



CLARA BARTON

Founder of the American Red Cross

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CLARA Barton is best known as the founder of the American Red Cross. Fifty years ago she was included in every American history book, and encyclopedias today describe her as a philanthropist, a humanitarian, a patriot, "a great American woman who devoted her life to the good of humanity."

Clara Barton was born in Oxford, Massachusetts the same year that Mary Baker was born in Bow, New Hampshire. In 1907, at 86 years of age, Miss Barton was publishing the *Story of My Childhood*. At that time some newspapers and magazines had been publishing lies and malicious attacks upon Mary Baker Eddy and Christian Science for over a year until the Discoverer and her discovery were on every tongue and daily press copy for all the papers.

Early in January of 1908 Viola Rodgers interviewed Miss Clara Barton asking the latter's opinion of the much discussed Leader and her religion. Miss Rodgers' story appeared as follows the next day in the *New York American*:

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MOST POTENT FACTOR
IN RELIGIOUS LIFE, SAYS CLARA BARTON

While not an acknowledged Christian Scientist, Miss Clara Barton today talked with me regarding this wonderful cult in a manner which left no doubt that the great woman patriot is greatly interested in the subject, and in Mrs. Eddy, its Founder. She said that

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she looked upon Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy as the one person, regardless of sex, living today, who has done

the greatest good for her fellow-creatures, and that Christian Science itself is the most remarkable as well as the most potent factor in religious life. Her admiration for Mrs. Eddy is beyond limitation, and she is intimately acquainted with the life history of the Founder of the Christian Science Church, for she outlined her story from the beginning and commented upon the magnificent single-handed struggle and sacrifice made by Mrs. Eddy in her effort to give Christian Science to the world.

"While I have not studied deeply enough the great religion founded by Mrs. Eddy to consider myself a Christian Scientist," said Miss Barton, "I can say that I look upon Christian Science, as I understand it, as the most ideally beautiful yet the most practical and comforting of beliefs. It is doing more in the world today, and will continue to as more people become cognizant of the beauty of its teachings, than any other one influence for good. Mrs.

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Eddy should have the respect, admiration, and love of the whole Nation, for she is its greatest woman. Her teachings spread love and good will among men, and a Christian Scientist cannot be a Christian Scientist unless he has eliminated greed and selfishness from his nature."

Asked if she had read Science and Health, Miss Barton said that she had, and was much comforted by its teachings. "Love," she said, "permeates all the teachings of this great woman,— so great, I believe, that at this perspective we can scarcely realize how great,— and looking into her life history we see nothing but self-sacrifice and selflessness. Never has Mrs. Eddy tried to bring her personality before the public. She has, on the other hand, isolated herself from the world, and her only motive in doing so,

I firmly believe, has been in order to let her teachings, instead of herself, reach the people. She has never exploited herself, but so profoundly has she been interested in bringing a great, joyous, healing and comforting religion to a people, that she made directly for that object, regardless of what criticism came to her in so doing. How beautifully she has managed her own unfortunate trials! Without malice, always with a kindness and charity that is almost beyond human comprehension, has this woman fought antagonism, and that only with love. And I say no one familiar with her life and her teachings can help but see the marvelous consistency and beauty of what she has given to the world in Christian Science. The Christian Scientists I have met all im-

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press me with that same spirit of unselfishness that is characteristic of Mrs. Eddy. They are an intelligent, thinking people, and they impress me that their belief comes after careful and scientific investigation and conviction, rather than from hysterical evangelism."

"Most troubles are exaggerated by the mental attitude, if not entirely caused by them," continued Miss Barton. "I have in mind the matter of age. Now it has been my plan in life never to celebrate or make anything of birthday anniversaries, because this only depresses and exaggerates the passing of years. The mind is so constructed that we have become firmly convinced that after a certain length of time we cease to be useful, and when our birthday calendar indicates that we have reached or are nearing that time, we become lax in our work and finally cease to accomplish; not because we feel in reality that we are no longer useful, but because we are supposed by

all laws and dictums to have finished the span of life allotted to work.

"Such a grave error! I have noticed it particularly among old soldiers. Why you know in attending many reunions of old soldiers I have noticed that nearly the whole of their conversation is upon the passing of time and upon their ages. They seem to think it quite marvelous that they are even alive, let alone having in mind the doing of anything for their fellow-creatures. It is not their fault, but the fault of the attitude of the world to the old in years. When a man has ceased to feel himself useful he is no longer useful, but I maintain that no one need feel that way just because he is fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty, or even ninety or a hundred years of age. That is according to year standards. Many men at eighty are as capable of being useful to the world as they were fifty years before; perhaps not in the same way, but maybe in a much more important way, for life gives experience with its years that is of some account, if made use of.

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"Birthday celebrations after one is ten are without any value, and what is more, I verily believe that they are harmful. Let your life be counted by the mile-stones of achievement and not by the time-piece of years. We would all be younger if that were so, and would live to be much older than we do at the present time, when the props are pulled from under us by tradition and precedent after threescore and ten has been reached. Today I feel as young in my own mind as I did a half century ago, and that is because I have not folded my hands and given up work, and have also given up the thought that I was not as useful as I had been in other years. Christian Science gives one the mental attitude to live one's

ANNOUNCING AUTHOR'S NAME

21

life in accordance with that idea, I believe."

