

THE SOLDIERS' AND SAILORS' FAMILIES

BY W. FRANK PERSONS,

Director General of Civilian Relief, the American Red Cross.

Although in the very nature of the case, soldiers and sailors are separated from their families, the Home Service of the American Red Cross reaches both the men, wherever they may be, and their loved ones at home. It is at once the means of sustaining the spirits of our fighting men and of preserving the welfare of their families. It is a tie that binds them together. Men may be the best soldiers in the world, but if things are not well with their families at home they lose efficiency through worry, and the morale of the army—that all-important factor—begins to fail.

So it is the patriotic duty as well as the humanitarian opportunity of Home Service workers of the American Red Cross to care for the lonely families of our fighting men. They *must* be encouraged to "carry on" without faltering. Their families must not be allowed to bear personal privation and so to double the willing sacrifices they have made. Every report from the training camps and from the French front mentions the excellent spirit of our troops. Will they maintain this morale while thousands of miles from home, through trench-life and battle, to the victorious end? The answer will be determined largely by the Home Service of the Red Cross, which must be the nation's assurance that no enlisted man's family will suffer for any essential thing that lies within its power to give.

There are representatives of the Home Service of the Red Cross in every training camp for soldiers and sailors in this country; they are with our troops in France; and their offer of help is on the bulletin-board of every ship of the Navy. They invite the confidence of the men, and win and deserve it. They learn of the anxieties of the enlisted men and of needs in their homes. Such messages are then promptly sent to the Home Service Sections of the Red Cross Chapters and their families are visited and helped. Then the encouraging news goes back to the husband or brother. He also is helped. That result is not hidden from those on this side the trenches. Daily letters are received like the following:



CAMP ———

December 10, 1917.

To the American Red Cross:

I wish to extend my sincere thanks to you for going to aid my wife and child whom I asked you to help last week. My wife wrote me that you came to see her. I highly appreciate that. *I can soldier better now.*

Yours sincerely,

No argument is necessary to show that Home Service must give the assurance that the soldier and sailor must have, if he is to do his best,—the assurance that in trouble or misfortune the Red Cross will do what *he* would do if he were at home instead of at the front or on the sea.

The Home Service of the Red Cross may assist, through morale, to shorten the conflict and so to lessen the consequences of battle, but it may do even more to save the social consequences of war at home. It may protect the homes left lonely and unprepared for emergencies; bring comfort and cheer to the homes left in anxiety and privation; safeguard the health of women and children; uphold the standards of child care, of working conditions and of recreation and education. So far as is humanly possible it may help to maintain the essential standards of home life, so that when the soldiers and sailors return from the war, their families shall be found ready to help and to encourage them to honor further the country which they have so nobly served. Nothing less than this will measure up to American ideals, and on these ideals the Red Cross has founded its conception and its plans for Home Service.

OPPORTUNITIES OF HOME SERVICE

Home Service is not relief in the sense of money payments or doles of food or clothing, though such assistance may be necessary even to the families of soldiers and sailors. The enactment of the War Risk Insurance Law, heartily advocated by the Red Cross, has placed the responsibility for financial aid in large measure upon the government, where it justly belongs. The provisions of that act make liberal money allowances to the families of men in the armed service. These allowances do not diminish but rather multiply the opportunities for usefulness of Home Service, though these were manifold before allowances were granted. Home Service is now able to turn its full power upon its own real task.

The greatest opportunity of Home Service lies in conserving human resources in the families left behind. The majority of these families are in position to maintain good standards of health, education, industry, and family solidarity without recourse to outside help of any kind. A considerable minority, on the other hand, find their powers of self-helpfulness strained to the breaking point by lack of opportunity, by ill health, or by the sudden changes in their way of living brought about directly by war conditions. In no instance must the standards and ideals of home life be lowered. The social consequences of war must be anticipated and all tendency to deterioration must be checked.

