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VISIT OF H.R.H. THE PRINCESS ROYAL TO DUNBAR HOSPITAL.

We hear from Miss C. McGilvray that the visit of H.R.H. the Princess Royal to the Hospital at Dunbar was very greatly appreciated. Her Royal Highness, on her way to Braemar, paid a short visit to Sir Reginald and Lady Wingate at their residence near Dunbar. While there the Princess expressed a wish to see the Hospital, and the visit was arranged. Her Royal Highness visited all the wards and spoke to each one of the patients. Before leaving she handed to the President of the Hospital, Mrs. Hay, a very generous donation to its Funds. A beautiful bouquet of carnations was presented to the Princess by a Member of the Staff. Her Royal Highness expressed herself as delighted with all the arrangements of this very up-to-date little Hospital, which serves a wide district in East Lothian. We were very interested when we received an account of the visit, for Miss McGilvray, Matron of the Hospital, is a popular member of the Association and frequently visits the Club, where she is always sure of a warm welcome from her colleagues; she is enthusiastic in promoting the development of her Hospital, and we are sure that the encouragement given to it by the gracious act of the Princess Royal will be appreciated by no one more than by its energetic Matron.

ETHICS AND FREEDOM.

The subject of ethics is one of recognised importance in all professions, and one reason why it is interesting is because of its close relationship both to philosophy and to psychology. Plato, Aristotle, the Epicureans, the Stoics, as well as many philosophers of more modern times, have sought to bring to the world an answer to the question "What is virtue?" Great leaders of thought have spent their lives in trying to penetrate to the very sources of moral life and to bring to men a feeling for ethics which will be something more than mere theory and which will encourage an almost scientific search into the sources of moral influence.

Of necessity such study brought man early to face the question—What is freedom? The answer at which the old philosophers arrived still holds good to-day; they decided that the possibility of freedom only exists when there is possibility of error, that it exists only when man is able to go wrong in one direction or another, and that he only is free who is able to choose the right, the ethical course irrespective of impulse, influence or self-interest. Those teachers of an old civilisation adopted a much more analytical attitude in regard to ethics than the present-day habit of repeating and adopting well-worn platitudes and opinions. They would, for instance, point to two quite everyday human characteristics such as, say, sympathy and apathy, or courage and cowardice; they would say that each of the two characteristics, being considered,

formed, as it were, one side of a pair of scales, and that ethics, harmony, only existed when the "scales" were well balanced. There is much truth in this, for do we not often see how sympathy can become sentimentality, excessive courage recklessness, and the like? A person who has pushed his sympathies beyond all bounds so that they have become a habitual sentimentality, stripped of any ordered and harmonised reasoning, gets crushed by the world through his very desire to serve it, and thereby he is lost to *himself*. The case is even more serious when a person goes to the opposite extreme and becomes apathetic, because then he is lost to the *world*. In the first case he is torn into the life of his time so that his individuality, and thereby its influence for progress, is lost; in the second case he stands a being apart, valueless to all but himself. So it is with courage carried to the point of recklessness, then a person is often lost to himself, or he may fall to the other extreme—cowardice—when he is, so to speak, lost to the world. Thus in regard to ethics many problems can be solved if we keep before us what the old philosophers spoke of as "the mean," influenced of course always by light from the circumstances surrounding the problem.

From a psychological point of view the best means to attain to a position of balance, in our attitude towards the ethical problems of life, is to develop an interest in the people and the world around us. The feelings of love, and the right understanding which underlies such interest, will help to engender what Plato spoke of as the first of all the virtues—wisdom; from this will be born another great thing—a feeling for truth. This is an ethical quality little understood in our age; we have only to think of our attitude towards newspapers and books to realise this. We often read statements in them and are not at all concerned afterwards when we find that these are untrue, indeed we just go again to newspapers and books very often when we wish to form our policy on one point or another. Again, perhaps, we accept some policy because it appears to be from the mind of the mass, forgetting that the "herd mind" is much less capable of forming free, truthful, considered opinions than the individual or, it may be, the minority determined to see the truth and stick to its dictation uninfluenced by circumstances, influence or self-interest. For the very reason that the appreciation of truth has become of so little account at the present time, public opinion, propaganda, economics and the like have usurped to a very great extent that "freedom" of which the old philosophers spoke.

These are but a few suggestions, not to be taken as applying specially to the field of Nursing Ethics but just as indications perhaps of how we reach those viewpoints wherefrom we may arrive at a balanced judgment on the problems that seem to crop up more frequently in our profession than in any other walk of life because of the responsibility and trust which individuals and the community must, of necessity, place with the nurses.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)