

ANNIE TURNER WITTENMYER

Seven hundred and fifty sick and wounded soldiers from Sherman's army at Milliken's Bend were packed on the steamboat, *City of Memphis*, on their way to the hospitals at St. Louis. Every space was filled. Some of the men were delirious and their cries mingled with the whir of the wheels and the splash of the waters as the boat, temporarily transformed into a hospital, pushed upstream against the current.

On the floor of one of the cabins a soldier lay on his blanket, his fever-racked head upon his knapsack. A woman, one of the few on that ghastly boat, stepped to his side and asked, "What can I do for you?" "You can write to my wife if you get through alive, and tell her I died on the *City of Memphis*", he replied. The woman took down the name and address, spoke words of encouragement to the sick man, and then asked, "Could you drink a cup of tea?" The man refused. "Could you drink a glass of lemonade?" the woman persisted. The face of the sick man brightened. "Where could you get it?" he asked. "Make it", answered the woman. "I have lemons and sugar, and there is a whole river full of water at hand." The patient drank the lemonade — and lived to thank his benefactor years later. The woman was Mrs. Annie Turner Wittenmyer, Sanitary Agent for the State of Iowa. The soldier was one of the many to whom she ministered during the years of the Civil War.¹

At this time Mrs. Wittenmyer was a woman in her thirties, with snow-white hair which set off her blue eyes and

¹ Wittenmyer's *Under the Guns*, pp. 62-65.

fair complexion.² With a gracious, kindly manner she combined a high degree of courage, a strong sense of social responsibility, a deep religious feeling, and an independence rare in the women of that day. The story of her family and early life explains some of these characteristics.

Annie Turner was born at Sandy Springs, Adams County, Ohio, on August 26, 1827. Her father, John G. Turner, was originally from Kentucky, where the family for several generations had been southern gentlemen, planters, and slave-holders on a plantation near Louisville. Her mother, Elizabeth Smith Turner, claimed descent from John Smith, the Virginia soldier of fortune; and Simeon Smith, the grandfather of Annie Turner, had been a soldier in the American Revolution. Both the Turner and Smith families were interested in education.

Annie, one of the older children in the family of John and Elizabeth Turner, seems to have been unusually literary as a child, for her first poetry was published when she was twelve. She was educated at an Ohio seminary, where she received more advanced training than was usual for young women of that time. At the age of twenty Annie Turner became the wife of William Wittenmyer, a merchant of Jacksonville, Ohio. He was a man of considerable wealth, many years older than his wife.

In 1850 the Wittenmyers moved to Keokuk, Iowa, and early in 1851 bought the site for a new home, a large two-story colonial house with a hall running through the center and large double rooms on either side. Three of the four children born to Mr. and Mrs. Wittenmyer died in infancy. One son, Charles A. Wittenmyer, survived his mother for many years.

When Mrs. Wittenmyer came to Keokuk, she found many

² Letter from Miss Maymie Turner, dated Keokuk, April 27, 1931. Miss Turner is a niece of Mrs. Wittenmyer, a daughter of Dr. William H. Turner.

children on the streets because their parents could not afford to pay the tuition required in the schools. She felt that something ought to be done about this condition, and it was characteristic of her that feeling found expression in action. She soon converted one of the large upstairs rooms in her home into a schoolroom, hired a teacher, and collected the poor children into this free private school. Indeed, she assisted with the teaching, a task for which she was well fitted both by education and character. Nor was she satisfied with providing a school. Many of the children were dirty and ragged and Mrs. Wittenmyer organized the church women of the town to help wash and clothe them. Later this school was moved to a warehouse where it is said two hundred children were enrolled.

Mrs. Wittenmyer was also interested in establishing a Sunday School in the same building, and she was one of the founders of the Chatham Square Methodist Episcopal Church of Keokuk. She also wrote a number of the hymns used in the services.³

And so the days passed until the coming of the Civil War. At that time Annie Turner Wittenmyer was a widow, living with her one surviving child in her comfortable home. Although the Turner family was originally from the slaveholding class in Kentucky, all were whole-hearted in their loyalty to the cause of the Union. Mrs. Wittenmyer's son was a child, too young for military service, but three of her four brothers were soon in service, a fourth being unable to enlist because of physical disability.

Dr. William H. Turner was a surgeon in the Second Iowa Infantry. James P. Turner enlisted in the First Iowa Cavalry, becoming a first lieutenant before the close of the

³ Letter from Miss Maymie Turner, dated Keokuk, April 27, 1931; *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. IV, pp. 278, 402; letter from Roy M. Martin, county recorder's office, Keokuk, dated October 3, 1931.

war. The youngest brother, Davis C. Turner, sixteen years old, ran away from home to join his brother's regiment, the First Iowa Cavalry. His age on the roster is given as nineteen.⁴

With three brothers in the service, it was not surprising that Mrs. Wittenmyer was interested in the welfare of the Iowa regiments. Moreover, the location of Keokuk brought to the people in the community an early realization of the meaning of war. To Keokuk, the "Gate City", came news fresh from the camps and battlefields to the south. Company after company, regiment after regiment, embarked at Keokuk or were transported past it to be swallowed up in the sucking, seething maelstrom of the war. Even before the Iowa men embarked the sympathetic women of Keokuk found many needs to supply. To Keokuk, too, came the backwash of the war. As the fighting went on, boat after boat stopped at the wharves of Keokuk, each with its load of men wrecked by wounds and disease. Its hospitals were crowded with soldiers who needed care, food, and clothing.

The organizations for relief work during the Civil War grew slowly, with much duplication and often with jealousies and hard feelings. There was at this time no skeleton organization like the American Red Cross which could be expanded to meet emergencies. Organizations had to be formed from the ground up and of inexperienced and unskilled material.

The women of that time were, as compared with the men, especially inexperienced in coöperation. Organizations of women were few and their membership was small. The women of Keokuk, however, soon realized that individual work for the soldiers was inadequate. To carry on their work more efficiently they organized the Soldiers' Aid So-

⁴ *Roster and Record of Iowa Soldiers in the War of the Rebellion*, Vol. I, p. 99, Vol. IV, pp. 183, 184.

ciety of Keokuk, with Mrs. J. B. Howell, the wife of the editor of the Keokuk *Gate City*, as its president, and Mrs. Annie Wittenmyer as secretary. Mrs. Wittenmyer was, in fact, the executive secretary of the organization.⁵

It was not long before the women realized that they needed first hand information concerning the needs of the men in camps and hospitals. This field work at first was incidental to personal visits by women who had husbands, brothers, or sons at the front, but it soon became the regular duty of Mrs. Wittenmyer. In April, 1861, she visited some of the Iowa regiments and wrote a letter to Mrs. Howell in which she explained that the soldiers in the hospitals needed less lint and bandages and more ticks to be filled with straw for mattresses, more pillows, cotton sheets, and cool garments to take the place of the heavy army clothing of the patients. They also needed dried fruits and other delicacies to supplement the army rations of such food as pork, beans, coffee, and bread.⁶

Mrs. Wittenmyer was absent about ten days on this trip, but from that time until the close of the war she spent little time at home. Fortunately her mother and a married sister lived in Keokuk and between them they cared for her young son and her home.⁷

It was not long before societies from other towns began to ask Mrs. Wittenmyer to take charge of their goods. "I must trouble you again, to give me some further information, about the sending of boxes, to the care of Mrs. Wittenmyer", wrote a woman from Iowa City to a friend on June 2, 1861. "I wish to know *exactly* about everything this time, that we may not be delayed as before. We *decidedly* prefer sending our boxes to Mrs. Wittenmyer's care, if she

⁵ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. IV, p. 279.

⁶ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. IV, p. 279.

⁷ Letter from Miss Maymie Turner, dated Keokuk, April 27, 1931.

will allow us, as the confidence of the people here, is very much shaken in the management of the official societies, whether justly or not, — and we can do nothing more here, unless we can create confidence anew, — and this arrangement seems to meet the approbation of all.”⁸

Similar letters of inquiry were frequent, but the women seem to have worked quietly and with little publicity. Welfare “drives” received little support from the newspaper and there is no record of posters. On the fifth of August, 1861, a Keokuk paper contained an inconspicuous announcement that Mrs. Wittenmyer had gone to St. Joseph, Missouri, to look after the sick of the Second Iowa Infantry, but not finding them there had followed the regiment to St. Louis.⁹ There was no report of what Mrs. Wittenmyer found, but that she carried back to Iowa a message of urgent need seems evident from the increased efforts of the local Soldiers’ Aid Society. Among other ways of raising money the women of Keokuk gave an entertainment which netted a little over one hundred and fifty dollars. “That does very well for these hard times”, remarked the editor of the paper, “and will do very much to the comfort of the sick and wounded soldiers in the hospitals.”¹⁰

But Mrs. Wittenmyer and the women with whom she worked soon realized that the task of furnishing even the minimum supplies for the sick and wounded soldiers of Iowa was a task of more than local scope. On the thirteenth of August, 1861, Mrs. Wittenmyer, as secretary of the Keokuk association, wrote a letter to the women of Des

⁸ Letter from C. D. Allen to Mrs. Chittenden, dated Iowa City, June 2, 1861, in the *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer*.

This collection of letters, in eight volumes, is preserved in the library of the Historical, Memorial and Art Department at Des Moines.

⁹ *Des Moines Valley Whig* (Keokuk), August 5, 1861.

¹⁰ *Des Moines Valley Whig* (Keokuk), August 19, 1861.

Moines inviting them to coöperate in supplying comforts and conveniences urgently needed by the hospitals.¹¹

A short time after this the Keokuk Soldiers' Aid Society published in a Keokuk paper an appeal that the women of Iowa organize and assist in furnishing supplies to the hospitals in which Iowa soldiers were cared for. The appeal continued:

As our society will be in direct communication with the troops, they will, through their Secretary, transmit to you from time to time such items of intelligence as will advance the interests of your associations

All packages sent to the "Soldiers' Aid Society," Keokuk, express pre-paid, will be forwarded to their destination free of charge.

For further information address the Corresponding Secretary.

This message was signed by Mrs. J. B. Howell, the president, whose name appears in large capital letters, and by Annie Wittenmyer, Corresponding Secretary. Below the signatures was the notice, "Papers throughout the State please copy."¹²

That some of the men in charge of the sick realized the deficiency of the hospital diet is evident from a letter written to Mrs. Wittenmyer by Brigade Surgeon General E. C. Franklin from the Mound City General Hospital on October 29, 1861, in which he said: "You will pardon me for soliciting your aid & influence on behalf of the sick soldiers in this Hospital. The inability of obtaining proper & suitable dietetic preparations for our invalid patients, such as jellies, preserves, &c has militated very materially against the convalescence of the sick under my charge."¹³

¹¹ Fullbrook's *Relief Work in Iowa During the Civil War* in THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XVI, pp. 197, 198.

