

# Clara Barton

**“The Angel of the Battlefields”**



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by

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## “The Angel of the Battlefields”

For several weeks the sound of hammer and saw had been heard on the Barton farm where a new barn was being built. The framework was almost up, and David Barton and his little sister Clara, with a group of friends, were eagerly watching the carpenters, who were just fixing the high rafters to the ridge-pole.

"I dare you to climb to the top, Dave!" suddenly challenged a boy in the group.

David Barton, who was known as the "Buffalo Bill" of the neighborhood, always took a dare. Almost before the challenge had been given his coat was off and he had started toward the new building amid a chorus of cries: "Good for you, Dave!" from the group of young spectators who were always thrilled by his daring exploits. Only the little sister Clara protested.

"Don't, David," she exclaimed. "It isn't safe."

Her warning was not heeded. Up went the sure-footed athlete until he had almost reached the topmost peak of the barn. Crash! a board gave way under his feet, and down to the ground he was hurled, landing on his back on a pile of heavy boards. Limp and lifeless he lay there, a strange contrast to the vigorous young man who had climbed up the building only a few moments earlier, and the accident seemed to paralyze the faculties of those who saw it happen. It was not the builders or the older persons present who spoke first, but small, dark-eyed, determined Clara, who idolized her brother.

"Get mother, and go for the doctor, quick!" she commanded, and in less time than it takes to tell it the entire Barton family had been summoned to the scene of the disaster, and a doctor was bending over the unconscious man.

Dorothy and Sally, the grown-up sisters, hastily obeyed the doctor's orders, and made a room in the farm-house ready for their injured brother, while Stephen Barton and one of the workmen carried him in as gently as possible and laid him on the bed which he was not to leave for many weary months. Examination proved that the injury was a serious one, and there was need of careful and continuous nursing. To the surprise of the whole family, who looked on eleven-year-old Clara, the youngest of them all, as still a baby, when Mrs. Barton made ready to take charge of the sick-room, she found a resolute little figure seated by the bedside, with determination to remain there showing on every line of her expressive face.

"Let me take care of him! I can do it—I want to. Please, oh, please!" pleaded Clara.

At first the coveted permission was denied her, for how could a girl so young take care of a dangerously injured man? But as the weary days and nights of watching wore away and it seemed as if there would be no end to them, from sheer exhaustion the older members of the family yielded their places temporarily to Clara. Then one day when the doctor came and found her in charge, the sick-room was so tidy

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and quiet, and the young nurse was so clear-minded and ready to obey his slightest order, that when she begged him to let her take care of her brother he gave his hearty permission, and Clara had won her way.

From that time on, through long months, she was the member of the family whose entire thought and care was centered in the invalid. David was very sick for such a long time that it seemed as if he could never rally, and his one great comfort was having Clara near him. Hour after hour, and day after day, she sat by his bedside, his thin hand clasped in her strong one, with the patience of a much older, wiser nurse. She practically shut herself up in that sick-room for two whole years, and it seemed as if there was nothing too hard for her to do well and quickly, if in any way it would make David more comfortable. Finally a new kind of bath was tried with success. David was cured, and Clara Barton had served her earliest apprenticeship as a nurse.

Let us look back and see what went into the making of an eleven-year-old child who would give two years of her life to a task like that.

On Christmas Day of the year 1821, Clarissa Harlowe, as she was named, or "Clara" Barton, as she was always called, was born in her father's home near the town of Oxford, Worcester County, Massachusetts. Her oldest sister Dorothy was seventeen at that time, and her oldest brother Stephen, fifteen, while David was thirteen and Sally ten years old; so it was a long time since there had been a baby in the family, and all were so delighted over the event that Clara Barton says in her *Recollections*, "I am told the family jubilation upon the occasion was so great that the entire dinner and tea sets had to be changed for the serving of the noble guests who gathered."

The house in which the Christmas child was born was a simple farm-house on a hill-top, and inside nearly everything was home-made, even the crib in which the baby was cradled. Outside, the flat flagstone in front of the door was marked by the hand tools of the father. Stephen Barton, or Captain Barton as he was called, was a man of marked military tastes, who had served under "Mad Anthony" Wayne in campaigns against the Indians. In his youngest daughter Clara he found a real comrade, and, perched on his knee, she early gained a passionate love of her country and a child's simple knowledge of its history through the thrilling tales he told her. In speaking of those days she says:

"I listened breathlessly to his war stories. Illustrations were called for, and we made battles and fought them. Every shade of military etiquette was regarded. Colonels, captains, and sergeants were given their proper place and rank. So with the political world; the President, Cabinet, and leading officers of the government were learned by heart, and nothing gratified the keen humor of my father more than the parrot-like readiness with which I lisped these difficult names." That they did not mean much even to such a precocious child as Clara Barton is shown by an incident of those early days, when her sister Dorothy asked her how she supposed a Vice-President looked.

"I suppose he is about as big as our barn, and green!" was the quick reply.

