

# Royal British Nurses' Association.

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## TOUR OF THE GREEK VASES.

We had a most interesting glimpse into the art of old Greece recently when Mr. Cecil Hallett took us round the collection of Greek vases in the British Museum. First of all he gave us a short history of the development of the Greeks, and also told us something of the people who preceded them; he showed to us vases of the Minoan period in Greece, the same period as that of Moses. Those particular vases were all made by hand as the potter's wheel had not then been invented, and we admired the wonderful uniformity and harmony achieved. The first Greeks copied this Minoan pottery. In their earliest pottery their designs are more or less conventional, later they began to adorn it with copies of plants, still later of animals and, after that, men; in this last development Mr. Hallett pointed out several curious features, as for instance the fact that, for a long period, the Greeks drew both animals and human beings only in profile, and yet in the latter, for a considerable time, they drew the whole eye as seen when facing a person; this naturally gives to their figures a somewhat curious expression. As the art of portrayal developed, we find figures drawn from various aspects, and still later there are those which show that the Greeks had mastered the conception of foreshortening. It was curious to note from the vases that the very early inhabitants of Greece evidently dressed very much after the manner of the present day, with the main weight of the clothing hung from the waist; subsequently there came the beautiful and graceful draperies of the later Greece which hang from the shoulders.

Mr. Hallett had a wonderful way of impressing upon us the period to which each collection of vases belonged by mentioning that this or that collection was made in the time of the Judges, of the Kings, and so on. He pointed out that the Greeks were great colonists; they sent settlers for instance to the opposite shore, in Asia Minor, and so founded Ionia. On the Delta of the Nile they also founded two great colonies and thus oriental influence crept into their pottery with its strange imaginary animals. Then too there is the fact that Corinth and Athens became great seaports, and ships entering those, with cargoes of great variety, exerted also an influence on the pottery; for instance the domestic fowl, brought originally from India, began to be portrayed on the vases.

The Greek pottery is charming in its form, the exquisite curves of it called forth many an exclamation of admiration from us; and also we admired the extraordinary feeling and grace in the drawing of the figures. On one small plate, for instance, there was a light sketch of a young girl picking fruit. There was desire and feeling in every line of it, and here and before other pieces we were impressed by an idea that the ancient Greek got his results in Art in quite a different way from the modern one. They flowed out from his own conceptions and feelings, he knew how to draw because he *felt* what the perfect human form should be like, and the moderns are mere copyists in comparison. On the famous "knuckle bone" piece of pottery we saw a

Professor of Dancing teaching a butterfly dance, and most modern painters or photographers would envy the draftsman responsible for the figures on it, for they were *flying*—in all or nearly all modern paintings or photographs you do not feel that the birds are flying, rather they hang in space. In this section too we found the original inspiration for the crest of the Great Western Railway—a wheel with wings symbolising speed.

In a short hour we learnt much of an old and wonderful culture, for most of the present-day knowledge of the history, social and national customs, dress, etc., of ancient Greece has been culled from its vases; they have made it possible to accumulate volumes of modern literature on old Greece. It was a delightful thing indeed to contact a civilisation more than 2,500 years old on a December afternoon, a fine way to escape from the hurry and bustle of London in order to "speak one another in passing," we and that little people of a long past age who have left a greater impress on the culture of the West than any other. A great philosopher has said that of all peoples the Greeks "dreamed the dream of life the best"; a lovely dream it must have been and one fruitful in a harvest of treasure, the heritage of the centuries.

## BENEVOLENT ACTIVITIES.

At this time we usually bring to the notice of members the Benevolent Schemes connected with their Association. The generous support extended to those throughout the past year has enabled them to meet the calls upon them and we are very grateful for this. Especially have the claims on the finances of the Settlement Fund been heavy; the Home has been almost entirely redecorated and certain structural repairs were also necessary, so that a heavy strain has been put upon our banking account and has involved a small overdraft at our bankers for a time. Against this expenditure, however, we are able to place the gift of the hundred pounds of five per cent. War Stock recently received from Mrs. John Temple, M.R.B.N.A. At a recent meeting of the Committee a very kind and courteous letter was received from two of the members of the Association who reside at the Home saying how much they enjoy their nice bright rooms. The large window space adds much to the value of these and we hear that the bulbs in the Settlement garden are already beginning to push their way up through the earth with their message of the springtime. Miss Nash, the Sister-in-Charge, takes a keen interest in gardening, and there is no doubt that this stretch of garden is a considerable asset to the Home, apart from the hygienic aspect of the extra amount of air space which it ensures. There is a wonderful stimulus about growing things and a well-cared-for garden has its influence on the mental health of those who are able to enjoy it. We find that there exists some confusion as to the origin of the Settlement Home; a member recently gave to an enquirer the information that it had been founded partly by the R.B.N.A. members and partly by subscriptions from the public; in case other members may

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