The second opportunity for Home Service, for which the government in the very nature of things cannot make provision, is relief in emergencies, such as temporary financial aid while legal claims are being adjusted, or while the receipt of a government allowance is delayed. The chief requirement here is promptness. This kind of service has not been a heavy burden, although the Red Cross Home Service undertook it during the first seven months of the war when there were no government allowances. In every instance Home Service is careful to continue its relations of confidence and friendship with the families it has aided in this way and to conserve the welfare of these families in every possible manner.

The third opportunity, like the first, will be not only a continuing but an increasing one. It is the giving of regular allowances, when needed, to those who have no legal claim to the federal allowances, but a moral claim to Red Cross interest, owing to the fact that they have been accustomed to depend upon men now in the service. Another large group, who have no legal claim on the United States government but who have been formally accepted by the Red Cross as a special responsibility, are the families resident in the United States of men who are in the armies or navies of our allies. This is no small matter. On Manhattan Island there are many hundreds of these families receiving Home Service. It is the aim of Home Service to discharge scrupulously in each community this duty to the families whose men are fighting side by side with our own.

The fourth opportunity for Home Service will increase in importance with each month that our forces are engaged in actual warfare. It relates to the returning soldier or sailor, more especially when he returns disabled. Whatever can be done through special-

ized hospital and institutional treatment will be done by the government, supplemented so far as may be appropriate by the Red Cross and by other agencies. The supremely important thing is the prevention of permanent disability. In this, many forces must cooperate. In so far as these forces are local, Home Service will have to carry forward the work begun in government hospitals and training shops. The non-institutional side, the readjustment to actual home conditions, the fitting of men back into industry after discharge, the interesting of individual employers, the organizing of local resources for further training, and the development of a helpful and stimulating attitude towards these men throughout the whole community,—these are recognized as definite Home Service tasks. It is not merely a just, humanitarian service to individuals, but also a duty to the country, to put forth every effort to conserve the energies of partially disabled soldiers and sailors, and to readjust them to civilian and industrial life.

The fifth opportunity for Home Service lies in the desire of relatives of enlisted men for information of many kinds. Already this service is widely extended through Home Service advising how mail should be addressed to soldiers and sailors; how information may be obtained concerning those sick, wounded, or missing; what the War Risk Insurance Law means and how to take advantage of its provisions. This work is being constantly extended and is saving untold anxiety and suffering. It will serve furthermore in a very substantial way to maintain the comfort and health of those families who have given their breadwinners and protectors to the service of their country.

Finally, a sixth opportunity for Home Service is to help families to keep pace, in ambition and achievement, with the man who is surrounded, often, with new chances for education and advancement. The growing importance of this work is realized by Home Service workers. Men who have had but limited opportunities in life are suddenly obliged to travel, to accept mental discipline as well as military discipline, and to associate with men such as they have never met before in close contact. And they are advancing. For example, one Home Service Section is now caring for the large family of a naturalized citizen who voluntarily enlisted as a private but who is already top sergeant. He has made good in remarkable fashion. If he should return home to find his family in the same

forbidding home life in which he left them, he would most surely be disheartened and discouraged. So the Home Service worker has moved the family to pleasant comfortable quarters. The wife and children have now the recreation and advantages which will insure a home life worthy of this soldier's ideals when he comes back.

ORGANIZATION

Concerning the organization of the Red Cross for Home Service, perhaps it is sufficient to say that the work is organized in each locality as a separate, distinct activity of the local Red Cross Chapter. As a part of the Civilian Relief Committee of the Chapter, there is constituted a Home Service Section whose membership is as representative as possible of various local interests—business, professional, church and social work. The Home Service Section is responsible to the officers of the Chapter for the proper conduct of its work in behalf of the families under its care. It decides matters of policy as to its own work; prepares and submits the budget required for carrying on its activity; employs the clerical and visiting staff; enlists its volunteers; organizes its office system and makes its own required reports to the Chapter and to the Department of Civilian Relief. Where the work is considerable, a Consultation Committee is appointed which includes persons engaged locally in public health work and social service, and others with special experience and knowledge of local social conditions. If possible there is also appointed someone familiar with the military and naval affairs, who can advise the Section concerning proper procedure in such matters. There is also usually appointed a lawyer who can instruct the Home Service workers about municipal and state laws. The principal function of the Consultation Committee is to consider difficult problems which arise in the course of work with individual families. It is designed to facilitate coöperation between the Red Cross and the agencies and persons regularly engaged in family work.

