

## INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF NURSES. THE TRANSACTIONS OF THE FOURTH REGULAR MEETING.

We briefly referred last week to the publication of the Transactions of the Fourth Regular Meeting of the International Council of Nurses at Copenhagen, but we were able to give, in the brief space at our disposal, an impression of the importance and interest of this Report.

It includes the list of the Hon. Officers, the Affiliated National Councils, the International Delegates to the Copenhagen Conference, the Constitution of the Council, and its Official Organs. Then follows the Programme of the Meeting, and the accounts of the Sessions, which include the Reports from the Councils to be affiliated, Belgium, China, Italy, Norway, and South Africa. The speeches, papers, and discussions are also printed *in extenso*, with the Resolutions passed by the Council.

We shall refer again to the Reports from the affiliated countries, this week we devote the space at our disposal to a paper read by Miss Sophie Nelson for Mlle. Romanoff, which we print below. Its poignant appeal must move all hearts, and we hope the feeling it arouses will not evaporate in sentiment, but will result in action for the relief of the pitiable condition of our Russian sisters.

### THE ORGANIZATION OF RUSSIAN NURSING SISTERS.

The Organization of Russian Nursing Sisters is one of the oldest in Europe. Its origin dates from the Crimean War, when some time before the arrival of Florence Nightingale, Elizabeth Kartzeff had already begun to work on the fields of battle with a group of Russian women. The Sisters in Russia went through a course of training in the Sisterhoods of the Russian Red Cross, to which Russian girls and women of all classes flocked, looking upon the service to the suffering as the highest of callings, and renouncing all personal life in order to devote themselves to it gratuitously.

The Sisterhoods which were founded under the Flag of the Red Cross spread their network all over Russia, and in these schools the Sisters went through a preparatory, practical and theoretical two years' course of studies, after which they received the calling of Trained Nurse. The programme of these studies was a very extensive one, and embraced all the branches of the science of nursing the sick.

The Sisters—or Nurses—worked gratuitously, but the Sisterhoods provided everything that was necessary for their life, guaranteed their treatment in case of illness, and those of them who served as Sisters for 25 years, had the right to a pension, and to living in the Refuges organised by the Red Cross. The Japanese War proved that the number of Trained Nurses was insufficient, and courses for the training of Reserve Nurses were organised, which prepared them in the term of a year's time for war time work.

The war which broke out in Europe in 1914 called all the Nursing Sisters to work, but the dimensions of the calamity were so vast, that the number of Trained Nurses once more proved to be insufficient, and the short courses for the training of war-time Sisters had to be developed on extensive lines, in order to give all who desired to do so the possibility of preparing for work. I think we may say with right, that the Russian Nursing Sister has proved to be at the height of her calling, and that she held, and still holds her flag aloft.

The fatal year of 1917 opened for Russia which sapped the foundation of everything existing in Russia and destroyed the whole order of the State. The Red Cross—on a line with other Russian institutions—was deprived of the possibility of carrying on its work.

With the evacuation of those to whom remaining in Russia would have meant certain death, the majority of Russian Sisters were obliged to leave their country; some of them accompanied the evacuated lazarettes and separate groups of wounded, while others followed their families into exile, abandoning everything they possessed, and were obliged to seek shelter in foreign countries. According to the general registration made in different countries of Europe and Africa the number of these Sisters attains to about 1,000. A comparatively small number of them have had the possibility of carrying on their work in different institutions of the Russian Red Cross and local medical institutions. The majority are obliged to seek all kinds of work in order to obtain the means of living, and we know of Sisters—excellent nurses—who have become dressmakers, waitresses in cafés, servants, etc., earning their living, and that of their families in that way. The administration of affairs of the Russian Sisters is concentrated in the hands of the Russian Red Cross Committee, but the extremely limited means of which they dispose, deprive the Committee of the possibility of coming to the assistance of all those who are in need of it. They are obliged to limit their assistance to separate cases of extreme poverty, sickness, etc. Repetition Courses have been organised in Constantinople, in Serbia, in Bulgaria for Russian Sisters of Mercy, and scholarships have been founded for them at the Courses of "Infirmières Visiteuses" in France and Belgium. Notwithstanding this assistance, however, the position of the enormous majority of Russian Sisters is extremely painful, and the question of providing for invalid and old Sisters is one that is beyond the means and budget of the Committee.

But, although the position of the Russian Sisters abroad is painful enough, there are those who have remained in Russia and continue, with the greatest self-denial, their work of assistance to the suffering, in conditions which are hard to describe, among the bloody chaos that reigns in Russia. The information that reaches us pictures the Way of the Cross which had fallen to the lot of the Russian Nursing Sisters in Russia, under the reign and sway of the Bolsheviks. We have

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