

**THE RETIREMENT OF MISS LYELEE JOHNSTONE,  
M.B.E., R.R.C., S.R.N.**

The heartfelt wishes of her colleagues for a happy retirement go out to Miss Lyelee Johnstone upon relinquishing her active work in the Nursing Profession, which she has graced for upwards of forty years.

Miss Johnstone received training at the Queen's Hospital for Children, Hackney Road, under the Matronship of "our" Miss Bushby, and took her general training at the University College Hospital, London.

She served for four and a half years with Q.A.I.M.N.S. (R.) in France during the first World War, and one and a half years in India, for which distinguished services she was awarded the Royal Red Cross. Returning to London, Miss Johnstone held various Sister's posts in Voluntary Hospitals before being appointed Assistant Matron at the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital, London, during the Matronship of Miss Grace Hale, R.R.C., afterwards the first Secretary of the British College of Nurses.

In 1928 came the opportunity for the crowning success of her life's work, when she was appointed Matron of one of the Sunshine Homes for Blind Babies.

Miss Johnstone has provided us with the following most interesting peep into the work in which she has been so happy and so successful.

"One objective in the Sunshine Homes is to train the blind child to be completely independent, but at the same time retaining a 'home' atmosphere and bestowing love and affection, without which no child—blind or sighted—could know security and contentment.

"The training in independence begins irrespective of age—a bottle-fed baby is made to place his two hands on his bottle although the nurse is holding it. When he reaches the light mixed diet stage, he is taught to hold his own spoon, and a blind baby trained in this way can feed himself at one and a half years of age.

"With dressing and undressing, the training consists of taking the baby's hands in the adult's hands and naming each garment as it is put on or removed. All this needs an infinite patience, which is well rewarded when one sees a blind child indignantly refusing assistance offered by well-meaning but misguided friends or relations.

"We had always an average of thirty-six resident blind babies, and each Sunshine Home has its own Nursery School which the babies attend from three years onwards.

"They leave us at seven years to attend blind schools—as near as is possible to their own homes.

"When they leave us at seven years they are able to do everything for themselves—wash, bath, dress, undress, take messages from one part of the Home to another and are really 'grown up.'

"To sum up, our objectives—in addition to the training in complete independence—are to give the blind child a happy, contented childhood, never to let him feel he is different from other children and to develop his other senses to replace as far as possible the valuable gift of sight which he does not possess. These first seven years form (I hope) a background—a bright background—for the shadowy days that inevitably come later, when the blind child in his teens realises he does not 'see' like others, but only 'sees' with his fingers."

Miss Johnstone says that she trained in what were called "the bad old days," but she does not regret one single day and would do the same all over again.

For this magnificent service to the suffering community we are happy to state that Miss Johnstone was awarded the M.B.E. in the recent King's Birthday Honours.

We are proud to be associated with Miss Johnstone in our noble profession, and in the British College of Nurses, Ltd., to which she has brought high honour.

**MINISTRY OF HEALTH.**

**PUBLIC HEALTH IN 1946.**

**New Low Records for Maternal and Infant Mortality :  
Success of Diphtheria Immunisation.**

The highest birthrate for 22 years, coupled with continued improvement in many health statistics, were encouraging features of health in 1946, reviewed in the Ministry of Health's Annual Report\* for the year ended March 31st, 1947, presented to Parliament on July 15th.

Summing up the nation's health, Sir Wilson Jameson, Chief Medical Officer to the Ministry of Health, says:—"Austerity was again the note of 1946, and there was little relaxation of rationing or control nor any lessened need for effort, compared with the preceding years of war. As the year ended and the winter deepened the fuel crisis brought additional discomfort. But, in spite of it all, the vital statistics for 1946 remained as good as ever."

Although the birthrate rose to 19.1 per thousand of the population, the infant mortality rate fell to 43, a new low record. Maternal mortality fell to a record low level of 1.43 per thousand total births, and death rates under 15 years for measles, scarlet fever, rheumatic fever and heart disease were all the lowest ever known.

The death rate was 12.0, the lowest since 1938 (11.6) which was the best on record.

The spectacular success of the diphtheria immunisation campaign is reflected in the rapid fall in deaths from this disease. The number was 472 compared with 2,361 in 1938, and corrected notifications of cases show a drop of 36 per cent. on 1945.

Although notifications of whooping cough were higher than in 1945, the fatality rate was lower. In all there were 92,936 notifications and 808 deaths. Further trials of whooping cough vaccine were made by the Medical Research Council, but no prophylactic of proved reliability was forthcoming. The importance of finding one is shown by the fact that the case fatality rate was six times that of measles and 12 times that of scarlet fever.

**Big Increase in Venereal Disease.**

Venereal Disease proved to be one of the worst blots on the health record. The return of millions of men of the age groups most likely to be infected led to a spectacular increase in syphilis—new male cases at treatment centres rose to 10,705, nearly double the previous year. Female cases were 6,970 compared with 5,527 in 1945.

Cancer deaths in civilians numbered 75,407, an increase of 1,654 on 1945, the increase being rather larger in the case of men. The report emphasises that "... much can be done with modern methods of treatment to relieve the pain and other unpleasant symptoms in incurable cases if the patient is kept under constant review by the specialist staff of the hospital."

Ninety years ago tuberculosis was causing 66,000 deaths a year in England and Wales among a population half its present size. In 1946, new low records were established for deaths from both respiratory and other forms of the disease, the number being 22,847. "Granted the potential influence of some epidemiological cycle which we are as yet unable to comprehend, it is perhaps not unreasonable to assume that increased knowledge and wisely directed administrative effort have contributed to this decline in mortality," states the report, later observing: "There is, however, no room for complacency in the face of a disease which still causes nearly one-third of all deaths at ages

\* Report of the Ministry of Health for the year ended March 31st, 1947, including the Report of the Chief Medical Officer on the State of the Public Health for the year ended December 31st, 1946. Cmd. No. 7441. H.M. Stationery Office, price 3s. 6d., post free 3s. 9d.

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