

CONSCIOUS AIM OF TRADE UNIONISM.

Miss E. Maude MacCallum, Hon. Secretary of the Professional Union of Trained Nurses, and Mr. Herbert E. H. Highton, Amalgamated Society of Engineers, were the speakers at a meeting held at the Scottish Nurses' Club, 205, Bath Street, Glasgow, on Friday, March 19th. Dr. McGregor Robertson was in the chair and made it plain that the meeting was not promoted by the club, which was intended to provide a place where all nurses could freely and frankly discuss questions which are at present being considered among them.

TRADE UNIONISM FOR NURSES.

Miss MacCallum began her address on the above subject by disabusing the minds of her hearers that Trade Unionism was synonymous with strikes, which, she admitted, it was in her own mind until she went thoroughly into the matter. Being a Trade Union meant that instead of being registered under the Companies Acts your Society was registered under the Trades Union Act; the difference was that under the Companies Acts your business was often in the hands of lay people who, no matter how kind or willing to help they might be, very often did not really understand the needs of the people they represented.

Under the Trades Union Act the business of a Society must be managed entirely by the members themselves, that was why, for the first time in their history, nurses had just started a Professional Union of Trained Nurses which had now been registered under the Trades Union Act.

Of Trade Unionism for Nurses there were three different aspects: first, in its relation to the State; second, in respect to the general public as individuals; third, as it affects nurses themselves.

Miss MacCallum remarked that since the dawn of Christianity, and in all probability long before that era, the righteousness of a cause, or the necessity for a reform, could be gauged by the amount of opposition and evil that was stirred up as soon as the question was mooted. The Professional Union of Trained Nurses must have been a much-needed organisation if one might judge from the bitter attacks made on its organisers. Who was afraid of being injured? It would not be the nurses themselves who would be hurt by this action, as their conditions were so bad they could hardly be worse; besides, it was not to be expected that so much wrath should be poured forth just to prevent the nurses from injuring themselves if they wished to do so. There must be some other interest threatened.

Miss MacCallum referred to the need of rest time for nurses, for the benefit of the public as well as the nurse, and of the heavy strain on private nurses because their minds and sympathies were engaged in their work. She read a letter from a district nurse asking that the case of district nurses might be taken up, showing the inadequate payment many of them received, and expressing the opinion that the partially-trained

district nurses were the cause of most of this trouble, as they were "flooding the country-side."

SOME ASPECTS OF PRESENT-DAY TRADE UNIONISM.

Mr. Herbert E. R. Highton, A.S.E., spoke on the above subject, and said that he did not think the nurses would appeal in vain for help from the workers of this country. He showed the enormous growth of trade unions during the last thirty years. In his own Society—the Amalgamated Society of Engineers—he calculated that 90 per cent. of the possible strength of the engineers was actually in the Society.

One of the striking features about the growth of trade unions in recent years had been not only that of "manual workers" and "skilled tradesmen," but also of the "black-coated professions," including the Draughtsmen's Association (in his own trade), the Actors' Association, the National Unions of Journalists, and of Teachers (headmasters included).

One of the most significant changes was the change in the conscious aim of trade unionism. There was a time when it was solely confined to matters of wages and hours. He was not of opinion that their economic position was all that trade unionists should trouble about, but he did not agree that it should *not* be troubled about, and that they should go on thinking only of their high ideals; because, until the community was willing to give the economic and physical basis of life (and people must have that basis before they could get the ideals they ought to have, or put them into daily practice), mercenary matters must have their proper place.

There had been a distinct advance in the conscious aim of even the ordinary workers in trade unions. They used to be mainly concerned with hours and money, now they were largely concerned with how far they were to have a corporate say in the conditions under which they worked—not merely to drag out of unwilling employers the hours and the wages they wanted, but to have some responsible say in the control of the industry in which they were engaged. To many professional people—and nurses as well as others—this side of the work of a Trade Union ought to be of considerable importance. When it came to claiming this control, all sections of workers found themselves up against a blank wall. The University Lecturer was up against the Senate, the engineers could get no say in the management of the business. The door was shut, and would not yield until either the one side was strong enough to force it, or the other side became a great deal more reasonable than some thought it just now.

FEVER NURSES' ASSOCIATION.

At the Executive Committee meeting, held on the 15th inst., a sub-committee was appointed to consider the revision of the Association's Syllabus and Schedule. The Annual General Meeting of the Association will be held on Saturday, May 8th next, at Croydon, when Dr. Veitch Clark, M.O.H. for Croydon, will deliver his Presidential Address.

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