

## A LECTURE ON NURSING HISTORY.

Her Royal Highness Princess Arthur of Connaught, R.R.C., S.R.N., Duchess of Fife, on November 26th, honoured the British College of Nurses by presiding at a Lecture on Nursing History, illustrated by lantern slides, delivered by Miss Isabel Macdonald.

Her Royal Highness was received by the President (Mrs. Bedford Fenwick) and the Councillors of the College in their Robes of Office, and was presented by Miss M. S. Cochrane, R.R.C. (Matron of Charing Cross Hospital and Vice-President of the College), with a lovely bouquet of geranium red carnations, and conducted to the Council Chamber, where she signed her name in the Distinguished Visitors' Book. She was shown some of the College treasures—amongst them the William and Mary box and Bible; the bound file of the seventy-seven volumes of the *Nursing Record* and THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING and of the *Nurses' Journal*, the official organ for some years of the Royal British Nurses' Association, of which Her Royal Highness is President, and the beautiful Book of Remembrance, bound in rose-coloured morocco, in which are illuminated the names of departed Fellows and Members. She then proceeded to the Lecture Hall, which was crowded to overflowing. Here tall palms and sweet crimson roses were the flowers used for decoration.

Her Royal Highness at once called upon Miss Macdonald to deliver her lecture.

Miss Macdonald said that there were two essential points which every historian must endeavour to observe both in the teaching and the study of history. In the first place, the greatest accuracy must be exercised in testing the truthfulness of every detail. In the second place, history should be studied in a more scientific way than is usually the case. Materialistic history is apt to observe what is little more than a chronological sequence of happenings, but a student of history ought to go far beyond that and study the impulses which come in from time to time to make the evolution of history—impulses carried sometimes by single individuals, sometimes by a community of individuals.

Miss Macdonald referred to the traces of nursing history in the ancient civilisations of India, Persia, Chaldea, Egypt, Greece and Rome. One does not, she

said, expect to find many references to nursing in epic poetry, but even there incidents can be captured. The slides comprised pictures connected with nursing in the three latter countries. Speaking of Hippocrates, the lecturer characterised him as the greatest physician of all time; he brought quite a new impulse into medical work from that which had led the old mystery schools, but, like everyone who introduces some new ideal or development, he met with opposition and was criticised as having "burnt books of the mysteries." It was not surprising that Christianity, with its teaching of love and ethical standards, should have revolutionised nursing, and a long collection of slides was shown connected with the work of the Church and the various

saints who had made it part of their mission to care for the sick. Many of those old pictures and very archaic drawings (showing the saints performing their duties, or the earliest surgeons and physicians at work) were exceedingly curious. Reference was made to the part which the Church had played up to the time of the Reformation in charging itself with the care of the sick and several slides showed them being nursed in the nave of the church, with the chancel and altar beyond it. A beautiful picture of the Empress Helena (mother of Constantine) was put on the screen, and was followed by references to the great patrician Deaconesses of ancient Rome. Miss Macdonald said she had been tempted, when reading, in works on nursing history references to the two Matildas, Eleanor and Philippa of Hainault (Queens of England) to search the annals of Scotland in order to find a Royal Scottish nurse

who could be placed with these. Carlyle had said somewhere that nothing of importance had happened in Scotland until John Knox. The lecturer could not agree that John Knox was "the first thing of importance to happen in Scotland." Among others, there was St. Margaret, Queen of Scotland, and reference was made to her works of beneficence towards the sick and poor. Some very old anatomical diagrams were shown, pictures connected with the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, the Hotel Dieu at Paris, the Order of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul (it was an interesting fact that two Sisters of the Order of St. Vincent de Paul were in the room), the work of Elizabeth Fry, and Friederike and Caroline Fliedner. Several slides were shown,



H.R.H. THE PRINCESS ARTHUR OF CONNAUGHT, R.R.C., S.R.N.  
President of the Royal British Nurses' Association.

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