¹² *Des Moines Valley Whig* (Keokuk), September 16, 1861.

¹³ Letter from E. C. Franklin to Mrs. Wittenmyer, dated Mound City Gen-

Conditions among the sick were described by Mrs. Wittenmyer in a report to the women of Iowa submitted after a tour of the hospitals in the West which she made early in November, 1861. She declared that there was a lack of many stores and supplies which the government intended to furnish but could or did not. Of this she said:

That there should be a lack of such hospital furniture and stores as the Government proposes to supply, may be a matter of surprise to some, but when we take into consideration that the Government, at the commencement of this war, was almost in a state of disorganization, and that within the compass of a few months, a vast military campaign has been set on foot, involving millions of dollars, and the health and comfort of hundreds of thousands of men, and that the Government has had to contend with an injured credit and hordes of dishonest army contractors, there is little cause to wonder that her supplies are not more bountiful.

But some of our soldiers have still more serious difficulties to contend with, — their surgeons have not made the necessary requisitions, are lacking in moral character, addicted to intemperate habits, or are overbearing to their men and exhibit but little concern for their health, comfort or cleanliness

Many of our Surgeons are noble men, who will do their duty in the camp or in the field, and are doing all they can for the comfort of their men; but there are others who will best secure the interest of themselves and their men by *resigning their positions immediately*.

Among the things needed for the hospitals Mrs. Wittenmyer listed the following:

“Bed-shirts and drawers, made of canton flannel, bed sacks, pillow-sacks and cases, size for cot, sheets and comfortables, size for cots, yarn socks, slippers, or cloth shoes, towels, lint, bandages, and old linnen [sic] or cotton clothes,

eral Hospital, October 29, 1861, in the *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer* (State Historical Department, Des Moines).

wines, jellies, dried or canned fruits, farina, corn starch, &c.”

She also urged that at least two experienced women nurses should be provided for each Iowa regiment to assist in caring for the sick and wounded.¹⁴

Visiting the military hospitals was no pleasant duty unless the pleasure of giving aid made up for the dangerous and disagreeable experiences. Of the hospital in which she found her youngest brother one January morning, 1862, Mrs. Wittenmyer has left this picture in a book dealing with her war experiences:

The restless tossing of the fever-stricken ones in the adjoining room, the groans of the wounded, the drip, drip, drip, of the leaking vessels hung above the worst wounded ones to drop water on the bandages and keep them cool and moist, put every nerve on the rack, and pulsed through heart and brain till it seemed as though I should go wild. It was an inside view of the hospitals that made me hate war as I had never known how to hate it before.

The pitiful cry of helpless ones calling, “Nurse, nurse! water, water!” and the weary, sleepy nurses making no response — sitting, perhaps, fast asleep, yet willing to do their duty when I aroused them, still rings in my ears.

The surgeon in charge here and the attendants were kind but very much overworked. The acting medical director, however, coming to the hospital too drunk to talk plainly or walk without staggering, ordered that Mrs. Wittenmyer

¹⁴ *Council Bluffs Nonpareil*, November 30, 1861; *Anamosa Eureka*, December 13, 1861.

Most of the nursing in the hospitals of the Civil War was done by enlisted men, often convalescent soldiers, who were as inexperienced in nursing as many soldier cooks were in cooking. Some women nurses were assigned by the War Department or served without the formality of enlistment or employment. For accounts of the work of some of these army nurses see Moore's *Women of the War; Their Heroism and Self-Sacrifice* and Brockett and Vaughan's *Woman's Work in the Civil War: A Record of Heroism, Patriotism and Patience*.

be excluded from the hospital except for an hour a day. Fortunately for Mrs. Wittenmyer and her sick brother, her influence with the higher officers was sufficient to have the acting medical director dismissed from service.¹⁵

Not all the difficulties connected with the relief work were in the camps, however. The "trial and error" methods of organization made inevitable by the inexperience of the workers and the unprecedented magnitude of the task led to misunderstanding and friction among the workers at home.¹⁶

At first Mrs. Wittenmyer worked as the unofficial executive agent of the aid societies organized by the women in the various communities in Iowa. Her first trips to the camps were made at her own expense, but later the Keokuk Aid Society seems to have assumed responsibility. In March, 1862, the corresponding secretary of the Keokuk Aid Society wrote in a letter to Mrs. Wittenmyer:

"I want to ask what in the world you are exercising your mind so much about your expenses for? Who suspects your honesty madam? I only asked you for a list of your expenses in order that the Treasurer may be able to make out a report. Some persons have accused the *Society*, not *you*, of spending too much money in keeping an agent in the field & we wished to make a report that every body might see *how little we had paid for that purpose*. The Society does not wish you to feel disturbed or distressed in mind on account of your expenses; & I can assure you that nobody imagines that you spend our money for oysters & mint juleps, or theater tickets so I do beg of you to set your heart entirely at rest upon this subject."¹⁷

¹⁵ Wittenmyer's *Under the Guns*, pp. 73-75.

¹⁶ See Fullbrook's *Relief Work in Iowa During the Civil War* in THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XVI, pp. 155-274.

¹⁷ Letter from Miss L. Knowles to Mrs. Wittenmyer, dated Keokuk, March

On October 13, 1861, Governor Kirkwood appointed thirteen prominent citizens of the State as members of the Army Sanitary Commission for the State of Iowa, usually known as the Iowa Sanitary Commission. This group, it was expected, would do for Iowa soldiers what the United States Sanitary Commission was doing for the army as a whole.

No women were named on the new commission; indeed the fact that women's organizations were already doing relief work was ignored. This seems to have aroused some criticism. *The Weekly Gate City* of Keokuk printed a long editorial, including the following:

All at once, many months after the Iowa First had fought, bled and died, and several weeks after the Ladies' Aid Association had furnished valuable information to the public and stores of necessary articles to the hospitals, 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 parcelled 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

This Commission have issued a circular to the women of Iowa, in which they ignore the existence of any Soldiers' Aid Society, 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 the Commission have taken so little interest in the subject that they were substantially in entire ignorance of what has been done.¹⁸

4, 1862, in *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer* (State Historical Department, Des Moines).

¹⁸ *The Weekly Gate City* (Keokuk), November 25, 1861. The members of

Thus there were two groups functioning in relief work in Iowa — the Army Sanitary Commission, made up of prominent men appointed unofficially by the Governor, and the loosely knit women's organization who looked to Mrs. Wittenmyer for leadership. The system naturally caused hard feelings. Mrs. Wittenmyer, under the auspices of the Keokuk Soldiers' Aid Society, had already sent out appeals to the women of the State for money, clothing, and food for the sick and wounded soldiers. Now came the Army Sanitary Commission with similar appeals. The women in the communities throughout the State were confused and perplexed. Some of them thought Mrs. Wittenmyer and the Army Sanitary Commission were working together. In April, 1863, Mrs. Amelia Bloomer of Council Bluffs wrote a long letter to Mrs. Wittenmyer asking for information on this point and explaining that the aid society in Council Bluffs had transferred its support to the Commission because it understood that it received more "credit" for supplies sent through its agency. Mrs. Bloomer, an ardent feminist, declared that she rejoiced at Mrs. Wittenmyer's position and added that she had opposed the movement to withdraw from Mrs. Wittenmyer and give "all their support and confidence to a society of men".¹⁹

"The Sanitary Commission have sent us some more circulars requesting in the most urgent manner that we shall send them supplies", wrote the secretary of the Keokuk

the Army Sanitary Commission named at this time were: Dr. J. C. Hughes, Rev. George F. Magoun, Hiram Price, Rev. A. J. Kynett, Elijah Sells, Bishop Lee, George G. Wright, Bishop Smyth, Caleb Baldwin, Rev. G. B. Jocelyn, Wm. F. Coolbaugh, Ezekiel Clark, and Lincoln Clark. — Fullbrook's *Relief Work in Iowa During the Civil War* in THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XVI, p. 199.

¹⁹ Letter from Mrs. Amelia Bloomer to Mrs. Wittenmyer, dated Council Bluffs, April 20, 1863, in *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer* (State Historical Department, Des Moines).

Society early in 1862. "Mr. Estabrook, Chaplain of the 15th Regt called to see Mrs. Graham & asked for a list of the societies that we correspond with & obtained supplies from. Of course he did not obtain it He is in the interest of the San. Com."²⁰

A little later the same woman wrote to Mrs. Wittenmyer to say that the Keokuk Society was running out of funds. Why not expose the inefficiency of the State Sanitary Commission, she suggested, and ask for the support of persons contributing to its work — and ask aid from the Governor.²¹

In an attempt to iron out the difficulty, Mrs. Wittenmyer called a convention of relief workers which met at Davenport early in July, 1862. It was agreed that the correspondence of both agencies should be handled jointly by A. J. Kynett, a member and the corresponding secretary of the Sanitary Commission and Miss L. Knowles, the corresponding secretary of the Keokuk Soldiers' Aid Society.²²

This compromise apparently satisfied neither group. In a speech before the Ladies' Aid Society of Iowa City in July, 1862, Mrs. Wittenmyer stated in answer to a request, that the Sanitary Commission, although it had received money from the State in addition to gifts, had no agent in the field, while she traveled constantly and without pay.²³

The convention also agreed to send a delegation — including Mrs. Wittenmyer — to the Governor to urge that he appoint some one to assist Mrs. Wittenmyer in the field

²⁰ Letter of Miss L. Knowles to Mrs. Wittenmyer, dated Keokuk, March 4, 1862, in *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer* (State Historical Department, Des Moines).

²¹ Letter of Miss L. Knowles to Mrs. Wittenmyer, dated Keokuk, March 21, 1862, in *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer* (State Historical Department, Des Moines).

²² Fullbrook's *Relief Work in Iowa During the Civil War* in THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XVI, pp. 209, 210.

