

of the London Hospital, we hold Lord Knutsford and his Committee responsible for the insufficient term of training and the economic exploitation of the Private Nursing Staff at the London Hospital, and we call upon them—now that a new Matron is appointed—to consult the Nursing Staff (as was recently done at the General Infirmary, Leeds), and invite them (without prejudice) to place their suggestions for reorganization and reform before the Committee of the hospital. "The toad beneath the harrow knows," &c.—Ed.]

THE STATUS OF IRISH NURSES.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

MADAM,—From a widely circulated leaflet it appears that nurses "who want better salaries, shorter hours, less night duty, more freedom, and control of their own profession," are invited to join the Irish Nurses' Branch of the Irish Women Workers' Union. Before nurses join this organisation it might be well for them to inquire by what means these desirable objects are to be secured. Are the Irish nurses willing to be "called out" in sympathy with the other branches of the Union—say, the waitresses? If not, will the waitresses "come out" in support of the nurses? And if there is no such reciprocation, what is the good of belonging to the Union? Again, if nurses are to "control their own profession," should they not be able to control their own Union? The necessity of such technical control is shown by the leaflet itself. For "the nurses are classed in sections according to the nature of their work, each section having its own elected representatives to manage its affairs."

One of the greatest dangers that threatens the interests of trained nurses is that they should have admitted to their ranks women who, no matter how otherwise estimable, have not "gone through the mill." The recent report of a Departmental Committee which recommended that some 10,000 unqualified men should be placed upon the Dental Register, *pari passu* with the 5,000 men who have gone through an arduous course of study and have passed difficult examinations, shows how real this danger is. The passage quoted from the leaflet seems almost to invite such an invasion.

I would re-echo the words of the leaflet: "The things that nurses need can only be won for nurses by nurses, acting together as one body in a steady, reasonable, but determined way." I am not so certain about the final words of the sentence—"on sound trade union lines." A nurse, without thought of shirking, freely risks her life when nursing a case of infectious fever. It is difficult to apply "sound trade union lines" to this relationship. Whatever the shortcomings of hospital governors, none of them can be influenced by personal gain. The profit made by "exploiting" nurses goes to the hospitals. No doubt, nurses should not be "sweated" even in a good cause; but before they can be better paid, or have their hours of labour shortened, the hospitals must either close a proportion of their beds or get more money.

Nurses are over-worked and under-paid, and they have hitherto been refused that State recognition which seems essential to effective organisation. The Irish Nurses' Association, of which I am President, has been labouring in this direction for years. The recently proposed drastic health legislation brings State registration nearer than ever before; and the importance of having a representative body of Irish trained nurses to mould such legislation in accordance with Irish conditions (widely different from those in England) does not need emphasis. The Association has been instrumental in bringing about the formation of the Irish Nursing Board, of which twenty-two out of twenty-six members are elected directly by the nurses on the register. So far "the conditions of training and the standard of efficiency" are already in the hands of nurses.

A public meeting of the Irish Nurses' Association will be held within the next fortnight, when proposals will be submitted for improving the conditions under which nurses at present work. Meantime, I would advise nurses, and especially probationers, to recognise the weakness which must follow a division of their forces, and to be slow to bind themselves to any organisation, no matter how specious its promises, unless there seems a reasonable probability that it will be able to "deliver the goods."

Yours, &c.,

A. CARSON RAE,
President, Irish Nurses' Association,
34, St. Stephen's Green, Dublin.

KERNELS FROM CORRESPONDENCE.

Welfare Nurse:—"I note the Duchess of Marlborough is advocating charity aid for babies—the babies of the poor, of course—and asks "Why should not V.A.D.s become V.A.B.s?" The reason *why not* is because they are not likely to train so as to be safe caretakers of the babies of the poor—if they are to give *voluntary* help—and, moreover, all this voluntary aid is most unsound economically. It is time millionaires realised that the poor are as important to the State as the rich, and form equally with them the State. Therefore let the State see to it that its children are provided with highly-skilled nurses, whose temperaments are maternal. The average V.A.D., whilst acclaiming her patriotism in so far as sick soldiers are concerned, has shown no marked evidence of love of mothers and children. The Labour Party is out against 'charity.' It has been fed up with it during the war. I did hope, when the war was over, we were to be relieved from social control, but apparently not."

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

March 8th.—What are the duties of the nurse in caring for a case of influenzal pneumonia? What precautions should she take for her own protection?

March 15th.—What do you know of erysipelas and its origin? What are the principal nursing points?

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