

Parliamentary Franchise, there are other votes, notably those in our professional associations, which we possess. How do we exercise them? Both for the well-being of our calling at the present time, and because we hold things in trust for those who come after us, it is of great importance that we should exercise our vote aright. Do we always realise our responsibility in this matter?

For instance. We receive an agenda paper containing the points to be discussed at a forthcoming meeting. Do we give our intelligent consideration to them, so that we may go to the meeting with a well-considered opinion, prepared to support it both verbally and by our vote, or do we put the paper on one side and attend the meeting with no fixed ideas on any point, and glad when the business of the day is over so that we may enter with unreserved enjoyment on the social side of the proceedings?

It is to be feared that too often many amongst us attend meetings, where we are required to vote upon important points, with no definite ideas in regard to them, irresponsibly waiting for a lead, putting aside the need for arriving at a personal decision on the ground of "loyalty to leaders," and pluming ourselves upon our wisdom in leaving matters in the hands of those who "know so much better than we do."

If this be our attitude of mind, then at least let us be frank, and plainly say that we dislike the trouble involved in self-government, that we prefer to be controlled by an autocracy, and are quite content to leave matters in its hands. Such a position is a conceivable, though scarcely a wise one. But the position which is neither conceivable nor admirable is that of the nurse who, possessing a vote, exercises it quite irresponsibly, who forms no conclusions on the subject before her, but merely waits to see how the majority are voting, and votes with them. That women do vote in this way is due no doubt to the fact that, having for so long been deprived of self-government, they are only slowly awaking to the responsibility they assume when they exercise their vote; but it is time that we roused ourselves, and assuredly it would be better, more dignified, more moral to refrain from voting at all on a subject which we have not studied and do not understand, than by hasty, ill-considered, or irresponsible action to carry measures of grave and far-reaching importance.

Assuming that, having made up our minds on a given subject, we vote in accordance with our belief, then, even if our judgment should be mistaken, government on the democratic basis of "one man one vote" is still a better form than is possible under the wisest autocracy. We learn by our mistakes and the errors of to-day can be set right at a future date when we have learnt wisdom. Only, however we vote we should require of ourselves that we are able to give a reason for the faith

that is in us; that we see to it that we are not of those who "nail their colours to the hedge," or shift responsibilities which we should ourselves assume on to other shoulders, but that with a full appreciation of our obligations to our profession at the present time, and to those who will succeed us, we discharge the duties which devolve upon us in the exercise of a vote. Then when the Parliamentary Franchise is at last in our possession we shall exercise wisely and well a function which we have learned to regard not only as a right but as our highest privilege.

### The Certification of Still-born Children.

The certification of infants, whether still-born or otherwise, by a duly qualified medical practitioner prior to their burial is greatly to be desired, and the action of the Nunhead Cemetery authorities in refusing to permit the burial in their ground of a child who was not so certified is to be commended. It appears that the cemetery is private property, and that, in order to prevent baby-farming, the authorities require all such cases to be legally certified. The mother of the child in question was attended by an obstetric clerk from St. Thomas's Hospital, and the Southwark coroner described the circumstances as quite straightforward in the present instance, though the rule laid down by the cemetery authorities was a good one, as it sometimes happened that more than one baby was buried in a coffin.

The practice of students attending maternity cases unsupervised is a very usual one. It is, however, to be hoped that eventually hospital authorities will see their way to arrange for the attendance of outdoor maternity cases by qualified medical practitioners, whose practical instruction of students would be most valuable. In the case of midwives, in all well-regulated maternity hospitals a certificated midwife is always sent to the outdoor cases. She takes with her a pupil in training, whose work she supervises, and whom she instructs in the best methods of its performance. By this means the work of pupil midwives is kept under observation throughout their training, and the patients receive skilled care.

It is becoming a well-recognised principle of education that to be efficient the work of pupils must be constantly supervised by skilled teachers. To learn "by experience" is not a desirable method in the interests of the learner, whose experience is generally gained at the cost of mistakes, and certainly, where a maternity patient is concerned, it is not to her advantage that she should be attended either by an unqualified student or by a midwife in training. The presence of a teacher is essential in the interest of both patient and pupil.

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