

greatly need to adopt a profession which is protected from competition with semi-educated and largely incompetent women now being cheaply recruited as Assistant Nurses by unprofessional County and County Borough Councils. And, personally, having taken an active part in nursing organisation for half a century, our sympathies are with the sick, who should be, but are not, the first consideration of persons empowered to organise and maintain the highest standard of nursing efficiency.

It may be argued that the vacancies for woman medical students will be limited, but that is not the point, which is that the most intelligent girls, who should be specially trained for Matrons and Sister Tutors, will aspire to the higher profession of medicine instead of nursing.

THE SHORTAGE OF NURSES.

Thousands of our most patriotic nurses are devoting their lives to caring for sick and wounded on all fronts and in home hospitals; but from many parts of the country the shortage of nurses for the general sick is resulting in death.

In Southern England the shortage of nurses is arousing a cry for help, and from a report in the *Kent Messenger* the dying await beds and nursing which, under present organisation, is apparently unprocurable, the result, in our opinion, of lack of professional organisation upon the declaration of war.

We wrote at the time, under the heading of "A National Duty":

"Institute a really representative Statistical Committee to investigate nursing conditions, providing ample representation for *free* Registered Nurses, from which the Athlone Committee rigorously excluded them. Invite regional reports on existing demand and supply, with suggestions for the organisation of national recruitment of nurses. Encourage the best type of girl to realise, as a civic duty, that it is worth while to build up a highly efficient service to help prevent disease and serve the sick. Make it possible for every Registered Nurse to honour her cloth.

"Great Britain is a speck on the world's map. A scheme for the efficient care and health of its people is no insuperable task. Moreover, it is a primary duty of Parliament."

This professional advice was, of course, ignored by the unprofessional potentates in high places, and with the inevitable result that the organisation of this skilled profession, in its adaptation for war duty, was placed in the hands of persons totally incapable of estimating the needs of the sick or their attendants.

At a recent meeting of the Kent Public Assistance Committee at Maidstone: "The shortage of accommodation throughout the county, arising from the Committee's inability to obtain staff, has created a desperate position which it is hardly possible to exaggerate," said the Chairman (Alderman W. N. Rule). "Patients who are dying have had to be refused admission."

The Public Assistance officer, Mr. John Moss, said that it was the most serious report he had presented to Committee since he became its officer. Deputations, he said, had been to the Ministries of Labour and Health,

and they had been asked to direct women into the Nursing Services; but the reply was that it was not the policy of the Ministry to direct people into nursing.

The Chairman said that the Committee should urge that, in their opinion, the only possibility of improving matters, was for the Minister to exercise his power and direct labour to nursing.

This condition of affairs in Kent is ample proof of the futility of placing the organisation of a highly qualified profession, such as nursing the sick, under the direction of the Minister of Labour and National Service, who has neither knowledge of nor sympathy with the work of highly skilled professional nurses, and until the provision of care in sickness is organised on a regional basis, it may, in the stress of war, fail to meet regional necessity.

"The Cow Jumped Over the Moon."

The present situation reminds one of athletic feats, in which in childhood we had absolute faith.

*Hey, diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon.
The little dog laughed to see such sport,
And the dish ran away with the spoon.*

A REPROACH TO HUMANITY.

After reading the report of the horrible cases of cruelty to children which appeared in *The Times* last week, where apparently people professing to care for them caused their deaths through ill-treatment, and the totally insufficient punishment for such crimes, it was with the very greatest relief that we read in the *Daily Mail* that cruelties that go on in the children's homes in Britain are listed in a Report that Lady Allen of Hurtwood, chairman of the Nursery Schools Association, has drawn up. Some of the indictments are so heart-rending that we hope there will be no delay in replying to Lady Allen's demand. A nurse says that an approach to a child caused it to shield its face and crouch as if expecting a blow. "So starved were they of love and affection," the nurse wrote, "so longing for a little individual attention, that they would undo shoelaces to obtain it."

Her evidence is based on her own inspection of public and charitable institutions, and on letters from people who have seen what goes on in some of these homes.

She tells of meals taken in absolute silence, of children held by the nose and forcibly fed, of a three-years-old put to bed in a dark room as punishment for tantrums, of a child forcibly put to "rest" with a blanket held over the head.

Her charges are made in a pamphlet, "Whose Children?" and she says: "There is growing up an army of disillusioned and unhappy citizens, and there is a bitter and angry feeling that the State has, for too long, evaded its responsibility."

Lady Allen of Hurtwood says in her Report: "Neither the public nor any one Government Department has a clear picture of the administrative confusion that exists."

We hope all readers of this Journal will interest themselves in this matter and help to remove what is evidently a very serious reproach to our humanity.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)