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THE CHRISTMAS SEALS

PHILIP P. JACOBS

PLAYING "post office," not exactly in the osculatory manner in which it is done in the common parlor game, but in a way somewhat similar, was a game by which some of our mothers and grandmothers, and even some who read this page, helped to make a million dollars during the Civil War.

It was in 1862, when the northern hospitals were being taxed to their utmost to care for the thousands of sick and wounded soldiers returning from the war that

some women in Boston and Brooklyn almost simultaneously hit upon the idea of having fairs, the features of which should be post offices where anyone could get a letter from anybody he wished to hear from, provided he

would pay the postage. Postage was in the form of "sanitary fair stamps" of varying denominations. The price was fixed by the generosity of the buyer.

These stamps were the forerunners of our popular Red Cross Seal and were the first of the thousands of charity stamps which now are sold all over the world. The Brooklyn fair is memorable for the \$400,000 realized, largely through the stamps sold. In Boston, Springfield, Albany, Stamford, and scores of other places sim-



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ilar fairs were held with like success, so that over a million dollars was collected between 1862 and 1865.

After the Civil War the stamp idea was forgotten until in 1892 when the Red Cross of Portugal revived it in its campaign for relief funds. Again the popularity of the appeal was demonstrated, and since that time, the "charity stamp" has found vogue in almost every part of the world from Iceland to Australia and from Russia to California.

The variety of purposes for which these stamps and seals are sold is almost as great as the number of places selling them. For example, soldiers' stamps are sold in Italy, Hungary, Roumania and elsewhere. In Austria there are over thirty different kinds of stamps for children's hospitals. Germany has 300 or more kinds of

Wohlfahrtsmarken sold in almost as many different ways. In England missionary organizations and churches sell stamps for their special funds. Stamps for memorial funds and stamps commemorating some special event such as the coronation of King

George V., the proceeds of which are used for charitable purposes, are common also. In Roumania, Denmark, Russia and other European countries, special



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stamps of this character are good for postage, the additional charge for the charitable fund being added to the ordinary postage cost.

Practically all these European stamps, however, are sold throughout the year, and except in a few instances, sales campaigns at certain seasons

of the year are not undertaken. Notable exceptions are in Norway, Sweden and Denmark, where special stamps for tuberculosis funds have been issued since 1904, and where active campaigns during the holiday seasons are usually carried on. The movement is waning, seemingly, in these countries each year, largely because other national movements are taking their place.

The United States has led the world in demonstrating the possibilities of an organized movement for the sale of seals or stamps. When, in 1907 Emily P. Bissell of Wilmington, Del., seized upon Jacob Riis's suggestion in the *Outlook* that someone in this country pattern after Norwegian and Swedish tuberculosis stamps, little did she think of the possibilities that she had opened up. From a sale of \$3,000 in 1907, limited to a very small area in and around Philadelphia and Wilmington, the Red Cross Seal sale last year reached a total of over \$330,000 and spread into almost every part of the United States, including our insular possessions and the Canal Zone. Nearly \$1,000,000 has been realized since 1908, when the American Red Cross issued, at Miss Bissell's persuasion, the first seal for the benefit of the national anti-tuberculosis move-

ment. And, if the present organization is any indication of success, the sale this year should exceed by several thousands of dollars that of last year.

A few of the factors that have contributed to the success of the Red Cross Seal campaign should be noted. First, there is the careful and energetic organization, beginning with the national agent and running down through state agents, and local agents to the army of nearly 50,000 sub-agents. Next, the vital publicity work on tuberculosis with which the six weeks before Christmas is turned into an educational campaign; and third, the distribution of the proceeds. By far the largest percentage, from 75 to 90 per cent. of the receipts, remain in the local communities where the seals are sold. Hundreds of local forms of anti-tuberculosis work have been financed in this way. Indeed, it is not too much to say that in some of the states leading in this campaign the anti-tuberculosis movement would be poorly organized today if it were not for these Red Cross Seals.



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KEY

1. First tuberculosis stamp in America issued by Delaware Red Cross Society in 1907.
2. Red Cross Seal, 1910.
3. Red Cross Seal, 1911.
4. Red Cross Seal, 1909.
5. First National Red Cross Seal, 1908.
6. A Vienna stamp for working girls' home.
7. Wisconsin Anti-Tuberculosis Association, stamp, 1909.
8. A German Red Cross Charity stamp.
9. California Association stamp with Los Angeles imprint, 1909.
10. California Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis Stamp, 1909.
11. California Association stamp with Redlands imprint, 1910.
12. National Sanatorium Association (Canada) stamp, 1911.
13. Royal Edward Institute (Montreal) stamp, 1911.
14. An Austrian missionary stamp.
15. An Austrian Soldiers' Relief Fund Stamp.
16. A 600th year jubilee stamp.
17. An English mission stamp.
18. First Swedish Tuberculosis Stamp, 1904.
19. Swedish Tuberculosis Stamp, 1905.
20. Danish Tuberculosis Stamp, 1905.



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