

donations. The neglect of donors in this respect did not matter much in the early days of blood transfusion when a donor was asked to part with his blood only once or twice in an emergency not likely to recur again as far as he or she was concerned.

Now that blood transfusion is generally recognised as an invaluable measure in many surgical emergencies as well as in a great variety of diseases, one and the same donor may find himself parting with his blood several times a year during many years. A whole class of donors has come into existence with which it is common that they part with many litres of blood every year. Are these frequently repeated withdrawals of blood ultimately likely to hurt some donors? If so, how can injurious effects be avoided, and how can the persons most liable to suffer from them be discovered at an early stage, so that they can be withdrawn promptly and for a time, at any rate, from the ranks of the donors?

These and various other questions having been raised, an attempt has been made to answer them at the blood transfusion centre in Strasburg, which is in charge of Professor Canuyt. A team of workers consisting of Professor Merklen, Dr. L. Israel, and Dr. A. Apffel have set to work at this centre and have undertaken an intensive study of 20 donors between the ages of 24 and 59. Fourteen of them were men and six were women, and all 20 had supplied between two and 15 litres of blood. Six of the donors had given more than nine litres of blood in the course of a few years. Not only were their weight and general state of health examined, but their blood was submitted to various tests, and to counts of the numbers of red cells and white cells.

The number of blood corpuscles was almost without exception normal. Nineteen donors had more than 4,000,000 red corpuscles—a normal figure—and as many as seven had more than 5,000,000. There were indeed three donors with more than 5,500,000 red corpuscles, and one rejoiced in more than 6,000,000. The only donor with a low red blood corpuscle count had 2,820,000. The amount of hemoglobin, or red colouring matter in the red blood corpuscles, showed wider fluctuations, and in four cases it was below 70 per cent. In eight cases it was between 70 and 90 per cent.

The white blood cells, or leucocytes, seemed at first also to present a satisfactory picture. But it was found that as many as 10 donors suffered from neutropenia—an abnormal deficiency in neutrophil white cells in the blood. In three of these 10 cases the neutropenia was considerable. It was found in donors who had given quite little blood, only two to three litres; whereas it was not demonstrable in donors who had parted with 10 to 12 litres. This abnormality would not, therefore, seem to depend solely on the quantity of blood withdrawn. Among the donors suffering from neutropenia were men as well as women.

The comparatively frequent occurrence of neutropenia suggests that some donors are unable to respond to the repeated loss of blood in this particular respect. Neutropenia may be such an important condition that at the blood transfusion centre in Strasburg it is now taken as a serious warning, the donor being given a long holiday as such. By taking this precaution, donors have quickly recovered from their neutropenia.

Blood donation has good as well as occasional ill-effects. The loss of blood almost invariably makes the donor feel happier than before and enables him to do more bodily and mental work. Several donors gain weight. One of the Strasburg donors, an orderly, who had given 15 litres of blood in three-and-a-half years, found his weight rise in this interval from 65 to 80 kilos. In another case, a cook who parted with 12 litres of blood in three years, gained eight kilos in this period.

It is not yet clear why certain donors should feel fitter and should gain weight, but it is a well-known observation that horses which are frequently bled to provide diphtheria anti-toxin acquire an increased capacity for creating new blood. It is probable that successive bleedings have the same effect on human beings, and it is conceivable that in the process they may lose certain poisons as well as so many litres of their own blood.

(Communicated by the Secretariat of the League of Red Cross Societies.)

THE GUILD OF NURSES.

A very live meeting of some 500 nurses, representing a much larger number, was held at the St. Pancras Town Hall on the evening of November 26th, presided over by Mr. George Lansbury, M.P., who said that every one present understood the object of the meeting, which was there to discuss the organisation of Nurses on Trade Union lines. Almost every profession, as well as unskilled labour, was organised. When Trades Unionism was first started the unions included only a few hundreds; and was much opposed. Now the Trades Unions in this country included many millions, and no one objected except hard-boiled Tories.

Nurses needed to be organised and their general status recognised. Their accommodation and their food also needed investigation. It was hoped to enlist them in this great Trades Union movement, membership of which included both patients and doctors.

Mr. Peter McHugh, registered mental nurse, spoke of the conditions, even to-day, which existed for the nurses in some hospitals, and said it was too true that these conditions existed. The Nursing Profession was a sweated occupation. They had themselves to thank a great deal for the position in which they found themselves; they must themselves apply the remedy. Some of the things they needed were: (1) An eight-hour day; (2) The right of nurses, when trained, to live outside the institutions in which they worked. It was urged that reforms could not be accomplished on the score of expense, but if the National Government could spend millions on battleships it could afford to spend something also on improving nursing conditions.

The system of training nurses in this country was the best in the world, but the rules were unnerving. As a Vice-Chairman of the Union he invited those present to get nurses into the Guild and to work for an eight-hour day and an increase of wages.

Councillor Mrs. Drapper, J.P., National Organiser, said that they had gone step by step building up the Guild organisation, but explaining the difficulties which confronted them, told of a letter in which a member wrote saying she regretted she must resign her membership as Matron did not approve. Nurses should be able to enjoy freedom and comradeship. She spoke of the work done on Trades Union lines by Mr. T. O. Morgan, S.R.N. Now it behoved London to lead the way.

Mr. L. L. Lunn, President of the N.U.C.O., brought messages to the meeting: (1) from Sir Walter Citrine, General Secretary, Advisory Congress; and (2) from the Central Council of the Trades Union Congress.

Miss Dora Westmacott, S.R.N., S.C.M., Chairman of the London Committee of the Guild of Nurses, said she was proud to be a member of the Guild. It broadened one's outlook, got one out of the ruck. She demanded consideration by those in authority for the nurses working under them. Some matrons gave it, but many did not. We are told we of the nursing profession must make sacrifices and we are prepared to do so, but we will not sacrifice to it body, mind and soul.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)