Each Home Service Section draws its budget from the funds of its Chapter, raised locally, the responsibility for raising funds for Home Service resting with the Finance Committee of the Chapter. There is the minimum of red tape and formality, the minimum of control so far as the Department of Civilian Relief in Washington is concerned.

It is the purpose of the Red Cross Home Service that each Chapter shall have such a Home Service Section, no matter how few men may have entered the service from its territory and no matter how self-sufficient their families may appear to be. By no other means can the responsibility for Home Service be fixed. The Home Service Section in each community is much more apt to have the coöperation of local social agencies, and to enlist the initiative, the cordial spirit, and the sympathy in fullest measure of the neighbors and friends of soldiers' and sailors' families, if the responsibility for organization and direction of this work remains in local hands. Without a group charged with this responsibility for Home Service, there will be soldiers' children dropping out of school or deprived of timely medical treatment; there will be soldiers' wives wheedled out of their income by shrewd agents or cheated out of it by fakers; and there will be soldiers' homes broken up during their absence by misfortune of one kind or another which the strong will and informed mind of a friend at hand might have overcome. Ten families have just as much right to Home Service as have one hundred families. It is not the volume but the character of the work that counts.

HOW HOME SERVICE LEARNS WHERE HELP IS NEEDED

Home Service endeavors to be very careful about the method of approach to these families. It is not intended or permitted that all families of soldiers and sailors shall be called upon, and asked if they require assistance. No home is to be visited in the name of Home Service without a definite invitation from the family or from some responsible person competent to speak for them. Home Service has no desire to intrude or to expose people to comment. For this reason, the wearing of a special costume by Home Service workers has been discouraged; for this reason also, unconfirmed, anonymous requests to visit families are ignored, though each such request is made a matter of record. It is purposed that the work of the Home Service Section be so well understood, and its work so natural and neighborly, that those who need help of any kind will be drawn to avail themselves of it. There are many ways, of course, in which the Home Service worker may come into contact with these families.

At every camp and cantonment the Home Service Director,

who everywhere enjoys the fullest support and approval of the military authorities, takes every means to let the men know of this phase of Red Cross work. Sailors on every vessel of the Navy get the message. Many requests come from soldiers and sailors through such publicity. Through publicity in the local press, and through their friends, Home Service comes to the attention of other members of the soldier's or sailor's family who may ask help for the wife or the mother of the household. These have been very frequent means of approach to those who have needed assistance.

Home Service Sections learn of emergencies in families, and find ways of offering help, in the natural course of fulfilling the Information Service which has proved to be one of its great opportunities. Helpful relations have been established with families in which there were children, by securing the assistance of school teachers to whom the aims and the scope of Home Service are being everywhere explained, not by general circularizing but in quieter ways which have resulted in mutual understanding and the securing of prompt information about children who are wayward or sick or neglected, or withdrawn from school prematurely because of the war service of a father or other near relative.

Again, the various religious and social organizations of the community have many contacts with the families. To these agencies the Red Cross has given full information about the work of Home Service. This is not done by formal approach through circular or advertisement but by personal contact and association and by drawing into the Home Service Sections, as members, representatives of these social agencies and religious societies. Home Service Sections have established friendly relationships with the various state and local Councils of Defense, who notify them promptly of homes where Home Service is required. Finally, Home Service Sections have established contacts with Exemption Boards, and have in many instances learned thereby of the needs of families of drafted men.

