

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF NURSES CONFERENCE AT MONTREAL.

In July, by the generosity of the Government, I was privileged to attend the quadrennial meeting of the International Council of Nurses in Montreal, to represent the nursing profession of New Zealand. There were present between six and seven thousand nurses from about forty countries, and a great deal of business was discussed. Many round-table conferences were held, a paper being read first. Special committees were appointed to deal with matters brought up for discussion, and these, especially the committees on nursing education and public health, had a large amount of work to do.

Perhaps the most important committee was that on nursing education, which was entrusted with the task of drawing up a minimum basis for nurse-training from information obtained from all the countries belonging to the International Council of Nurses. With widely varying sizes and conditions, it will be understood that this was no easy task, but the discussions were very interesting and helpful in considering our own problems. In some countries only two years' training is desired, it being thought that the tendency is to waste the pupils' time in performing the same acts over and over again after a reasonable amount of practice may be supposed to have rendered her sufficiently expert. The practice of giving the pupil-nurse an undue amount of domestic work during the whole term of training has been largely discontinued in many countries, especially those in which the trainee has to pay a premium for the privilege of training. It was also felt that a higher standard of education was becoming more and more essential, as science is entering so much more into the nurse's work that it is difficult for an ill-educated girl to keep abreast of present-day requirements. Affiliation between large and small hospitals was strongly supported. The preliminary-training school has been instituted in many countries. The importance to the nurse of some experience in mental nursing was emphasized, and also the value of the social-service department, as bringing her into touch with the home conditions of the patient.

One of the chief objects of the Conference was to assist the younger countries in attaining to a better standard of nursing than has been possible for them in the past. It was gratifying to realize that nursing in this Dominion was regarded so highly, and much appreciation was expressed of the fact that New Zealand had been the first country to obtain State registration for nurses and that so high a standard had been maintained since the passing of the Nurses Registration Act in 1901. At the same time, other countries have made great progress since I had the opportunity of exchanging views with their leaders in 1923, and we are now somewhat in danger of remaining more or less at a standstill unless we take steps to bring our very small training-schools under some scheme of affiliation with larger institutions.

While the discussions on problems affecting nursing were most helpful, the greatest value of the Conference consisted in meeting so many leading women from over forty countries represented, and exchanging views concerning the work in which all were alike interested. The Conference of the International Council of Nurses at Montreal in July, 1929, is said to have been the largest meeting of women ever held in the history of the world, and I felt it was a great privilege to have been permitted to attend. After the close of the Conference I went, in company with many other delegates, on the invitation of Dean Annie Goodrich, of the Yale University School of Nursing, to Newhaven, to study the conditions under which nurse-training is there carried out in conjunction with a university course. This scheme is being tried out as an experiment, and is based on the conviction that a medical school requires a good school of nursing associated with it. It is also designed to attract well-educated girls who, while desirous of following nursing as their life-work, are also anxious to pursue a university course and secure a diploma. The Dean of Nursing and the Dean of the Medical School are both on the executive committee. The scheme had its origin in the fact of the Rockefeller Foundation having some years ago 50,000 dollars to spare, which it was proposed should be devoted to nursing education. Accordingly a diploma for nursing was established at the Newhaven Hospital in conjunction with the Yale University under the following conditions: (1) The course was to be given in the shortest possible period of time; (2) theory and practice of nursing were to be co-ordinated; (3) the instruction was to be placed on a basis of preventive medicine throughout.

In order to carry out the first condition, the course of training was made one of twenty-eight months, instead of the usual three years, the students having attended at least two, preferably four, years at a secondary school, and having had some training in the principles of psychology. To comply with the necessity for co-ordinating theory and practice, a very thorough system of case-study has been evolved, the students making a detailed record of their patient's case and studying throughout the relation between his condition and the treatment ordered. The third condition was complied with by the fact of the School of Nursing being in close co-operation with the Medical School. This scheme was of special interest, as it was apparently a successful effort to carry out a project similar to one proposed for New Zealand nurses in connection with the Otago University which was found too ambitious for our young country and was superseded by the existing very successful post-graduate course. An interesting feature of the hospital was the fact that all patients in private wards were nursed entirely by fully-trained nurses.

In Toronto I had an opportunity of learning something of the very efficient social-service work carried out by the Public Health Department from its headquarters in the City Hall under the direction of Miss Dykes. The staff consists of seventeen nurses, who visit all the hospitals in the city—with the exception of the Toronto General, which has its own social-service department—and see each patient prior to discharge regarding his home conditions and the necessity for any further treatment or assistance. In addition to the executive office in the City Hall, there are four district offices from which nurses go out, the city having been mapped out into areas for the convenience of the work. In order to make nurses understand the importance of preventive work, each pupil-nurse during her first year in training is sent for one week of observation to the Social-service Department.