

those of St. Sixtus and the lovely, happy St. Barbara is calculated to give balance and harmony to the whole. The very curtain rings, with the sky appearing above, are a part of the scheme to add to the feeling that the space of the heavens is here. The balustrade below sets the picture into perspective, and the two little angel figures, while helping to maintain balance and harmony, give a decorative and lovely touch as well.

Discussions have arisen about the Madonna in which romantically minded people have sought to find that Raphael used for his model a lady in Rome whom he loved. The story appears to rest merely upon a courteous sentence of the young Raphael on a woman he admired. Again, others say that he painted his Madonna from his ideal of what a beautiful woman should be like, while the third theory has been put forward which claims that inspiration alone was responsible for the picture. This is just as probable a theory as any other, for when a great painter is at work he is unconscious—unconscious of his own personality—and, in this condition, Raphael might well be gripped by inspiration.

But we must return to the point of view expressed at the commencement of this article—to the suitability of the Sistine Madonna, or rather a reproduction of it, as a gift to the nurses. Among many people still this picture is regarded as being particularly health-giving, and it was this fact that inspired us to make a study of it many years ago. Indeed, in the Middle Ages, all the beautiful Madonna pictures were regarded as having powers of healing, but this Madonna most of any. Only recently the wife of a great artist told us of how her husband was taken ill when on their way to Rome, and how he felt quite well when looking on the picture.

The reason why health was supposed to come to the beholder from such pictures as the Sistine Madonna is difficult to analyse. No doubt it is, in part, attributable to the sublime *holiness* of such a work of art, and in this connection it is an arresting fact that the word used in Germany for holy and for healing is the same. And what about our own word whole? Then the effect of such pictures was probably due to the *saintliness* of the characters depicted. What about that word? Have not saint, santa, sanity, and even the unpoetical word sanitation, the same root meaning? In part the picture may have lost something of its sublimity for us because the many reproductions of it, some good, some bad, have made it almost a commonplace, but "in the commonplaces lie the great poetic truths." A great educationist once said that a copy of the Sistine Madonna should be in every nursery and every parents' bedroom, and, it might be added, in every Nurses' Home.

Perhaps one day it may be the good fortune of some of us to stand before this great masterpiece for an hour or so, to gaze upon the clear transparency of the colour laid on by the master who knew so well how to avoid the appearance of enamel and yet achieved transparency, most wonderful of all to gaze into the eyes of the mother and child, those wondrous eyes in this greatest mystery picture. They are eyes full of wisdom, with their profound gaze turned upon the universe, as indeed are the eyes of all the little angel heads in the clouds and of those two, placed with decorative purpose, at the foot of the picture. Many things lie behind this mystery

picture. Perhaps Raphael painted it to make men wonder, for wonder is the beginning of wisdom. Perhaps he painted more into his mystery picture than he understood himself. Much meditation and study may indeed go to the picture, but we put forward just one Christmas "Imagination," using the word in the old world meaning, *i.e.*, the picturing of a truth too deep for words to portray. For two hundred years after the death on Golgotha the Christ was always spoken of as the Sun God. As such he is portrayed in the catacombs and also in some primitive pictures connected with the Crusades. And so it is that this great picture tells us that, at Christmas, at the time of the winter solstice, when the powers of the physical sun are most withdrawn from the earth, the Spiritual Sun appeared. This is one of the lessons which the Sistine Madonna was intended to teach before the days of printing. True it is that the latter is more suited to the intellect, but when it comes to the soul and to imaginative thinking, the artists of the Middle Ages realised that beauty and art must, of necessity, be the teachers. And, if we cannot sometime view this great work of art in the gallery at Dresden, we can at least let our imagination take a journey, a journey into bygone centuries and picture the Sistine Chapel in the darkest days of the year, with the priests celebrating the midnight mass—the Christ Mass—and, above them and the worshipping people, this holy picture in its grandeur and sacred mystery, shining down upon them in the flickering light.

MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK'S JUBILEE.

THE ELECTRIC ATMOSPHERE OF KINDNESS.

On Tuesday, December 7th, Mrs. Bedford Fenwick's Jubilee in connection with her work for the organisation of the Nursing Profession was celebrated at 39, Portland Place, W., in the simplest and happiest manner possible.

A crowded meeting of friends assembled to offer her an Address of Thanks for a half century of work which had benefited nurses all the world over.

Miss Margaret Breay, whose life has been devoted to the service of her fellow nurses, was in the Chair, and Miss Isabel Macdonald, the soul of the Royal British Nurses' Association, read the Address with sympathetic enunciation.

Her Royal Highness, the Princess Arthur of Connaught, President of the Royal Corporation, sent a letter to Dr. and Mrs. Bedford Fenwick on behalf of all the members, conveying their greetings and her own. A cablegram was read from Miss Effie Taylor, President of the International Council of Nurses sending "Greetings, Congratulations, and kind personal regards." Showers of golden telegrams and letters of affection and congratulations were read, and a profusion of lovely flowers decorated the rooms.

An electric atmosphere of fellowship prevailed, the spirit of kindness inspired a joyous company. The Registration Cake ablaze with eighteen candles, many of them lighted by pioneers, was cut with ceremony.

A real joyous reunion of hearts.

By request a full report of the ceremonies will appear in our next issue.

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