

Army Hospitals; and in this Her Royal Highness has already in a great measure succeeded, through negotiations entered into with several of the large Hospitals of the metropolis. Such a project, if fully carried out and sanctioned by the authorities, would provide a reserve of experienced Nurses which would be available at short notice as an efficient auxiliary of the Army and Navy Medical Services.

Briefly summed up, our aim should be:—

(a) A more general appreciation of the Convention of Geneva, which was signed and adopted by this country more than a quarter of a century ago, then pigeon-holed at the Foreign Office, and which has since remained almost a dead letter.

(b) The recognition of the Red Cross as a military badge of neutrality, the abuse of which in time of war inevitably entails certain serious penalties, and which, therefore, in time of peace should be carefully protected.

(c) The organisation of a powerful Red Cross Society, to be formed from the institutions already indicated, acting within their present limits in time of peace, but entirely under military control for all war purposes."

Sir Alfred Jephson then made some remarks, during which he said that he hoped some good might come of the suggestions made by Mr. Furley, but if they were to be productive of good they must be acted on in times of peace. When war broke out it was too late. The means were at hand, but they required organising, and any organisation should be brought under strict military discipline. He then proceeded to state that during a recent campaign this did not obtain, and that Nurses were found at the front, instead of where they should be, in the rear. He presumed they were not there to fight, but were led there by the natural curiosity of their sex. [It appears to us a little ungenerous to attribute these motives to the Nursing staff on the field of battle. From our knowledge of Nurses we are inclined to imagine that perhaps keen professional zeal, and desire to render as speedy assistance as possible to the sick and wounded entrusted to their care, may have had more to do with the position of the Nurses than the speaker gave them credit for. We conclude that every *man* who was at the front was there from a strict sense of duty only, and that no thought of possible advancement, or mixed motives of any description influenced him in his desire to be to the fore.] The speaker concluded his remarks by hoping that the outcome of the meeting might be to formulate some definite scheme.

Mr. Maclure next spoke, and stated that for the last twenty years he had been engaged in organising the Reserves and the Volunteers, and that in connection with them there were 10,000 men, trained not only in England, but also in Canada, China, Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong, ready for work in this connection. After this

Colonel Young, in the course of a few remarks, said that he did not agree with Mr. Furley. Mr. Furley had quoted France and Germany, but that anyone who knows, knows that in each of these cases the whole nation is armed to the teeth for a specific purpose—self-defence against its neighbour, and for the protection of a purely imaginary boundary line. While Mr. Furley may instruct public opinion, it is the authorities who must take the initiative. There was further the difficulty of the allotment of duties between the Army and the civil population, and for all

this organisation was necessary. Colonel Young considered that it was important to instruct people as to what the Geneva Convention meant. He would like to bring home to military authorities their misdeeds, and to say that the Army had adopted the Geneva Cross. It was also largely used by the civil population, and if he was not mistaken, he had seen Volunteers wearing the Red Cross and carrying loaded rifles! He would suggest a short Act of Parliament making it penal for tradesmen or anyone else to use the Red Cross. He further stated that philanthropy was a most powerful factor in determining the actions of the Society, and occasionally even forced indiscretions upon it. In Khartoum in 1884 and 1885 it even overcame military opposition which had reluctantly to give way to it. He considered that the present was an opportune time for making a new departure. There were the various societies at hand, ready and willing to be useful, but they required organisation.

Lieut.-Surgeon Rawley Fletcher did not consider Mr. Furley's suggestions of practical value. He inquired of what use the St. John's Ambulance Association would be in the case of the invasion of England. He thought the obvious plan was to utilise the Nursing staffs and medical students of our Hospitals and did not think that the members of the St. John's Ambulance Association had had Nursing experience. He was also of opinion that instead of the demand for a larger Nursing corps, in consideration of the more deadly appliances of modern warfare, and the consequent greater number of wounded, that the fact would be that the number of killed would be greatly increased, and the number of wounded actually less. He considered that the Red Cross Medical Staff Corps might be utilised for carrying and nursing the wounded, and that if they carried rifles it was for their own protection in a country of barbarians, where the conditions of the treaty of Geneva were not understood. He also drew attention to the fact that the Volunteer Medical School of Instruction did not represent the whole of the Volunteer force.

Mrs. Bedford Fenwick then addressed the meeting on the necessity for the organisation of a Volunteer Corps of Trained Nurses. She stated that in 1889 she had formulated a scheme which had been forwarded to the War Office, and which she presumed, in common with the other documents alluded to by Mr. Furley, had been pigeon-holed by that department. Two years ago the Royal British Nurses' Association had initiated a scheme for a Volunteer Nursing Corps, but so far it had not taken actual shape. Mrs. Fenwick was strongly of opinion that to be of any value such a corps of Nurses must be selected and organised in time of peace—from the very best material obtainable—so that it should be ready for service, absolutely at the discretion of the War Office, at a few hours' notice, either to relieve the regular Army Nursing Sisters sent to the front, or if necessary for active service. The selection of thoroughly trained Nurses and, moreover, women suitable by education and character to control men, could alone make the scheme successful.

A speaker who followed said that the representatives of the various bodies all saw the need for co-operation. They were wishful to do the work but needed organisation. He thought that the Royal Red Cross Society should do the organisation and the others the training.

Mr. Furley replied to some of the remarks which had been made,

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)