But though the child did not understand all that was poured into her greedy little mind by an eager father, yet it bore fruit in later years, for she says: "When later I ... was suddenly thrust into the mysteries of war, and had to take my place and part in it, I found myself far less a stranger to the conditions than most women, or even ordinary men, for that matter. I never addressed a colonel as captain, got my cavalry on foot, or mounted my infantry!"

When she was not listening to her father's stories or helping her mother with the housework, which, good housewife that Mrs. Barton was, she took great pains to teach her youngest daughter how to do well, Clara was as busy as possible in some other way. In that household there were no drones, and the little girl was not even allowed to waste time in playing with dolls, although she was given time to take care of her pets, of which she had an ever-increasing collection, including dogs, cats, geese, hens, turkeys, and even two heifers which she learned to milk.

Dorothy, Sally and Stephen Barton were teachers, and as Clara early showed her quick mentality, they all took great interest in educating her according to their different ideas. As a result, when the little girl was three years old she could read a story to herself, and knew a little bit about geography, arithmetic and spelling. That decided the family. Such a bright mind must be developed as early as possible. So on a fine, clear winter morning Stephen lifted her to his shoulders with a swing of his strong arms, and in that way she rode to the school taught by Col. Richard C. Stone, a mile and a half from the Barton farm. Although the new pupil was such a very little girl, and so shy that often she was not able even to answer when she was spoken to or to join the class in reciting Bible verses or in singing songs, yet Colonel Stone was deeply interested in her, and his manner of teaching was so unusual that the years with him made a lasting impression on his youngest scholar's mind. To Clara it was a real loss when, at the end of five years, the Colonel left the school, to be succeeded by Clara's sisters in summer and by her brother Stephen in winter.

David was Clara's favorite brother. So athletic was he, and so fond of all forms of out-of-door life and exercise, that he was no less than a hero to the little sister, who watched him with intense admiration, and in her secret heart determined that some day and in some way she, too, would be brave and daring.

Having decided this in her own mind, when David suggested teaching her to ride, she was delighted, and, hiding her fear, at once took her first lesson on one of the beautiful blooded colts which were a feature of her father's farm. In her *Story of My Childhood* she says: "It was David's delight to take me, a little girl five years old, to the field, seize a couple of those beautiful grazing creatures, broken only to the halter and bit, and, gathering the reins of both bridles in one hand, throw me on the back of one colt, spring on the other himself, and, catching me by the foot and bidding me 'cling fast to the mane,' gallop away over field and fen, in and out among the other colts, in wild glee like ourselves. They were merry rides we took. This was my riding-school. I never had any other, but it served me well.... Sometimes in later years when I found myself on a strange horse, in a troop saddle, flying for life or liberty in front of pursuit, I blessed the baby lessons of the wild gallops among the colts."

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And so it was that the child grew strong in body and alert in mind, while the routine of daily farm duties, when she was not at school or galloping over the fields with David, developed her in concentration and in inventive ability. Housekeeping at that time was crude, and most of the necessary articles used were made at home. There were no matches. The flint snapped by the lock was the only way of lighting a fire. Garments were homespun, and home-made food was dried, canned and cooked in large quantities by the busy housekeeper. Although there was always a fire blazing on the hearth of the home, it was thought to be a religious duty to have the meeting-house unheated on the Sabbath day. Little Clara, who was particularly susceptible to cold, bore the bitter chill of the building as bravely as she could, each week in the long winter, but one Sunday as she sat in the big pew, not daring to swing her feet, they grew more and more numb until at last, when she was obliged to stand on them, she fell over—her poor little feet were frozen, and she had to be carried home and thawed out!

When she was eight years old her father left his hill farm and moved down to the Learned house, a much bigger farm of three hundred acres, with the brook-like French river winding through its broad meadows, and three great barns standing in the lowlands between the hill and the house. Stephen and David remained on the hill to work their small farms there, and the other sisters stayed there, but Clara was not lonesome in the new home in the valley, for at that time she had as playmates the four children of Captain Barton's nephew, who had recently died. With them Clara played hide-and-seek in the big hay-mows, and other interesting games. Her most marked characteristic then and for many years afterward was her excessive shyness, yet when there was anything to do which did not include conversation she was always the champion. At times she was so bashful that even speaking to an intimate friend was often an agony to her, and it is said she once stayed home from meeting on Sunday rather than tell her mother that her gloves were too worn out to wear!

Inside the new house she found many fascinating things to do, and did them with eager interest. The house was being redecorated, and Clara went from room to room, watching the workmen, and even learned to grind and mix paints. Then she turned her attention to the paperers, who were so much amused with the child's cleverness that they showed her how to match, trim and hang paper, and in every room they good-naturedly let her paste up some piece of the decoration, so she felt that the house was truly hers, and never lost her affection for it in any of her later wanderings or changes of residence.

