

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

Whilst cordially inviting communications upon all subjects for these columns, we wish it to be distinctly understood that we do not in ANY WAY hold ourselves responsible for the opinions expressed by our correspondents.

THE IRISH NURSES' UNION.

A MANURE CART FOR MIDWIVES.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—With reference to Miss Klaassen's letter in your issue of the 28th ult., may I say that the nurses reported to have gone on strike at the Carrickmacross Fever and General Hospital are not members of the Irish Nurses' Union? I do not know whether they are members of any other Union.

The strikes referred to in your editorial note were strikes by members of the Irish Asylum Workers' Union, and undoubtedly they did, in some cases, as at Clonmel, cause considerable distress to the inmates. At the same time, I think there is little room for dispute that these strikes would never have taken place if the governing authorities of the institutions had displayed anything approaching a reasonable spirit in dealing with their employes.

The Irish Nurses' Union has never ordered or advised its members to go on strike in the sense to which Miss Klaassen refers, but we have had a "strike" of a kind during the past week, which it may be instructive to report. It has been, for some time, the practice in the Dublin Union Hospital to require the nurse in charge of the admission ward at night to undertake the listing and checking of garments, &c., brought in by the patients admitted. This work is obviously not a nurse's work, and, as a matter of fact, it may on occasion, very seriously interfere with the due carrying out of the nurse's proper duties. We therefore brought the matter to the notice of the Board of Guardians, and as the Board seemed indisposed or unable to deal with the matter as speedily as was required, we advised one of our members to refuse to undertake this work in future, in other words, to go on strike. The result was that the nurse was dismissed, but in a couple of days we secured her reinstatement, and a definite understanding that the question as to who should do this work would be gone into. We have had considerable experience of the Dublin and other Guardians, and I have no hesitation in saying that, were it not for the "strike" should not have been able to secure so speedy and satisfactory an arrangement of the matter. This brings me to the suggestion I should like to make to Miss Klaassen and those who think with her. While I appreciate their feeling on this question, I think they are inclined to attach too much blame to the nurse who is driven to strike, or to threaten to strike, and too little blame to the authorities who are responsible for driving her to this extreme. I confess I doubt very much whether hospital and other nursing authorities, including Government

departments, would adopt the same dilatory methods and dictatorial attitude towards any other class of workers, who can go on strike without creating serious difficulty, as they adopt towards nurses, who practically cannot go on strike. In other words, I am not at all sure that the authorities do not take advantage of the nurses' devotion to duty.

It may be that on your side of the Channel nurses are held in greater respect generally than is sometimes the case here, but I may perhaps be allowed to give an actual illustration of the courtesy extended to a nurse by a member of the public authority employing her. A Poor Law Guardian in the Co. Meath sent for the Poor Law midwife to attend the wife of one of his labourers. The vehicle he sent to bring her to the labourer's house was a farm manure cart! I wonder would Miss Klaassen feel inclined to go on strike in such a case? The midwife concerned, of course, went to her patient, but not in the vehicle provided by the Guardian.

Yours faithfully,

M. MORTISHED,

Secretary.

29, South Anne Street, Dublin.

KERNELS FROM CORRESPONDENCE.

Irishwoman: "I think it is a scandal taking Red Cross money to build the College when Haig and Beatty are calling out for money to relieve distress amongst the officers who sacrificed all to save England, it is a vile shame to take that money for luxuries for nurses. One feels as if all justice had gone out of Britishers."

[Sir Robert Hudson, the Hon. Treasurer of the Joint War Committee, denies that Red Cross money subscribed for sick and wounded is to be used for this purpose.—Ed.]

A "Loyal Sister": "I have noticed in the daily papers that Sir Henry Burdett is suffering from over-work, and has been ordered a complete rest by his doctors. As one of his own papers remarks, 'Those who were present at the meeting of the Nurses' Co-operation on February 6th, which he attended in spite of his doctor's orders, can hardly have realised from the vigour of his speech how seriously over-worked he was.' This is quite true; at the same time, some of us who were present were distinctly of opinion that later a reaction might set in, and change of air might be necessary!"

OUR PRIZE COMPETITIONS.

QUESTIONS.

March 13th.—How would you feed a baby, eight months old, after an operation for intussusception?

March 20th.—How would you prevent foot-drop, acute thirst, constipation and vomiting after an operation?

March 27th.—(a) Describe fully the varieties of Uterine Inertia; (b) What treatment would you adopt in each case?

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)