

**New Chair of Obstetrics**

A letter received by the council of the University of Melbourne from the Premier's office announced the intention of the Government to co-operate with the University in the establishment of a chair of obstetrics, and asked for the submission of a scheme to carry out the decision. The council referred the letter to the faculty, and accepted the recommendation of the latter that the appointment should carry a salary of £1,500 per annum, with the right of private consulting practice. The recommendation of the faculty that the appointment should be a five-yearly one was referred back to that body for further consideration.

**Proposed Clinical Hospital at Melbourne.**

The establishment of a clinical and research hospital in connexion with the University of Melbourne is still under consideration. The council of the university has given its approval to the scheme, and the faculty of medicine has appointed a committee to consider the method of administration and other problems connected with the proposed hospital.

**Post-graduate Refresher Course.**

The annual refresher course arranged by the Melbourne Permanent Committee for post-graduate work was held in Melbourne from August 6th to 17th. This course ran concurrently with a special course of lectures delivered by Professor F. R. Fraser, of St. Bartholomew's Hospital Medical College, London, who has been visiting Melbourne at the invitation of the Post-graduate Committee.

## Scotland.

**Scottish Quarterly Statistics.**

SALIENT features of the vital statistics for Scotland during the second quarter of the year 1928 include a birth rate of 21.2 per thousand, a marriage rate of 6.5 per thousand, and a death rate of 13.6 per thousand. In the larger burghs, taken individually, the death rate ranged from 17.2 in Perth, 15.4 in Aberdeen, 15.3 in Dundee, and 15.2 in Greenock, to 11.2 in Clydebank, 11.6 in Falkirk, 11.7 in Dunfermline, and 11.9 in Motherwell and Wishaw. In Glasgow the quarterly death rate was 14.6, and in Edinburgh 14.2. Deaths of children less than 1 year old numbered 2,112, equal to an infantile mortality rate of 82 per thousand registered births. In the larger burghs, taken individually, the infantile mortality rate varied from 119 per thousand births in Aberdeen and in Greenock, and 114 in Ayr, to 52 in Dunfermline, 55 in Clydebank, 71 in Motherwell and Wishaw, and 76 in Kilmarnock. In Dundee this rate was 99, in Glasgow 89, and in Edinburgh 83.

**Montrose Royal Asylum.**

The report of the Royal Asylum of Montrose for the year ending May 15th, 1928, by Dr. C. H. Shaw, physician-superintendent, shows that the number of patients under treatment in the asylum during the year was 871; of these 73 were discharged—56 left recovered, 8 relieved, 9 not improved—while 62 died. The total number of certified patients admitted was 148, including 70 men and 78 women, of whom 46 were private patients. During the year 27 voluntary patients were admitted, thus doubling the number of persons in this category undergoing treatment. Of the admissions, 24 had suffered from at least one previous attack. It is noted that in 3 cases the recurrence was due to the renewed abuse of alcohol, while in several other cases home conditions were not satisfactory. Dr. Shaw suggests that a local after-care association, whose members would take an interest in discharged patients and arrange for suitable employment, would be a great benefit. It is also noticed that the standard of physical health among the persons admitted was low; 25 of them were in a very feeble and exhausted condition, while 70 were described as weak. With regard to the causes of mental breakdown, heredity was ascertained to be a factor in about 40 per cent. of cases, while in 8 per cent. alcoholic intemperance was assigned as a cause. The latter figure

is somewhat higher than in recent years, although there has been a great diminution in the frequency of alcoholic excess as a cause. Adverse economic conditions were found to be a causal condition in 13 cases, in which illness was due either to lack of proper nourishment or to unemployment. With regard to the deaths, the average age at death was 60 years, and evidence of the weak physical condition of many of the patients received is shown by the fact that 7 died within a week of admission and 15 within one month. It is pointed out that this asylum was originally erected by voluntary subscription in 1781 as a charitable institution, being the oldest foundation of its kind in Scotland, and that it still preserves this character. At present 38 patients benefit by a special rate—less than that charged for parish patients—because of their necessitous circumstances. During the year 5 male and 13 female nurses passed the preliminary and 5 nurses passed the final examination of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association.

**Sir Arthur Keith, Hon. F.R.F.P.S.**

At a meeting of the Royal Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, held on September 3rd, the honorary Fellowship was conferred upon Sir Arthur Keith, M.D., F.R.S. During the course of an "At home," given in the Faculty Hall to members of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Sir Arthur Keith signed the roll of honorary Fellows. It will be recalled that last year Sir Arthur Keith was President of the British Association, and his address on "Darwin's theory of man's descent as it stands to-day" was published in the *British Medical Journal* on September 10th, 1927 (p. 439).

