

## TRADE UNIONISM FOR NURSES.

BY NORA M. MACDONALD.

It is with hesitation that I again write you regarding professional matters, as I prefer leaving this to others more capable than myself, but after reading Mr. Minet's address to nurses in the B.J.N. of January 1st I cannot allow his statements to pass unchallenged.

To me it is inconceivable that any trained nurse of to-day could have chosen her life-work for any other reason than the love of caring for the sick—one of the deep things of her soul which she seldom speaks of.

To those of us who wanted to be nurses when in our cradles (I cannot remember the time when I did not want to do the kind of things nurses are doing to-day and think I must have been born with the desire), the uplifting of the ideals of our life-work has always been and *always will be* before us, and it is to get nearer this idealism so many of us have joined ourselves to the Professional Union of Trained Nurses registered under the Trade Union Act, and if we had our lives to begin over again would gladly and joyfully go through the strenuous hardships of training for the opportunities it gives us of nursing the sick.

I cannot quite grasp what Mr. Minet means by "spiritual," and the words, "Religion—we use the word in no narrow sense." Mr. Minet's references in connection with the word "spiritual" are so vague that I am afraid I must leave this.

There are so many different religions in the world that the word itself is just about wide enough to include the whole of humanity. There is, however, only one kind of Christianity, and if the word vocation is used by Mr. Minet in the sense of a special calling of God, then it cannot be called the teaching of Christ. The scullery-maid, the trained nurse, teacher or preacher if in the place, and doing the work, God has planned for them has chosen the very highest vocation of life, namely, fulfilling the will of God. The P.U.T.N. is but a means to an end, and that end all that is highest, noblest and best in our work, and but the fuller development of the noble spirit with which Florence Nightingale began. Hitherto we have been like machines. With more quiet time (and all the things the P.U.T.N. is out for) for the refreshing of our souls and bodies, so will the souls and bodies of our patients be more carefully tended. It is a divine command that we take one day's rest out of the seven. Can we get this by 56 hours' of work per week? The reward due the labourer worthy of his hire can only be fixed by those who know what the labourer's work is.

When we see untrained women trip gaily in where others fear to tread, tear aside the veil which almost lays bare the very souls of our patients and go out to the highways and hedges and proclaim aloud the things they see there, it is such things that drive us to forming ourselves into a union of trained nurses controlled only by trained nurses.

Had such a "Union" been formed long ago these things would not have been allowed to happen, neither should we have had to look on helplessly at the sick poor being nursed (?) by the semi-trained while the rich could always have the trained—for "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me," Matthew 25, 40.

The word "strike" in connection with the P.U.T.N. is already threadbare and scarcely worth responding to. Miss MacCallum, Hon. Organiser and Secretary, and Miss McAra, Hon. Secretary of Glasgow and District Branch of the P.U.T.N., have both publicly declared themselves against strikes. The former that she would never leave her patient to go on strike, and the latter that she was "against strikes." A strike would require a banking account of several years' growth.

Mr. Minet says: "The first principle of a Union is selfishness." The women who have "gone through the mill" for *at least* a period of four years' training, worked for State Registration in *pre-war* days, and since formed themselves into a "Union," namely, the P.U.T.N., are after bigger things than that of merely gratifying self. Has the Organiser of our P.U.T.N., Miss MacCallum, who is still Hon. Organiser and Secretary, shown by her work that her first principle is selfishness? The life of one who has such wide knowledge of human nature is so full that selfishness is crushed out.

There is a time for silence and there is a time when it is no longer right to remain silent. There is no time or place for indifference.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, perfect in His humanity, revealed a sublime strength when He remained silent before Pontius Pilate, but that same divine Being Who is yet to be judge of all the earth later on (in the Revelation) pronounced an awful doom on a certain Church which was "neither cold nor hot"—impressively solemn words.

True in these latter days when so many are "blown about with every wind of doctrine," we had better see to it that our house is built on rock and not on shifting sand. We have need to pray for a clear vision of right and wrong, then without any fear of the Pharisaical spirit we will earn that "Well done good and faithful servant" for "His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face."

### NURSES' MISSIONARY LEAGUE.

The Nurses' Missionary League has changed its headquarters, and the address of the Secretary, Miss H. Y. Richardson, is now 135, Ebury Street, S.W. 1.

### VOLUNTARY HOSPITALS INQUIRY.

Lord Linlithgow has been appointed, on the nomination of the Secretary for Scotland, to the Committee which is inquiring into the financial position of the voluntary hospitals.

The first meeting of the Committee was held at the Ministry of Health on Wednesday.

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