

NURSING ECHOES.

With the next issue Mrs. Bedford Fenwick will have acted as Hon. Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING for twenty-five years, so that the professional nurses of this country may have freedom of expression in the press. With three organs at the disposal of their employers, and many newspapers subsidised in opposition to their interests, how valuable such an asset has been will only be realised by a future generation of nurses.

We wonder if committees of district nursing associations have taken into consideration the cost of nurses' shoe leather. In the pre-war days the problem of keeping herself shod, in boots or shoes which were weather resisting, on the small salary she received, was a difficult one to many a district nurse, and now, with deterioration of materials, and prices soaring upwards, it is most acute. Yet, if nurses are to keep in good health, it is imperative that they should be well and comfortably shod, and committees, in arranging war bonuses, and increases of salary, will do well to take the question into consideration.

Strikes are in the air, and the asylums staffs in the London area recently notified the London County Council that unless their demand for an all-round advance of 25s. a week on pre-war wages, and other grievances were redressed, they would hand in their resignations. The women were said to be particularly determined in their attitude. We understand that substantial concessions have been made.

On Saturday the General Purposes Committee of the Metropolitan Asylums Board submitted a report, which was agreed to, dealing with staff petitions for increase of salary.

The first came from the male attendants at Tooting Bec Asylum, asking to be placed on the same scale of remuneration as that adopted for L.C.C. workers. The next was a similar petition from the National Asylum Workers' Union, representing the employees at other asylums of the Board; and the third a petition of the Municipal Employees' Association, representing the staff of the Board at all institutions except asylums, and asking for an increased war bonus, with a flat rate of £1 per week.

The Committee are reconsidering all scales of salaries, and will report to a meeting of the Managers on October 12th. As regards war

bonuses, they advise the Managers to adopt an award made by the Conciliation and Arbitration Board for Government employees as applicable to Civil Servants with salaries not exceeding £500 per annum. They recommend that the bonus for the female staff should be at the flat rate of £18 per annum.

The strike of Asylum workers in two of the Lancashire Asylums was settled at the meeting of the Lancashire Asylums Board on Thursday in last week, when the matters in dispute were referred to arbitration.

The attendants and nurses at Prestwich Asylum had left work on Wednesday morning, and in the afternoon the Whittingham employees followed suit. On the Thursday afternoon, following a special meeting of the Asylums Board, which agreed to submit the demands to arbitration, the workers had returned to duty.

The following is a statement of the claims of the Asylum workers:—On January 7th last they made application to the Asylums Board for 5s. a week permanent advance in wages for all attendants and nurses; for a 60 hours' working week; for wages to be paid weekly instead of monthly; to be allowed to put union notices up in the messroom for the benefit of members; for the married staff who are called up to sleep in the asylum to be paid 1s. 6d. per night for doing so; for the outside artisans to be paid within a halfpenny of the district rate per hour; for men who earn the certificate for mental nursing to be paid £2 per year extra; and for the month's wages so far kept in hand to be paid up.

This was replied to in June, when 5s. per week bonus instead of an increase was given, and the month's wages kept in hand was paid up. No other concession was made.

At the present time (it is stated) the working hours average 72 per week. The staff is prepared to work overtime if necessary, provided overtime pay is forthcoming. The current wages worked out at about 6½d. to 6¾d. per hour for men, and 2d. to 3d. less for women.

On August 9th the original application was renewed, and the Asylums Board was given a 14 days' ultimatum. The reply to this was that the matter would be considered at the next meeting of the Finance Committee. This was not satisfactory to the Asylum union officials, as the Committee only meet quarterly, and about five months had elapsed between the application being made and the first reply.

Accordingly the strike began. The safety of the patients was seen to by a minimum staff

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