When the new home was completed inside Clara turned her attention to out-of-door matters and found more than one opportunity for daring feats. With shining eyes and bated breath, she learned to cross the little winding French river on teetering logs at its most dangerous depths. When this grew tame, she would go to the sawmill and ride out on the saw carriage twenty feet above the stream, and be pulled back on the returning log, and oh the joy of such dangerous sport!

By the time she was eleven years old her brothers had been so successful with their hill farms that they followed their father down to the valley of the river, where they

bought the sawmill and built new dams and a grain-mill, and Sally and Stephen, who both married, settled in homes near the Barton farm. Then came the building of the new barn and David's accident. Eleven-year-old Clara, a child in years but mature mentally, proved equal to the emergency and took up her rôle of nurse in the same vigorous way she went about everything—but she had to pay a high price for her devotion.

David was strong and well again, but the little sister who had been his constant companion through the weary months was far from normal. The family had been so occupied with the invalid that no thought had been given to his young nurse. Now with grave concern Captain Barton talked with his wife.

"She has not gained an ounce in weight in these two years," he said, "and she isn't an inch taller. If anything, she seems to be more morbidly self-conscious and shy than ever. What shall we do with her?"

That was the question. The years shut up in the sick-room had completely unfitted Clara for ordinary life; she seemed to be more afraid of speaking to any one, more afraid of being seen or talked to than ever before. All took a hand at helping her to forget herself. Sally, who knew what an imaginative nature her small sister had, interested her in reading poetry, which was a delight to Clara. At the same time her father and brothers kept her out-of-doors as much as possible, and her father gave her a fine horse of her own. She named him Billy, and at once jumped on his back to get acquainted. From that time the slim, graceful animal with his youthful rider became one of the features of the neighborhood as they galloped across country. But, despite all that was done to make her healthy and happy, her self-consciousness and shyness remained, and another way of curing her was tried. She was sent to the boarding-school which was kept by her old teacher, Colonel Stone. He was delighted to have her in the school, and her quick mind was an amazement to him; but she was so homesick that often it was impossible for her to study or to recite, while being with one hundred and fifty girls of her own age made her more bashful than ever. In despair, Colonel Stone advised her father to take her home before she became seriously sick, and soon she found herself again in her beloved haunts. After that time her brother Stephen taught her mathematics; and later, when two fine teachers came to Oxford, she studied Latin, philosophy and chemistry with them, besides literature, history and languages—finding herself far ahead of the other scholars of her age, although she had been buried in a sick-room for two years.

As long as she was busy she was contented, but when vacation came she was again miserable. Her active mind and body demanded constant work; when she did not have it she was simply wretched, and made those around her so.

One day, when she was in her brother's mill watching the busy weavers, she had a sudden desire to work a loom herself. When she mentioned this at home her mother was horrified, but Stephen, who understood her restless nature better, took Clara's side and a few days later she proudly took her place before her loom and with enthusiastic persistence mastered the mysteries of the flying shuttle. How long she would have kept on with the work cannot be guessed, for on the fifteenth day after

she began work the mill burned down, and she was again on the look-out for new employment for her active brain and body.

That she was a real girl was shown when, having discovered that she had no summer hat, she decided she must have one. Walking through the rye-fields, she had an idea. With quick interest in a new accomplishment, she cut a number of green rye stalks, carried them into the house and scalded them, then laid them out in the sun to bleach, and when they were white, she cut them into even lengths, pulled them apart with her teeth, braided them in eleven strands and made the first straw bonnet she ever owned.

Somehow or other the months of vacation wore away; then the question was, what to do next? Her nature demanded constant action. She was far ahead of others of her own age in the matter of studies, and Mrs. Barton was in real bewilderment as to what to do with her youngest child. A phrenologist, who was a keen observer of child nature, was visiting the Bartons at that time, and Clara, who had the mumps and was lying on the lounge in the adjoining room, heard her mother tell their guest of her daughter's restlessness and self-consciousness and ask his advice. Listening eagerly, she heard his reply:

"The sensitive nature will always remain," he said. "She will never assert herself for herself; she will suffer wrong first. But for others she will be perfectly fearless. Throw responsibility upon her. Give her a school to teach."

The very words, "give her a school to teach," sent a shiver of fear through Clara's frame, as she lay there listening, but at the same time she felt a thrill of pleasure at the idea of doing something so important as teaching. If her mother was so much troubled about her peculiar traits as to be obliged to talk them over with a stranger, they must be very hard to bear. She would set to work to be something quite different, and she would begin at once!

And so it happened that when Clara Barton was fifteen years old she followed in the footsteps of her brother and sisters and became a teacher. As soon as she decided to take the step, she was given District School No. 9, up in "Texas village," and in May, 1836, "after passing the teachers' examination with a mark of 'excellent,' she put down her skirts and put up her hair and walked to the little schoolhouse, to face and address her forty scholars." That was one of the most awful moments of her life. When the rows of pupils were ranged before her, and she was supposed to open the exercises by reading from the Bible, she could not find her voice, and her hand trembled so visibly that she was afraid to turn the pages and so disclose her panic. But no one knew. With perfect outward calmness, she kept her eyes on the open book until her pulse beat less fast, then she looked straight ahead and in a steady voice asked them to each read a verse in turn. This was a new and delightful plan to her pupils, who were still more pleased when the reading was over to have the new teacher question them in a friendly way about the meaning of the verses they had just read in the "Sermon on the Mount."

