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EDITORIAL.

THE ART OF HEALING.

Those who attended the conference convened by the Chartered Society of Massage and Medical Gymnastics—until recently the Incorporated Society of Trained Masseuses—at Mortimer Hall, W., on June 24th, listened to a lecture from Professor Arthur Keith, extraordinarily stimulating and interesting to all those whose work is concerned with the art of healing.

The thread of thought running through the whole of the lecture was that Nature is the great repairer, the great healer; that, in so far as those concerned with the treatment and care of the sick study the methods of Nature, they are working on sound lines, that success is best attained by assisting her, but that, without any assistance, Nature's powers of healing and repair are very great. Professor Keith instanced the teeth as parts of the body over which Nature has no power of repair. Why did Nature so forget herself as to give the teeth no power of healing? The enamel was so dense that she could not afford to put into it the minute nests of bone cells in which the virtue of healing lies. But such cells are provided with nerves, and Nature knew what she was about. What would one's position be on cracking a nut, or eating the foreign meat supplied to us at the present day, if the enamel of the teeth were provided with nerves?

When a muscle, such as the biceps, is torn, blood oozes out, and fills the gap; then mysterious messages, the origin of which we do not understand, are sent out to the white corpuscles, and they come crowding in from all parts of the body to clear away the debris. Then the real workmen begin the work of repair. The cells on each side of the rupture change their mode of life, shape, and activity till the

newly formed connective tissue has filled up the gap, when they stop work, no longer continue to bind, change their shape again, and settle down to a passive life, and a seam of connective tissue is left. The surgeon does not say "I can mend that muscle," but "I can help Nature to mend that muscle." The stitches he puts in are not going to hold the wound together; that is done by the connective tissue—by Nature's spinning. The cells which form it are no undisciplined mob, but trained soldiers who know their places, and go about their work. The problem of the art of healing is how to help these cells.

John Hunter understood that the surgeon was Nature's assistant. He realised that the red tissue was his friend, and studied it as a gardener studies his garden. Then Pasteur and Lister came along and demonstrated that the great enemies to the healing of tissue are minute organisms, and that the great assistant to the art of healing is cleanliness.

No doubt, said Professor Keith, the brain has a very direct influence on the body, and can help or retard Nature. Results depend largely upon how far the body can enlist the sympathy of the brain, and that is often how the quack gains his successes. Such success as has attended Christian science hangs on this.

This knowledge (which is utilised by the quack) also stands by those who are conducting a rational, not a quack, practice. It increases your confidence and makes you study each case much more closely, so that you may learn what you can best do to help. Those who carry on work on these lines will have added something to the good of mankind.

We wish all nurses could have heard every word of this lecture, and hope that they will study and practise the principles which it inculcated.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)