

The American Nursing World.

The London County Council is to be congratulated on its desire to utilize the Thames for the benefit of London's millions. One method of using great waterways for the benefit of the feeble folk in cities is described in an interesting article, in the *National Hospital Record*, which we publish below, of the hospital ships which ply the harbour at Boston, U.S.A., during the summer months, and by means of which the fragile and invalid children pent up in this great city are able to enjoy the invigorating breezes which come up from the sea. The same plan is adopted on the tidal rivers in the United States. We commend the idea to the London County Council, who would confer inestimable benefit on the invalid children of London by fitting up steamers to ply up and down the river each day, which should carry trained nurses and so insure the proper care of these small passengers.

BOSTON FLOATING HOSPITAL.

No class of sufferers appeals more strongly to the universal heart than do sick children. Especially do the babes born to poverty claim our sympathy, for it is in the crowded quarters of our large cities that disease and death claim the largest number of victims. How to remedy this state of things has been a question frequently discussed by philanthropists. In July and August, when the death rate is largest, is the time of greatest need. That something can be done during these months to lessen the death rate and give pleasure and happiness in the place of discouragement and misery has been demonstrated in some of our large cities.

In this matter each city must study its own possibilities and formulate its own plan of work. To endeavour to transplant the methods of one section to another would surely fail of good results. Boston has its beautiful harbour and its unrivalled park system. For many years the effort has been made by the Fresh Air Fund to get mothers to take the babies to the parks and into the country, and facilities have been furnished them, and some good has resulted, but it was not until 1894 that the experiment was made to get the children out upon the waters, where the air is purest and laden with tonic and reviving properties. Mr. Rufus B. Tobey was the founder of the enterprise, and is still at the head, having seen a great work develop from a very small beginning.

An excursion boat was hired for the first experiment, fitted with hammocks, cots, clothing for the children, apparatus for cooking food and sterilizing milk, and other things necessary for the small passengers and their attendants. Five trips were made the first season, commencing July 25th,

and eleven hundred children received the benefit from this work. It was a great task for those who planned and executed this remarkable enterprise. The excursion boat being only hired for each trip, all articles had to be removed and stored after the day's pleasure was over. The marked improvement of the children was so apparent to doctors, nurses, and all who assisted in the work that it was decided to make another attempt the following year. Citizens who learned of the work gave financial aid, and unstinted praise to the undertaking, so that the following year's work was begun under more favourable auspices. One thousand four hundred and seventy-eight sick children were carried during the season of 1895, and thirteen trips made. The diseases treated during this summer included nearly all those incident to childhood, except those that were contagious, and the work so appealed to all those interested that great plans were made for the ensuing year.

In the spring of 1896 a coalition was formed with the Ten Times One Society, by which the hospital obtained the advantages of incorporation, and the season opened with a complete reorganization, including a board of directors, a regularly appointed medical staff, two permanent nurses, with a corps of volunteers representing the best trained nurses in the city. A modified milk department was established, with an experienced woman in charge. An inspector of supplies was appointed, and the examination of articles brought on board by the mothers inaugurated. A kindergarten was started, in which the well children were taught and entertained, to the increased comfort and benefit of the sick children and the relief of the mothers. In explanation of the fact that there were well children on board it must be stated that where a mother with a sick baby had an older child which could not be left it was allowed to be taken on board. The kindergarten thus became an important part of the work.

It was during this season, 1896, that surgical facilities were added to the equipment, and the patients classified. The more serious cases were assigned to the sick ward, the average cases to the middle ward, and the milder ones to the upper deck. The method of receiving and caring for patients had now developed into a system which has worked well, and is as follows:—

"The mother, having obtained a card of admission, on which a physician certifies that the child is sick, but has no contagious disease, presents this to the inspector at the gang plank. If the simple formalities have been complied with—and these are made as easy as possible—her bag, bundle, or package is examined to see that no contraband article of food or drink is brought on board. The instruction is, that no food of any description is to be brought, this being provided by the hospital. In spite of this caution, in the earlier years of our

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