That first day proved her marked ability as a teacher, and so kindly and intimate was she with her scholars that they became more her comrades than her pupils.



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When the four rough boys of the school "tried her out" to see how much she could endure, to their astonishment, instead of being able to lock her out of the building as they had done with the previous teacher, she showed such pluck and physical strength that their respect was won and kept. After that, almost daily, at recess time she would join them in games such as no teacher had ever played with them before. And with her success Clara gained a new assurance and a less shy manner, although she never entirely lost her self-consciousness.

So successful was she with that first school that it was the preface to sixteen years of continuous teaching, winter and summer. Her two most interesting experiences as a teacher were in North Oxford and in Bordentown, New Jersey. North Oxford was the mill village where her brother's factories were, and where there were hundreds of children. When her popularity as the teacher in No. 9, Texas village, spread to North Oxford, she was asked to go there to start a school for operatives. This was a piece of work to her liking, and for ten years she says: "I stood with them in the crowded school-room summer and winter, without change or relaxation. I saw my little lisping boys become overseers, and my stalwart overseers become business men and themselves owners of mills. My little girls grew to be teachers and mothers of families." Here was satisfying work for the busy brain and active body! But even that did not take up all of her time; she found long hours in which to read and study, and also acted as Stephen's bookkeeper in the mill, during those years in North Oxford.

At the end of the ten years she broke away from the routine of teaching and became a pupil herself in Clinton Liberal Institute in New York, as there were no colleges for women at that time. The year of study refreshed her in mind and body, and, as her mother died during the year and her father decided to live with his married children, Clara was free to seek the work of the world wherever it should claim her.

From the seminary she went to Hightstown to teach, and while there rumors of her ability to cope with conditions and unruly scholars reached the village of Bordentown, ten miles away from Hightstown. Many attempts had been made to start a public school there, but without success. As a result the children of the poor ran wild in the streets, or when an attempt was made to open a school they broke up the sessions by their lawless behavior. When she heard this, Clara Barton was so greatly interested that she went to Bordentown to talk it over with the town officials, who told her that it was useless to think of making the experiment again.

Clara Barton's eyes flashed with determination. "Give me three months, and I will teach free!" she said.

As a result of her generous offer, she was allowed to rent a tumble-down, unoccupied building, and opened her school with six pupils! Every one of the six became so enthusiastic over a teacher who was interested in each individual that their friends were eager to be her pupils, too, and parents were anxious to see what the wonderful little bright-eyed, friendly woman could do for their children. At the end of five weeks the building was too small for her scholars, and the roll-call had almost six hundred names on it. To a triumphant teacher who had volunteered her services to

try an experiment, a regular salary was now offered and an assistant given her. And so Clara Barton again proved her talent for teaching.

But Bordentown was her last school. When she had been there for two years and perfected the public-school system, her voice gave out as a result of constant use, and she went to Washington for a rest. But it did not take her long to recuperate, and soon she was eagerly looking out for some new avenue of opportunity to take the place of teaching. Government work interested her, and she heard rumors of scandals in the Patent Office, where some dishonest clerks had been copying and selling the ideas of inventors who had filed patents. This roused her anger, for she felt the inventors were defrauded and undefended individuals who needed a protector. As her brother's bookkeeper, she had developed a clear, copper-plate handwriting, which would aid her in trying to get the position she determined to try for. Through a relative in Congress she secured a position in the Patent Office, and when it was proved that she was acceptable there, although she was the first woman ever appointed independently to a clerkship in the department, she was given charge of a confidential desk, where she had the care of such papers as had not been carefully enough guarded before. Her salary of \$1,400 a year was as much as was received by the men in the department, which created much jealousy, and she had many sneers and snubs and much disagreeable treatment from the other clerks; but she went serenely on her way, doing her duty and enjoying the new line of work with its chances for observation of the government and its working.

War clouds were now beginning to gather over both North and South, and signs of an approaching conflict were ominously clear in Washington, where slavery sentiments swayed all departments. Clara Barton saw with keen mental vision all the signs of the times, and there was much to worry her, for from the first she was clearly and uncompromisingly on the unpopular side of the disturbing question, and believed with Charles Sumner that "Freedom is national; slavery is sectional." She believed in the Union and she believed in the freedom of the individual. So eager was she to help the government in the coming national crisis that she offered her services as a clerk, to do the work of two dishonest men; for this work she was to receive the salary of one clerk, and pay back into the Treasury that of the other, in order to save all the money possible for an emergency. No deed gives a clearer insight into the character of Clara Barton than that. As it was in the case of the school in Bordentown, so was it now. If public service was the question, she had no thought of self or of money—the point was to achieve the desired end. And now she was nearer the goal of her own personal service to the world than she dreamed.

