

THE INDIAN MILITARY NURSING SERVICE

By Miss M. Willmott, M.B.E., Principal Marton, Indian Military Nursing Service.

The last Great War of 1914 marked the beginning of a Nursing Service for Indian Troops. At the declaration of war, nurses were required and many sisters and nurses working in Civil Hospitals and in private practice, volunteered to join the Temporary Nursing Service for Indian Troops, which it was called in those days, and were sent to Egypt, Mesopotamia, hospital ships and hospitals in India. A 'V.A.D.' service was also formed and the nurses were sent to many hospitals, where they were a great help, although they were not able to take much responsibility.



When the armistice was signed in November 1918, many of the large field hospitals were closed and personnel returned to India from overseas. Many of the Nurses were demobilised, some had liens on their appointment and returned to civil hospitals and those V. A. Ds, who were keen on nursing, entered training schools.

As the Indian Frontier War started soon after the first Great War, some of the nurses were still required in military hospitals, in north India and from this time onwards, a small number of sisters were kept on in Indian station hospitals; which had never had sisters before the war.

The improvement in the hospitals where a Nursing Staff had been appointed was so great, that the higher medical authorities considered a certain number of nurses should be retained for the Indian troops and the Temporary Nursing Service Indian troops became the Indian Military Nursing Service in October 1926, with the gradings of Matrons, Sisters and Staff Nurses.

The distinctive uniform was white with navy blue facings.

The service was a very small one, with a total establishment of 55 for the whole of India (Matrons 12, Sisters 18, Staff Nurses 25) and this was the number available at the outbreak of war in 1939. The great expansion of the Indian Army made it necessary to raise more field medical units to cater for the wounded and sick in the field; which has meant a corresponding increase in the number of nurses needed.

The response to the appeals for nurses was small at first, although many volunteers, whose names were already in the emergency roll for which the Red Cross and Trained Nurses' Association of India were responsible, joined at once. Recruitment has greatly improved, but many more nurses are needed, although since there is such a paucity in the country, it is impossible to know where they are to be found. Indian Military Nursing Sisters have distinguished themselves over a far flung battle line and are giving sterling service. They have had to shoulder tremendous responsibilities and have to nurse not only Indian, but troops of other nationalities, who are all full of gratitude and praise. They have not only faced dangers with the greatest courage and endurance but have shown great ability and the true Nightingale spirit in their skill and tender care of their patients, in spite of the fact they have had to cope with the work in hospitals which have been sadly understaffed.

Their great courage and selfless work during the evacuation of Singapore will never be forgotten and many gave their lives for the sake of their patients.

The conditions in the service have been greatly improved, salaries and allowances have been increased, the rank of staff nurse has been abolished, all members are now recruited as Sisters and under Ordinance XXX of September 1943, they were granted King's commissioned rank in the army.

An Indian Military Nursing Service representative with the rank of Principal Matron has been appointed to General Head Quarters for the duration of the war.



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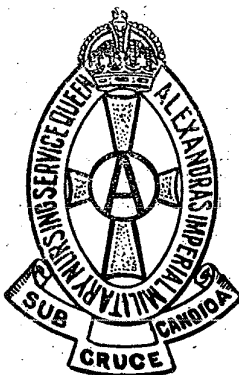
EASTERN FRONTIER

Slogan

Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is a progress, working together is success.

QUEEN ALEXANDRA'S IMPERIAL MILITARY NURSING SERVICE

By J. A. Patterson, Q. A. I. M. N. S.



As early as 1799, in 'Regulations to Regimental Surgeons for the Better Management of The Sick in Regimental Hospitals' instructions were laid down regarding the duties of the nurse, including her pay of one shilling a day. By 1800, matrons, head nurses and nurses were employed, but generally speaking, the women employed in attending the sick and wounded of the Army at that time were not trained nurses, but mostly the wives of the soldiers. It was not till 21st October, 1854, when the Pioneer of nursing—Florence Nightingale left England with a party of 40 nurses for the Crimea, that nursing in the Army can be said to have begun.

It was due to Miss Nightingale's wonderful forethought that the Nursing profession as it is to-day in all countries, was created.

In 1844 it was ruled that all nurses before being accepted for the Army Nursing Service, must receive previous training in a civil hospital. Today all candidates must be State Registered Nurses under the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, a great advance on 1800.

Many ladies of the Royal Family were and are still keenly interested in the nursing profession as a whole, the chief ones who have been most closely connected with army Nursing being H. H. The Princess Christian, who was a great worker for

