

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.

TRADE UNIONISM AND STRIKES.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—Free discussion on such matters as trade unionism and strikes, as suggested by Miss Klaassen, should certainly help nurses to form stronger views and perhaps encourage more of them to think for themselves.

Miss Klaassen's statement that without strikes "the nation would have been ill-fed and have deteriorated and become weak and poor" does not coincide with my point of view.

I think the nation *has* been ill-fed and has deteriorated in consequence; and that instead of being part of an organised plan of reform, strikes were the *result* of evil conditions.

It seems to me that drastic action on the part of the oppressed indicates reckless defiance, flaming up from the smouldering of misery and hopelessness created by past grievances, and ignited by the "last straw" of a new burden which may be small in itself.

Upon such occasions we cannot expect the ear to be sensitive to platitudes on the sufferings of *others*, the mind being totally absorbed in its own.

In referring to "cruel" strikes, Miss Klaassen must mean those which apparently cause more suffering than usual to helpless outsiders. I consider all strikes are equally cruel; but there is no doubt that to the average mind, sudden calamities (such as the death of a patient resulting from lack of attention) make more impression than protracted suffering (such as total destruction of a child's health leading on to contagious disease, resulting from semi-starvation of an already impoverished system).

It is also unfortunately true that many easy going people, with little or no imagination, are prompt in "drawing away" the sympathy they are not capable of feeling from any and every class of strikers without distinction or inquiry.

Now, trade unionism is the medium by which we hope to make strikes, not unlawful, but unnecessary in order to secure all reasonable claims. We desire to make negotiations between employers and employees before misery drowns the voice of the peace maker and dulls the point of argument; and whilst hope is still enthroned. Recklessness and defiance might then be left in the shadows of our undisciplined past.

Such is our aim. The attainment depends not so much on the officials of our unions, as upon the driving force, and that force is guided by members but weakened by non-members.

Those who pride themselves on their lofty views should lose no time in adding to our driving force.

The principles of trade unionism are truly Christian, being bound up in the common brotherhood of man and the protection of the weak; and in the ever-increasing chain of societies which are linked together in this common bond, no link could be more appropriate than that of the nursing profession, which should enhance the whole chain by its solidity and completeness.

Yours faithfully,

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KERNELS FROM CORRESPONDENCE.

PRIVATE NURSES AND THE HOURS OF EMPLOYMENT BILL.

Private Nurse, London: "I hope Private Nurses who realise the danger foreshadowed in your remarks last week, will not sit supine as usual, and have their work taken away from them by Act of Parliament in the Hours of Employment Bill. I have been a Private Nurse for fifteen years, taking my fee of £2 2s. (now £3 3s.) a week, less a small percentage, and in that time although I began without a penny, I have saved enough on which to retire in comfort. Sometimes I have worked twelve hours, sometimes longer; at others I have travelled with patients, seen foreign countries, and had a really good time. 'Give and take,' as you say. I wish to put it on record that I have been very generously treated by the majority of patients, and have a dozen places where I can spend a holiday, free of expense. If we are to have 'collective bargaining' in private work I for one shall try to evade it."

Member R.N.S.: "I do hope we private nurses may be left in peace to do our duty by the sick and not be legislated for in the Hours of Employment Act. I have saved £500 in the few years I have been on the staff of the R.N.S. and enjoyed good holidays each year."

F. E. B. Mussoon, India: "I have been quite excited over reading all the news about the passing of the Nurses' Registration Act, and the subsequent meeting. I wish a miracle would happen to dissolve that wretched College of Nursing, Ltd., before it makes us any more ashamed."

["*Nurse Juliet*" has been the very last straw. Trained Nurses bitterly resent the D.T. appeal through this bogus mannequin.—Ed.]

OUR PRIZE COMPETITIONS.

QUESTIONS.

April 10th.—What is Uræmia? When does it occur? Give the symptoms and general management of this condition.

April 17th.—How would you recognise perforation in a case of enteric fever? What immediate action would you take, and how could you temporarily relieve the patient?

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