Fort Sumter was fired on. President Lincoln called for seventy-five thousand troops, and all those who were at the seat of government knew that the hour for sacrifice of men and money had come. Massachusetts responded to the call for troops with four regiments, one of which, the Sixth, set out for Washington at once. As they marched through the streets of Baltimore they were attacked by a furious mob who succeeded in killing four soldiers and wounding many more, but the troopers fought them off as bravely as possible and marched on to the station, where they entrained for Washington, many of them arriving there in a pitiable condition. When they de-

trained at the national capital they were met by a large number of sympathetic women, among them Clara Barton, who recognized some of her old friends and pupils among those who were limping, or with injured arms, or carried on stretchers, and her heart went out to them in loyalty and pride, for they were giving their services to their country in an hour of need.

The men who had not been injured were temporarily quartered at the Capitol, while the wounded were taken to the Infirmary, where their wounds were dressed at once, any material on hand being used. When the supply of handkerchiefs gave out, Clara Barton, as well as other impromptu nurses, rushed to their homes and tore up sheets for bandages, and Miss Barton also filled a large box full of needles, pins, buttons, salves and other necessities, and carried it back to the Infirmary, where she had her first experience in caring for wounded soldiers. When she could leave the Infirmary, she went to the Capitol and found the poor fellows there famished, for they had not been expected and their commissary stores had not yet been unloaded. Down to the market hurried the energetic volunteer nurse, and soon came back carrying a big basketful of supplies, which made a feast for the hungry men. Then, as she afterward wrote in a letter to a friend, "the boys, who had just one copy of the *Worcester Spy* of the 22nd, were so anxious to know its contents that they begged me to read it to them, which I did—mounting to the desk of the President of the Senate, that they all might hear."

In her letter she says, "You would have smiled to see *me* and my *audience* in the Senate Chamber of the U. S. A." and adds: "God bless the noble fellows who leave their quiet happy homes at the call of their country. So far as our poor efforts can reach, they shall never lack a kindly hand or a sister's sympathy if they come."

Eager to have the soldiers given all the comforts and necessities which could be obtained, Miss Barton put an advertisement in the *Worcester Spy*, asking for supplies and money for the wounded and needy in the Sixth Regiment, and stating that she herself would receive and give them out. The response was overwhelming. So much food and clothing was sent to her that her small apartment overflowed with supplies, and she was obliged to rent rooms in a warehouse to store them.

And now Clara Barton was a new creature. She felt within herself the ability to meet a great need, and the energy which for so long had been pent up within her was poured out in a seemingly unending supply of tenderness and of help for suffering humanity. There was no time now for sensitiveness, or for shyness; there was work to do through the all-too-short days and nights of this struggle for freedom and unity of the nation. Gone was the teacher, gone the woman of normal thought and action, and in her place we find the "Angel of the Battlefields," who for the remainder of her life was to be one of the world's foremost figures in ministrations to the suffering, where suffering would otherwise have had no alleviation.

"On the 21st of July the Union forces were routed at Bull Run with terrific loss of life and many wounded. Two months later the battle of Ball's Bluff occurred, in which there were three Massachusetts regiments engaged, with many of Clara Barton's lifelong friends among them. By this time the hospitals and commissaries in Washington had been well organized, and there was no desperate need for the sup-

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plies which were still being shipped to Miss Barton in great quantities, nor was there need of her nursing. However, she went to the docks to meet the wounded and dying soldiers, who were brought up the Potomac on transports." Often they were in such a condition from neglect that they were baked as hard as the backs of turtles with blood and clay, and it took all a woman's swift and tender care, together with the use of warm water, restoratives, dressings, and delicacies to make them at all comfortable. Then their volunteer nurse would go with them to the hospitals, and back again in the ambulance she would drive, to repeat her works of mercy.

But she was not satisfied with this work. If wounds could be attended to as soon as the men fell in battle, hundreds of deaths could be prevented, and she made up her mind that in some way she was going to override public sentiment, which in those early days of the war did not allow women nurses to go to the front, for she was determined to go to the very firing-line itself as a nurse. And, as she had got her way at other times in her life, so now she achieved her end, but after months of rebuffs and of tedious waiting, during which the bloody battle of Fair Oaks had been fought with terrible losses on each side. The seven days' retreat of the Union forces under McClellan followed, with eight thousand wounded and over seventeen hundred killed. On top of this came the battle of Cedar Mountain, with many Northerners killed, wounded and missing.



One day, when Assistant Quartermaster-General Rucker, who was one of the great-hearts of the army, was at his desk, he was confronted by a bright-eyed little woman, to whose appeal he gave sympathetic attention.

"I have no fear of the battle-field," she told him. "I have large stores, but no way to reach the troops."

