

as a Corporation apart from the members."

The Association is asking for powers "to promote and increase by all lawful ways and means the knowledge, skill and profession of its members in all things relating to the business or profession of nursing, and to that end to establish classes, lectures and examinations, and prescribe such tests of competence, fitness and moral character as may be thought expedient." It proposes that the Council of the Association shall consist of fifteen graduate nurses. We cordially congratulate Miss Crosby and the Graduate Nurses' Association of Ontario on the progress they have made, and hope that their efforts will soon be rewarded with success.

### Medical Matters.

#### PLAGUE IN HARBIN.

A letter contributed by Dr. W. H. Graham Aspland, F.R.C.S., Edin., to the *British Medical Journal*, dated from the "Anti-plague car, Harbin," and evidently written with much difficulty, under pressure of a great stress of work, is of great interest to nurses, any of whom may be called upon to nurse cases of plague.

Dr. Aspland says in part:—

After delay, which seemed inevitable in organising a work so totally new to the Chinese mind, a little fear gradually gained hold of the usually stolid Chinese, and to a limited extent the people began to assist. Quarantine was effectually established, and the city divided into four main sections, each with its staff of doctors, students, sanitary coolies, stretcher bearers, search parties, dead removers, police, and messengers, numbering between 300 and 400 for each section. Each main section was again subdivided, and under the charge of junior doctors, and all sections linked up to the Administrative Bureau by telephone. Every individual in the streets had to wear a Government badge, the colour of the section in which he lived, and no one was allowed out of his section without permit. A military cordon round the city, which has no wall, prevented ingress and egress. By the time this was all arranged the deaths numbered nearly 200 a day; about half of these deaths only occurred in our already organised plague hospitals; the remainder were collected on the streets by the sanitaires and police. In order to escape quarantine, the dead were thrown into the streets at night, or in hundreds of instances the sick

were forced out of doors in a staggering condition, to drop in the street and probably freeze to death before killed by the plague. With the institution of the military cordon, the police doing cordon duty were liberated for city work, and in a short time bodies ceased to be thrown out; but, worse still, the people were hiding them in cupboards, boxes, roofs, ceilings; this added greatly to the duties of the search parties. The greatest difficulty was the disposal of dead. Graves could not be dug; the thermometer stood constantly in the neighbourhood of 20 degrees Fahr. below zero; so after a long half-mile of bodies and coffins had collected, the Government rose to the occasion and sanctioned what in the Chinese eyes is an unwarranted desecration—namely, burning. In three days over 4,000 bodies were burnt, and since then every few days, as a few hundreds would accumulate, similar burning.

Our quarantine section was composed of 100 railway trucks, each holding about 20 persons, a plague hospital for 30 people, a suspect hospital for 30, and a disinfecting station, together with administration building and kitchens. The advantage of railway trucks for quarantine work could be much enlarged upon.

When the administration got well to work, a few days saw the beginning of a decline in the number of deaths. It hung for a week or more at 170 to 180 a day, then gradually fell to 140, and with a few rises and falls, as I write to-day, after six weeks of Western scientific administration, the deaths number only seventeen. This is the Chinese side. The Russian city work, assisted by special professors of Moscow, and Dr. Paul Haffkine in charge of the plague hospital, will be more ably reported on by the conference. A few medical details in closing.

First, the plague is absolutely pneumonic and septicaemic in type, not a single instance of bubonic.

Secondly, not a single case of undoubted plague has recovered (our deaths in the Chinese city are well over 6,000).

Symptoms are unreliable during the maximum intensity of the plague. In the quarantine daily examinations we picked out on first examination all fast pulses and then took the temperature. If the case was septicaemic, the temperature was mostly subnormal; if pneumonic, there was a slight rise, but positively nothing to indicate the severity of the condition. Patients, laughing, talking, and joking, were in scores of cases dead in a few hours. Finally, in the rush of work, as our suspect hospital converted itself into a plague hospital by the rapidity of death, we simply relied

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