

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

No. 1,562.

SATURDAY, MARCH 9, 1918.

Vol. LX.

**EDITORIAL.**

**MRS. LEISURED BUSY-BODY.**

Mrs. H. B. Irving has done the community good service by drawing attention in the *Times* to the treatment of an unmarried expectant mother by a committee of women Poor Law Guardians, at which she was present. Mrs. Irving writes:—"A young expectant mother was cruelly handled, and tortured with bitter words and threats, an ordeal which she will have had to endure at the hands of four different sets of officials by the time her baby is three weeks old. These guardians told her in my presence that they hoped she would suffer severely for her wrong doing, that they considered her own mother who had treated her kindly had been too lenient; and that her sin was so great that she ought to be ashamed to be a cost to self-respecting ratepayers."

The name "Guardians of the Poor"—a beautiful title if those to whom it applies strive to carry out their public obligations in the spirit which should inspire it—should protect any applicant for relief from such treatment. Further women are usually supposed to be inspired by religious motives; could anything be further from the spirit of the Divine Master than conduct such as Mrs. Irving described. Two instances are given us of the way in which He dealt with erring women. Of the first He said, "Her sins which are many are forgiven her, for she loved much," and to the woman "Go in peace" and, in the second instance where the woman brought to Him accused of adultery was "taken in the act," His reply to her accusers was "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

That is not the way in which the average comfortably placed man or woman treats an erring sister. As Mrs. Irving points out "the expectant unmarried mother is at present the only destitute person who, pre-

vious to admission to a Poor Law Institution may be brought before a Committee of Guardians for censure and inquiry. No purpose is served by such proceedings, as any destitute girl has a right of admission to a workhouse if she applies to a Relieving Officer, and a right to a bed in the Maternity Ward if she is about to become a mother.

"This being so why must a committee go into the case all over again before she is admitted?"

The trouble with many guardians is that they are so obsessed with the belief that they must administer punishment for wrongdoing, that they forget that treatment should be remedial, and that an appeal to a girl's better nature has a much greater chance of success in inducing her to live a straight life in the future than a public rebuke such as that described, which can only harden her, and deaden her sense of shame.

Once more, to quote Mrs. Irving, "the work of regeneration of the mother is done by the baby, and the healthier and happier the conditions of the baby, the greater the chance of improvement in the moral outlook of the mother."

And again, "We are spending thousands of pounds in trying to check the ravages of venereal disease by opening clinics for its treatment at our hospitals and infirmaries. Supposing that each patient was subjected to the sort of inquisition the particular girl I mentioned had to endure, would there be any patients left to receive treatment? We must be consistent. If we do everything to encourage the cure of disease which is in most cases the result of an act of immorality, we must not discourage the girl who, by the same act is about to become a mother, from receiving such care and treatment as will enable her and her child to become helpful members of society."

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