

The International Council of Nurses.

A MESSAGE.

My joy and gratification on reading the good news of the full completion of the National Council of Nurses of Great Britain and Ireland cannot be told. How carefully and far-sightedly the Provisional Committee has prepared for this consummation is shown in the admirable provisions of the Constitution adopted, so well planned to allow unhampered growth in good and useful activities. My warmest congratulations are offered to the Sub-Committee who drew up the Draft Constitution, and my best wishes go to all the fortunate and happy members of this strong arm of our International Council. May we all long work together for the realisation of our highest aims.

L. L. Dock, *Hon. Sec.*

Our Foreign Letter Prize.

We have pleasure in announcing that the Prize of £1 10s. for the most interesting Foreign Letter has been awarded to Miss Mary Harvey, Oporto, Portugal: for "A Morning Ramble."

The following competitors have received honourable mention:—

Mlle. A. Gallienne, France: "The Surgeon's Visit in a French Hospital."

Miss Frances L. Jackson Bennett, Egypt: "Assiout, Upper Egypt."

Miss M. E. MacDonnell, India: "Work in a Mission Hospital, Neyoor, India."

We hope to publish all these interesting Letters.

The Scottish Hospitals Inquiries.

REPORTS OF THE COMMISSIONERS.

The reports of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the alleged unsatisfactory conditions at the Falkirk and Ruchill Hospitals have now been issued. As to Falkirk, they consider that the management of the hospital by the late Matron was lax and inefficient, but that other charges against the administration have not been proved.

In regard to the Ruchill Hospital, the Local Government Board for Scotland concur generally in the findings of the Commissioners, but in forwarding the report of the Commissioners to the Local Authorities express their own opinion on certain points raised therein.

They are satisfied that during considerable periods of 1907 the hospital was overcrowded and understaffed, and that in the earlier part of the year the overcrowding could have been met by the use of vacant wards; that the extreme departure from the prescribed standard of cubic space was not justified, but was the unfortunate result of a well-intentioned policy not of reckless indifference or neglect. The Board is also of opinion that the acute friction between the resident medical officers and the Matron was in a great measure due to the understaffing and overcrowding; that the allegations of the resident medical officers as to the overwork of the nurses, the inexperience of the nurses in charge, and the interference of the ambulance system in force with the efficiency of the staff were, on the whole, well founded; but that their claim that they should always be consulted by the Matron before changes were made in the distribution of nurses was "put too high."

The Board concur in the opinion of the Commissioners that the responsibility for overcrowding lies mainly with the Physician Superintendent, though the Medical Officer of Health cannot be altogether exonerated from the charge of unduly crowding the hospital.

The Commissioners state in their report that, except in the first year of its existence, the number of patients in the hospital has rarely exceeded that authorised, namely, 440. In December, 1907, the average number was 695, and on some days it exceeded 800. They point out that the cubic space allowed cannot be reduced without detriment, and that in such diseases as measles and whooping cough, the prevalence of sequelae is largely influenced by good ventilation and abundant cubic space. Yet 51, and even 74, children were admitted to a ward constructed for 15 beds, and in a smaller ward there were 62 patients on one day, at least; children were lying two in a cot, the number of nurses was insufficient, and patients were left for long periods in an unclean condition, so that on occasions the doctors were unable to treat them on that account.

The increase in the nursing staff appears to have been achieved by a large increase in probationers, who had had little or no experience. The staff of experienced nurses was not increased at all.

The Commissioners, who relate in detail the circumstances of the dispute between the Matron and the Assistant Physicians, state that it had a very serious effect on the discipline and administration of the hospital. They regard the question of the understaffing

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