

The International Council of Nurses.

This Council held its meeting on Monday, September 16th, 1901, at 3 p.m., at the Women's Educational Union, Niagara Square, Buffalo, N.Y. The chair was taken by Mrs. Bedford Fenwick (President of the Council). There were present on the platform Miss McIsaac (President of the International Congress of Nurses), Miss Brennan, Miss Lucy Walker, Miss Maud Banfield, Miss Isla Stewart, Miss Mollett, Miss Snively (Hon. Treasurer), and Miss L. L. Dock (Hon. Secretary), and a large audience filled the Hall.

The minutes of the meeting of the Provisional Committee held in London in July, 1900, were read and confirmed, and the President then delivered the following

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

Ladies,—In opening this, the first Session of the International Council of Nurses, it is my first duty to express how deeply I appreciate the honour of having been elected as your first President, to convey to its members my profound sense of the responsibility attached to the office; and to assure them that it is my earnest determination to uphold the dignity of the distinguished professional position which has been conferred upon me.

WORK.

The text of the few words which I would say to you is comprised in the one word—Work. We take our stand in the Preamble of this International Council of Nurses as a confederation of workers. "We nurses of all nations," it runs, "sincerely believing that the best good of our profession will be advanced by greater unity of thought, sympathy and purpose, do hereby band ourselves in a confederation of workers to further the efficient care of the sick, and to secure the honour and the interests of the Nursing Profession."

The work which lies before us in the organization of an International Council of Nurses may well impress us with its magnitude. We have written down its Constitution—a Constitution pregnant with, and powerful for good—but we have to make that Constitution live, and to do this, we must inspire it with the vital force of a fine purposeful spirit. Hence work must be our watchword.

It has been written that no man is happier than he who loves and fulfils the particular work for the world which falls to his share. To man is entrusted the nature of his actions, not the result of them, and, therefore, does it behoove us to be diligent in our several spheres, although the law of evolution wills it that the good which our

exertions effect may rarely become visible. Between the result of single efforts, and the end we have in view, and the magnitude of the obstacles to be overcome, there may often appear a large and painful disproportion, but we must not allow ourselves to be discouraged by seemings; warm and hearty endeavour will certainly meet its reward. Good uses are never without result. Once enacted, they become a part of the moral world; they give to it new enrichment and beauty, and the whole universe partakes of their influence. They may not return in the shape wherein played forth, but likelier after the manner of seeds, which never forget to turn to flowers. Philosophers tell us that since the creation of the world not one particle of matter has been lost. It may have passed into new shapes; it may have combined with other elements; it may have floated away in vapour, but it comes back even then in the dewdrop and the rain, helping the leaf to grow, and the fruit to swell; through all its wanderings and transformations, Omniscience watches over and directs it. So is it with every generous and self-denying effort; it may escape our observation and be utterly forgotten; it may seem to have been all in vain; but it has painted itself on the eternal world, and is never effaced. Nothing that has the ideas and principles of good in it can die, or be fruitless. That which the fountain sends forth returns again to the fountain. "Every man," says Fichte, "should go on working, never debating within himself, nor wavering in doubt whether it may succeed, but labour as if of necessity it must succeed." In work then, consists the true pride of life.

Thus we have inspiration and effort, but we also need order. See what order there is in nature! along with sublimest activity, what smoothness, what ease! How still the growth of the plant, yet how rapid! How peacefully the stars of midnight seem encamped, yet before morning whole armies have disappeared! So much is achieved because everything is done in order at the right time, intently, yet deliberately. So in the formation of this International Council of Nurses—its founders have looked well to its organization. The vote covers all. They have, therefore, chosen graduate suffrage as the foundation on which to erect their stately pillar of international professional co-operation, and have thus based the Constitution on the fundamental principle, that a free and, therefore, a progressive community must be self-governing. The organization of the International Council is as simple as it is sure. The graduate nurse combines to form Alumnae Associations; by delegation, these societies co-operate to form a National Association. The National Associated Alumnae, in con-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)