²³ *The State Press* (Iowa City), July 12, 1862.

work. It appears that Ira M. Gifford was appointed as a temporary assistant at this time, and on September 11, 1862, the General Assembly in special session passed a law making it the duty of the Governor to appoint two or more Sanitary Agents for the State, one of whom, it was expressly stated in the law, should be Mrs. Annie Wittenmyer. The Governor was also authorized to fix and pay the salaries and expenses of these State Agents and to provide State funds for the purchase and transportation of supplies for the sick and wounded Iowa soldiers.²⁴

Mr. Gifford continued to serve as one of the Sanitary Agents under the new law, and it appears that at least two other men were appointed to serve with him — John Clark and Dr. Ennis. Dr. Ennis received \$100 per month. Later he seems to have been succeeded by Dr. A. S. Maxwell, who was paid \$140 per month. Clark appears to have served without pay. Just how much work these men did, it is hard to say. Apparently they made rounds of the camps, reported to the Governor, and furnished political contacts. Mrs. Wittenmyer continued to be the chief organizer of the relief work. Her salary, which seems to have been fixed by the Governor, was \$100 per month during her service as State Sanitary Agent.²⁵

It is doubtful, however, if the position of Mrs. Wittenmyer was actually much changed by this law. She had already been recognized by many of the men in command of the army in the West as an official representative of Iowa relief organizations. In most cases Mrs. Wittenmyer had been given free transportation for herself and goods and even free telegraph service. In July, 1862, she wrote

²⁴ *Laws of Iowa, 1862 (Extra Session), Ch. 36.*

²⁵ Fullbrook's *Relief Work in Iowa During the Civil War* in *THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, Vol. XVI, p. 210; *Reports of Mrs. Annie Wittenmyer, State Sanitary Agent; also Special Message of Governor Wm. M. Stone*, pp. 32, 33, 38, in *Iowa Legislative Documents, 1864, Vol. II.*

to Governor Kirkwood: "You will please secure me a pass from the Secretary of War, for myself and goods, at *your earliest* convenience so that it may reach me before I go south."²⁶

Mrs. Wittenmyer continued as State Sanitary Agent for almost two years. Her public work during this period seems to have been continuous and arduous. Considering the difficulties, the lack of organization, and the magnitude of the task, it appears also to have been efficient, although at no time during the Civil War was relief work at all adequate to the needs of the soldiers. Indeed, it is doubtful if mercy can ever keep up with the hardships and cruelty of war.

A collection of the war correspondence of Mrs. Wittenmyer now in the Library of the Historical Department at Des Moines, gives some idea of the work this woman did. There are letters from mothers asking her for news of missing sons or husbands, from men also interested in sons or friends, from women who wanted work in the hospitals, from aid societies asking for instructions. Hawkins Taylor wrote from Washington, "In your *glorious* work of looking after the Iowa soldiers you may find a little nephew of mine who is with Col. J. A. McDowell of the 6th Iowa If he is wounded try and see that he is properly cared for & if dead try and have Col. McDowell have the spot marked so that I may secure his body."²⁷

Letters describing the donations from the various aid societies indicate that the women must have worked heroically and sacrificed a great deal. A communication from

²⁶ Copy of a letter from Mrs. Wittenmyer to Governor Kirkwood, dated Keokuk, July 15, 1862, in *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer* (State Historical Department, Des Moines).

²⁷ Letter from Hawkins Taylor to Mrs. Wittenmyer, dated Washington, April 16, 1862, in *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer* (State Historical Department, Des Moines).

New London, Henry County, enumerated among the contributions shipped to Mrs. Wittenmyer the following: 3 jars of blackberries, 1 jar of butter, 2 jars of "plumb" butter, 1 jar of currants, 2 jugs of preserves, 1 jug of tomatoes, 1 can of cherries, 1 bottle of mustard, 1 package each of dried cherries, grapes, blackberries, plums, and apples, and a lot of books and magazines.²⁸

A Quaker wrote from Springdale that he was sending a box containing, among other things, seven shirts, two pairs of drawers, lint and bandages, one small pillow, two rolls of butter, dried currants, grapes, plums, and gooseberries. He added, "Although a stranger I have implicit confidence in thee".²⁹

The distribution of supplies was of itself a perplexing task. What soldiers needed them most and how much should be sent to each hospital or camp? Mrs. Wittenmyer tells an amusing story of her experience in distributing potatoes. During the summer of 1862 the Soldiers' Aid Society of Muscatine had planted some land in potatoes. The yield of this "Sanitary Potato Patch" was large. Some fifteen hundred bushels of potatoes were later sent in one shipment to St. Louis to be distributed by Mrs. Wittenmyer wherever they were most needed. Many of the soldiers were suffering from scurvy and the potatoes were very welcome. At Island No. 10 she put off a hundred bushels with the injunction that they must be divided equally among the officers and men of an Iowa regiment stationed there — more than a thousand men in all.

When she came back up the river a few days later and

²⁸ List in *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer* (State Historical Department, Des Moines).

²⁹ Letter from George Moore to Mrs. Wittenmyer, dated Springdale, January 31, 1863, in *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer* (State Historical Department, Des Moines).

stopped at Island No. 10 she was at once surrounded by soldiers who reported that they had had only three messes of potatoes and that the officers had eaten most of them. "I was indignant", said Mrs. Wittenmyer, "and went directly to the colonel's headquarters with the complaint." The quartermaster was summoned. "You only gave us one hundred bushels of potatoes", he said, "how long did you think they would last?" When Mrs. Wittenmyer hazarded one month, he explained that there were ten companies of one hundred men each in the regiment. Each company had been given ten bushels of potatoes, but one-tenth of a bushel of potatoes for each soldier meant only two or three messes. When Mrs. Wittenmyer admitted that this was so, he added, "I see that you are not accustomed to feeding armies." A few minutes later Mrs. Wittenmyer was explaining to the disgruntled soldiers that they got so few potatoes because there were too many men.³⁰

This was not the only difficulty Mrs. Wittenmyer had with potatoes though not with the same shipment. Some time in the spring or summer of 1863, stories were circulated at Keokuk to the effect that potatoes, obtained through Mrs. Wittenmyer, had been sold by the surgeon of the Twenty-second Iowa to the sutler. The surgeon wrote to Mrs. Wittenmyer denying the charge and the sutler declared that he had never purchased potatoes from the surgeon at any time.³¹

There seems, indeed, to have been some organized campaign to discredit Mrs. Wittenmyer during the spring and summer of 1863. Early in February a letter, signed by W. Emonds, was published in the *Iowa State Press*. This

³⁰ Wittenmyer's *Under the Guns*, pp. 58-61.

³¹ Letter from Wm. H. White to Mrs. Wittenmyer, dated Carrollton, La., August 31, 1863, and statement from C. H. Evans, dated September 1, 1863, in *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer* (State Historical Department, Des Moines).

contained the charge that Mrs. Wittenmyer had offered to sell butter and eggs to the Sisters of Charity in charge of a hospital at Memphis, and that, when they refused to buy, she had refused to give them necessary sanitary stores.

When Mrs. Wittenmyer saw this charge, she wrote a letter to the *Press* emphatically denying the charge. "I have never in that hospital or any other hospital," she wrote, "sold or offered to sell, goods, eatables, or sanitary stores, or refused to give hospital goods, or any aid that it was possible for me to render, during the eighteen months I have served my State as Sanitary Agent *I have no time, or capacity, or desire, to peddle butter and eggs.*" She declared that she was neglecting her own property and business to carry on the work and warned the editors that they would be held responsible for the publication of false statements of this kind. This letter was published in full in the *Press*.³²

Possibly the story originated in a plan suggested to Mrs. Wittenmyer by Governor Kirkwood, who suggested that on her trips north she should buy fresh vegetables, ship them to the well regiments, and sell them at cost, as a prevention of scurvy. She found the scheme impracticable for the men had not been paid, and she finally gave the vegetables away and refused to have any thing more to do with the plan.³³

Nor were such stories the only sources of vexation. The goods sent to Mrs. Wittenmyer had for the most part been sent to Partridge & Co., at St. Louis. Here Mrs. Wittenmyer or her agents sorted them and made them ready for distribution. Early in April, 1863, boats along the river

³² *The State Press* (Iowa City), February 7, March 14, 1863.

³³ Letter of C. D. Allen to Mrs. Wittenmyer, dated Iowa City, March 13, 1863, in *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer* (State Historical Department, Des Moines).

refused to take goods marked for this destination. At the same time an order of the War Department threatened to delay the distribution of goods along the Mississippi River. N. H. Brainerd, Military Secretary to Governor Kirkwood, wrote that this misunderstanding about the shipments to Partridge & Co. had been cleared up by Adjutant General Baker, and added, "There is a mystery about this matter which I do not pretend to understand and do not know as I want to for I fear if I did I might indulge in unchristian feelings towards some one or more of my fellowmen."³⁴

Another source of worry was the attempt of some of the associates in the sanitary work to secure political or economic advantage. One of the men serving as Sanitary Agent wrote to Mrs. Wittenmyer asking her to get from General Grant a concession for his son to sell goods in Vicksburg. She wrote at the bottom of this letter: "I want no business chances nor need I speak to Grant."³⁵

The friction between the women's organization headed by Mrs. Wittenmyer and the Army Sanitary Commission continued, although both groups worked for the welfare of the sick and wounded soldiers of Iowa. In the fall of 1863 a convention of aid societies was called to discuss the situation. It met at Muscatine on October 7-9, 1863, and was attended by representatives of both groups. Mrs. Wittenmyer was chosen temporary chairman of the convention.

At this meeting it was decided to establish an orphans' home and to form an Iowa State Sanitary Commission "for the purpose of promoting the sanitary interests of the State, and building an Orphan Asylum." Some friction was evident during the proceedings for when A. J. Kynett, the

³⁴ Letters from N. H. Brainerd to Mrs. Wittenmyer, dated Iowa City, April 15 and April 18, 1863, in *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer* (State Historical Department, Des Moines).

³⁵ *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer* (State Historical Department, Des Moines).

secretary of the Army Sanitary Commission, was called upon to speak he advised that the women coöperate with his organization and the United States Sanitary Commission instead of forming a new organization. In reply Mrs. Wittenmyer declared that the women's societies had preceded both the Iowa Army Sanitary Commission and the United States Sanitary Commission by at least five months. She also asserted that the law providing for the appointment of two sanitary agents by the Governor had, in effect, done away with the Army Sanitary Commission appointed earlier without legislative authorization.