Then she described the condition of the soldiers when they reached Washington, often too late for any care to save them or heal their wounds. She *must* go to the battle-front where she could care for them quickly. So overjoyed was she to be given the needed passports as well as kindly interest and good wishes that she burst into tears as she gripped the old soldier's hand, then she hurried out to make immediate plans for having her supplies loaded on a railroad car. As she tersely put it, "When our armies fought on Cedar Mountain, I broke the shackles and went to the field." When she began her work on the day after the battle she found an immense amount of work to do. Later she described her experience in this modest way:

"Five days and nights with three hours' sleep—a narrow escape from capture—and some days of getting the wounded into hospitals at Washington brought Saturday, August 30th. And if you chance to feel that the positions I occupied were rough and unseemly for a woman, I can only reply that they were rough and unseemly for men. But under all, lay the life of a nation. I had inherited the rich blessing of health and strength of constitution such as are seldom given to women, and I felt that some return was due from me and that I ought to be there."

The famous army nurse had served her novitiate now, and through the weary years of the war which dragged on with alternate gains and losses for the Union forces, Clara Barton's name began to be spoken of with awe and deep affection wherever a wounded man had come under her gentle care. Being under no society or leader, she was free to come or go at will. But from the first day of her work at the front she was encouraged in it by individual officers who saw the great value of what she accomplished.

At Antietam, when the fighting began, her wagons were driven through a field of tall corn to an old homestead, while the shot whizzed thick around them. In the barnyard and among the corn lay torn and bleeding men—the worst cases, just brought from the places where they had fallen. All was in confusion, for the army medical supplies had not yet arrived, and the surgeons were trying to make bandages of corn husks. The new army nurse immediately had her supplies unloaded and hurried out to revive the wounded with bread soaked in wine. When her bread gave out there were still many to be fed. All the supplies she had were three cases of unopened wine.

"Open the wine, and give that," she commanded, "and God help us."

Her order was obeyed, and as she watched the cases being unpacked her eyes fell on the packing around the bottles of wine. It was nicely sifted corn-meal. If it had been gold dust it could not have been more valuable. The wine was unpacked as quickly as possible; kettles were found in the farm-house, and in a twinkling that corn-meal was mixed with water, and good gruel for the men was in the making. Then it occurred to Miss Barton to see what was in the cellar of the old house, and there three barrels of flour and a bag of salt were found, stored by the rebels and left behind when they marched away. "What wealth!" exclaimed the woman, who was frantically eager to feed her flock. All that night Clara Barton and her workers carried buckets of hot gruel up and down the long lines to the wounded and dying men. Then up to the farm-house went the army nurse, where, in the dim light of a lone flickering

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candle, she could dimly see the surgeon in charge, sitting in apparent despair by the table, his head resting in his hands. She tiptoed up to him and said, quietly, "You are tired, doctor."

Looking up, he exclaimed: "Tired? Yes, I am tired! Tired of such heartlessness and carelessness! And," he added, "think of the condition of things. Here are at least one thousand wounded men; terribly wounded, five hundred of whom cannot live till daylight without attention. That two-inch of candle is all I have, or can get. What can I do? How can I bear it?"

A smile played over Clara Barton's clear-cut face. Gently but firmly she took him by the elbow and led him to the door, pointing toward the barn, where dozens of lanterns gleamed like stars.

"What is it?" he exclaimed.

"The barn is lighted," she said, "and the house will be directly."

"Who did it?"

"I, doctor."

"Where did you get them?"

"Brought them with me."

"How many have you?"

"All you want, four boxes."

For a moment he stared at her as if to be sure he was not in a dream. Then he turned away without a word, and never spoke of the matter again, but his deference to Clara Barton from that time was the greatest a man can pay a woman.

Not until all her stores were exhausted and she was sick with a fever would Clara Barton leave the battle-field of Antietam; then, dragging herself to the train, she went back to Washington to be taken care of until she was better. When at last she was strong enough to work again she went to see her friend Quartermaster-General Rucker, and told him that if she had had five wagons she would have had enough supplies for all the wounded at Antietam. With an expression of intense admiration on his soldierly face as he watched the brave volunteer nurse, he declared:

"You shall have enough next time!"

The promise was made good. Having recognized the value of her efficient services, the Government assisted in every way, making it possible for her to carry on her work on the battle-fields and in military camps and hospitals in the best way.

Clara Barton!—Only the men who lay wounded or dying on the battle-field knew the thrill and the comfort that the name carried. Again and again her life was in danger—once at Antietam, when stooping to give a drink of water to an injured boy, a bullet whizzed between them. It ended the life of the poor lad, but only tore a hole in Clara Barton's sleeve. And so, again and again, it seemed as if a special Providence protected her from death or injury. At Fredericksburg, when the dead, starv-

ing and wounded lay frozen on the ground, and there was no effective organization for proper relief, with swift, silent efficiency Clara Barton moved among them, having the snow cleared away and under the banks finding famished, frozen figures which were once men. She rushed to have an old chimney torn down and built fire-blocks, over which she soon had kettles full of coffee and gruel steaming.