HOW HOME SERVICE IS GIVEN

Home Service has demonstrated its ability to conserve human resources in thousands of homes by helping to maintain there good standards of child care, of physical and mental health, of education, and of working conditions. In some communities these standards

have been achieved only after long toil. Home Service is helping to maintain them.

Living is more difficult for everyone in war times, and the first thing a Home Service visitor comes to understand in trying to conserve the welfare of children, is that their mothers are, beyond everything, often lonely and discouraged. Whatever will give the mothers courage to "carry on" helps the children. From many different parts of the country comes the story of women whose outlook is suddenly darkened, whose need is for sympathetic understanding of their plight, for the development of new interests and cheerful companionship. Some are facing the birth of a first child alone; some have displayed symptoms of mental depression that require the promptest attention and, in a few cases, hospital care. The absence of the man deprives the family of the interest which he brings home with him from the world of trade and industry. This lack and loss of companionship must, so far as possible, be replaced. Various forms of recreation, including clubs and classes, become, therefore, very important for the mother as well as for the children.

The chairman of a Home Service Section reports one instance in which discouragement led a mother to write to the department of soldiers' aid in her state, asking her husband's release from the army; her three boys, she stated, were so unruly that she could do nothing with them. A Home Service visitor, asked to report upon this request, found the family in no financial difficulty, but the mother so worried that she lacked the mental energy to cope with three little lads all of whom were full of life and high spirits. The visitor's first suggestion was a vacation for the mother and a temporary housekeeper for her children. But the boys would have none of this, protesting that they wanted their own mother and no one else. This new attitude upon their part gave no small degree of comfort to the discouraged woman. She began to enter into the recreational plans for the children, which were proposed and carried out by the visitor, but seemed to respond most of all to the chance to talk over personal affairs at frequent intervals with someone who was really interested in them.

The health of young children is a matter of constant concern on the part of the Home Service worker who is urged to consult the physician advising the Section about the obvious indications of

malnutrition, adenoids, and other frequent ailments of infants. Speaking generally, any sign of debilitation, such as persistent cold, cough, loss of weight and appetite, mouth breathing and pallor prompts the visitor to urge the parent that medical advice be secured.

All available resources for the health-care of the school child are brought to bear when at all needed. Home Service workers make full use of the services of the infant welfare nurse, the school nurse, and the tuberculosis nurse, and of any visiting nurse or public health nurse in the community. Such nurses are sometimes asked to advise about dietaries and food economies as well as concerning matters of health.

A representative of the national Children's Bureau says that the chief measure for protecting babies is to insure their care and nursing by healthy mothers in their own homes. Helping mothers to plan their affairs so as to remain at home most of the time while the children are small is a health measure for both mother and child, though a woman's temperament and her standard of home care before the enlistment of the breadwinner should be taken into consideration.

Faithful school attendance is often assured by arranging, when necessary, for regular reports from teachers. When the age for leaving school approaches—in fact, long before it has arrived—Home Service seeks the best vocational guidance obtainable for the boy or girl. Its workers discourage entrance into occupations in which there is no future, no skill to be acquired, no good chance of advancement, or in which the processes menace health.

Problems of boys and girls in their early teens—in the years of adolescence—often require the wisest advice available from teachers, club leaders, and from others experienced in child helping.

Sometimes the mother is unable to manage the family affairs as she should. She may even be the victim of a bad habit. Then it is important that the allotment of pay and the family allowance be expended by someone else who will administer it for her and her children's best welfare. Soldiers and sailors have had to appeal to Home Service Sections in such situations, the solution requiring court intervention in some cases and in others not.

Another difficult situation is that of the father whose wife has died. A widower, drafted into the army, appealed to the Home

Service Section in his city to arrange for proper care for his one child. This was done with the help of a child-placing agency, and the child's board being paid by the father through the Home Service Section.

