

ferre with the flowing forces of actual growth and decay; the healthy progress of the metamorphosis of the plant world may have forces in it that work upon us, although the senses remain unconscious of them, forces perhaps just as important as many of the remedies that have found their way into the British Pharmacopœia from the kingdom of the plants. However, be this as it may, the land of enchantment has been brought into the region of practical economics, through the gardens scheme, to help many a poor sufferer along the path to health. The very consciousness, that the services of the nurse have thus been brought within reach of such an one, must give a suggestion of the healthy beauty that one finds in a garden; a garden is a real sanatorium for the mind and even a pictured one must have its stimulus to a sick person. A place of inspiration too it is. "Tis sure God walks in mine" said a poet, and many a fine piece of literature, as well as Wagner's "Parsifal," has been "told" first to the flowers. Epicurus, one of the Fathers of Philosophy, established his Academy in a garden and lived very simply there.

It was a fine gesture on the part of the National Council of Nurses to place, among the earliest events on its programme, for the Nightingale Week, an expedition to the home of the Foundress of Modern Nursing. There can one feel the influences that were around her childhood, a childhood impressionable, earnest, reflective, we are told. Did the lovely growing things at Embley Park, the healthy life of the trees and plants about her, bring their reaction in after years in a burning desire to induce the same harmonious conditions, that exist in the plant kingdom, as far as possible into the kingdom of man? If there is anything in such a point of view, the past will speak into the present on July 5th and will tell us that one of England's greatest daughters entered upon a very precious heritage because, in her plastic childhood, she lived among all this loveliness and had, driven into her very being, impressions of a continuous healthy process of transition in the deeds of the Goddess Natura. Students of Child Psychology know how far-reaching the influences of childhood may be in their reactions in later life; the flowers at Embley, tossing their heads in the summer air, shining like terrestrial stars as the poets say, the winds whispering softly in the trees, the birds overhead, all of these, may tell you—"Her story is *our* story too, for *we* had her childhood, *we* set her task, for we taught her the lesson for which there was no forgetfulness in her, that health and harmony and beauty are the rightful heritage of *all* God's kingdoms." Such is the kind of background against which, at Embley Park, the delegates from other lands will be enabled to place the later picture of the Crimea and the long laborious efforts of the years to achieve a system of nursing education and to promote sanitary reform.

And then, at eventide, comes the last phase—a quiet grave, among those of many simple folk, in the green churchyard of East Wellow.

I. M.

#### ALEXANDRA ROSE DAY.

It is announced that the Alexandra Day collections for Greater London resulted in a total of approximately £50,500. Last year the total was £53,000.

## THE PUBLIC HEALTH.

### STERILIZATION OF MENTAL DEFECTIVES.

A Committee of Inquiry into the sterilization of mental defectives has been appointed by the Minister of Health.

The terms of reference will be:—To examine and report on the information already available regarding the hereditary transmission and other causes of mental disorder and deficiency; to consider the value of sterilization as a preventive measure, having regard to its physical, psychological and social effects, and to the experience of legislation in other countries permitting it; and to suggest what further inquiries might usefully be undertaken in this connection.

Sir Allan Powell, former chief officer of the L.C.C. Public Assistance, recently presided at the Voluntary Eugenic Sterilization Conference at Caxton Hall, Westminster, when he laid stress on the urgent need for public education on the subject of the sterilization of the unfit, and said that any regulated decrease in the population must come first from the mental defective and social problem groups, the existence of which was a menace to the community.

Sir Thomas Horder said that the time had now come when sterilization on eugenic grounds should be made legal under proper safeguards.

Mr. Cecil Binney, a barrister, said that the legality of sterilization was doubtful in the case of a normal adult, but there was little doubt that it was unlawful to sterilize a defective.

Wing-Commander A. W. H. James, M.P., announced that he proposed to introduce a private member's Bill in the House of Commons to provide for voluntary sterilization.

Dr. C. J. Bond pointed out that because of the present state of the law with regard to sterilization, and the reluctance on the part of the voluntary hospitals to admit patients for eugenic sterilization, persons in poor circumstances were placed in a disadvantageous position as compared with the rich.

### THE HUMANIZATION OF PRISONS.

Those of us who love our freedom are in sympathy with the humanization of prisons, and the hope recently expressed by the Home Secretary that it would be possible in the not distant future to introduce legislation authorizing further reforms in the treatment of offenders in prisons is welcome. Whilst being careful not to forget that prison should be a place of deterrence of crime, the more done to humanize the system the better. Those of us who have time should study a report drawn up by the Departmental Committee on the Treatment of Persistent Offenders. The Committee, which has been sitting for several months, has arrived at a series of unanimous recommendations, many of them of very considerable importance, dealing among other things, with the principles which should underlie the industries to be taught and the work in our prisons.

We remember as a child seeing a man on the treadmill—an atrocity long since abolished—what wonderful progress in Prison reform has been made since those days. Nations have the type of criminal they deserve. It is criminal apathy in our social relations which breeds them.

### THE PROBLEM OF MENTAL DEFICIENCY.

As we go to press the Report of the Committee appointed by The British Medical Association over a year ago to consider the problem of mental deficiency from various aspects, has been issued, and appears in the *British Medical Journal*—Probable Causes, Influence of Heredity, and Sterilization are seriously considered.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)