

his chief servant, waiting upon him, literally hand and foot, preparing his food, and standing near him while he took his meals. Nothing would shock her more than the suggestion that she should share those meals. She had little or no relaxation or society, and her sole pleasure was in chewing betel-nut and listening to the gossip of the bazaar. The speaker mentioned that her sister was governess to some Hindoo princesses at Ramnad, who were most satisfactory pupils and intelligent and amiable children, anxious to learn and to improve their minds until their betrothal and entrance into the zenana, when they seemed to lose all desire for self-improvement. The darkest period in the life of an Indian woman was that of widowhood. With the death of her lord, all her natural duty ended, and her pride of position was annihilated. From the day of his death she was divested of all his treasures. She ate but one meal a day—always a cold meal; she must bathe twice a day in a tank and perform the longest and most tedious devotions. There was no solace for her; she became an object of scorn and contempt, her name a by-word and her touch pollution. No career could be more honourable than that of a woman who offered medical aid to those unfortunate women. Mrs. Scharlieb then explained the training necessary to qualify for the work, and the agencies through which it was now being done, briefly sketching a grand scheme which originated with our Queen, the Empress of India, known as the Dufferin Fund, or the National Society for the Supply of Medical aid to the Women of India. While the work was great the reward was greater.

---

### — Science Notes. —

---

#### THE ROYAL SOCIETY IN THE REIGN OF CHARLES II.

---

In the pages of *Nature*, Mr. Herbert Rix, Librarian of the Royal Society, has given a sketch of the early history of the Society, and of its first Secretary, Henry Oldenburg, so full of interest that all readers must share the regret, expressed by Mr. Rix, that no adequate biography of Oldenburg has ever been written. The archives of the Royal Society, however, bear witness to his industry, containing as they do, many hundreds of his autograph letters and other writings.

Oldenburg was a contemporary of Milton, Spinoza, and Robert Boyle, and corresponded extensively with them. He sends Boyle recipes for invisible ink, and for a wonderful oil to cure "migraines, palsies, lamenesses, crookednesses, and all ricketing diseases." To another correspondent, who communicates the intelligence to Boyle, Oldenburg speaks of a Paris doctor whom he has met, "clever, but very secretly acting," who has spoken to him of a method of preparing a drink from sunbeams. These letters were written before the formation of the Royal Society, and while Oldenburg was travelling on the continent with a pupil, a nephew of Robert Boyle.

For over three years, after undertaking the manifold duties of Secretary to the Society, Oldenburg appears to have received no payment. In fact, the Society was in great need of funds; of 156 Fellows only 53 paid

regularly, and the arrears increased year by year, in spite of the efforts of the secretary to collect subscriptions. In 1664, he was authorised to make what he could by publishing the transactions of the Society, but they appear to have seldom brought him in as much as £40 a year. The next year the plague visited London, and the year after, the great fire. There was no sale for books, but Oldenburg stuck to his post, and in the year after the fire he was imprisoned in the Tower of London on the charge of "dangerous plans and practices." The only ground of suspicion which the government appears to have had against him was his enormous foreign correspondence. This was fully accounted for by himself in a letter written later, which runs as follows:—

"Sir, you will please to remember that we have taken to taske the whole Universe, and that we were obliged to doe so by the nature of our Dessein. It will therefore be requisite that we purchase and entertain a commerce in all parts of the world with the most philosophical and curious persons, to be found everywhere."

In spite of the quaint remarks about wonderful oils and drinks prepared from sunbeams, it will be seen from the following letter, that Oldenburg's thoughts were, on one subject at least, decidedly in advance of his time. The letter was addressed, in 1660, to Lady Francis Jones, and runs as follows:—

"I wish heartily that that sexe, which is thus advantaged by Nature with a choyce structure of body, and thereby gives cause to conclude, that the guest thereof must be more than ordinary, would not suffer themselves to be diverted from those nobler improvements they are, to speak the truth, as capable of as men; nor be contented to have their innate capacity in their education stifled or debased to the needle or the making of sweet meats."

To fully appreciate these sentiments, one must remember that the writer lived at a time, when, according to Macaulay, "extreme ignorance and frivolity were thought less unbecoming in a lady than the slightest tincture of pedantry," and "ladies highly born, highly bred, and naturally quick-witted, were unable to write a line in their mother tongue without solecisms and faults of spelling, such as a charity girl would now be ashamed to commit."

---

### Notes on Art.

---

#### THE NATIONAL GALLERY.

---

I have already suggested that those who are engaged in the arduous duties of Nursing, might find rest and change of thought by even rapid visits to the National Gallery, and in the last "Notes" on this noble collection of pictures, I dwelt on the work of Fra Lippo Lippi as illustrated by his lovely *Annunciation*. It is now proposed to turn to another great Florentine, Andrea del Sarto, and to take, as before, the guidance of Browning in interpreting the painter who earned the title of "The Faultless." A few words respecting his life may not be uninteresting. History states that Andrea D'Agnoia, called del Sarto from the occupation of his father who was a tailor, was born in Florence in 1486. He was a student of Piero di

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)