As she was bending over a wounded rebel, he whispered to her: "Lady, you have been kind to me ... every street of the city is covered by our cannon. When your entire army has reached the other side of the Rappahannock, they will find Fredericksburg only a slaughter-pen. Not a regiment will escape. Do not go over, for you will go to certain death."

She thanked him for the kindly warning and later told of the call that came to her to go across the river, and what happened. She says:

"At ten o'clock of the battle day when the rebel fire was hottest, the shells rolling down every street, and the bridge under the heavy cannonade, a courier dashed over, and, rushing up the steps of the house where I was, placed in my hand a crumpled, bloody piece of paper, a request from the lion-hearted old surgeon on the opposite shore, establishing his hospitals in the very jaws of death:

"Come to me,' he wrote. 'Your place is here.'

"The faces of the rough men working at my side, which eight weeks before had flushed with indignation at the thought of being controlled by a woman, grew ashy white as they guessed the nature of the summons, ... and they begged me to send them, but save myself. I could only allow them to go with me if they chose, and in twenty minutes we were rocking across the swaying bridge, the water hissing with shot on either side.

"Over into that city of death, its roofs riddled by shell, its every church a crowded hospital, every street a battle-line, every hill a rampart, every rock a fortress, and every stone wall a blazing line of forts.

"Oh, what a day's work was that! How those long lines of blue, rank on rank, charged over the open acres, up to the very mouths of those blazing guns, and how like grain before the sickle they fell and melted away.

"An officer stepped to my side to assist me over the débris at the end of the bridge. While our hands were raised in the act of stepping down, a piece of an exploding shell hissed through between us, just below our arms, carrying away a portion of both the skirts of his coat and my dress, rolling along the ground a few rods from us like a harmless pebble in the water. The next instant a solid shot thundered over our heads, a noble steed bounded in the air and with his gallant rider rolled in the dirt not thirty feet in the rear. Leaving the kind-hearted officer, I passed on alone to the hospital. In less than a half-hour he was brought to me—dead."

She was passing along a street in the heart of the city when she had to step aside to let a regiment of infantry march by. At that moment General Patrick saw her, and, thinking she was a frightened resident of the city who had been left behind in the general exodus, leaned from his saddle and said, reassuringly:

Clara Barton by Kate Dickinson Sweetser

"You are alone and in great danger, madam. Do you want protection?"

With a rare smile, Miss Barton said, as she looked at the ranks of soldiers, "Thank you, but I think I am the best-protected woman in the United States."

The near-by soldiers caught her words and cried out:

"That's so! That's so!" and the cheer they gave was echoed by line after line, until the sound of the shouting was like the cheers after a great victory. Bending low with a courtly smile, the general said:

"I believe you are right, madam!" and galloped away.

"At the battles of Cedar Mountain, Second Bull Run, Antietam, during the eight months' siege of Charleston, in the hospital at Fort Wagner, with the army in front of Petersburg and in the Wilderness and the hospitals about Richmond, there was no limit to the work Clara Barton accomplished for the sick and dying, but among all her experiences during those years of the war, the Battle of Fredericksburg was most unspeakably awful to her. And yet afterward she saw clearly that it was this defeat that gave birth to the Emancipation Proclamation.

"And the white May blossoms of '63 fell over the glad faces—the swarthy brows, the toil-worn hands of four million liberated slaves. 'America,' writes Miss Barton, 'had freed a race.'"

As the war drew to an end, President Lincoln received hundreds of letters from anxious parents asking for news of their boys. There were eighty thousand missing men whose families had no knowledge whether they were alive or dead. In despair, and believing that Clara Barton had more information of the soldiers than any one else to whom he could turn, the President requested her to take up the task, and the army nurse's tender heart was touched by the thought of helping so many mothers who had no news of their boys, and she went to work, aided by the hospital and burial lists she had compiled when on the field of action.

For four years she did this work, and it was a touching scene when she was called before the Committee on Investigation to tell of its results. With quiet simplicity she stood before the row of men and reported, "Over thirty thousand men, living and dead, already traced. No available funds for the necessary investigation; in consequence, over eight thousand dollars of my own income spent in the search."

As the men confronting her heard the words of the bright-eyed woman who was looked on as a sister by the soldiers from Maine to Virginia, whose name was a household one throughout the land, not one of them was ashamed to wipe the tears from his eyes! Later the government paid her back in part the money she had spent in her work; but she gave her time without charge as well as many a dollar which was never returned, counting it enough reward to read the joyful letters from happy, reunited families.

While doing this work she gave over three hundred lectures through the East and West, and as a speaker she held her audiences as if by magic, for she spoke glowingly about the work nearest to her heart, giving the proceeds of her lectures to the



continuance of that work. One evening in the winter of 1868, when speaking in one of the finest opera-houses in the East, before one of the most brilliant assemblages she had ever faced, her voice suddenly gave out, as it had in the days when she was teaching. The heroic army nurse and worker for the soldiers was worn out in body and nerves. As soon as she was able to travel the doctor commanded that she take three years of absolute rest. Obeying the order, she sailed for Europe, and in peaceful Switzerland with its natural beauty hoped to regain normal strength; for her own country had emerged from the black shadow of war, and she felt that her life work had been accomplished, that rest could henceforth be her portion.