The question has been asked whether unmarried women who are the mothers of soldiers' children come within the scope of Home Service. Such mothers do, and so do their children. The legal rights of both mother and child should be known. In handling such cases, a denial by the man must be investigated, remembering, however, the possibility of blackmail and so being very careful to deal fairly with both man and woman on the basis of all the facts obtainable, and with the competent advice and service of a good lawyer of sympathetic mind who should be a member of each Home Service Section.

Many people become so accustomed to a low health standard that they actually regard ill-health as a normal thing. Home Service visitors try to accustom families to a higher standard, and to attend to dental defects, eye defects, nose and throat defects in time, bringing them promptly to the notice of the proper medical and dental specialists.

It is necessary, in particular, to guard against an increase of tuberculosis. The experience of foreign countries, especially of France, in this war, indicates the possible rapid spread of this disease. Accordingly, especial attention is directed (1) to any loss of weight in members of the families visited, (2) to a persistent cold or cough, (3) to fever or loss of appetite. Suspected cases are referred to a doctor or to the local tuberculosis dispensary. "In families where we have found a *history* of tuberculosis in the past," writes the secretary of one Home Service Section, "we have had examinations made and have been able to give treatment to patients who had not known they required a physician's care."

Here is an extract from the notes of one Home Service visitor.

We were asked to furnish crutches in this family for the lame boy of thirteen. He lives with his father, mother and five brothers and sisters, of whom the oldest boy has enlisted. I found all the others in bad physical condition owing to a combination of insufficient income, poor management, and lack of knowledge of food values, so I took every one of them to a dispensary, where they were examined by specialists. Two doctors examined the boy who "needed crutches." With the consent of his parents and his priest, he was operated upon with satisfactory results. I am teaching the mother how and what to cook. There is an astonishing physical improvement in every member of the family.

Mention has been made of the importance of keeping children in school and assuring regular attendance there, but Home Service Sections are doing more than this. Children who had been removed and put to work to meet a shrinkage in the family income are being returned to school promptly, as soon as Home Service is called in. One Home Service Section reports a boy, found to be working illegally nearly fourteen hours a day, who has been returned to school. This Section is making special provision to keep children between the ages of fourteen and sixteen in classes where they will receive a good preparation for earning their living later. Another is taking children out of "blind alley" occupations and providing special aid to give them training for better work. Another reports upon a wayward boy who has been introduced to the Boy Scouts and is now doing well in school. Still another made it possible for a young man to complete his last year in college by paying the necessary tuition after his father entered the national army. One member of a Home Service Section is getting a great deal of pleasure out of giving free music lessons to three children whose father has died.

Unless we are able to learn by the mistakes of Great Britain in the earlier years of her present struggle—mistakes which she recognizes now—we shall be confronted with attempts to speed up industry at the expense of the health and strength of the workers. The strict administration of the laws now on our statute books for the protection of workers against long hours and unwholesome processes is placed upon the conscience of those engaged in Home Service.

First of all, the Home Service worker is expected to know what the national, state, and local provisions are—not only the laws regulating working conditions, but the agencies and officials responsible for their enforcement. What provisions are there about maximum hours? What is a standard working day for men, for women, for children of working age? Is one day's rest in seven provided for by law? Is night work prohibited for women? For children? What hazardous employments are prohibited for either or both? Children who work are required to have employment certificates in almost all of our states. Have these been issued legally? Women need special protection from overwork before and after childbirth. Lawyers interested in Home Service are

asked to advise about the laws applicable to these matters. By order of the Quartermaster-General of the Army, uniforms for soldiers cannot be worked upon in any tenement house or dwelling. Home Service workers give valuable help in the enforcement of the order by making it known to the families with which they have to deal.

Home Service Sections are systematically avoiding the practice of thrusting women into industry who can serve the family better at home. Before family allowances made earning outside the home less necessary, they were assuming extra financial burdens cheerfully in order to keep mothers with their children and this is important to safeguard home life on this side.

