken of, out of tin cups, each partaker furnishing his or her own spoon. For a time the rattle of cups entirely drowned the music of the band. The mush was dished out steaming hot from pans, the milk poured from sprinkling cans, jugs, &c." From this event the sum of eighty-four dollars was realized for soldiers' relief.³³⁷

Early in the spring of 1863 Mr. Gabriel Little, who lived about three miles out of Muscatine, offered thirty acres of land for growing potatoes for the soldiers and their families, upon the condition that a picnic party should be organized to plant them. The offer was accepted, and the planting was completed in less than a day, "by a voluntary, spontaneous and almost *instantaneous* gathering of loyal-hearted men, women and children." The field was cared for by neighboring farmers and voluntary workers and again in the fall a picnic was organized to harvest the crop. This event was described as follows:

Yesterday was the time set for digging the potatoes. Accordingly about 200 persons, of all ages and conditions, from the grey-haired sire and matron to the school boy and girl just entering their teens, assembled and went to work with a will, using plows, harrows, hoes and *fingers* to gather the esculents from their native soil. If our soldier boys could have looked upon the scene, and beheld their fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, wives and sweethearts, engaged in the laudable and laborious work of providing for their comfort, their hearts would have been cheered and their resolutions strengthened in the noble cause in which they are engaged. Although most of those at work were novices at farm labor, they made good progress, and by four o'clock two thirds of the 'patch' had been gone over and the potatoes hauled to the city and stored away.

³³⁷ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, March 4, 1864.

The crop amounted to about one thousand bushels, and since potatoes were selling at sixty cents, "with a prospect of being a dollar before New Year", it meant a large addition to the stores of the Ladies Soldiers' Aid Society.³³⁸

It was through such activities as these and many others that the Aid Societies were able to forward such large amounts of supplies to the armies and at the same time aid the poor at home. Just what many of the organizations really accomplished is shown by their periodical reports. In Polk County and Des Moines several societies were operating during the war. One of these, which was organized December 17, 1864, arranged a festival for the last day of the same month which cleared \$4245. By the close of hostilities this society had raised \$7261.³³⁹ The Independence Aid Society was formed October 25, 1861, and at the end of the following month was prepared to send forward its first box, containing twenty quilts, twelve straw ticks, twenty-four pillows, twenty-eight shirts, thirty pairs of socks, and various smaller articles.³⁴⁰

By cash contributions and a course of lectures, the Council Bluffs Soldiers' Aid Society for the first five months of 1865, raised \$504, of which \$299 was turned over to the Christian Commission, and the remainder given to the Chicago Sanitary Fair.³⁴¹ From September 26, 1861, the date of its organization, to July 1, 1862, the Muscatine Ladies Soldiers' Aid Society had sent sixteen boxes and barrels, valued at \$1,250.95, to the Keokuk organization and the Iowa Army Sanitary Commission. This first re-

³³⁸ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, May 29, July 10, October 23, 1863.

³³⁹ Dixon's *Centennial History of Polk County*, pp. 126, 127, 128; Porter's *Annals of Polk County, Iowa, and City of Des Moines*, pp. 210, 211, 212.

³⁴⁰ *Buchanan County Guardian* (Independence), October 22, 29, December 3, 1861.

³⁴¹ *Council Bluffs Nonpareil*, May 20, 1865.

port of the organization stated that the society had met every week since its formation and would continue to do so "as long as there is a soldier to care for, and a rag can be found in Muscatine large enough to make lint."³⁴² During the last six months of 1862 this society forwarded supplies valued at \$792.60.³⁴³

The report of the treasurer of the Iowa City Aid Society for the first year estimated the total amount of its contributions in money and materials to be over \$1000. For the year closing in October, 1864, the same society sent supplies valued at \$276.50 to the Orphans' Home; goods worth \$747.84 were distributed among soldiers' families; and \$2,155.87 worth of sanitary stores were forwarded to the armies. Thus, to the three causes this one society made a total contribution of \$3,180.21 during a single year.³⁴⁴

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³⁴² *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, July 4, 1862.

³⁴³ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, January 30, 1863; *The State Press* (Iowa City), November 8, 1862.

³⁴⁴ *The State Press* (Iowa City), December 14, 1864.