**Edinburgh Prison Medical Officer.**

The Secretary of State for Scotland has appointed Dr. Allen Thomson Sloan to be medical officer of the Prison of Edinburgh. Dr. Sloan is a former Edinburgh Academical football player and on nine occasions played for Scotland in international matches, commencing in 1914. Dr. Sloan graduated M.B., Ch.B. at Edinburgh in 1921.

## Ireland.

**Tuberculosis in Belfast.**

In his annual report for the year ending December 31st, 1927, Dr. Andrew Trimble, chief tuberculosis officer of the county borough of Belfast, submits certain practical suggestions for the further development of the work of the tuberculosis department, which has been in operation for fourteen years. He advocates more intensive education of the people in public and personal health and in the prevention and cure of tuberculosis; he thinks it reasonable also that there should be preventive inoculation against this disease, beginning with every infant born into a tuberculous family. More open-air schools are said to be required; it is stated that this subject is to be dealt with shortly in a joint report by Dr. Trimble and the chief school medical officer. Another suggestion made is that there should be added to the medical curriculum a course in the history, prevention, diagnosis, and methods of treatment of tuberculosis in the individual, and the means of dealing with it in the community. The accommodation for children suffering from non-pulmonary forms of tuberculosis is said to need extension. Dr. Trimble favours the extension of medical benefits to insured persons in Northern Ireland on the same terms and conditions as at present prevail in Great Britain, with, possibly, the inclusion of dependants. He adds that some reinforcement of his staff will be needed if the newer and more delicate methods for the diagnosis and control of tuberculosis are to be applied effectively. During the year under review 2,086 persons were notified, as compared with 1904 in the previous year; of these 51.7 per cent. were found to be infected, 5.3 doubtfully so, and 43 per cent. were free from the disease. In 27 per cent. of the definitely infected cases there was clear indication of the possibility of direct infection by living in contact with tuberculous patients; Dr. Trimble draws attention to the continuance of overcrowding, despite the efforts made by

the Belfast Corporation to provide new residential accommodation with a low weekly rate of "purchase repayment," but hopes that the difficulty will eventually be overcome. During 1927 the Belfast Insurance Committee gave £150 for the provision of an artificial light installation at the Central Tuberculosis Institute, and shortly afterwards a mercury vapour lamp was presented to another tuberculosis institute in the city. The open-air school has also been enlarged, but the demand for admission is far in excess of the accommodation. It is stated that the Government of Northern Ireland has issued only one form of licence for selling milk—namely, Grade A (T.T.) milk—and the Tuberculosis Committee has resolved to purchase this only in future for the municipal sanatorium and the hospital for tuberculous children. The hope is expressed that the time is not far distant when no other grade of milk will be allowed to be sold.

#### Preservatives in Food.

The Minister for Local Government and Public Health in the Irish Free State has issued an order prohibiting the use of certain preservatives in foodstuffs on and from October 1st, 1928. It is made illegal to sell, import, or produce food which contains specified preservatives or other improper ingredients, and power is given to local authorities and to the Customs officials to deal with breaches of what are named as the Public Health (Preservatives, etc., in Food) Regulations. The Secretary to the Ministry, in a circular letter to local sanitary authorities dealing with the aim and scope of the regulations, points out that they follow the lines of similar ones made in the neighbouring countries in conformity with the recommendations of a committee of experts. They provide for the prohibition of the importation and sale of articles of food to which preservatives and other specified substances have been added; a preservative is defined as any substitute which is capable of inhibiting, retarding, or arresting the process of fermentation, acidification, or other decomposition of food, or of masking any of the evidences of such process, or of neutralizing the acid generated by any such process. It does not include common salt, saltpetre, sugars, lactic acid, acetic acid or vinegar, glycerin, alcohol or potable spirits, spices, essential oils, or any substance added to food by the process of curing known as smoking. No person may manufacture for sale or sell any article of food which contains any of the following preservatives: compounds of antimony, arsenic, cadmium, chromium, copper, mercury, lead, zinc; the vegetable colouring matter gamboge; and the coal tar colours—namely, picric acid, Victoria yellow, Manchester yellow, aurantia, and aurine. The use of sulphur dioxide or benzoic acid is permitted in very minute quantities in connexion with the manufacture of certain named commodities. No person may sell any article for use as a preservative, or any colouring matter for any article of food, if such use would be contrary to the regulations. No cream may be sold which contains any thickening substance. Strict regulations are provided to ensure that all articles shall be properly labelled and described. The regulations make very full provision for their enforcement by the sanitary authorities.

