

*1920 to 1930.*—Originally there had been a Hospitals Department, which had continued as such until 1908, responsible for the supervision of hospital and charitable aid practice. Then in 1900 had become established a Health Department under a special Minister of the Crown, which was to be in charge of the health of the colony. Inevitably the two Departments became amalgamated in 1909, when the new system of hospital administration introduced a system financed by local rates with a Government subsidy and under State supervision.

But though this amalgamation had taken place partly because of the pressure of work during the war years and partly because of local interests the amalgamation was not complete. Some essentially health services were still carried out by Hospital Boards such as the follow-up of infectious diseases, and some were the responsibility of the Department. Again, medical supervision of the school-child was in the hands of the Education Department. The new Act set out to co-ordinate these services and provided for a central Department under a Minister of the Crown, the executive head being the Director-General of Health. The work of the Department was divided into Divisions, each Division having a controlling officer in charge of it, and so the Nursing Division of the Department came into being with a Director of Nursing in charge who was responsible for the policy and supervision of her division, which included the administration of the Nurses and Midwives Registration Act.

New Zealand was divided into four main Health Districts, each being in charge of a Medical Officer of Health and, as part of his staff, a Nurse Inspector who would be responsible for the supervision of the private hospitals and midwives and maternity nurses in that particular area.

In 1922, as Miss Maclean's retirement was drawing near, it was decided to send Miss J. Bicknell abroad for a year to gain an insight into the newer developments taking place elsewhere. But before Miss Maclean's retirement she was associated with the movement in which many nurses and members of the lay public—particularly Sir Lindo Ferguson and Miss Williams, of Dunedin—were interested, the establishment of a suitable and fitting memorial to those nurses who had given up their lives during the Great War and who had died during the influenza epidemic. Committees were set up in different parts of New Zealand, and the public and nursing profession were canvassed for funds the sum of £26,000 being raised. It was then decided to set up a perpetual trust to be known as the "Nurses Memorial Fund." The endowment, and such other sums as were contributed in the future, were to be invested and the interest used to assist nurses who through old age or sickness were in need of financial assistance.

Since its inception the trust has been administered by a Central Committee situated in Dunedin, who are represented by members in the principal centres of the Dominion. The overhead costs have been practically nil, as the work has been carried out voluntarily. Many nurses have received untold help from the fund, and the manner of its assistance has been such that they have been able to retain their own independence without this help being public property. New Zealand nurses owe a great deal to this very kindly committee in Dunedin, whose foresight and care have helped so many.

In 1923 Miss J. Bicknell was appointed Director of the Division of Nursing. Fresh from contact with the Old World and the new movements taking place there, Miss Bicknell's first action was to strongly recommend the establishment of a Nursing School in connection with the New Zealand University, where nurses would have the advantage of post-graduate study. She pointed out that schools considered it necessary to prepare their teachers for their onerous duties, and in the same way it was considered essential that the nurses' training-school should be in charge of a prepared teacher; added to which the rapid developments taking place in preventive medicine were demanding workers who required some additional training other than that given to the ordinary hospital nurse.

These views were first placed before the nursing world in New Zealand at a conference of the New Zealand Trained Nurses' Association held at Dunedin in 1923, and from this conference a strong recommendation went to the Government asking for the establishment at Otago University of a School of Nursing where a five-year course would be available giving two years in the University studying the elementary sciences; then two years in hospital, followed by a fifth year in the University; when the nurse would specialize in either hospital or public-health practice. The result of this recommendation, together with the Department's representations, was that it was decided to ask Otago University to establish a Diploma in Nursing, and this was done in 1925, the students registering at the Home-science School for the first two years' course. In the meantime it was decided to send two nurses abroad for further study, who would return to be in charge of this diploma course. Miss J. Moore, R.N.R.M., who trained at Dunedin Hospital and at that time was Matron of Waikato Hospital, was sent to London to take the course in hospital administration and teaching of nurses given by the International Committee of the League of the Red Cross Societies at Bedford College, and the writer, who trained at Christchurch Hospital and at that time was on the staff of the Department in Christchurch, was sent to Canada to Toronto University to study public-health nursing.

On the return to New Zealand of these two nurses in 1927 difficulties arose in that the Otago University considered it had not the funds to pay the salaries of these officers, and the Government did not wish to establish the precedent of doing so. Further consideration had also been given to the original idea, and it was felt to meet the situation at that period a modification was required, so the diploma course at Otago lapsed. Instead a committee of management was set up in Wellington representing the Department, Victoria University College, and the Wellington Hospital Board, to control a post-graduate course established to train nurses in hospital administration and teaching of nurses and public-health nursing with these two officers in charge. It is advisable that teachers should be experienced nurses rather than young girls just completing a five years' course, and as an inaugural movement there is no doubt that the present course has met the needs of New Zealand, and the work of the students from this course has been much appreciated.