

## The Convention of Geneva, and the Care of Sick and Wounded in War.

A MOST interesting paper was read by Mr. John Furley at the rooms of the United Service Institution in Whitehall, on Friday, April 24th. The Right Hon. Viscount Knutsford, G.C.M.G., was in the chair.

The Chairman, Lord Knutsford, in his opening remarks, said there was no one more competent than Mr. Furley to speak upon the subject before them. Mr. Furley had been keenly interested in this matter for over twenty years, and he had studied it not only in an arm chair in his library at home, but practically, on the field of battle. Mr. Furley was director of the Ambulance Department in 1870 in the Franco-Russian War, was with MacMahon in 1871, and at Montenegro in 1877. He had thus acquired a practical knowledge of the Convention of Geneva, and of Ambulance work. This Convention was drawn up in 1864, and at the present time is accepted by thirty-six Governments.

Mr. Furley, in the course of his admirable paper, said:—

“The Convention of Geneva was drawn up in 1864; within six months it was signed on behalf of eight European States, including Great Britain, and at the present time it has been accepted by thirty-six Governments.

A red cross on a white ground was adopted as the badge of neutrality, and since 1864, thirty-seven national Red Cross Societies have been formed, each with an independent national existence, but with one international object, namely, the amelioration of the position of sick and wounded soldiers in war.

It is popularly supposed that the purpose of the Convention was to establish Red Cross Societies; this is an error; the treaty makes no mention of such societies; but it is true that by taking voluntary aid to the victims of war under its protection, it suggested the formation of Red Cross Societies.

Since 1864, many Red Cross Societies have been formed, and, as may well be imagined, they have passed through many vicissitudes. In 1870, when the Franco-German War broke out, a very confused idea prevailed as to the meaning of the Red Cross badge, and many mistakes were made; nevertheless, so much good resulted from its use as a neutral sign for the protection of sick and wounded soldiers, and also of those who had charge of them and the buildings in which they were lodged, that no proposal has ever been seriously made for the abrogation of the Geneva Treaty.

In those days the general impression seemed to be that any man or woman wearing a white armband with a red cross upon it was free to go pretty much where he or she thought fit, with a proud contempt of such things as military passes. A large proportion of these armbands were home-made, and had not even the official stamp of any military authority in either of the belligerent armies. Then, again, Red Cross flags of various forms and sizes were hung over innumerable houses, whether the roofs sheltered wounded men or not. This matter was rectified by an order that no such flag would be recognised unless there were a certain number of beds in the house actually occupied by invalids.

No badge has ever been more generally abused, both in peace and war, than the Red Cross, and unfortunately it has not been made a penal offence to use this distinctive emblem without legal authority, although in time of war any persons so wearing it would soon find themselves in a very unpleasant position. This ignorance has led to the use of the Red Cross badge as the recognised mark of a Hospital or house of a private Nurse, and various societies have adopted it, to say nothing of vendors of patent foods and medicines.

On the recent march of British troops to Kumassi, each man in the bearer companies of the Army Medical Corps carried a rifle and seventy-five rounds of ammunition. Although we were then opposed to savages, it was unfortunate that the Red Cross should have been displayed in any form.

I may also refer to another case where ignorance on the subject was also shown. Some of the members of the St. John's Ambulance Association recently went from the Cape to Krügersdorp, having volunteered their services, which were accepted by the Boers. A complaint has since been made that an armed Boer had a red cross on his arm. As the Transvaal Government had not adopted the Convention of Geneva, and neither side had received official sanction to wear the badge, any irregularity in regard to its use was possible, and there could be no legitimate ground for complaining that the Convention had been violated on one side or the other.

I hope I shall not be accused of undue self-assertion if I mention the success which has attended one step that has been taken in England towards realising the desire to train and organise a body of men and women who could be relied on, in case of necessity, to act as a reserve to the Army Hospital Corps, and who, meanwhile, are daily employed in ministering to the relief of the sick and wounded in time of peace. I refer to the St. John's Ambulance Brigade, of which I formed the nucleus when I had the honour to be Director of the Ambulance Department of the Order of St. John, and which is surely, if slowly, developing into a very useful body.

If, as yet, I have said little with regard to female Nurses, it is because they form a subject which comes rather within the province of others who are more competent than myself to speak on it, and because their training for peace, as well as for war, must be more complete and extensive than in the case of the majority of the men to whom I have just referred. First-aid Nurses who have been instructed and enrolled by the St. John's Ambulance Association are doing admirable service, especially in some of the colliery districts, as many surgeons will testify, but for real hospital work only a long course of training and experience, extending over two or three years, is sufficient to bring them up to a safe and proper standard of efficiency.

Besides these, there is another most valuable and indeed indispensable element to be found in the existing organisations of female Nurses. We all know the valuable patronage and practical assistance given to the British National Aid Society by the Princess of Wales during the last Egyptian Campaign, and the great interest taken by Her Royal Highness in everything that concerns the selection, training, and general welfare of female Nurses. We also know, from the evidence of official records, that it has long been the aim and desire of the Princess Christian to form a national reserve of highly-trained Nurses for the

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