

I'M GOING A MILKING.

The value of women's work received striking proof in the House of Commons on Monday last, when Mr. H. J. Tennant, Under Secretary of State for War, appealed to the Labour members to help the Government to organize the forces of labour so that, when a man joined the Colours, his place might be taken by another not of military age or physique, or by a woman.

One of the most essential trades in the country just now is the milk trade, the supply of labour on the farms to replace the many farm hands who have gone to the war is therefore one of great importance.

In the recent discussion at the Annual Meeting of the Matrons' Council on "Women and their Work during the War," which we report this week, the two points of principal interest were the nursing question, and that of women on the land. Much agricultural work would be difficult for women, but the question of the milk supply is one which eminently concerns them, and it is a problem which they might well make it their business to study and solve. It involves not only work for women, but the nourishment of the people, and it is therefore a factor of tremendous importance in the present war, and without doubt women who give effective help in this direction will be doing national service.

Time was when dairy work, including milking, was considered essentially woman's work; now, with many openings for women, it has to a great extent fallen into the hands of men, and we are told that it is unsuited to women, because, in order that the milk may be sent by trains to the towns, the milking is done at 2 or 3 a.m. This is not an argument which will carry great weight with either nurses or midwives, both of whom do much night duty. There is no doubt that the peasants in other countries work harder in agriculture than our own; or that the physical strength of women of a higher social rank, exhibited in feats of endurance in sports, would not be equal to much of the agricultural work now done, or supervised, by men. "Where there's a will, there's a way," and, given the will, there seems no reason why women should not go a milking; and, in certain directions in agriculture also, fill the places of the absent men. Incidentally, all the milk does not go to towns, often the cream is separated for butter making, and country children as well as town ones need new milk.

A JUSTIFIABLE GRIEVANCE.

A country doctor, in the *Medical Times* complains that "the doctor has recently had his domain encroached upon in so many ways that his work has been reduced to merely visiting and prescribing. There are ambulance men to attend to all or any injuries, there are midwives to attend confinements; there are chemists who prescribe and advise; there are unqualified dentists to draw teeth. There are specialists for every disease, and last, but not least, there are twentieth century manufactured female minor general practitioners

in the form of District Nurses who are open to treat all minor ailments and decide whether the doctor is to be called in or not. These modern conglomerations of smatterings of medical science are usually employed by Nursing Associations with a Lady Bountiful for chief. This Lady Bountiful usually belongs to that type of female who, for her own aggrandisement wishes to superintendent nurses—a society fad at present. She is usually a person of feeble intellect, but a person possessed of an uncontrollable desire to know everybody's business but her own. Doctors know her only too well; they also know that what she does not know about the private affairs of the inhabitants of the village is not worth knowing.

"This Lady Bountiful introduces a nurse, who may be a midwife, a sort of club, or so-called association is formed, and the public, consisting of small farmers and tradespeople are invited, or almost compelled to subscribe. The labourer is also coerced into the trap and unwillingly contributes a halfpenny a week. For this sum a nurse is placed at their disposal to attend all minor ailments. What is defined as a minor case is left to the discretion of the nurse. Now is this right?"

"I have letters from medical men strongly condemning these associations. One practitioner in exposing the system says the nurse is paid £16 per annum with 4s. 6d. per week allowed for board, and she is under an agreement to remain three years or forfeit £24. He mentioned a case where the nurse after a few months' service preferred to pay the penalty rather than stay. As a rule it is only those nurses whose education and attributes are unsuitable for really proper scientific nursing who attach themselves to these associations.

"The objections to these associations are:—(1) They are illegal; (2) They are misleading to the public; (3) They encourage delay in calling in the doctor; (4) They are usurping the rights and privileges of medical men; (5) They bring discredit on the whole name of nurses; (6) They are not carrying out skilled nursing under medical supervision; (7) By acting independently they are thwarting the doctor and endangering the lives of the people.

"In many instances these so-called district nurses employed by these associations are boastful pretending to an art they imperfectly understand. They pass themselves off on to the credulous public as properly trained nurses, whereas in many cases they are extremely ignorant and imperfectly trained."

Among the means adopted by Lady Bountiful are baby shows where the judge may be a nurse chosen by herself. "According to my experience the most rickety and unhealthy baby gets the prize because it is the biggest."

We quite agree with the writer of the article that associations in which the standards are set by people who have no practical knowledge of nursing are open to grave objections.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)