Mrs. Wittenmyer was elected president of the newly organized association. On the last day of the convention she made some practical suggestions as to packing goods for shipment to the camps and hospitals. Among other things, she explained that small boxes which a man could carry were less likely to injury than larger boxes which had to be rolled about. Eggs should be packed in oats and not in cornmeal, which often became heated and spoiled the eggs.³⁶

This arrangement lasted only a short time. On November 18, 1863, another convention met at Des Moines and formed what was called the Iowa Sanitary Commission. Mrs. Wittenmyer was not an officer of this Commission and it appears to have been unfriendly to her. The policy of giving local aid directly to Iowa soldiers which had been one of Mrs. Wittenmyer's ideas was, however, continued, at least in part and as State Sanitary Agent Mrs. Wittenmyer continued to handle a large part of the relief work.³⁷

In handling the relief work, Mrs. Wittenmyer required

³⁶ *Proceedings of the Loyal Women's Convention, Held in Muscatine October 7th, 8th and 9th, 1863.*

³⁷ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, November 27, 1863; letter from William M. Stone to Mrs. Wittenmyer, dated Des Moines, December 16, 1863, in *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer* (State Historical Department, Des Moines).

assistance. Volunteers were at first sufficient, but this aid soon proved inadequate, and in the spring of 1863, Enoch J. Mathis, an enlisted man from the Thirty-seventh Iowa Infantry, was detailed to assist her. On May 30, 1863, he wrote the following letter to Mrs. Wittenmyer from St. Louis:

Out of the depths I essay to make a start at my official correspondence.

Enclosed please find a lot of letters which have been perambulating the country after you for a long time.

There is but one that as yet I am able to answer and I have acknowledged that.

I have kept myself pretty busy copying invoices and making a list of Aid Societies.

Will be able to get straight after a while I hope.

Mr. Mathis appears to have been an efficient and conscientious secretary and seems to have had charge of the books and office business, especially the receipt, repacking, and shipping of boxes, at the St. Louis office.³⁸ A number of women also worked with Mrs. Wittenmyer as assistants and secretaries. Among these was Miss Mary E. Shelton of Keokuk who began her duties as secretary in the summer of 1863, frequently accompanying Mrs. Wittenmyer on her field trips. Miss Shelton served throughout the war, although not always as a personal secretary.³⁹ Mrs. W. H. Cole and a number of other women also gave assistance in the office.

Of Mrs. Wittenmyer's experiences in her trips up and down the Mississippi River and in the hospitals and camps,

³⁸ Letter from E. J. Mathis to Mrs. Wittenmyer, dated St. Louis, May 30, 1863, and letter from Mrs. Wittenmyer to Mary E. Shelton, dated Louisville, Ky., December 10, 1863, in *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer* (State Historical Department, Des Moines); *Journal of the Senate* (Iowa), 1864, p. 197.

³⁹ Moore's *Women of the War; Their Heroism and Self-Sacrifice*, pp. 213-237.

she has left many stories, all written with almost military terseness, but with dramatic vividness. On one occasion the train was thrown from the track. "I was sitting by the stove at the time reading my beautiful new book, my mind full of tenderness and poetry", she wrote to Miss Shelton. When the car left the track, she realized the danger of being pinned against the stove and sprang into the aisle. Just then the contents of the water tank struck her in the face. When it was over, she found herself safe except for a few bruises, although she was wet and chilly, but her book was covered with soot, water, and ashes.⁴⁰

On the night of December 31, 1863, not long after this experience, Mrs. Wittenmyer and another woman relief worker were at Chattanooga, Tennessee. At the foot of Lookout Mountain was a large field hospital in which the men too severely wounded or too sick to be moved were sheltered in tents without floors and unheated. A storm from the north was raging and the night was bitterly cold—so cold that men on guard were frozen to death. The situation of the sick and wounded men in the tents was desperate. Mrs. Mary A. Bickerdyke, one of the characters among the army nurses in the Civil War, had taken charge. She was no stickler for red tape in emergencies and when fuel ran low she had ordered her helpers to use the logs from a surrendered Confederate fort, in spite of the objections of the surgeon that he had no authority to use this government property and that she would be reported and arrested. "Mother" Bickerdyke knew that the men would freeze before the order for the use of the material could be secured, so she used the logs first and explained later.

And so the fires were burning and Mrs. Wittenmyer

⁴⁰ Letter from Mrs. Wittenmyer to Miss Shelton, dated Louisville, Ky., December 10, 1863, in *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer* (State Historical Department, Des Moines).

helped to carry heated stones from the fires to the tents to keep the patients from freezing. Some of the tents blew down and the attendants had to crawl under the fallen canvas to get to the patient with their hot rocks. Among the supplies she had brought with her to this camp, Mrs. Wittenmyer found a lot of home-knit wool socks which were a boon to the chilled and suffering men. Fortunately the storm lasted only a short time and order was soon restored, but the suffering was acute while it lasted. It was here that an Irish soldier attempted to express his appreciation of the assistance rendered by Mrs. Wittenmyer by saying: "And sure it's an angel ye are, and may ye be in heaven three weeks before the devil finds out ye're dead."⁴¹

In contrast to this picture of a field hospital in a winter's storm is the story told by Mrs. Wittenmyer of the situation she found at Vicksburg. She came to this camp in June, bringing supplies and found many sick and wounded men sheltered in tents pitched on the sides of a bluff which shut out the breeze. The sun beat down on the men, already suffering from wounds and fever. The water was brought to the camp in barrels and stood all day in the blazing sun. Always there was the roar of artillery and the whine of the shells. The place was an inferno of pain, heat, and noise. As Mrs. Wittenmyer stopped at the side of one of the sick men with lemonade — tepid, no doubt — he said: "I got a little sleep a while ago, and I dreamed that I was at the old spring; but just as I was taking a good cool drink I waked up."

It was at this camp that Mrs. Wittenmyer, as she sat talking for a few minutes to the surgeon, noticed that the weeds outside the opening to the tent rippled and shook as if some small animal was running through them. She

⁴¹ Wittenmyer's *Under the Guns*, pp. 51-57; Brockett and Vaughan's *Woman's Work in the Civil War*, pp. 172-186.

called the surgeon's attention to this motion, for there was no wind, and he smiled and explained that the motion was due to bullets, but he added the reassurance, "The bullets fall a little short you see." A few days later an officer was killed while sitting in the chair which had been occupied by Mrs. Wittenmyer.⁴²

During the siege of Vicksburg, a number of wounded Union soldiers were in a hospital under the guns of both armies, but protected by a high embankment. Mrs. Wittenmyer had sent supplies to these suffering men, but had not attempted to visit them, since the approach to the hospital was under fire. The surgeon, however, decided that it would please his "boys" to have Mrs. Wittenmyer visit them. He had secured a horse, which he insisted "wouldn't shy or jump if a shell burst just before him". Would she go?

She did, mounted on a cavalry saddle, swimming her horse across the canal, and riding at a gallop under the shells from the mortar boats and batteries on both sides.

She was appalled by the condition of the wounded men in the hospital when she reached it, her dress still dripping wet from crossing the canal. The next morning she called on General Grant and reported the condition of these men lying in the midst of constant bombardment. General Grant at once ordered the men moved, and that night under cover of darkness, they were transferred to a hospital twenty-five miles away.⁴³

During the battle of Shiloh, the hospital boat on which Mrs. Wittenmyer was traveling was moored at the landing. As the day broke, the three women on the boat could see the wounded men on the nearby boats, some lying out in the rain. Along the bank were the mangled bodies of the dead. In the faint light of morning came calls for water

⁴² Wittenmyer's *Under the Guns*, pp. 125-127.

⁴³ Wittenmyer's *Under the Guns*, pp. 11-16.

and food. The three women were soon busy. Among her supplies, Mrs. Wittenmyer had some canned oysters and several barrels of crackers. When these were exhausted they used beef from the store-room and made barrels of soup. An officer, seeing Mrs. Wittenmyer carrying a bucket of soup across the gang plank, detailed a soldier to help her. The women worked all day, without a moment's rest. Sometimes Mrs. Wittenmyer paused to help a surgeon dress the worst wounds. Her clothing was wet and muddy to the knees. At ten o'clock that night some one asked her if she had had supper and only then did she remember that she had not eaten a mouthful of food since the night before.

During the battle, as Mrs. Wittenmyer walked across the field while guns were still heard in the distance, she met two soldiers carrying a badly wounded comrade. The two men laid their burden down at the foot of a large tree and Mrs. Wittenmyer went to see if she could be of assistance. "I am dying", the man said, "can't somebody pray?" Mrs. Wittenmyer did not hesitate. Kneeling on the damp ground with the hand of the dying soldier in her own, she prayed until he said, "The way is light now, I do not fear", and all was still.⁴⁴

Late in August, 1863, Mrs. Wittenmyer found over two thousand sick and wounded men at Helena, Arkansas, tormented by heat, flies, and dust. Nearby was a swamp, from which came malaria-laden mosquitoes. Water from the tepid Mississippi River stood in barrels which had held pickled pork. A barge of ice lay at the landing, but no one seemed to have authority to issue it and it was slowly melting away. Mrs. Wittenmyer had money to buy, however, and soon cakes of ice were floating in the water barrels.

The men had given up hope of being moved north. The nearest officer who could give orders for their removal was

⁴⁴ Wittenmyer's *Under the Guns*, pp. 28-35.

at Memphis and Mrs. Wittenmyer decided to present the case of the suffering men at Memphis. All night she waited for the up-bound steamer, writing letters meanwhile for the soldiers. At daylight a steamer came and Mrs. Wittenmyer boarded it, leaving Miss Shelton to continue the letter-writing. At Memphis she drove to the office of the medical director, only to find that the director had gone hunting leaving an orderly in charge. She went to the office of the commanding general to find only the adjutant there. The general was ill, but she finally was permitted to see him and present her plea. In conclusion she said, "I want you, General, to send down four steamers immediately, fitted out with cots and supplies, to bring all these suffering men away from that death-trap." The general said it should be done. "But, General", she continued, "I want the order issued before I leave this office." The adjutant promised to send out the order at once, but Mrs. Wittenmyer, to emphasize her determination, added: "Remember, I have no other appeal but the newspapers and the great, generous people of the North who sustain them, if you fail." Evidently Mrs. Wittenmyer had learned the power of public opinion.

The next morning she was back at Helena with the news. In the two churches where many wounded and sick men were lying on the seats, Mrs. Wittenmyer went into the pulpits and proclaimed the glad tidings — "Four hospital steamers will be here to-day to take you to Northern hospitals." The men could not believe the report, but the boats came.⁴⁵

There were many other lines of relief work. Women who came to the camps to visit their sick and wounded relatives often required assistance which Mrs. Wittenmyer's familiarity with military life enabled her to give.

⁴⁵ Wittenmyer's *Under the Guns*, pp. 106-114.