But Clara Barton was still on the threshold of her complete achievement. When she had been in Switzerland only a month, and her broken-down nerves were just beginning to respond to the change of air and scene, she received a call which changed the color of her future. Her caller represented the International Committee of the Red Cross Society. Miss Barton did not know what the Red Cross was, and said so. He then explained the nature of the society, which was founded for the relief of sick and wounded soldiers, and he told his eager listener what she did not know, that back of the Society was the Geneva Treaty, which had been providing for such relief work, signed by all the civilized nations except her own. From that moment a new ambition was born in Clara Barton's heart—to find out why America had not signed the treaty, and to know more about the Red Cross Society.

Nearly a year later, while still resting in quiet Switzerland, there broke one day upon the clear air of her Swiss home the distant sounds of a royal party hastening back from a tour of the Alps. To Miss Barton's amazement it came in the direction of her villa. Finally flashed the scarlet and gold of the liveries of the Grand Duke of Baden. After the outriders came the splendid coach of the Grand Duchess, daughter of King Wilhelm of Prussia, so soon to be Emperor William of Germany. In it rode the Grand Duchess. After presenting her card through the footman, she herself alighted and clasped Miss Barton's hand, hailing her in the name of humanity, and said she already knew her through what she had done in the Civil War. Then, still clasping her hand in a tight grip of comradeship, she begged Miss Barton to leave Switzerland and aid in Red Cross work on the battle-fields of the Franco-Prussian War, which was in its beginnings. It was a real temptation to once again work for suffering humanity, yet she put it aside as unwise. But a year later, when the officers of the International Red Cross Society came again to beg that Miss Barton take the lead in a great systematic plan of relief work such as that for which she had become famous during the Civil War, she accepted. In the face of such consequences as her health might suffer from her decision, she rose, and, with head held high and flashing eyes, said:

"Command me!"

Clara Barton was no longer to be the Angel of the American battle-fields only—from that moment she belonged to the world, and never again could she be claimed by any one country. But it is as the guardian angel of our soldiers in the United States that her story concerns us, although there is reason for great pride in the part she

Clara Barton by Kate Dickinson Sweetser

played in nursing the wounded at Strassburg, and later when her presence carried comfort and healing to the victims of the fight with the Commune in Paris.

As tangible results of her work abroad, she was given an amethyst cut in the shape of a pansy, by the Grand Duchess of Baden, also the Serbian decoration of the Red Cross as the gift of Queen Natalie, and the Gold Cross of Remembrance, which was presented her by the Grand Duke and Duchess of Baden together. Queen Victoria, with her own hand, pinned an English decoration on her dress. The Iron Cross of Germany, as well as the Order of Melusine given her by the Prince of Jerusalem, were among an array of medals and pendants—enough to have made her a much-bejeweled person, had it been her way to make a show of her own rewards.

Truly Clara Barton belonged to the world, and a suffering person had no race or creed to her—she loved and cared for all.

When at last she returned to America, it was with the determination to have America sign the Geneva Treaty and to bring her own country into line with the Red Cross movement, which she had carefully watched in foreign countries, and which she saw was the solution to efficient aid of wounded men, either in the battle-field or wherever there had been any kind of disaster and there was need of quick aid for suffering. It was no easy task to convince American officials, but at last she achieved her end. On the 1st of March, 1882, the Geneva Treaty was signed by President Arthur, ratified by the Senate, and immediately the American National Red Cross was formed with Clara Barton as its first president.

The European "rest" trip had resulted in one of the greatest achievements for the benefit of mankind in which America ever participated, and its birth in the United States was due solely to the efforts of the determined, consecrated nurse who, when eleven years old, gave her all to a sick brother, and later consecrated her life to the service of a sick brotherhood of brave men.

On the day after her death, on April 12, 1912, one editor of an American newspaper paid a tribute to her that ranks with those paid the world's greatest heroes. He said:

"On the battle-fields of the Rebellion her hands bound up the wounds of the injured brave.

"The candles of her charity lighted the gloom of death for the heroes of Antietam and Fredericksburg.

"Across the ocean waters of her sweet labors followed the flag of the saintly Red Cross through the Franco-Prussian war.

"When stricken Armenia cried out for help in 1896, it was Clara Barton who led the relief corps of salvation and sustenance.

"A woman leading in answering the responsibility of civilization to the world!

"When McKinley's khaki boys struck the iron from Cuba's bondage it was Clara Barton, in her seventy-seventh year, who followed to the fever-ridden tropics to lead in the relief-work on Spanish battle-grounds.

"She is known wherever man appreciates humanity."