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Editorial.

VOLUNTARY AID ORGANISATION.

In the course of his address to the International Congress of Nurses on "The Nurse as Patriot," the Secretary of State for War intimated that a larger scope for the skilled services of women, in connection with national defence, would shortly disclose itself than had appeared to the present time, and on Monday last a letter was issued by Colonel E. W. D. Ward, Secretary of the War Office, to the secretaries of Territorial County Associations in England and Wales, on the subject of a Scheme for the Organisation of Voluntary Aid, issued by the Army Council—after conference with the Council of the British Red Cross Society—for the relief of the sick and wounded in connection with Home Defence. In this scheme the work of women plays an important part.

In the above-mentioned letter the hope is expressed that the County Associations will, without delay, place themselves in communication with the Council of the British Red Cross Society, 9, Victoria Street, Westminster, with a view to initiating the formation of Voluntary Aid Detachments, if it is not the wish of the Associations themselves to undertake their formation and training.

The published summary of the scheme states that:—It has been modelled upon those which already exist in certain foreign countries. The necessity for voluntary aid for sick and wounded in war in the home territory is fully recognised by the inhabitants of the United Kingdom.

There is a tendency for societies having in view the rendering of assistance to sick and wounded in war, to act independently one of the other. Efficiency cannot be maintained unless all voluntary aid be co-ordinated. In the scheme the county system has been adopted, because it is the

system upon which the Territorial Force is organised, and which the British Red Cross Society has adopted as the basis of its constitution.

The County Association, therefore, is charged with the responsibility of the organisation of voluntary aid in the county. Each County Association should through the medium of the local branches of the British Red Cross Society form "voluntary aid detachments," with an establishment which is laid down in the scheme; also each county group of voluntary aid detachments (and there need be no limit to the number of such detachments) should be under the command of a County Director, and each detachment should be capable of being used, either as a clearing hospital or as a rest station, or as an ambulance train personnel, as the circumstances of the moment may demand in time of war. The men's detachment will be specially trained in transport of wounded, and women's detachments in the preparation of food and in nursing duties.

It is proposed that each Women's Detachment of the British Red Cross Society should, besides two medical officers and two quartermasters, include two Lady Superintendents and twenty women, of whom two should be fully-trained nurses.

The women's detachments would be employed chiefly in forming railway rest-stations, preparing and serving meals to sick and wounded during evacuation by railway, and for taking temporary charge in the evacuation stations, or temporary hospitals, of severe cases unable to continue the journey. Half detachments may be employed for duty in ambulance trains.

It will be seen, therefore, that a widespread and systematic effort is to be made to co-ordinate the available voluntary aid through affiliation with the Red Cross Society, in close touch with the War Office.

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