Letters were to be written for the very sick. Women sometimes wrote to Mrs. Wittenmyer to thank her for news of loved ones, sometimes even for a comforting notification of death, instead of the usual long newspaper list. The return of the little personal effects of the dead soldier was often a real service to the friends at home. Assistance in securing furloughs for convalescent or very sick soldiers was also an important part of relief work. In January, 1863, N. H. Brainerd, Military Secretary to Governor Kirkwood, wrote to Mrs. Wittenmyer: "Gov. Kirkwood directs me to call your special attention to those soldiers in hospital who are permanently disabled and ask you to make every effort in your power to obtain discharges for such. It is feared many die in hospital who might have been saved had they been discharged in time and sent to their homes but for want of some one to interest themselves in their behalf have lingered and died. Will you make this a very special point in your labors."⁴⁶

Nor were Mrs. Wittenmyer's ministrations limited to the men of the Union army. After the surrender of Vicksburg, Mrs. Wittenmyer visited the Confederate hospitals distributing supplies. A young Confederate soldier attracted her attention and she asked him if he would like to have her write a letter to his mother in Alabama. "You couldn't do it", he replied, "it wouldn't get through the lines." "Yes, I can send it", Mrs. Wittenmyer replied, "I often send letters. I send them through the commanding general when a flag of truce passes." And so through the kindness of this Iowa woman and General Grant, a mother in Alabama had news that the son, whom she had believed to be dead, was alive, though wounded and a prisoner, and that

⁴⁶ Letter from N. H. Brainerd to Mrs. Wittenmyer, dated January 9, 1863, in *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer* (State Historical Department, Des Moines).

she could write to him by sending the letter unsealed to Mrs. Wittenmyer.⁴⁷

Interesting and dramatic as Mrs. Wittenmyer's personal work among the soldiers was, her most important contributions to the welfare of sick and wounded soldiers was undoubtedly the organization of the special diet kitchens in the hospitals. Her interest in this need had been aroused early in the war by a personal experience.

One morning in January, 1862, Mrs. Wittenmyer, then acting as unofficial field worker for the Keokuk Aid Society, walked into a military hospital at Sedalia, Missouri, and glanced keenly around the large room filled with cots, each one holding a sick or wounded soldier. Some of the men may have recognized the visitor, for many of the patients were Iowa soldiers.

It was breakfast time and attendants were moving about with trays. Mrs. Wittenmyer noticed that one patient waved the attendant away with a look of disgust on his pale face, and heard the man who acted as waiter say, "If you can't eat this you'll have to do without; there is nothing else". She moved closer and recognized her own brother, Davis C. Turner, who had enlisted the preceding year. Then she looked at the rejected breakfast. "On a dingy-looking wooden tray", she wrote later, "was a tin cup full of black, strong coffee; beside it was a leaden-looking tin platter, on which was a piece of fried fat bacon, swimming in its own grease, and a slice of bread."⁴⁸ No wonder the sick boy looked upon this fare with disgust. The accidental meeting of the sister and brother was indeed fortunate for the sick boy who was nursed back to health by his competent sister. It was fortunate, too, for other soldiers, for it emphasized on the mind of Mrs. Wittenmyer the need

⁴⁷ Wittenmyer's *Under the Guns*, pp. 160-163.

⁴⁸ Wittenmyer's *Under the Guns*, pp. 72-76.

for special diets for certain types of sick and wounded soldiers.

In most hospitals at the time sick men were served exactly the same kind of food as that issued to the men in the field. Even for the well soldiers, the rations would be condemned to-day for the lack of vitamins and certain necessary food ingredients, but for men sick with typhoid fever or dysentery, or running a high temperature as a result of infected wounds — and most wounds were infected in those days — bacon, beans, bread, and coffee were evidently unsuitable foods. Moreover, most of the cooking was done by private soldiers, most of whom did not care for the job. But military red tape could not be expected to distinguish between a well soldier and a sick one: certain rations were provided — or were provided if no dishonest contractor or commissary officer intervened.

When supplies of delicacies were sent to the hospitals there was still the problem of distribution. The surgeons were unwilling to have visitors distribute food to the sick on the ground that something might be given to the patients which would be injurious — although it is difficult to see how anything except poison could have been much more harmful than the food regularly served. On the other hand, when such supplies were turned over to the commissary, they often failed to reach the sick men for whom they were intended.

Mrs. Wittenmyer pondered this problem of feeding the sick and wounded men and in December, 1863, she proposed the establishment of special diet kitchens in each hospital with two experienced women to act as supervisors or dietary nurses. The food for each patient requiring a special diet was to be prescribed by the surgeon in charge, prepared in the special diet kitchen, and served to the patient according to the name or number on the diet slip.

While she was engaged in this new work, her enemies at home were not idle. This culminated in an attempt to get the General Assembly which met in January, 1864, to repeal the act which made Mrs. Wittenmyer one of the State Sanitary Agents. No doubt aware of this opposition, Mrs. Wittenmyer submitted a report of her activities to the Governor and General Assembly on February 5, 1864.

In this report she described her activities and discussed some of the problems in the sanitary work. She pointed out that much of the relief work was then being done through the United States Sanitary Commission and the United States Christian Commission, since Iowa regiments had become so scattered that it was almost impossible to distribute goods to them individually. She pointed out, however, that the State Sanitary Agents were still needed at various concentration points to look after sick and convalescent Iowa soldiers and to assist the men in securing needed furloughs, clearing up delays in pay, and in other matters.

Mrs. Wittenmyer also called attention to the need of women as nurses in the hospitals. Iowa, she declared, had furnished more female nurses than any other western State. The president of the Western Sanitary Commission had written to Mrs. Wittenmyer in November, 1863, that fifty-three Iowa women were then employed as nurses. He then added, "Nothing adds more to the comfort of our sick soldiers than the kind and tender care of these patriotic women who have volunteered to serve in hospitals. I wish that more could be employed, but as it depends in a great degree upon the will and caprice of the Surgeons in charge of the hospitals, I cannot force it. A large number of applicants from Iowa have been declined for want of situations to give them."

Replying to the criticisms of the administration of relief

work, Mrs. Wittenmyer warned the people not to be discouraged in welfare work by reports of dishonesty and mismanagement. It was true, she said, that there had been cases of such dishonesty, but there was also much fine work. Some complaints came from the soldiers themselves, because some of the goods which really came from the Sanitary Commission were distributed by the army commissary or medical departments and the soldiers did not realize they were receiving such sanitary supplies as gifts from the people.

During the preceding year, Mrs. Wittenmyer had received sanitary goods for the soldiers estimated at some \$115,876.93. She also expressed appreciation of the cooperation she had received from General U. S. Grant and thanked the railroads and the packet companies for free transportation for herself, her staff, and sanitary supplies, and the Illinois and Mississippi Telegraph Company for free transmission of messages. She estimated that she had traveled some thirty thousand miles.

The distribution of sanitary supplies, although almost entirely supported by gifts from private citizens, received some State aid, largely at the discretion of the Governor. Between August 1, 1862, and January 13, 1864, Mrs. Wittenmyer received \$1960.77 from the State of Iowa for expenses, including traveling expenses for herself and her assistants, and the transportation of women nurses to the hospitals. On February 10, 1864, Governor William M. Stone, on the recommendation of former Governor Samuel J. Kirkwood had paid her \$1550 as salary for fifteen and one-half months.⁴⁹

On February 6th, the day after this report was submitted

⁴⁹ *Journal of the Senate (Iowa)*, 1864, pp. 42, 43, 196-219, 407; *Reports of Mrs. Annie Wittenmyer, State Sanitary Agent*; also *Special Message of Governor Wm. M. Stone*, in *Iowa Legislative Documents*, 1864, Vol. II.

to the legislature, the House of Representatives adopted a resolution calling on the Governor to inform the House what persons, in addition to Mrs. Wittenmyer, had been appointed sanitary agents; what sums of money had been furnished to Mrs. Wittenmyer and the other sanitary agents; how such money was expended; and "whether the 'needed articles' therewith purchased, were furnished gratuitously to the sick and wounded soldiers in the field, or whether said articles were sold to said soldiers, and if sold, what disposition was made of the proceeds of such sales; and what sum or sums of money have been paid by him or his predecessor to Mrs. Annie Wittenmyer or to each of the other agents under the provisions of the 6th Section of the Act cited in the foregoing Preamble, keeping *seperate* [sic] and *distinct* the amount paid as 'just and reasonable compensation,' and the amount paid as 'traveling expenses,' as contemplated in said 6th Section, including 'expenses' incurred in attending *Conventions*, Fairs, etc., in different places in the United States, or only those incurred in going to, remaining in, or returning from the field or hospital."⁵⁰

Governor Stone replied to this request by a short special message on February 13th in which he declared that he knew very little about the sanitary work during the administration of his predecessor. He declared that he had paid Mrs. Wittenmyer \$110.77 for expenses not covered by previous payments, bringing the total to \$1960.77, and that he had paid her the \$1550 for her salary as certified by the former Governor.⁵¹

⁵⁰ *Reports of Mrs. Annie Wittenmyer, State Sanitary Agent; also Special Message of Governor Wm. M. Stone*, pp. 30-41, in *Iowa Legislative Documents*, 1864, Vol. II; *Journal of the House of Representatives (Iowa)*, 1864, pp. 236, 237, 274-279.

⁵¹ Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. III, pp. 157-163.

Ten days later — February 23rd — Mrs. Wittenmyer submitted a supplementary report to the General Assembly. In reply to certain criticisms implied in the questions sent to the Governor by the House, Mrs. Wittenmyer declared that all the goods furnished by the State of Iowa the previous year — about two hundred bushels of potatoes — had been distributed gratis to the soldiers. She went back to the old charge that she had sold goods contributed for the soldiers. In January, 1863, she explained, she had bought with her own money, or money for which she was charged by the State, about three hundred dollars worth of supplies and antiscorbutics which were to be furnished to some of the Iowa regiments at cost. These were paid for out of company saving funds, but some of these things were given to the wounded and as a result Mrs. Wittenmyer lost money. In answer to the question as to where the proceeds on such sales went Mrs. Wittenmyer replied, "*there were no proceeds*".

Mrs. Wittenmyer also gave a definite statement as to money paid her by the State. Her first journeys to the army, she declared, were made at her own expense. Later the Keokuk Aid Society financed her expenses, with the aid of two hundred dollars from the State fund. From August 1, 1862, to January 18, 1864, her expense account was \$1,180.88. This did not include transportation, usually furnished by the government. She submitted with this report a statement of expenditures with vouchers.

