

THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS SOCIETY.

Dr. Charles Krafft, of Lausanne, in a pamphlet recently published, claims that the International Red Cross Society alone should be responsible for the organization of hospital staffs other than those attached to military hospitals in time of war. He argues that while to call the Red Cross Society, as conceived by its founder (Dunant Moquier) an International Association would be superfluous, yet there does not in reality exist an International Society of the Red Cross. There are separate organizations in the several countries, but there is no bond of union between them except the Congress which takes place every five years, although each one recognises the existence of the others. This, Dr. Krafft thinks, is a very serious mistake, by which much unnecessary suffering has been caused during the past year. He writes:—

The so-called International Red Cross Society, having its headquarters at Geneva, held its first Congress at Karlsruhe in 1887 under the able presidency of Mr. Gustave Ador. Since the Congress at Washington in 1912, the Society has been prominent in assisting prisoners of war, whose cause it has adopted with much zeal and assiduity. This, however, is not the chief object it was designed to protect. It is actually on the field of battle—"at the Front"—that an International Society should make its influence felt. Hitherto the belligerents have not sanctioned any interference along these lines.

If the Geneva Convention were the legally accredited agent of an International Red Cross Society, instead of being merely a voluntary elective body, its authority would be increased a hundredfold. Indeed, there would be practically no limit to the influence its members, convened in time of war, would be able to exert.

Army hospital orderlies and male nurses are directly controlled by the Army, of which they form a part, and have no need to be controlled by the Red Cross. [In Great Britain the Regular Nursing Services are also controlled by the War Office.—E.D.] This is not the case, however, with the female nurses whose services are requisitioned in war time. Their professional qualifications are undefined, no uniform standard of proficiency is exacted either nationally or internationally. The result of this has plainly been seen during the present War, the wounded having been much less well tended than they should have been, as witnessed by the immense and unforeseen number of avoidably septic cases.

When we consider the question of the Red Cross brassard, obviously if it is to be recognised and respected by all the belligerents, it should embody an *Inter*-national symbol, it should be awarded *inter*-nationally, be subjected to definite *inter*-national laws and be officially recognised by all nations. This is not the case at present.

Take Germany, for instance, where there are two separate organizations of women nurses—

the "Bund" (League) under the competent direction of Sister Agnes Karll, in Berlin, and the "German Red Cross." These two Societies are not affiliated, either officially, compulsorily, or by reason of any hierarchical distinction among their members. Theoretically the League (composed of fully-trained nurses) is not officially recognised, and is subordinate to the Red Cross Society, which also has its headquarters in Berlin, and is recognised by the military authorities. The proof of this is that in March last in reply to a letter addressed by me to Sister Agnes Karll she referred me to the Central Committee of the Red Cross in Berlin.

The relations between the two parallel organizations in Vienna may be termed rather strained than otherwise.

The French War Office—but only in March, 1915—issued regulations regarding the uniform to be worn by accredited female nurses, who *must* be members of one of the three branches of the Red Cross Society in France; and pronounced the illegitimate use of this uniform liable to a severe penalty.

Similar measures with regard to nurses' uniforms may have been taken in other countries, but even were this so, no facilities have been afforded thereby to neutral non-combatants desirous of offering their services to the sick and wounded.

This, after all, is the point to be aimed at.

If respect for the Red Cross badge is to be enforced, the belligerents have the right to demand protection against its misuse; and the only way to ensure that is by restricting the liberty—(we might almost say the licence)—to allot badges (brassards) to] an *international* council, which alone should have the right to determine the conditions of allotment.

In the Territorial Hospitals the same state of chaos exists as in the Red Cross societies. The nurses employed in those hospitals are either professional nurses or amateurs. The professional nurse ought to take precedence over the untrained person. . . . Amateur nurses should have a distinctive appellation, and, by international agreement, their activities should be confined to certain departments. They should rank second to the trained nurses who have grasped the technique of their work, and be prepared—in taking a back seat—to prove their devotion to the cause.

Both trained and untrained nurses should wear the brassard—that of the trained nurse to be distinguished by an additional row of red braid.

The privilege of being a member of a Red Cross Society should not be accorded, as it is now-a-days, to all and sundry who have followed a short course of lectures on amateur nursing. Only those should be entitled to become members, be they women of independent means or women who must work for their living, who have satisfied an *inter*-national council that they are qualified to nurse the wounded in accordance with the regulations and conditions specified by that council.

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