

The Sick and Wounded in War.

A BRITISH CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS.

THE following statement has been issued to the press by the War Office:—

"In great international wars the duties of the regular medical service of the army are naturally considerably increased, and it is now not only generally recognised that voluntary aid, as a means of meeting this extra strain, is indispensable; but it is also most desirable that every facility should be afforded by the military and naval authorities for giving practical effect to the undoubted national sympathy with the sufferings, resulting from wounds and disease, of our soldiers and sailors engaged in war.

The voluntary aid, however, which popular sentiment elicits, and which would be forthcoming in abundance from every corner of the Empire in the event of our country being involved in a great war, would come upon our military authorities in the form of a mass of more or less unorganised and untrained elements, probably so unsuited to the actual requirements of the Army Medical Service, as, for a time at any rate, to considerably hamper and embarrass its administration. In the great armies of the Continent much of this has been foreseen, and voluntary aid organisation, under National Central Committees of the Red Cross, has attained a high state of perfection, and is permanently kept in touch with the organisation of the regular Army Medical Services in such a way as to enable the latter to know exactly the amount, nature, and condition of the supplementary aid that will be available from voluntary sources in time of war.

With the view of obtaining similar results in this country, Lord Lansdowne some time ago invited representatives of the National Society for Aid to the Sick and Wounded in War, the St. John Ambulance Association, and the Army Nursing Reserve to meet the heads of the Army Medical Service at the War Office and discuss with them the lines upon which a central organisation for bringing voluntary aid throughout the British Empire into touch with army medical requirements might be created. As an outcome of this conference, a Central British Red Cross committee has been formed and has now been recognised by the Secretary of State for War as the official channel through which offers of voluntary aid in time of war will be accepted by the War Office.

As at present constituted it is composed of representatives of the above-named societies and of the War Office, her Royal Highness Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein and Miss Wedg-

wood having kindly consented to act as representatives of the Army Nursing Reserve; Lord Wantage, V.C., Lord Rothschild, and Sir William MacCormac as representatives of the National Society for Aid to the Sick and Wounded in War; and Viscount Knutsford and Sir John Furley as representatives of the St. John Ambulance Association; while the War Office is represented by the Deputy-Director-General (Surgeon-General Muir) and the Assistant Director (Lieut.-Colonel Gubbins, Royal Army Medical Corps), of the Army Medical Service, and by the officer in charge of Mobilisation Services (Colonel Hon. F. W. Stopford, C.B.).

Lord Wantage has been appointed chairman of the committee, and Major W. G. Macpherson, Royal Army Medical Corps, secretary.

The committee are at present holding their meetings in the board room of the medical division of the War Office, 18, Victoria Street, Westminster, and their efforts will first be directed towards the organisation of voluntary aid in time of peace, so as to facilitate its being placed at the disposal of the military authorities in the form which is most likely to meet the supplementary requirements of the Army medical service in time of war. It is hoped that ultimately the formation of this Central British Red Cross Committee will have the effect of bringing local committees of the societies which are, or may be, represented on the central committee and established throughout the Empire, into touch with the conditions which the military authorities must of necessity impose upon the popular desire to aid the sick and wounded. It is felt that throughout Her Majesty's dominions the resources of voluntary aid are very large, but that some organised effort is necessary in this country to enable full effect to be given to the humane impulses upon which they are based, and to make them conform to the principles that have been formulated in the Geneva Convention under the emblem of the Red Cross."

We are glad to see that the Red Cross Society in this country is rising to a sense of its responsibilities. Probably the resolution passed at the Annual Conference of the Matrons' Council last year, and forwarded to the British Red Cross Society, on the subject of providing some organization in time of peace, by means of which skilled nursing should be available in time of international wars, has had its effect, although the Society at the time was unable to see its way to undertaking this duty. We presume that as the National Society for Aid to the Sick and Wounded in War (the British Red Cross Society) is taking part in the formation of the new committee, the services offered under the new scheme will be available for international purposes; otherwise, the Red Cross

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