

The Conference on International Affiliation.

A Conference of Delegates of Self-Governing Nursing Societies and Leagues, convened by Miss Isla Stewart, Hon. Vice-President in this country of the International Council of Nurses, was held on Friday, April 8th.

It was one of those occasions which is inspiring, owing to the possibilities of development involved, and the far-reaching consequences which may result from the action taken. The day itself, warm and sunshiny, after the long and drear spell of winter and biting east winds, was inspiring, and as representatives of the majority of Leagues foregathered for the first time, with the definite object of discussing closer union, in the pretty rooms at 431 Oxford Street, and made each other's acquaintance over an inviting cup of tea, which was evidently appreciated by those who had travelled long distances to attend the Conference, there was a feeling of anticipation in the air, and from the keen and interested conversation it was evident that the delegates had come ready and eager to discuss the question of affiliation.

There were present Miss Isla Stewart (in the chair), Mrs. Bedford Fenwick (President International Council of Nurses), and the following delegates:—Miss Helen F. Cameron, Miss Marquardt, Miss L. A. Morgan and Miss Brey (Matrons' Council), Miss S. A. Villiers, Mrs. Matthews, Mrs. Grimsdale, Miss J. A. Smith (State Registration Society), Mrs. Dyll, Miss Helen Todd, Miss F. Nevile and Miss E. Parry (League of St. Bartholomew's Hospital Nurses), Miss E. C. Barton, the Lady Hermione Blackwood, Miss N. Barnard, Miss M. Snell, Miss Elizabeth Hayes, Miss G. Jackson (Chelsea Infirmary Nurses' League), Miss Honnor, Miss Saunders, Miss Messenger and Miss Waugh (League of St. John's House Nurses), Miss S. Cartwright, Mrs. MacEwen, Miss M. Scruby, Miss M. Webb, Miss L. Webb, Miss F. G. Holliday, Miss Kate Holliday, Miss Elsie Armstrong (Registered Nurses' Society), Miss Pell Smith, Miss M. de H. Spittal, Miss Jessie Davies, Miss Annie Sellar, Miss May Coghlan, Miss Emily M. Turner (Leicester Infirmary Nurses' League).

The business of the day was "To discuss Organisation with a view to International Affiliation." Miss Stewart, in opening the Conference, named the Leagues and Societies represented, and said not many years ago nurses stood as units; they had no associations, no means of becoming acquainted with one another, or of knowing what was going on in the nursing world. Recently, the feeling, which had found expression in the formation of Nurses' Leagues, had arisen that co operation was desirable. Now it was found that further union was neces-

sary to bring nurses in this country into touch with their colleagues of other nations. A few in this country, as individuals, were in communication with those in other lands, but we had no organisation through which our nursing societies could be brought into contact with theirs. This was essential if we were to keep abreast with the times, and the consequence was that we were in some danger of descending from the position we had so far held, and which some believed that we still held, at the head of the nursing profession. For her own part, she thought that America was now side by side with us, and if we did not organise might shortly outstrip us. As we had been inclined formerly to think our own training-school the only hospital in the world, now we were in some danger of becoming narrow nationally. But when we studied the question we found that up to a certain point the training in the best schools all over the world was much the same, and it must be beneficial to have some organisation by means of which we could communicate with the nurses in other countries and exchange ideas with them.

If the self-governing Nursing Societies associated themselves together in some form of National Council we should then be able to enter into official relations with the International Council of Nurses, and through it become acquainted with the nurses of other nations. Miss Stewart then called upon Mrs. Fenwick, who, she said, had the question at her finger-tips, to explain the proposals before the meeting.

Mrs. Fenwick said she would preface what she had to say by reading the resolutions which would later be put to the meeting. They were as follows:—

Resolution 1.—That in the opinion of this meeting it is desirable, for the promotion of unity and mutual understanding between associations of trained nurses, that National Councils of Nurses be formed.

Resolution 2.—That in furtherance of this object those present at this Conference recommend that a Provisional Committee be formed of delegates from societies of nurses represented at this meeting, with a view to affiliation with the International Council of Nurses.

Resolution 3.—That this Provisional Committee shall act as the intermediary for this country with the International Council of Nurses, until it represents by delegation 3,000 trained nurses, when a Constitution forming a National Council of Nurses of England shall be considered.

To explain the origin of the International movement, Mrs. Fenwick said she must go back to the World's Fair at Chicago in 1893. In that year she attended the first Quinquennial Meeting of the International Council of Women and listened to a magnificent address on Internationalism from Mrs. May Wright Sewall. Some of those present no doubt remembered the splendid meeting of this International Council which took place in London six years later, when delegates attended from sixteen different

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)