

# Royal British Nurses' Association.

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## THE BRITISH EMPIRE AND ITS ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT.

On Saturday, October 16th, Major Rigg, O.B.E., lectured on "The Origin and Growth of the British Empire." Mrs. Strong took the Chair and, in introducing the lecturer, said that it gave her great pleasure to take the Chair that afternoon for, although she had never had the pleasure of meeting Major Rigg before, she had heard of him very often. The subject should be very interesting to an audience of British Nurses because, since the days of Florence Nightingale, they had counted themselves among the Empire Builders. No one was more competent to lecture on the British Empire than Major Rigg, he had a very wide knowledge of his subject, he was a great patriot, a great lover of his country.

Major Rigg said that he would like to endorse what Mrs. Strong had said about his subject being acceptable to an audience of nurses, they had indeed played no insignificant part in the work of Empire Building. Major Rigg, after referring to the mighty development of the British Empire, compared its origin with that of the Empires of early ages in the world's history. Such nations as the Assyrians, the Armenians and the old Persian nation had nearly all developed on military aggression, their war-like tendencies had arisen, usually out of the efforts to obtain food and other necessities, to gain lands for grazing for instance. The British Empire had not developed through military conquests, its progress had been governed by peaceful settlement, by the dictates of prudence, it had cleansed the seas of piracy and done a great work in liberating slaves.

It was doubtful whether its influence on world progress had been fully realised, but it was to be remembered that really great services very rarely received the gratitude of those they benefited, while those who gave some small help or benefit to others received an excess of gratitude. At the bar of history, however, the beneficent influence of the British Empire, on world development, cannot fail to receive recognition.

As an example of the statesmanship of some of our great Empire Builders, Major Rigg referred to the policy of Lord Chatham, the elder Pitt. He may be said to have regarded the colonies almost as personal appendages, and he was a devoted adherent of the policy of the mercantile development of the Empire's resources. As shown by the memorable speech made in the House of Lords, on the eve of his death, Chatham had ever striven to drive home to his colleagues in office, his conviction that the Dominions would only be kept loyal to the British Flag by the development and protection of the autonomy and independence of each individual Colony. Pitt was one of the greatest statesmen in the world's history, and the great future of the Britannic Empire was a subject ever close to his heart.

With the exception of South Africa, practically all the British Colonies may be said to have been acquired by pacific means. It is true that, in New Zealand, the Maoris had to be overcome and brought to submission, after certain cruelties perpetrated on British missionaries and traders. No more interesting history existed, regarding any of our Colonies, than that of the West Indies: these for years were a pawn in the game of European politics, they were the cockpit of the Empires of Europe. Their connection with the slave traffic was a blot on the escutcheon of these nations; to our own nation belonged a measure of this discredit, and William Wilberforce, to whose efforts the abolition of the slave traffic was due, had in his life done much to remove that blot. Major Rigg in referring to India paid a tribute to the East India Company and to the Indian Civil Service; lastly he compared the British policy with that of a number of other European countries in regard to their colonies.

In closing Major Rigg said that we should all regard our Empire as a great heritage, as the fruit of the efforts of our ancestry, efforts that had made us more free than any other race in the world.

Miss Kent, Miss Holmes and Miss Treasure spoke in appreciation of Major Rigg's lecture. He had shown to their Association such kindness, and the large audience was evidence of the Association's regard and its welcome to him whenever he came to its headquarters.

### INVITATION.

In order that Members may have the pleasure of meeting Miss Meyboom, till recently Matron of the Municipal Hospital, Rotterdam, and Miss Ditmar, who has held the position of Sister there, both Members of the Dutch Association of Nurses, while they are in residence at Queen's Gate, the Hon. Officers and General Council of the Association will be "At Home" on Friday, November 12th, from 4 to 6 p.m. Members of the Association and readers of the *B.J.N.* are asked to regard this announcement as an invitation.

### TO THE MEMBERS.

The Secretary desires to thank the nurses who sent her such quantities of beautiful flowers for her "At Home" on 6th October. She had looked forward with great pleasure to meeting those members who were able to come to this, and it was a wonderfully surprising and delightful thing to find that she was "At Home" also to the flowers, for they kept on arriving every few minutes on the 5th, and on the morning of the following day it seemed as though they had all come to hold a carnival of their own in the Club drawing room before we should lose the memory of the summer in the autumn weather. At this nurses' "party" one was constantly reminded of the words of a visitor as she entered the drawing room recently: "Will you tell me why it is that wherever you find nurses you always find flowers?"

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