In conclusion, she asserted that no State Sanitary Agents except herself had attended any fair or convention in any part of the United States and added, "I would respectfully inform your honorable body, that my attendance upon those benevolent enterprises has not cost the State *anything*."⁵²

Friends of Mrs. Wittenmyer rallied to her support. The

⁵² *Journal of the Senate (Iowa)*, 1864, pp. 304-308.

Ladies Aid Society of Iowa City, for example, unanimously adopted some resolutions to be sent to the General Assembly. Protesting against the repeal of the Sanitary Agent law, the women declared that Mrs. Wittenmyer had proved her devotion to the soldiers by engaging in the work before any reward was offered; that the salary paid her by the State was in no way equal to the value of her services, and that her removal would discourage the women of the State and compel them to turn away from the official State agencies.⁵³

In the House, a bill to repeal the act of 1862 creating State Sanitary Agents and substitute a new measure was adopted but the bill was indefinitely postponed in the Senate.⁵⁴

Lieutenant Governor Enoch W. Eastman, who was the presiding officer in the Senate at the time, wrote to Mrs. Wittenmyer:

Before you receive this you will probably be informed that *you yet live*.

The day of trial is over & your friends had quite a rejoicing at the result. Upon the question to print your report *separately* the vote stood 6 to attach the Governor's message & your reply & 35 *against* it. So 1500 copies were ordered printed for you & 500 for the Senate.

When the House bill to repeal the law by which you were appointed came up the Sanitary Committee claimed it should go to them. Your friends asked for it to go to the Military Com. (who were your friends). I ruled in their favor & *there it went*. Day before yesterday they reported it back & recommended that it be indefinitely postponed and I put the question so quick that it made

⁵³ Resolutions adopted by the Iowa City Ladies Aid Society, March 10, 1864, in *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer* (State Historical Department, Des Moines).

⁵⁴ *Journal of the House of Representatives* (Iowa), 1864, pp. 387, 388; *Journal of the Senate* (Iowa), 1864, pp. 408, 416, 424.

their heads swim. And the loud "Aye" swam the bill into oblivion before your enemies could get breath to say "No". . . .

They had up a resolution in the House to print your report with the message of the Gov. Your friends finally triumphed by adding *your answer*. Thus you see "Justice is slow but sure".⁵⁵

In the meantime the diet kitchens were demanding more and more of Mrs. Wittenmyer's time. The commanding officers and the surgeons, at first hesitant, were soon asking for diet kitchens and women to assist in them. The United States Christian Commission decided to take over this work, and early in May, 1864, Mrs. Wittenmyer resigned her position as State Sanitary Agent to devote all her time to the superintendence of the diet kitchens. Before the close of the war more than one hundred of the special diet kitchens were installed. It was Mrs. Wittenmyer's plan that these kitchens should be a part of the regular hospitals, subject to the surgeon in charge. Usually two women were assigned to supervise the preparation of the food and to visit the sick men. In these kitchens, all kinds of foods needed or craved by sick men were furnished if it was possible to secure them. Such items as toast, milk, chicken, gruel, tomatoes, and jellies took the place of camp fare. Some of these special foods were secured from the commissary, but most of the extra diets were furnished by private gifts through the Christian Commission. Some of these diet kitchens furnished meals for as many as fifteen hundred very sick patients at one time. For the month of February, 1865, sixteen of these diet kitchens furnished 899,472 rations. As the organization increased, field superintendents in the various military departments were employed. Mary E. Shelton added jokingly after one of her

⁵⁵ Letter from Enoch W. Eastman to Mrs. Wittenmyer, dated Des Moines, March 10, 1864, in *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer* (State Historical Department, Des Moines).

letters: " 'Field Superintendent of Diet Kitchens in the Department of the Mississippi, U.S.C.C.' Keep out the way of my title. It is almost as formidable as yours.'"⁵⁶

The instructions sent out by Mrs. Wittenmyer to the women she appointed as supervisors of these diet kitchens, dated July 9, 1864, show how keenly she realized that the good will of the surgeons in charge must be kept if the diet kitchens were to be a success. Because they are characteristic of Mrs. Wittenmyer's attitude in her work, they are quoted in full:

INSTRUCTIONS TO MANAGERS OF SPECIAL DIET KITCHENS

In accepting your present position of responsibility, you place yourself in the service and under the general care and direction of the U. S. Christian Commission; and in my absence you will be under the general direction of the Field Agent of the Department, and will look to the nearest Station Agent of the Commission for assistance and supplies.

The following statements and requirements must receive careful attention, and be scrupulously observed:

1st. Your work in the Kitchen is to assist the Surgeons in giving comfort and restoration to languishing men, who are in need of carefully prepared nutritious food.

2d. The order of the Surgeon in charge, is the law of the Kitchens, as it is of all other hospital arrangements.

3d. Under the direction of the Surgeon in charge, it will be your duty to prepare such articles of diet, and only such, as are ordered or approved by the Surgeons in charge of the sick.

4th. You will keep open to the inspection of the Surgeon in charge, an account of all the stores received from any source outside of the hospital, and at the end of each month, send to me at

⁵⁶ Wittenmyer's *Under the Guns*, pp. 259-267; *Mrs. Annie Wittenmyer* in the *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. IV, pp. 283, 284; Brockett and Vaughan's *Woman's Work in the Civil War*, pp. 378, 379; *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, June 3, 1864; letter from Mary E. Shelton to Mrs. Wittenmyer, dated Memphis, Tenn., December 31, 1864, in *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer* (State Historical Department, Des Moines).

Louisville, Ky., a statement of the expenditures from such sources, and an invoice of the stock on hand, accompanied by a requisition for the supplies needed for the coming month.

5th. In addition to the monthly report, you will communicate with me at Louisville, Ky., at the end of each week, noting any incident of interest you may choose, and giving a general statement of the condition and working of the Kitchen.

6th. Great good may be daily accomplished by bringing kind words and Christian sympathy and solicitude, with articles of comfort and necessity, to the cots of the sick and wounded; but all such visits to the wards must be by the Surgeon's permission, and in strict conformity with hospital regulations.

7th. A spirit of censoriousness and evil speaking and intermeddling, unchristian anywhere, is doubly mischievous here, and dangerous to all concerned. First impressions of what can and ought to be done in a large hospital, are very likely to need the correction which extended experience and candid observation are sure to give.

8th. Neatness and simplicity of dress, are intimately connected with your success.

9th. A uniform Christian deportment, above the shadow of reproach, and the avoiding of the very appearance of evil, is absolutely necessary.

10th. Your work has its foundation in Christian self-sacrifice. The only possible sufficient motive for you, is a desire to do good to the suffering. For this you will be willing to forego, in a large degree, home comforts, and especially that of social intercourse, in order to give yourself, with a single aim, and with all your might, to the work you have undertaken.⁵⁷

St. Louis, Mo., July 9, 1864,

The work, however, did not always move smoothly. There was friction at many points. One point at issue was the

⁵⁷ Stewart's *Lest We Forget* — Annie Wittenmyer, *First President of the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union*, p. 3. Miss Lucy Shelton Stewart is a niece of Miss Mary E. Shelton, who was Mrs. Wittenmyer's secretary during the war. A sister of Mary Shelton's, Amanda Shelton, was one of the women supervisors of the diet kitchens.

position of the women supervisors sent out by Mrs. Wittenmyer. Some of the surgeons, rather unfriendly to what they considered meddling by the women, insisted that the women helpers were merely cooks. The surgeon in charge of the Adams General Hospital at Memphis, Tennessee, wrote to Mrs. Wittenmyer early in July:

I have been expecting the female cooks for some time but only one has come. I am informed that you have determined to assign one here as Superintendent. That will not do for I *know* it will create trouble wherever such an arrangement is made.

I expect of course that one of the cooks will rank the rest but all the cooks you send me are to come in the capacity of cooks and will be assigned to duty by me and I only *want four*. That number will be ample.⁵⁸

A little more than a month later, Mrs. Wittenmyer wrote to the Assistant Surgeon General describing the condition in this hospital. The surgeon in charge had just died, she asserted, from delirium tremens. His conduct during the last few weeks, was a "scandal to the hospital service". Conditions in another hospital at Memphis, the Gayoso, were equally bad. The women in charge of the special diet kitchens had been treated as servants and forbidden to visit the men in the wards, even upon request. The surgeon had said to one of the women: "The Kitchen is your place. If you cross the door into the dining hall or any of the wards I will pitch you out of doors."⁵⁹

Moreover, the women did not always get along together. There were complaints that some of these women — no doubt the younger ones — had danced in the hospital in-

⁵⁸ Letter from J. G. Keenon to Mrs. Wittenmyer, dated Memphis, Tenn., July 9, 1864, in *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer* (State Historical Department, Des Moines).

⁵⁹ Copy of a letter from Mrs. Wittenmyer to Col. R. C. Wood, dated Memphis, Tenn., August 13, 1864, in *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer* (State Historical Department, Des Moines).

stead of serving the sick men. Some of them did not work well with the surgeons. Some, on the other hand, were in too great favor with the men of the hospital. One woman was so influential with the surgeon that "her will appears to rule every thing". One woman was reported as saying that she needed no suggestions from Mrs. Wittenmyer, and would not report to her, and that she defied removal. Mrs. Wittenmyer's notation on this letter reads as follows: "Mrs. McKay remained insubordinate and had to leave, and the surgeon came near going too. After which the kitchen was reorganized and the men better fed."⁶⁰

There was also the problem of graft. Miss Lou E. Vance, one of the women assigned to the diet kitchen in the General Hospital at Madison, Indiana, found that things were not going well there. The food was bad, especially the coffee. Mrs. Wittenmyer advised her to do some detective work and report to her. One of the first things Miss Vance found was a barrel placed outside the kitchen door into which the used coffee grounds were deposited. She inquired why they were saved, and was told, "It's the surgeon's orders." She was also told that these used grounds were, at the orders of the same surgeon, dried on the floor of the commissary. When she inquired what was done with the dried coffee grounds, the men employed in the kitchen laughed, but declared they did not know. Miss Vance poured some of the coffee served to the patients in a white pine sink and decided that it had been adulterated with logwood to give it the color the used grounds did not. Miss Vance then picked out one of the men who looked easily frightened and asked him why the men put this logwood into the coffee to poison the sick men. He declared he was not to blame; it was the surgeon's orders. The

⁶⁰ *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer* (State Historical Department, Des Moines).

other men confirmed this statement. The surgeon was selling the new coffee and serving coffee made from the old grounds. Mrs. Wittenmyer ordered Miss Vance to get this information in the form of affidavits.

