

NURSES AND TRADE UNIONISM.

Speaking at a recent meeting of the Poor Law Workers' Trade Union, Miss Maude MacCallum said:—

"Since she had been working in this matter two things had struck her forcibly. The first was the need of united action on the part of all workers, and the second, how very many others besides herself had recognised that fact and already got to work. But nobody could imagine that a Union was started just for fun. As one of the organisers of the Professional Union of Trained Nurses, she assured them there was no amusement whatever to be got out of it. The only reason she could give for this desire for work and worry was that a stronger force than themselves was driving them forward, and even making them capable of doing things they would never have thought it possible to do. What was this force? The word 'evolution' would, to some extent answer that question. This generation, with their Unions, were building a foundation on which the finest and noblest edifice ever built would be eventually reared; and that was the universal brotherhood of man, when peace and goodwill, happiness and health would be the rightful heritage of every man, woman and child. On the other hand, they would be told, as she had been, that Unions were wicked things, invented to cause strikes and other inconveniences. Mistakes had been made, no doubt, by Unions, just as they had by every other body. It was up to them to improve on these errors. If that was their duty to their neighbour and posterity, what about their duty to themselves? She spoke more especially to nurses. It was right for every man and woman who was able, to do a certain amount of work for the public good, but was it right for any one section to have to work so long and so strenuously that their work could not be their best, and sometimes not even their second best? That was so often the case with nurses—they were often too utterly worn out to care about anything; they had often no time or strength for amusements or recreation, for improving their minds, or stretching their souls; it was just a round of grinding work and exhausted sleep. She appealed to nurses to join a Union of some sort."

We note that the public is not going to follow the example of the College of Nursing, Ltd., and its subsidised Press, and go bald-headed in opposition to "The Professional Union of Trained Nurses." We know the cussedness of human nature—make a person or an association into a martyr and it is bound to be crowned with a halo sooner or later. What the new Union has a right to is fair play so that it can work out its own salvation, and when College officials talk of Bolshevicks and the Burdett Press of "wolves," they are happily defeating their ends, in attempting to suppress a Nurses Trade Union, and arousing sympathy for the new movement—which is all to the good.

We are glad to note that Miss Gertrude Rogers, President of the Leicester Royal Infirmary Nurses' League in a letter to members published in its *Journal*, advises them to study the subject of a Nurses' Trades Union carefully, and adds, "don't rush into a movement because 'something must be done,' nor condemn it off-hand,"

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"THE BUILDERS."*

This story, saturated with the atmosphere of South America, and dealing with many social and political problems, has for its central figure a trained nurse, and we venture to think there is material in the story that will appeal in some way or another to the many and varied tastes of our readers.

Caroline was of the temperament that is bound to suffer.

Before the story opens, some years before, she had gone down into the deeps, but characteristically had refused to stay there.

At thirty-two "she was young, with an illusive and indestructible face of the soul. Her face seemed the face of some swiftly-changing idea. Long ago, before the wreck of her happiness, her father had said that Caroline's eyes were like blue birds flying. After eight years of nursing she had learned that nothing varied the monotonous personalities of patients."

To-day, as she sits in her Virginian home in company with her mother and sisters, she receives another call to work. Her mother, with scant income, had brought up her girls to take life gaily, and to rely on their own resourcefulness rather than on fortuitous events. As for instance her order to the old negro to bring some more wood for the fire.

"Dar ain' no mo wood 'ole Miss."

"Well, the garden fence is falling down by the smoke house, split up some of the rails."

The letter which brought the summons to Caroline was a long one, and explained the nature of the case for which she was required. A little delicate girl, a mother, one of the loveliest creatures on earth, a father of immense wealth and of good family, who upheld the Republican party, but who did not seem satisfied with their ways, and who was reported to treat his wife abominably.

"Well he can't hurt me," said Caroline firmly. Nothing she felt in an uncertain world was more certain than this—no man could ever hurt her again.

The period about which this book is written is that immediately preceding America's decision to come into the war.

Beautiful Mrs. Blackburne, with her appeal of delicacy and feminine weakness went to Caroline's heart. She was like a fragile white flower that could not live without warmth and sunshine. Though she was not tall, her extraordinary slenderness gave her the effect of height and the enchanting lines of one of Botticelli's graces.

"I never saw anyone lovelier than Mrs. Blackburne," she confided to Mrs. Timberlake, the cousin housekeeper, "she looks like an angel."

"Well, I reckon there's mighty little to say against Angelica's looks, unless your taste runs to a trifle more flesh," responded Mrs. Timberlake drily.

Caroline was aware of a stiffening of her figure, as if she were nerving herself for an outburst.

* Ellen Glasgow. John Murray.

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