

THE NURSES' TRADE UNION.

A largely attended meeting was held at King George's Hall, Tottenham Court Road, W.1., on Friday, November 7th, to discuss the Professional Union to be registered under the Trades Union Act, Miss Maude MacCallum occupied the chair, and, on calling the meeting to order specially invited expressions of opinion from those not in sympathy with the Trade Union movement.

She said further "I never object to criticism. Frankly I think it does a lot of good, but there must be a proper limit to it. 'Some people would appear to be desirous of doing their utmost to prevent this Trade Union being formed. Let me assure them here and now, that their efforts are useless. This Trade Union is going to be formed, and, furthermore, it is going to be a gigantic success.'" (Applause).

After emphasising the fact that the movement emanated from the rank and file of nurses, Miss MacCallum continued: "*The Hospital*, which I understand is under the same management as the *Nursing Mirror*, comes out in its issue of November 1st, with a bitter and malignant attack against us. (Shame). I do not intend to descend to the depth to which the editor of that paper has thought fit to go. I think in the main his references can be treated with indifference. The inferences to be drawn, and the innuendoes to be attached to that article are absolutely false, and entirely misleading." The writer had, she said, singled out ladies for attack, and had even gone so far as to threaten and warn one of them. They had worked zealously for the nurses for years past, and the attack which had been made upon them would assuredly recoil upon their attackers. Time would prove her words, and she had no hesitation in saying that the great work which they had done and were doing to-day, would make their names memorable in the history of nurses.

She advised the editor of the papers referred to to endeavour to raise his future literary efforts on the subject of the Nurses' Trade Union to one which approached a responsible editorial level. She had received offers of help, and great encouragement from all over the country, and from abroad, and in one letter, from another professional Union, the writer said, "We should like to know who you are and all about you. I am encouraged to think well of you by the bitter attacks made upon you by the *Hospital* and *Nursing Mirror*."

Nothing but good could come of the Union they were about to form. No patients need think they would suffer. On the contrary, if possible, they would receive better attention, and it was idle for anyone to suggest that the Union would do anything to hurt or harm those to whom they were called to minister. The Union was going to bring about a betterment of everything connected with nursing, not only for the nurses, but also for the patients. The time had come when the nurses' labour should be properly

organised, properly controlled, and their interests fully and thoroughly protected.

TRADE UNIONS MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE.

MISS HELEN KLAASSEN, a member of the National Union of Scientific Workers, said that as far as science was concerned she was a dug-out, having returned to it after many years of social work, during which she had become very interested in the economic position of nurses and midwives. She had got into touch with the National Union of Trained Nurses, and the Midwives' Institute, and she knew how courageously they went on, getting wonderfully little result. When a movement was most required it was most difficult to start.

She believed in professional Trade Unions, and that Trade Unions, more than anything else, would make the world a better place. She emphasised the fact that such unions were recognised by Government, that the Government schemes required their organization, and that in order to improve, and safeguard the conditions of work, the efficiency of work, and the distribution of the products of industry there must be unions of professional as well as of manual workers.

The middle classes were beginning to move. If we did not get organization on right lines we should get it on wrong, and class hatred would lead to the disruption of society.

Many people had read of bad things which were the outcome of Trade Unionism, but very few were well up in its good side.

It was very important in starting a Trade Union to use the great power it gave for good ends. She impressed on her audience the importance of getting the best nurses to come into their Trade Union at the outset, and to be very careful that their Constitution was democratic.

It was a mistake to associate the only idea of Trade Unionism with strikes. A strike was its national weapon, but not its only one. A trade union rate could be established by other means, and she instanced the warning notices issued in the advertisement columns of the *British Medical Journal*, from time to time, as an effective method of enforcing a trade union rate in regard to terms and conditions of work.

A Trade Union could not, however, hold out for improved salaries until it had built up its finances, and had funds in hand from which to help hard cases.

Miss Klaassen emphasised the fact that the public were well disposed towards nurses, and were very misinformed about the nurses' point of view. She concluded by pointing out that strikes and other methods of taking collective action could only be ultimately successful if that action had the approval of the public.

THE HOSPITAL SYSTEM.

Miss O'Dwyer, a private nurse, who asked indulgence of her audience for her maiden speech, said that in the course of her four years' hospital

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