#### Typhus Fever in Connemara.

What was at first feared would develop into one of the recurrent severe outbreaks of fever which in former years caused serious havoc in the poorer districts along the sea-coast of Connemara occurred last week in Bealadangan district, one of the poorest areas in South Connemara. The infection has, however, it is thought, been brought under control, and so far there have not been any further additions to the ten cases of typhus which have been brought to the Galway Central Hospital. The outbreak is confined to two houses in the village of Drinn; in one instance nine members of one family have been stricken down and are in the hospital; the other case is that of an old man who lived next door to the stricken family. The mother of the family of whom nine are in hospital died about fourteen days ago, and it is believed, but not definitely known, that her death was due to typhus. The father of this family and one of the children are in a serious condition.

## Correspondence.

### IRELAND AND THE QUEEN'S INSTITUTE OF DISTRICT NURSING.

SIR,—With keen disappointment and a feeling akin to despair I have read the paragraph headed "Queen's Institute of District Nursing" which appears on page 464 of the *British Medical Journal* of September 8th.

Associated most closely as I have been with the work of district nursing of the sick poor in their own homes throughout the whole of Ireland since the year 1889, I am in a position to state with emphasis that this beneficent and most valuable patriotic work has been successfully carried on throughout the length and breadth of Ireland by a noble band of highly trained women.

The Queen Victoria's Institute for Nurses was constituted under Royal Charter dated September 20th, 1889, and supplemental Charters dated respectively March 31st, 1898, and September 5th, 1904. Recently the title of the Institute has been changed at the instance of His Gracious Majesty the King to "The Queen's Institute of District Nursing."

The aims and objects of the Irish Branch are:

(a) To stimulate interest in district nursing, and to ensure throughout Ireland the most skilled home nursing service without distinction of creed, and with these objects in view: (1) to provide for nurses special post-graduate courses in district work, midwifery, infant welfare, school and tuberculosis visiting, so as to qualify them for district nursing as well as for all branches of public health work; (2) to supply nurses to local district nursing associations; (3) to arrange for the inspection of the work of each nurse twice yearly, and of the homes once a year, or more often as is considered advisable.

(b) To encourage the formation of a central or county nursing association in every county in Ireland, for the purpose of combining the existing nursing associations and to promote the development of new district associations where required.

The business of the Irish Branch is vested in an executive committee composed of representatives from both Northern and Southern Ireland in proportion to the relative population of those districts.

The supplemental rules for Northern Ireland provide that—

1. There shall be an advisory committee for Northern Ireland, consisting of not more than forty members elected annually by the county committee representing each of the six counties and two county boroughs of Northern Ireland.

2. The duties of the said advisory committee shall be:

To promote and co-ordinate the work of the Irish Branch in Northern Ireland, and, as far as may be thought desirable, to assist district nursing activities in general there.

To inform and advise the executive committee of the Irish Branch with regard to matters affecting the Irish Branch in Northern Ireland.

To report to the said executive committee as soon as may be after each meeting of the said advisory committee all proceedings at that meeting.

To nominate to the said executive committee not more than six suitable persons to act as representatives on the said executive committee.

To elect at its first meeting three trustees, who shall be jointly responsible for all capital sums raised in Northern Ireland in connexion with the said Institute, and for the payment of all interest accruing on such sums to the finance committee of the Irish Branch, and thereafter to fill any vacancies which may occur amongst the said trustees.

To receive a report from the aforesaid trustees at each annual meeting of the said advisory committee.

Such has been the existing constitution of the Irish Branch up to the present. For wellnigh forty years the work of the Queen's Institute has been carried on throughout Ireland without any question of either political or religious bias having arisen. In Dublin there are two homes for those already fully trained and registered nurses who are candidates under the Queen's Institute for the statutory period laid down for their training in district nursing before they can become Queen's nurses. Those homes, it is true, are respectively Protestant and Roman Catholic. But outside their doors the Queen's nurses are just all that this honourable title implies, and nothing more.

It pains me to think that it should be left to my fellow countrymen in Northern Ireland to harbour the suspicion,