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BEAUTY IN RELATION TO HYGIENE AND PSYCHOLOGY.

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever ;
 Its loveliness increases ; it will never
 Pass into nothingness, but still will keep
 A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
 Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing,
 Therefore on every morning are we wreathing
 A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
 Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
 Of noble natures, of the gloomy days
 Made for our searching. Yes, in spite of all
 Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
 From our dark spirits.

The above lines from Keats may be said to give us as complete a picture of the psychology and hygiene relating to beauty as one could find in a whole lengthy volume on aesthetics, psychology or hygiene. But the subject of this article really suggested itself (at this season when no lectures or meetings fall to be reported) when we commenced to write a paragraph on our delightful ramble, through lovely English country, to Stratford-on-Avon. The type of psychology to which these lines of Keats point is not the scientific one in which you pick out some particular trait in a person and submit it to examination and consideration. That kind of study is useful and necessary, but it is like picking up a piece of granite and thinking that on that you can study a complete Scottish mountain. Keats is considering beauty in relation to the whole man, for it is to the whole man, and not merely to the intellect, that beauty brings its influence and appeal.

Herbert Spencer once quoted the old proverb that "beauty is but skin deep," remarking that this is but a "skin-deep saying." It is, however, more from the point of view of a much older philosopher and psychologist than Spencer that we seek to understand beauty when it comes to a matter of psychology or hygiene. Plato, in discussing beauty, quaintly describes it as "a soft, smooth, slippery thing and therefore of a nature that easily slips in and permeates the soul." It is doubtful whether a clearer explanation has been brought forward after two thousand years of thought. For beauty will not bend to the reason, but just "slips in and permeates the soul"; so elusive it is, so comprehensive as to be beyond analysis and yet, from aspects which concern the nurse, it merits consideration. In this connection, one of the most important points is the harmony that beauty brings into the human being who is susceptible to it. Herein lies one of the reasons why we surround a patient with flowers—so that subconsciously their beauty may be active in promoting recovery. The sense of beauty is one which has to be cultivated, and the more a person can appreciate beauty the greater is the perfection of character that he is likely to attain. Perhaps the effects of beauty do not come very visibly to the surface of consciousness at the present time, but the old Greeks regarded it as having the most direct physical benefit. They were conscious of feelings

of well-being, of warmth, harmony and comfort when they looked upon beauty, while ugliness gave rise to feelings of coldness and discomfort; in fact, the latter apparently had very much the same effect that fear and neurasthenia have upon some people at the present time. Anyhow, there is no doubt that those ancient peoples felt beauty right into the physical and, by its working through that, they were able to bring into being their lovely works of art. This is a very interesting aspect in relation to psychology, for these ancient artists were not copyists in the sense of setting up a model and reproducing it; beauty and the sense of form lived within them and gave rise to artistic inspiration and creation. Thus we find that beauty lies deep in the history of man, and therefore it is very important in its bearings on psychology.

But there is not only the fact to be considered of how beauty tends to sooth and harmonise the nervous system; it has, in addition, a curious power in drawing forth graciousness, and even reverence, and so it can counteract irritation and ill-feeling and so many of the effects of the present age, when man's own creations have, to a great extent, become his masters. The lack of a perception for the beautiful and the result of this is probably responsible for a curious characteristic of the present time in relation to the different realms of art. For instance, in painting there is a demand, or appreciation we might call it, for works of art that, in the best sense, cannot be regarded as beautiful, distortions they are actually of form and are of strange inharmonious colouring. We look at some of them and conclude that there are degenerates in art as well as in other sections of life. But the point that is important, in relation to the present subject, is that apparently the people who appreciate ugly works of art are suffering from perversion of their perception for the beautiful. There can be degenerates in that respect also, for it is a well-acknowledged fact in aesthetics that to see the beautiful you must have the beautiful within you. And so we have a result of the age of machines and hurry working itself into art to shut out the vision of the beautiful, and so produce a vicious circle that is bound to breed neurasthenia more and more.

Beauty is a very important factor in helping a nurse to understand her patient, for beautiful surroundings invariably bring one person nearer to the character of another and usually into greater sympathy and friendship, so penetrating is "this soft, smooth, slippery thing" that we call beauty. Another psychological aspect of beauty lies in the fact that, except of course in cases of great turning points in a person's life, experiences of the beautiful maintain their existence in the memory longer than any others. Beauty once seen is, in a sense, never lost, and so it can prove a "well of healing"; hence its importance in holiday time to those who seek to ward off the effects of overwork at other seasons.

Yet, although, as some writer has said, beauty has taken the universe for its temple, it requires to be sought, and the person who has not the light within himself to

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