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EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

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EDITORIAL.

THE NURSING OF MEASLES AND WHOOPING COUGH.

The advantage of a Central Council for District Nursing in London, which, as we report in another column, presented its first annual report at the meeting held on February 25th at the offices of the Metropolitan Asylums Board under the chairmanship of Sir William Collins, was demonstrated in two important directions (1) the drafting, by its Executive Committee, of the outlines of a scheme for the district nursing of measles, German measles and whooping cough in London, and (2) the decision arrived at to prepare and publish a Directory of District Nursing in London.

In July of last year the Executive Committee of the above Council submitted a report to a meeting of that body showing that in a period of five years (1905—1909) measles alone caused in London 9,301 deaths, while all the infectious diseases ordinarily notifiable (small-pox, scarlet fever, diphtheria, enteric fever, etc.) caused but 8,585 deaths; further, that in the epidemic year 1911, there were 2,570 deaths from measles in London, and 1,038 from whooping cough, and that these were almost entirely deaths of little children, thus out of 2,361 deaths from measles in 1909 only 123 were of persons over five years of age, that the mortality increases in proportion to overcrowding and poverty, and that, moreover, this mortality is not a complete index of the mischief wrought, for measles is a frequent cause of retarded growth and development, and of ill health, often lighting up latent tuberculosis, added to which deafness and defects of eyesight are in many instances attributable to it.

The report further expressed the belief that "the greatest scope for saving life lies in the more complete medical attendance,

and in skilled nursing, and supervision of patients treated at home.

"In this the District Nursing Associations of London, by their experience and organization, are especially qualified to take part, and local authorities, desiring to provide for their poorer inhabitants, may, in the case of Borough Councils, do so by arrangement with the Associations under powers conferred by the Poor Law Acts."

Some difference of practice in regard to attendance by district nurses upon measles and other infectious diseases was found, and also that difficulty occurred, by reason of restrictions laid down in the rules of the Associations in obtaining the services of a nurse for these cases. The Committee advised that, "given suitable training and special instruction, district nurses, acting as they do under rule and supervision, may safely be trusted to undertake the nursing of measles, German measles, and whooping-cough in the course of their ordinary work."

The scheme now outlined has been drafted in accordance with instructions from the Council, the preparation being to some extent delayed by reason of the decision of the Local Government Board to issue an order for the compulsory notification of measles, the object of the scheme being to secure the provision of timely nursing care—in proper relation to medical advice—with a view to saving the lives and preventing permanent injury to the health of young children attacked by measles or whooping-cough. In putting this scheme into operation the Directory of District Nursing which is to be compiled should be of considerable value, as it will enable those interested to ascertain where to apply for the services of a district nurse in any part of the metropolis, and thus assist in co-ordinating the work of hospitals and public health workers with that of district nurses.

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