

Swiss voluntary labour service

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created a great impression and was subsequently translated into several languages. After many rebuffs from those who considered his ideas too fantastic, Dunant finally got the attention of the Geneva Public Utilities Society. They submitted his suggestions to a committee of five, which included Gustave Moynier, a later president of the International Red Cross Committee, and General Dufour, Commander-in-Chief of the Swiss army.

Dunant persevered in his campaign, and eventually, in October, 1863, a preliminary international conference took place at Geneva. The results of the same were so gratifying that on August 22, 1864, the International Red Cross treaty was signed in a chamber of the City Hall at Geneva, which is now known as the Alabama Room. Fifty-four nations became members of the International Red Cross Society upon its birth, and four additional countries joined later.

Geneva has ever since been the headquarters of the International Red Cross Society. Dunant lived to witness the triumph and growth of the cause for which he had laboured with such disinterested zeal. He had been a well-to-do man, but financial reverses reduced him for some considerable time to a stage of poverty. However, in 1901, he was given the Nobel peace prize, and the subsequent material relief and world recognition it brought to him made his old age brighter. He died in 1910 at the age of 82, at Heiden, canton of Appenzell. On his hundredth birthday anniversary in 1928 the Swiss Red Cross made a collection for a memorial worthy of the great humanitarian and this monument was unveiled in 1931 at Zurich, Dunant's last resting place.

SWISS VOLUNTARY LABOUR SERVICE.

This year the receipts of the annual Swiss Independence Day collections on August 1st, were set aside in favour of the Voluntary Labour Service. Switzerland at present has about 110,000 unemployed in Winter and 50,000 in Summer. Almost a fifth of these idle are persons under 24 years of age, for whose morale work is far more essential than mere financial relief.

For the benefit of these young unemployed, of 16 to 24 years of age, the Swiss Government has established a Voluntary Labour Service. This service emphasizes the ethical value of work, and is arranged in such a manner that the youthful unemployed are fortified in their desire to work. Whenever possible, an opportunity is given to them to retain their skill in their profession or trade. The duration of individual service is seldom permitted to exceed three months at a time and six months altogether per year.

Participants in the Voluntary Labour Service receive free board and room, a small amount of pocket money, and their travelling expenses. They are insured against accident and illness, and their working clothes and shoes are loaned to them. The service for men includes road construction, archaeological excavations, building of hostels for youth, also vocational work, while some units teach the arts of good housekeeping to the girls.

After a young person has done eight weeks voluntary service, he or she is given an official certificate to this effect, and employment agencies, as well as employers, have already come to regard such a document as a special recommendation for willingness to work on the part of its holder.

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