

## The Drama.

(The conclusion of a Lecture delivered at the British College of Nurses, Ltd., on February 22nd, and continued from page 29.)

He asks the reason for their presence as suppliants at the temple of Jove, and when the women tell him their story and demand his protection in the name of Jove he is deeply perplexed. He knows that if he receives Danaus and his daughters into the land of the Argives he will in all probability bring down upon himself and his people the armed challenge of the sons of Aegyptus and their allies. Yet if he turns the Danaides away from his shores he runs the risk of offending "Jove, the suppliant's high protector." Whichever way he chooses he is faced with the possibility of a "fall," and he is terrified at having to make a decision:—

"—To do, and not to do alike  
Perplex me; on the edge of choice I tremble."

Here, you see, at a very early stage in its development, the drama was made to express the stress of man in the darkness of his destiny. The example which I take here from Aeschylus is no uncommon one. Most of the great dramatists have treated of the terror which can exist in the choice between a "yea" or a "nay," and they have all emphasised one thing; the impossibility of retracting the act once it is committed. And here we get another of the great conditioning influences inherent in the drama. To a sentient audience such a scene as that which I have described must lead to a greater humility in the face of decision: not the least important of functions I think you will agree.

In giving you an example of early comedy I shall first ask you to imagine a set of circumstances quite contemporary in their significance. Assume for a moment that an eminent feminist leader, believing that men cannot legislate for peace, organises a strike of married women. At a pre-arranged time the housewives take possession of all the town halls in the kingdom and refuse to come out until the men have done something definite about settling the peace of the world. Now this, or something very much like it, was the conception of Aristophanes in the "Lysistrata." Aristophanes wrote this famous comedy in the year 411 B.C., when his own city of Athens was engaged in a disastrous war with Sparta. The situation of course provides a wonderful series of farcical "falls." There are disconsolate men presenting unkempt, grubby-faced children as "bait"; there are "blacklegs" among the women, particularly the young and newly-married ones. In general, however, it is the male sex that is made to appear ridiculous, and it is interesting to observe that the male in this play reveals characteristics similar to those of the farcical gentleman in my early example. Arrogance, and an overblown sense of his own wisdom when he is engaged in war—that last extreme of human idiocy—these are the characteristics which make the male so ludicrous in the "Lysistrata."

From these examples drawn from the ancient Greek drama I think two very important truths appear. The first is that the drama springs from the very significant consciousness in man of the uncertainty of his destiny; and the second, that through the laughter and tears of his theatre the mind of man becomes conditioned in a way that varies but little from age to age. I shall have something further to say about the latter point next month when I hope to talk to you about the drama again. But in closing the present lecture I would like to draw your attention to one important feature of this conditioning process. It is that in the laughter and the tears occasioned by the dramatic "fall," whether it be on the stage or the cinema screen, the audience unselfconsciously adjusts itself in relation to the widest extremes of life. This function is vital, for upon it the very sanity of man depends to a degree which perhaps he rarely suspects.

FRANCIS EDWARDS.

## The British College of Nurses, Ltd.

MISS A. A. WARD, S.R.N., very much regrets that, owing to the pressure of her professional duties, it was necessary to withdraw her nomination to stand for election to the General Nursing Council for England and Wales.

### Thanks to Australian Friends.

WE HAVE RECEIVED MANY intensely interesting communications from our indefatigable friend and member of the British College of Nurses, Ltd., in Western Australia—Miss May Ashton—telling us of much of the affairs of that amazingly thriving country, and of special interest is the purchase by the Returned War Nurses' Association of a beautiful house at Mount Lawley for the sum of £7,500 in which could be accommodated at least twenty nurses at one time.

This Association has been renting a house in West Perth which can only accommodate ten nurses, but it must be of great pride to the members of the Association to announce that in spite of this smaller house over 13,000 nurses have found a temporary home there since November, 1942.

The new Hostel was acquired by the Returned War Nurses' Association as a memorial to the nurses who gave their lives for King and Country during the war.

A warm invitation comes with this news welcoming any nurses likely to pass through Fremantle to the Eastern States, to communicate with Miss Holland or Miss Ashton at 32, Queen's Crescent, Mount Lawley, W. Australia, who will be pleased to find them accommodation at their new Hostel.

## Review.

### Modern Professional Nursing.\*

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"Modern Professional Nursing" is a truly magnificent and ambitious set of volumes, presenting for the first time, the complete text of all subjects contained in the different Syllabuses of Nursing for the various Registers approved by the General Nursing Council for England and Wales. Indeed, they contain more, as we shall see.

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