

Royal British Nurses' Association.

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RECEPTION BY THE DUCHESS OF YORK AT THE BRITISH EMPIRE EXHIBITION, WEMBLEY.

We met many interesting people when H.R.H. the Duchess of York, accompanied by H.R.H. the Duke of York, received the Members of Administrative Staff of the Exhibition and others at the Lucullus Restaurant on October 20th. Her Royal Highness was beautifully gowned, and received her guests with that charm which makes her so popular among the English people. A very delightful tea was provided, and we much enjoyed meeting people with very varied interests.

LECTURES:

CHARLES DICKENS.

On Saturday, October 4th, we had a most interesting lecture on "Charles Dickens," by Major Rigg, O.B.E., and Miss Cattell took the Chair. Miss Cattell said that the Major required no introduction to R.B.N.A. nurses; he had shown kindness to the Association on very numerous occasions, and they were always delighted to welcome him to the Club. She was specially pleased that the first occasion on which she took the Chair, after her appointment as Hon. Secretary, should be at one of his lectures.

Major Rigg said that it gave him great pleasure to lecture to the Royal British Nurses' Association on the subject of Charles Dickens. This great figure in English literature had made himself a friend and intimate in every household among English-speaking peoples. Few men had, in one individuality, impersonated such extraordinary possibilities, such extraordinary common sense, such high intellect and moral qualities united with so much literary skill and such a well-balanced mind. It was now fifty-four years since he passed away, years that had only served to strengthen and not diminish his hold on the affections and admiration of the human race. He had portrayed almost every phase of English life with an unerring pen and an extraordinary vision into the characteristics of different types, while certain of his works, connected with American life, were teeming with knowledge of types of men and conditions of life that were marvellous as coming from the pen of a young man who had spent but a few months in America at the time when they were written. It was amazing that the "Pickwick Papers" should have been written by a young man of 24. Some regarded this as greater than any work which Dickens had produced, but, where all were good, it was difficult to select the masterpiece. Major Rigg then mentioned a few of the principal works and their chief characteristics. "There are few authors," he said, "whose books one can read again and again and go back to with greater pleasure each time; this one can do with the works of Charles Dickens, and no matter where, at random, you open one of his books, you can read on with the keenest interest and enjoyment."

Nor is it easy to set a limit to the beneficent effect of Dickens's works on the human race. Major Rigg believed that the reforms in the poor laws, the improvements in the prison systems, the many and varied developments in benevolent work, were due in no small degree to his influence. With all the humour and the pathos flowing through his books, there was nothing that could not be placed in the hands of a child, nothing that could shock the sensibilities of the most refined. When Sir Walter Scott's life was nearing an end, he said to a friend, "My career is drawing to a close, I am fast shuffling off the stage; I have been the most voluminous writer of my day, and it comforts me to think that I have tried to unsettle no man's faith, no man's principles, that there is nothing in my writings that I would wish blotted out." The same might, with truth, be said of the works of Dickens.

The lecturer spoke of Dickens's connection with Southwark, and the effort now being made to raise a memorial to him in the church of St. George the Martyr there. Reference was made to certain passages in the works of Dickens which referred to different parts of that district, and to the old Marshalsea prison, where the father of Dickens had been imprisoned for debt. The church of St. George the Martyr dates only from 1738, but it stands on the site of a building which dates back to the time of the Conquest. It is interesting to lovers of Dickens as the church where Little Dorrit was baptised; it was here that she slept with her head on the register, and here that her marriage took place.

Major Rigg finished by quoting the lovely passages at the close of "Little Dorrit" which describe her marriage.

Unfortunately, space forbids us to do more than touch on a few of the main features of the lecture, but the prolonged applause at its close showed how much it had been appreciated, and we all felt that we had been brought to a greater sense of the splendid character and wonderful inspiration of one of our greatest men of letters, while the occasional references to certain parts of his work brought us very near to a great English gentleman who died half a century ago.

Miss Elma Smith thanked the lecturer for the pleasure he had given his audience, and then all adjourned for tea, very pleased to have opportunity to meet again friends whom we had not seen or heard from since our gatherings were discontinued at the commencement of the holiday months.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CHILDHOOD.

There was a good attendance at the Club on Saturday, 25th ult., when Mrs. Mackenzie, M.A., gave her lecture on The Psychology of Childhood, a large proportion of the audience being nurses engaged in teaching. Miss Macdonald, in introducing the lecturer, said that Mrs. Mackenzie was not only one of the few women who had occupied a Chair in one of our great Universities, but, when she was appointed Professor of Education in the University of Wales, it was the first occasion on which a woman had been called to a Professorship in Great Britain. The sub-

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