

N.Z. Nurses and Influenza in Australia

At the request of the Victorian Government a contingent of twenty-five trained nurses were selected by the Health Department, N.Z., to proceed to Australia to help in the nursing of influenza patients at Melbourne. We left Wellington per "Mocraiki" on 18th February, and commenced our work at the Exhibition on 4th March. The Exhibition was divided up into three large wards, two for men and one large wing for staff, women, and children. The beds were arranged as in the wards of the war hospitals, viz., in rows of five or six deep. The wards were capable of holding from 150 to 200 patients. The staff consisted of medical superintendent, six or seven medical men, matron, sub-matron, night matron, sisters, nurses (with two years' experience), auxiliaries, orderlies and V.A.D.'s as wardmaids, housemaids, laundry maids, etc. The cuisine was in charge of a chef with his attendants. Our medical superintendent was a returned man, and held the M.C.; he had also had great experience in the treatment of influenza at Home.

The housing and catering for such a huge staff meant great work and organisation for the matron and her assistant. At first the nursing staff were housed in the State School, outside the Exhibition grounds, an arrangement which was far from satisfactory. The orderlies slept in tents in the oval at the back of the Exhibition, and the matron and doctors in the Exhibition buildings, the latter in two large tents pitched near the secretary's office. The banqueting hall, which had seen many festive functions, was partitioned off into dining-rooms for sisters, nurses, V.A.D.'s and orderlies, and the laundry found a place under the grand stand! Later on when the health authorities woke up to the fact that the epidemic had come to stay for some months, other arrangements were made for the housing of the nursing staff and attendants, and so they were transferred to the picture gallery and sculpture room, off the aquarium. These rooms were made into cubicles, each cubicle holding four beds comfortably. These quarters were approached through the aquarium,

and the caves of Yeno Can, so that the staff had various exciting experiences at first with the seals, monkeys, etc., not to mention the room for the Egyptian mummies, which, needless to say, was soon christened the "Mortuary." Yet I can truly say the staff were very happy and merry in their cubic'es, and the sisters had a comfortable sitting-room, well supplied with easy chairs, and where we spent a most enjoyable evening when farewelled by the matron, doctors, and Australian sisters.

The wards were divided up into sections, with a sister, nurse, V.A.D.'s, and orderlies in charge. The orderlies on night duty were responsible for the cleanliness of pantries and bathrooms, as well as attending on male patients, doing "special" when patients became mental and had to be removed to the tents. The treatment of patients was, on the whole, very similar to New Zealand in the first stages of high temperature and acute pains in back and head. The usual antipyretics were given, and where the heart needed stimulating, brandy, digitalis, strophanthus and camphor were employed. Poulting found favour with many of the medical men, the packed poultice giving great comfort; mustard paste was also employed, and plasticine. Oxygen was much employed in the latter stages when breathing was laboured and difficult, but in the cases already waterlogged it proved but of little avail. In our first wave the mortality of the men was great—the young and strong were taken, and the alcoholic had but little chance, such cases becoming very mental, needing the "shackles" and strict watching. Many men over forty were attacked and recovered so that the disease was not altogether confined to the young. In the second wave we lost more women, but the second wave was less acute, and lasted for a shorter time than the first. During the first wave we admitted during the night as many as twenty-three to twenty-six women, not to mention children and men. On such busy nights the nursing staff was splendid, and work went on and patients were attended to, although the reaper Death was busy