

THE
BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING
WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 1,365

SATURDAY, MAY 30, 1914.

Vol. LII.

EDITORIAL.

EQUALITY OF RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES.

There are some phrases common in our language so rich in meaning that they should be used with reverence as we would quote a passage from the Scriptures; there are others on the other hand used so loosely, which if not actually meaningless, express at most, only half a truth. As an example of the former, we have:—*Nursing knows no nationality.* Obviously this should imply that Nursing recognises no *class distinction.*

With the phrase—"Everyone has a right to his or her opinion," we should have no fault to find, provided that all those who shelter themselves behind it, never formed an opinion except on the basis of knowledge. How instinctively we trust those honest and modest people when we hear them say "I cannot give an opinion, as I do not know enough about it."

Unfortunately, however, there are very many people who do not hesitate to dogmatise about matters without this essential qualification.

The Countess of Jersey, in rather a long article in the *National Review*, gives an adverse opinion on State Registration, and has a good deal to say about the quality of nursing the poor should have! She quotes Lord Knutsford in support of her views. This lady and this gentlemen are neither of them Nurses, that is the point, and with all due respect to them, we say that their opinion—not being based on practical knowledge—cannot be admitted to be the opinion of experts. If Lady Jersey really understood the full value of skilled nursing, she would surely not be so careful to explain at such length, that the very inferior quality of nursing which she extols, is good enough for the poor. In making laws and regulations, the principle recognised is:—*the greatest good of the greatest number.*

By following this principle, no great injustice need be done. The poor are in the majority; they have not only an inalienable right to the best nursing, but it is the duty of the country to see that it is supplied. Strictly speaking, the poor are not dependent upon the rich, rather we are all of us interdependent. If this fact were not so grievously lost sight of, a very much higher sense of justice would exist among us. Rightly considered, if there is to be any classification at all, then, unquestionably, the poor should have the best of it. When we consider that the sicknesses of the poor are very frequently caused by the bad—often shocking—conditions under which so many of them live and work, and which are often imposed by the greed and selfishness of many of their employers, we are the more persuaded of their indefeasible right to the very best in nursing, as a measure of compensation. It is within the practical experiences of many of us, that the leisured classes frequently employ skilled nursing when there is little or nothing the matter. It is true they have a perfect right to do so if they wish, but the lack of proportion strikes us as an absurdity, and increases our resentment at the bad provision for the poor. It is a real evil, which will doubtless be abolished when order is brought out of chaos by the only means, namely standardisation by the State.

Whatever our opponents may say or write, their opinions cannot prevent the victory that is now within sight, and it would be a graceful act if they were to retire from the field of an unequal contest, or better still, if they were to follow the example of the Bishop of London in respect of Women's Suffrage; first study the question with minds free from prejudice, and then acknowledge their conversion. Our proclamation is:—*Equality of rights and opportunities in nursing, between the classes.*

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