Miss Vance also discovered that the vouchers and the bills did not agree and that even the soap was adulterated. She asserted that 2200 pounds of soap had been made and 2500 issued. She wrote letter after letter to Mrs. Wittenmyer describing the condition and asking when the surgeon — whom she usually referred to as the “Maj.” or “Maj. R.” — was to be arrested and tried. She believed that he was unaware that she knew of his dishonesty. “He does not call so often”, she wrote in one letter, “but when he does, he always has a Sunday face, nice as a new book with a gilt edge.” In another letter to Mrs. Wittenmyer, Miss Vance wrote: “Do let me know if there is really any thing being positively done. This meanness must be exposed at all hazzards. I dont know but I shall have to take the stump to do the matter justice yet”.⁶¹

Mrs. Wittenmyer, however, was not idle, although she appears to have had great difficulty in getting action from the authorities, perhaps because the hospital at Madison, Indiana, was soon to be closed anyway. A letter from one of the officers of the hospital, apparently written in reply to a request of Mrs. Wittenmyer for information, indicates the difficulty. “I cannot”, he wrote, “give any information in the matter referred to till called for examination by the proper authorities. I commend your zeal in behalf of the soldier who suffers enough in the field, and any improper treatment of them in Hospitals, especially such [as] you

⁶¹ Letters from Miss L. E. Vance to Mrs. Wittenmyer, dated Madison, Indiana, May 6, June 2, 5, 8, 24, 1865, in *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer* (State Historical Department, Des Moines); Wittenmyer's *Under the Guns*, pp. 193-201.

inquire about, proves our inability to give some crimes a proper name."⁶²

Finally Mrs. Wittenmyer went to Louisville, Kentucky, to lay the evidence before Assistant Surgeon General R. C. Wood. When she explained her mission and gave the name of the accused surgeon, General Wood exclaimed in surprise, "Why, he is one of my best surgeons!" "You may think he is one of your best surgeons", Mrs. Wittenmyer replied, "but my opinion of him is that *he ought to be hung higher than Haman.*"

When she had finished presenting her evidence, the Assistant Surgeon General admitted that he was convinced of the guilt of the surgeon in charge of the hospital. Mrs. Wittenmyer wanted to turn the case over to Governor Oliver P. Morton of Indiana, for prosecution, but General Wood insisted on a military investigation to prefer charges, declaring that it would be a reflection on his honesty to let the Governor take charge. Mrs. Wittenmyer finally agreed, but her suspicion of the effectiveness of an investigation by a commission was justified by the outcome. Before the military investigation commission got through its investigation, the surgeon telegraphed his resignation to Washington and left the hospital — unpunished.⁶³

Mrs. Wittenmyer remained in charge of the diet kitchen work of the United States Christian Commission until the war closed and the hospitals gradually emptied. Of her work, General U. S. Grant said, "No soldier on the firing line gave more heroic service than she rendered".⁶⁴

Indeed, General Grant showed his appreciation of the

⁶² Letter from Dr. R. Knickerbocker to Mrs. Wittenmyer, dated Madison, Indiana, June 6, 1865, in *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer* (State Historical Department, Des Moines).

⁶³ *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer* (State Historical Department, Des Moines); Wittenmyer's *Under the Guns*, pp. 193-201.

⁶⁴ Reeves's *The Blue Book of Iowa Women*, p. 25.

work of Mrs. Wittenmyer from the beginning of the war. On one occasion early in the war, he had ordered the *City of Memphis*, one of the large boats on the Mississippi, to take Mrs. Wittenmyer to Mound City, Illinois, where there were several hospitals.⁶⁵

One of the few cheerful experiences related by Mrs. Wittenmyer is the account of how she and Mrs. W. M. Stone entertained General Grant, General McPherson, and General Stone — later Governor of Iowa — at dinner one night in a dilapidated house in Vicksburg soon after its surrender. The negro cook was so much awed by the news that General Grant was to be among the guests that she secured the services of two professional colored waiters with swallow-tailed coats, white vests, and white gloves, although a tin platter served as a tray and the guests had to enter the dining room by walking up inclined planks, the stairs having been destroyed by a shell.⁶⁶

In her work for the soldiers in the camps and hospitals, Mrs. Wittenmyer found many men who were worried about their children. Each casualty list, too, meant more orphans, and even when the mothers were still alive, it was frequently difficult for them to earn a living for a family of small children. On September 23, 1863, Mrs. Wittenmyer brought up the subject of soldiers' orphans at a meeting of the Soldiers' Aid Society at Iowa City, and a State Convention of Aid Societies was called to discuss this problem, among others. It met on October 7-9, 1863, at Muscatine and at this convention Mrs. Wittenmyer introduced a long resolution ending with the following: "*Resolved*, That we will establish an Asylum for the orphan children who have been made fatherless by this war."

Indeed "building an Orphan Asylum" was one of the

⁶⁵ Wittenmyer's *Under the Guns*, pp. 1-3.

⁶⁶ Wittenmyer's *Under the Guns*, pp. 174-180.

main purposes for which the "Iowa State Sanitary Commission" was organized at this time. Mrs. Wittenmyer was elected president; but when the Sanitary Commission was reorganized later that fall, the orphans' home project was separated from the relief work and a new organization — the Iowa State Orphan Asylum Association, later the Iowa Orphans' Home Association — was formed on December 30, 1863. Mrs. Wittenmyer was not one of the officers of this association but was on the board of trustees and was one of the incorporators of this first home, opened at Farmington in July, 1864. Another home was opened at Cedar Falls in August, 1865. These homes were soon full and in October, 1865, Mrs. Wittenmyer was sent to Washington, D. C., to secure from the Secretary of War permission to use the property belonging to Camp Kinsman at Davenport. She first called on the Surgeon General and secured a statement that these barracks were not needed for hospital purposes. She then secured a statement from the Quartermaster General that they were not needed for military purposes. "They were never needed; they ought never to have been built", he replied, as he signed the statement. Mrs. Wittenmyer then took up the matter with the Secretary of War and secured his promise to transfer the property subject to the approval of Congress when it met. This approval was later secured. The buildings here had cost the government some \$46,000. Mrs. Wittenmyer also secured from the War Department a large amount of hospital supplies, including blankets, sheets, pillow-cases, and pillows, valued at some \$6000.⁶⁷

The problems submitted to Mrs. Wittenmyer, however,

⁶⁷ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, January 28, 1864; Darwin's *History of the Iowa State Orphan Asylum* in the *Annals of Iowa* (First Series), Vol. III, pp. 453-457; *Proceedings of the Loyal Women's Convention, Held in Muscatine October 7th, 8th 9th, 1863*; Wittenmyer's *Under the Guns*, pp. 251-257; Aurner's *History of Education in Iowa*, Vol. V, pp. 119-174.

were not entirely financial. One of the women in charge of the home at Farmington wrote to Mrs. Wittenmyer of her troubles in discipline. "We have 52 children in the home", she wrote. "Nine of this no. are over 12 years of age. Five of them girls. The boys are unruly, one or two were unmanageable at home, and here where the children are all wild noisy untaught and full of life these older ones lead off, and it is equal to training cattle except that the children can make more noise."⁶⁸

Mrs. Wittenmyer's work of mercy received little recognition in the official records of the Civil War. That the sick men appreciated her services, however, is evident from the following comment by George D. Perkins, former editor of *The Sioux City Journal*, written at the time of her death.

"She belonged to Iowa during the Civil War. She was a leader among Iowa women in the collection and distribution of sanitary supplies for soldiers in the field. I was a member of Co. B, Thirty-first Iowa, and soon after our regiment reached Helena, Arkansas, I was taken violently ill. Our camp was utterly destitute of hospital supplies. The boys had fixed me up as well as they could. It was in the winter season and the rain fell almost incessantly. The boys gathered leaves and dried them and made a bed for me. My soldier overcoat was my pillow. In this situation, too weak to move more than my eyes and fingers, Mrs. Wittenmyer found me. She was just spying out the ground. She talked with me in such a cheery way, and when she left she said that in a few days they would have me in better shape. I do not remember all that followed, but I do remember that one day soon after her visit a real pillow took the place of my overcoat under my head. I was weak

⁶⁸ Letter from Mrs. W. H. Cole to Mrs. Wittenmyer, dated Farmington, November 20, 1864, in *War Correspondence of Annie Wittenmyer* (State Historical Department, Des Moines).

at the time, and I may as well confess that I instantly began to moisten it with tears. Of course, this is only one small incident in the army work of Annie Wittenmyer; but it is enough to enshrine her in my sacred memory.'⁶⁹

Mrs. Wittenmyer's interest in the soldiers and their families and the army nurses did not cease with the close of the war. She was one of the first members of the Woman's Relief Corps when it was formed in 1883 and in 1889 she was chosen national president. It was during this year of service that Mrs. Wittenmyer inaugurated the movement for a National Woman's Relief Corps Home. This was located at Madison, Lake County, Ohio, and was intended to house army nurses and the widows and mothers of soldiers. Mrs. Wittenmyer was also instrumental in securing a State home in Pennsylvania for mothers and widows of soldiers, for soldiers and their wives, and for soldiers' orphan children; and she was interested in securing for the Woman's Relief Corps the prison grounds at Andersonville.⁷⁰

In 1892 Mrs. Wittenmyer went to Washington to see what she could do about securing pensions for the army nurses. The time was not auspicious, for the administration was considered hostile to pension legislation, but within five months she had secured a bill giving a pension of \$12.00 per month to needy women who had official recognition of six months service as nurses in the army. Many of these nurses had served without official enlistment and Mrs. Wittenmyer spent a great deal of her time and energy helping some of these women secure the data necessary for a pension.⁷¹

⁶⁹ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. IV, p. 482.

⁷⁰ *Mrs. Annie Wittenmyer* in the *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. IV, pp. 285, 286; *Journal of the Eighth National Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps*, 1890, pp. 23-33.

⁷¹ *United States Statutes at Large*, Vol. XXVII, Ch. 379, p. 348.

It was not until 1898, however, that Mrs. Wittenmyer herself received a pension. At that time she was past seventy years of age and within two years of her death. The House Committee recommended the passage of this special pension bill in the following report:

Mrs. Wittenmyer served the soldiers during the entire civil war, with the approval of Secretary Stanton. At the request of the Surgeon-General of the Army she collected supplies for the sick and wounded amounting to about \$200,000 in value, established dietary kitchens, which became a recognized part of the hospital service, and appointed dietary cooks, who are recognized by the Pension Office, under a decision of Assistant Secretary Reynolds, as having been appointed by authority recognized by the War Department, and which recognition gives them a pensionable status under the act of August 5, 1892. Mrs. Wittenmyer also used about \$3,000 of her own funds in furnishing food delicacies, etc., for the soldiers.