The Red Cross believes that it owes consideration to the agencies in each locality which are carrying permanently the responsibility for social service. At its annual meeting in December, 1917, the Red Cross adopted a resolution which in substance is as follows: That while the Red Cross needs and must use immense sums of money for unusual purposes, it does not wish to receive that money at the expense of the permanent social work of this country but desires that the support of the Red Cross shall be in addition to that work. The Red Cross believes that the work of the local social agencies in each community must continue during the war, not only with full vigor, but with increased resources, in order to meet needs that are becoming greater; and the Red Cross holds that these local agencies must be ready to do their full part in social reconstruction when the war is over. It is the purpose of the Red Cross that the awakening sense of social responsibility shall be utilized by the agencies which are permanent and necessary, and that these organizations shall increase in membership and resources during the war, as their needs may require. The desire of the Red Cross, especially in its work of Home Service, is that everywhere there be the most cordial coöperation.

TRAINING OF HOME SERVICE WORKERS

Successful Home Service work depends, indeed, not so much upon the extensiveness of the knowledge and experience of those relatively few persons who will be actively engaged in it, as upon their ability to utilize the knowledge and experience of others. They levy a claim upon the expertness of the whole community to which

the possessors of special knowledge and skill have been only too glad to respond with enthusiasm, once it has been made clear that the Red Cross intends to do its fair share and that it makes good that intention.

In order that there may be a larger number of trained and competent executives for Home Service Sections, the Department of Civilian Relief has established at twenty-five strategic centers, representing every section of the country, Home Service Institutes. The Institutes are open to executives and members of Home Service Sections, and to other qualified volunteers. The courses of the Institutes require the full time of those who attend for a period of six weeks. The programs of all the Institutes are practically the same. They are prescribed by the Red Cross and are given under its auspices. The course includes four hours of lectures and discussion each week, required readings, and the balance of the time—about twenty-five hours each week—is spent in supervised practical field work in the Home Service of the Chapter in whose city the Institute is held and in the local societies that do similar work. The membership of each Institute is limited to twenty-five, in order to assure adequate personal attention in classroom discussion and in the field work. A certificate is granted by the Red Cross to those who complete the work with credit and, in the field work, show qualities fitting them to assume responsibility in Home Service and aptitude for it. Wherever possible, the Institute is affiliated with a well-established University, College, or Training School for social work.

For those unable to attend the Institutes, Chapter Courses are held in those cities where competent instruction and field work are available. These courses conform to a general standard prescribed and published by the Red Cross, but which may readily be adapted to local conditions and needs. Chapter Courses are always related intimately to the work of the local Chapters. Many Chapters have conducted such courses and many more are planning to do so. The Red Cross strongly endorses the organization of such courses and believes that the volunteers connected with Home Service Sections will work longer and do more if they are given such training. The eager response which has been made to the Chapter Courses and to the Institutes proves that people no longer feel that

good intentions are qualifications enough for Home Service. They want to learn how to do this work in the best possible way.

Those who have taken up Home Service have been quick to see that it requires a familiarity with new problems and a facility in dealing with them which can be acquired only through training. To be sure, the Home Service Institute, to say nothing of the Chapter Course, does not make social workers, but it does make informed people in the communities from which the students come. In short, the Red Cross, realizing its responsibility and its opportunity, is trying to fit itself to discharge that responsibility by beginning at the obvious point of departure—through a campaign of education. It is the earnest hope of the Red Cross, as it is the test of its standards, that through Home Service in coöperation with other agencies, the family of no soldier or sailor shall suffer a lowering of its standards nor lack any essential thing within the power of the nation to give. Home Service is solicitous about the welfare of the families of men in the service because it realizes that upon the success achieved in this task depends the kind of problems that will confront the nation when the war is over. It is the hope of the Red Cross that its Home Service may help to awaken a national spirit of social responsibility so that when the war is ended, America shall have not a new social problem, but instead a new and greater social force in working out its destinies.