

sion who, by their laborious research into ancient records have so enriched our knowledge.

PRIMITIVE NURSING.

In their introduction the authors say that the art of nursing, at once the oldest of the occupations of women, and the youngest branch of medical science, must have been co-existent with the first mother who performed for her little ones all those services which made it possible for them to live and thrive. These maternal cares, as old as, or even older than the human race, laid the foundation from which our profession of nursing has developed to its structure of to-day.

They go on to say that "in studying the origin of traits and customs, it is necessary to consider not only the human family but also the far older races of birds and mammals, among which arose the first dawning traces of parental love, kindness, and mutual aid," and show that the instinct of mutual aid is "actually a sense of race preservation which prompts the protection of the younger and weaker of the herd by the older and stronger, and causes flocks to share the distress, or attempt the rescue, of the individual in peril."

There is a fascinating chapter on "First Aid" among animals, our 'lowly "brothers," as St. Francis calls them, showing that toads and other animals are acquainted with antidotes for snake bite, that apes know how to stop bleeding by compression, and that snipe apply splints to fractured legs. "It is no less true that man also possesses an intuition which guides him in the selection of natural remedies, until he loses or destroys this instinct by abnormal habits or by over-civilisation."

In the lowest known stage of development illness is, we are told, believed to be the work of some other person—an enemy or a witch. Then comes the theory that sickness is caused by spirits, and later the higher intellectual stage, which postulates gods of healing, with intermediary priests possessed of a knowledge of medicine. The methods of the medicine man are simple. He tries "to make the patient's body an unpleasant dwelling-place for the spirit, and to drive him out by pummelling, squeezing, beating, starving, by hideous noises, evil smells, and nauseous doses; or he persuades it to go into some other creature's body to take up its abode."

PRE-CHRISTIAN TIMES.

It is often thought that the care of the sick is co-incident with the founding of Christianity, but it is historically certain, as is shown in the book under consideration, that hospitals existed in various countries long before the Christian Era. Amongst the ancient Hindoos and other nations, inoculation was practised for small-pox, massage was in constant use, and there were female practitioners of massage for women. Further, we are told "the ethical teaching of the Hindoos directed towards securing a favourable pre-natal influence is so pure and noble that few modern nations stand in this regard on so high a plane . . . the midwives were to be trustworthy, skilled in their work, and to have their nails cut short. Also a knowledge of contagion is assumed in the maxim: "It is not safe to put on clothes, shoes, or garments worn by others."

"There may still be seen in India the edicts cut in the rocks in the reign of King Asoka, who died in 226 B.C., directing that hospitals shall be erected along the routes of travellers." "The predominance of Buddhism, which was a religion of tenderness and compassion, was contemporary with the height of civilization. . . . Public hospitals were abolished when Buddhism fell, 750-1000 A.D. With the conquest by the Mohammedans, and the subsequent exploitation of the country by foreigners, the ancient glory of India faded, and the lower ranks of the people are today sunk in deplorable poverty, ignorance, and superstition."

In Ceylon, several centuries B.C., King Parakamabahoo built great hospitals for the use of the sick, "furnishing them with victuals and (a definite and interesting reference to nursing) slave boys and maidens to wait upon and nourish the sick."

The ancient Persians were also required by their laws to provide suitable houses for the sick poor in their communities, and the King was expected to provide the best medical treatment for the inmates free of cost. In the medical books of ancient Egypt "there is no mention to be found of nurses, yet it seems unreasonable to suppose that a nation which had brought medicine, pharmacy, and sanitation to so orderly and systematic a state should not have had a nursing class." In the Code of Hammurabi, King of Babylon, who reigned about 2250 B.C., there are some curious provisions for regulating the art of surgery.

Next we come to the Jews, who, from "the standpoint of humanity and the care of the afflicted, have an unbroken and glorious record. . . . The ancient Jews had the xenodochium, or 'pandok,' for travellers and destitute persons, to which was attached the ptochotropheum, or sick-house." The xenodochion was also a feature of Athens and other cities of Greece, and "gave its name, as well as its leading outlines, to the later institutions of the Christian Fathers. It was a municipal inn or hostel for strangers of every kind of degree, especially the sick and the poor."

"The introduction of medical knowledge to the Romans by the Greeks was made some time in the Third Century B.C. . . . The ancient Romans were not tender-hearted like the Buddhists, or sunny and gracious like the Greeks, or conscientiously charitable like the Jews. A military civilisation is never distinguished by the cult of humanity, and military imperialistic Rome was deficient in pity, or at least lacking in the imagination which stirs pity. . . . The record of ancient Rome, based upon slavery and militarism, falls far short of other pre-Christian nations in medicine, in nursing, and in the humanities in general." So ends the first part of the first volume, which deals with the pre-Christian period.

WOMEN WORKERS OF THE EARLY CHURCH.

The second part of the first volume is concerned with the history of nursing from the first to the close of the eighteenth century. "The marvellous activity of the early Church in works of love and

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)