She is now old and in straitened circumstances. A generous Government that she did not desert when it needed heroes and heroines will not desert her now. The case is a worthy one.

The bill, providing for a pension of twenty-five dollars a month, was approved on May 14, 1898.⁷²

The latter years of Mrs. Wittenmyer's life were largely devoted to religious and temperance work. Bishop Matthew Simpson of the Methodist Episcopal Church recognized her organizing ability and at the close of the war asked her to help with the organization of some home missionary work. In this connection she spoke before nearly all the annual conferences of the church and traveled thousands of miles from Maine to California.

Soon after she commenced this work, Mrs. Wittenmyer moved her home to Sanatoga, Pennsylvania, near Philadel-

⁷² *Congressional Record*, 2nd Session, 55th Congress, p. 1199; *United States Statutes at Large*, Vol. XXX, p. 1442.

phia. There she started a paper called *The Christian Woman*, an individual enterprise which she carried on for eleven years. Somewhat later she founded a similar paper for children which she called *The Christian Child*.⁷³

Children, indeed, were always of great importance in her thinking. As she had gathered the poor children of Keokuk into her home school, and planned and worked for the orphans of the soldiers, so she felt keenly the tragedy of the children raised in the poorer sections of the cities. In one of her books she has left a vivid description of the children in the slums who had "a life without a childhood". "In their innocence and helplessness", she said, "they find themselves, without choice of their own, in narrow, filthy quarters; nursed by drunken mothers; abused and cursed by brutal, besotted fathers; neglected and forsaken; struggling with the first gasp of life for life itself; breathing a polluted atmosphere".⁷⁴

Mrs. Wittenmyer had seen plenty of the evils of intemperance during her work in the camps and hospitals as well as in civilian life, and it is not surprising that after her war work was over she contributed her personality and organizing ability to the cause of temperance. In 1871 she published a book on the work of women along religious lines and urged the church women to fight intemperance and liquor selling in every way. In one chapter she commented upon drinking among women, following the Civil War. Part of this chapter read as follows:

There is no more alarming sign of the times than the increase of drunkenness *among the women of the higher classes*.

It is fearful enough to see men bloated and besotted with wine

⁷³ Mrs. Annie Wittenmyer in the *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. IV, p. 284; *Memories of Heroic Crusaders*, compiled by Anna M. De Yo, pp. 26, 27; *Biographical Sketch of Mrs. Annie Wittenmyer*.

⁷⁴ Wittenmyer's *Woman's Work for Jesus*, pp. 24, 25.

and strong drink, but drunkenness in women unsettles the very foundations of society.

It may be no greater sin for a woman to drink than a man, but it certainly is a greater social calamity.

We may not however conceal the fact, that drunkenness among women of all classes is greatly on the increase, and especially among the rich, and that there is not only wine upon the side-board and brandy in the secret drawer, but *public places of resort where women go to drink*. Restaurants, whose chief attraction is "the wine list." . . .

There are thousands of women to-day among the higher classes, who are more or less under the influence of liquor every afternoon, or who occasionally take a spree.

I have seen women elegantly dressed, living in palatial residences, who were so drunk that they could not get out of their carriage without the aid of a foot-man.

And I have very often seen women in street and railway cars so much under the influence of liquor, that they could not give an intelligent answer to the simplest question — mothers with little children, who could not be trusted with them in their arms, by the father, or the servants in attendance.

Much of the use of liquor among women, Mrs. Wittenmyer attributed to the free use of patent medicines, most of which she said were merely compounds of liquors with various drugs. Taken month after month they created a demand for intoxicating liquor and more people were made drunkards by their use than were cured of disease. The women of the churches, she declared, "must not only *banish liquors from their houses, but patent medicines from their closets, and bring their whole influence to bear against every form of this evil.*"⁷⁵

Intemperance was, indeed, prevalent in the United States at this time. During the year ending on June 30, 1873, the people of the United States with a population in 1870 of

⁷⁵ Wittenmyer's *Woman's Work for Jesus*, pp. 211-217.

approximately 39,000,000 and in a time of acute depression of industry drank more than 65,000,000 gallons of distilled spirits and over 300,000,000 gallons of fermented liquors such as beer. Mrs. Wittenmyer declared that the Chief of the Bureau of Statistics at Washington estimated the drink bill in one year at \$600,000,000 or more, an average of about \$15.00 per capita.⁷⁶

The liquor dealers, declared Mrs. Wittenmyer, "were so intrenched behind law, so sheltered in politics, so guarded and sustained by the government, that they were an oligarchy that could dictate to statesmen, and control legislatures, and defy public sentiment. Restrictive laws in most states were weak and inoperative, and the demand for 'free rum' and a 'free Sabbath' was fierce and loud".⁷⁷

When the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union was organized at Cleveland, Ohio, on November 18, 1874, Mrs. Wittenmyer was one of the nine women nominated for president. Miss Frances E. Willard was also a nominee, but withdrew her name and Mrs. Wittenmyer was elected the first president, receiving 51 out of the 66 votes cast. In 1875 and 1876 Mrs. Wittenmyer was reelected without opposition, but in 1877 a contest arose. Mrs. Judith Ellen Foster of Iowa nominated Miss Willard, but Mrs. Wittenmyer was reelected with 69 out of the 111 votes cast. She was again elected in 1878 but in 1879 Miss Willard received a majority and Mrs. Wittenmyer, then presiding, requested that some delegate who had voted for her should move to make the ballot unanimous for Miss Willard.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ *Cyclopedia of Temperance and Prohibition* (Funk & Wagnalls), p. 129; Wittenmyer's *History of the Woman's Temperance Crusade*, p. 26; *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1880, pp. 132, 133. Whiskey sold at wholesale at New York at approximately ninety-five cents per gallon.

⁷⁷ Wittenmyer's *History of the Woman's Temperance Crusade*, p. 27.

⁷⁸ Stewart's *Lest We Forget — Annie Wittenmyer, First President of the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union*, pp. 4-6.

In 1875 a State Temperance Union was formed at Philadelphia. A group of about one hundred women, headed by Mrs. Wittenmyer, went from the convention to Harrisburg to ask Governor John F. Hartranft to veto the proposed bill repealing the State local option law. The Governor received the women, but, in effect, refused their request.⁷⁹

While Mrs. Wittenmyer was president of the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union, twenty-three States were organized as auxiliaries and a national W. C. T. U. paper, *The Woman's Temperance Union*, was founded, beginning in June, 1875. Her work was heavy. Sometimes she spoke six evenings a week, and she attended all the large conventions of which there were forty-six in 1875 alone. She also planned the first Woman's National Camp Meeting, held at Ocean Grove, New Jersey. The meeting was wholly conducted by women and most of the speakers were women. One of the acts which characterized her administration was the presentation of a huge petition asking Congress for prohibition of the liquor traffic. The signatures were counted until they reached forty thousand, after that the memorials some of them measuring from fifty to a hundred feet were simply marked "uncounted thousands". The document was taken to Washington in February, 1875, and Mrs. Wittenmyer was invited to speak before the committee, but the matter was not even considered by Congress.⁸⁰

Mrs. Wittenmyer continued her work for temperance throughout her life, although she seems to have disagreed with certain activities of the W. C. T. U. in later years, because she believed that they made the Union politically partisan. She then became a member of a non-political or-

⁷⁹ Wittenmyer's *History of the Woman's Temperance Crusade*, pp. 503, 504.

⁸⁰ Gordon's *Women Torch-Bearers*, pp. 17, 18, 265; *Memories of Heroic Crusaders*, compiled by Anna M. De Yo, pp. 27-29.

ganization, serving two years as president. Later she gave support to the Anti-Saloon League.⁸¹

Although Mrs. Wittenmyer was interested in all kinds of church and public welfare work, she seems not to have taken part in the equal suffrage movement, although she wrote editorials defending the right of women to preach and speak in the pulpit and printed in her paper a series of sermons by women evangelists.

Mrs. Wittenmyer found time, however, to do a great deal of writing, chiefly in connection with the public work in which she was interested. Her little volume, *Under the Guns*, is a collection of short, dramatic stories of her war experiences. It contains an introduction by Mrs. U. S. Grant, written in 1894, in which she says: "I used to look upon this brave, heroic woman with profound respect and admiration, which, if it were possible, has grown the greater in the thirty years that have passed since then."

Woman's Work for Jesus presented her ideals of the conduct and work of Christian women in their communities. She also published a *History of the Woman's Temperance Crusade*, *Women of the Reformation*, and *A Jeweled Ministry*. In addition to her work on the two papers which she founded, she edited a Relief Corps column in the *New York Weekly Tribune* for some five years, and she was for many years associate editor of *Home and Country*, a New York magazine. *The Red Book* was prepared as a manual for the Woman's Relief Corps.⁸²

Mrs. Wittenmyer was also the author of a number of hymns. Among these are "The Valley of Blessing", "When the Curtains Are Lifted", "Jesus Is Mighty to Save", "A

⁸¹ Mrs. Annie Wittenmyer in the *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. IV, p. 285.

⁸² Mrs. Annie Wittenmyer in the *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. IV, p. 278; *Memories of Heroic Crusaders*, compiled by Anna M. De Yo, p. 27; *Annie Wittenmyer*, pamphlet issued by the W. C. T. U.

Wonderful Joy", and "When I Stand on the Streets of Gold".

The first stanza of this last named hymn reads as follows:

The burdens of life may be many,
The frowns of the world may be cold,
To me it will matter but little,
When I stand on the streets of gold.
With joy I shall enter the city;
The face of my Savior behold,
And I shall be changed and be like him,
When I stand on the streets of gold.⁸³

Mrs. Wittenmyer spent the last years of her life at Sana-toga, Pennsylvania. Here, in an old mansion surrounded by some sixty-five acres of ground, she spent her time when she was not busy with her public duties. On her seventieth birthday, in 1897, Mrs. Wittenmyer received congratulations and testimonials from all over the country. The gifts and money, it was estimated, amounted to some \$3600.

Mrs. Wittenmyer died in her home on the night of February 2, 1900. That her interest in her work continued until the last is evident from the fact that earlier that day she had lectured at Pottstown, Pennsylvania.⁸⁴ "Let her own works praise her in the gates".

RUTH A. GALLAHER

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⁸³ This hymn was copyrighted in 1886 by Mrs. Wittenmyer.

⁸⁴ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. IV, pp. 287, 402.