

return from the wars. French friends all write the same sad story: all dear ones at the Front; then hope, terror, loss, grief, death, and—silence; or sleeping and waking under the sword of Damocles day after day. We know something of this agony in England, and can truly sympathise with all those out of the fighting line of the countries at war.

THE RIGHTS OF THE SICK AND WOUNDED.

Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, President of the National Council of Trained Nurses, has forwarded, by request, to Sir Alfred Keogh, Surgeon-General, Army Medical Department at the War Office, an exhaustive statement, supported by evidence, of the present disorganized condition of the nursing of sick and wounded soldiers in auxiliary military hospitals. The evidence advanced in support of the Resolution unanimously passed by the National Council of Trained Nurses at its recent annual meeting will, we hope, convince the War Office that drastic reform in the nursing department of these hospitals must be immediately effected.

THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF NURSES.

The following letter, dated December 16th, 1914, has just been received by the President of our National Council of Nurses from Miss L. L. Dock, International Secretary. It will, no doubt, have crossed with our letter containing the recommendation that the International Congress be not held. The business meeting of the International Council will take place at San Francisco as arranged, so that the continuity of business will not be interrupted:—

THE INTERNATIONAL MEETING AT SAN FRANCISCO.

New York City, U.S.A.

DEAR MRS. FENWICK,—You may imagine how much disappointment and affliction it is to us to be compelled finally to give up our plans for International Day. But we have felt it was necessary, and though we have not yet heard from England, and still hope that you and Miss Breay may come, we have had so general an opinion that it was advisable, that we American Councillors and Miss Goodrich have decided to write officially to our members to this effect.

New Zealand has advised us to give up International Day, Denmark has been surprised that it has not been announced before this, Holland will be unable to send delegates, and through Holland we learn that Sister Agnes Karll, of

Germany, has given up all thought of the Congress. Mrs. Klosz writes to the same effect from India.

Whilst this terrible War rages it would seem a mockery to try to repeat the beautiful Ceremonials of England and Germany on International Day. It already has been necessary to abandon our gift procession for the Nightingale Memorial Fund. And now we must resign ourselves to holding simply an American Nurses' Annual Meeting and Conference at San Francisco. Needless to say, any nurse who can come from abroad will be warmly welcome, and we still expect to have our special trip with our own train. There will, of course, be much that is delightful and pleasant at San Francisco, and we have determined to hold our International Council Meeting, so that there shall be no break in the business of our Federation. We will make such plans as are possible for 1918. We shall hope, until the last, that you and Miss Breay may come as you had expected.

Ever most sincerely,

L. L. Dock.

We all share the natural disappointment of our kind American colleagues, who were planning such a splendid programme of welcome for the world's nurses in 1915. But to the inevitable we must bow. Those of us who feel that our country needs us in this crisis will naturally put every other consideration aside, and in no country in the world are the women who stand for high nursing efficiency so desperately required as they are in England, when it only needed the crash of war to prove how lightly our years of toil and professional efficiency are estimated in comparison with the ignorance, self-sufficiency, and climbing clamour of the well-gilded social parasite, who has not hesitated to assume our professional titles of Lady Superintendent and Matron, adopt our uniform in every particular, assume control of hospitals for the wounded, and autocratically dictate to thoroughly trained and skilled members of the nursing profession, who have laboured for years to attain a safe standard of skill for the benefit of the sick. Like a plague of locusts, ignorant and inexperienced girls and grandmothers—also dressed in our uniforms—have swooped down on hundreds of Red Cross hospitals, and fixed on to the wounded. Those of us who have the courage to protest are naturally few, but this minority mean to remain on the spot, and press a demand that the right authority shall without delay take such steps to safeguard our sick and wounded soldiers as will reduce to a minimum the risks they at present run when *hors de combat*. No doubt our National Council and THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING will be represented at San Francisco, but alas! such happiness is not for the women at the wheel.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)