

rather than practical purposes, as it is still included in the examination syllabus.

A special feature of the hospital is the accommodation which is set aside for the near relatives of any patient who is dangerously ill. Sleeping accommodation is provided so that the relatives are at hand and arrangements are made with the N. A. and A. F. I. for the supply of meals out of local funds. This is an essential feature, as the village, Netley Abbey, is so far from the hospital.

There is also a Military Families Hospital in the same ground—run and staffed on the same lines as the parent hospital.

—H. J. in the *Nursing Mirror and Midwives' Journal*, Oct. 9, 1937.

MALE NURSING IN THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

The Royal Air Force Hospital, Halton

A moment's consideration will make it clear that a hospital for the Air Force attached to a camp must be in surroundings where there is space. The hospital at Halton, near Aylesbury, in Buckinghamshire, is on a plateau set above the valley, and open to the winds on three sides, sheltered at the back by a shoulder of the Chilterns. The situation meets all requirements: the fresh, clean air blows health and strength into sick men, while the beauty of the hills and woods refresh their minds.

Wonderful View. Halton Camp is a town in itself, as anyone who tries to find the way round it will certainly discover. The hospital itself is a fine building standing on a hill surrounded with flower-beds and well-mown grass, and with a wonderful view. It is staffed by sisters of Princess Mary's Royal Air Force Nursing Service, and by male nurses or medical airmen, as they are called. All the sisters are fully trained, and the male nurses are in various stages of training. The ward work is also assisted by V.A.D.s who come for a week at a time in relays throughout the year.

Situated at the other end of the camp is what is known as the medical training depot, and it is here that the male nurses start their career. They come from Uxbridge, where they are enlisted as recruits. After three months there, mainly for disciplinary purposes, they arrive at the medical training depot for four months, where they learn the theory of nursing, hygiene and so on. When they have completed this preliminary training they are posted to one of the R.A.F. hospitals for six months' training on the practical side to learn the ward work. After this period they remuster to nursing orderly A.C. 2, and after a further six months, still as a nursing orderly, they reclassify and become L.A.C. (leading aircraftsmen) or A.C. 1 (aircraftsmen 1st class). At the end of this period, which is not less than nineteen months, if their reports are good, they can begin their studies to become 'trained nurse,' taking their full examinations, and in due course becoming qualified and State registered. In all, the period before State registration can be reached comes to about the three years served by any male probationer in a civil hospital. It may amount to much longer, as if there are no vacancies for fully qualified male nurses the man must continue as a nursing orderly until such time as the vacancy falls due.

Full instructions are issued to nursing orderlies of the advantages of becoming fully trained male nurses, and of the opportunities offered to such

when the men return to civil life. A nursing orderly or medical airman should be eligible for the preliminary State examination after one year's training. He can take the Final any time after his three years—it can be taken, for instance, when he has returned to civil life.

Keenest Sympathy. If a nursing orderly or medical airman is not ambitious he can simply remain in the rank of A.C. 2 or L.A.C. until his term of service with the Air Force has expired. He is required to study to be a fully trained nurse in his own time, but he is given every encouragement to do so, and the training officer shows the keenest sympathy with his nursing orderlies, while they have every chance of learning the practical work soundly, since they work in the wards under highly qualified sisters. There are also other opportunities offered to him—he can easily qualify as a laboratory assistant, masseur, radiographer, dispenser or operating-room assistant.

The nursing orderly who wishes to study as a trained nurse must find his own books, but the training officer invariably tells the men that they cannot do better than work off Watson's Handbook. He considers that if a man knows that, in the manner of the French grammar at school, 'through and through, inside out and from cover to cover,' he cannot fail! The male mental nurse can also find a place at Halton—there is an observation ward for mental cases where he can start as a mental orderly. At present there are about 160 posts in the special trades established for medical airmen in the Royal Air Force. The hospitals are, of course, in all parts of the world, and the men may be sent to any of them—Aden, Palestine, Halton, Cranwell, Uxbridge, Iraq, Henlow in Hertfordshire, and so on. Where there are small outlying stations the male nurse may be in charge of the sick quarters.

Air Force Sisters. When the nursing orderly goes over to the hospital for the practical work he comes at once under the charge of the Air Force sisters. The majority of the wards at the hospital are, of course, for men, though the sisters also have charge of a women's ward for the wives of airmen, a children's ward, and a maternity ward. The nursing orderly gets good experience in surgical and medical cases, also in the isolation block and the sanatorium for tubercular cases. The matron of Halton Hospital is at present Miss Jackson. All her sisters wear white uniforms with loose sleeves, white shoes and stockings and the charming short Air Force blue capes. Each male ward is staffed by a charge sister, two staff nurses and two orderlies, in addition to the mobile V.A.D.s. Up-patients are expected to assist also. The wards are extremely up to date and very quiet; there are pleasant day-rooms for the men, and two side rooms for special cases attached to each ward. The theatres are excellent, large and with every modern equipment. The most promising of the nursing orderlies are trained in theatre technique, and learn to prepare the theatre and the scrub up. In the massage department they are taught by a fully trained masseuse, who is also an Air Force sister, and are able in time to sit for the examination of the Chartered Society of Massage and Medical Gymnastics. Training in electrical work and radiology is also given.

The Air Force sisters have a fine home of their own in the grounds, overlooking a hard tennis-court, with a fine verandah, on to which both the messroom and the sitting-room open. In summer weather these rooms are particularly lovely. In the hospital is a charming little sick-bay for sisters and there is also a special ward for officers, with a large, centrally heated sun balcony which is very popular.

Here the officer patients, mostly happily convalescent at the time of my visit, are able to spend the time of their recuperation in comfortable

armchairs with a fine view on all sides of them, as the walls of the solarium are entirely of glass.

—B.M.W. in the *Nursing Mirror and Midwives' Journal*,
July 31, 1937.

INDIAN ARMY NURSING SEPOYS

Indian Army nursing sepoy are trained by and work under the sisters of the Indian Military Nursing Service in much the same way as the Royal Army Medical Corps orderlies work under the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service sisters, but their conditions are rather different. Before comparing them too unfavourably with those of the men in the R.A.M.C. we must examine the question from the widest possible standpoint.

To begin with, it is only very recently that the privileges described in other articles, have been granted to the men nurses in the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force and they have only been allowed to sit for the civil examinations and become State registered within the last year or 18 months or two years.

The Indian Military Nursing Service has only recently been formed and the work of Indian Army nursing sepoy is still in its infancy. The matter of their training has recently been brought to the notice of the Authorities and we feel certain it will not be long before the Service reaches the same standard as that of the Royal Navy, Royal Army Medical Corps and Royal Air Force.

The matter largely lies in the hands of the men themselves and will depend upon their efficiency and their standard of education before they enter the Service. At the moment no definite standard of education is demanded for recruits, although they must be able to read and write either in their own language or in English.

In spite of this many well educated men join the service, not always, unfortunately, through any vocational desire to nurse the sick and wounded, but because they hope to be drafted to clerks or other army posts. The sisters complain bitterly that the well educated men consider themselves above the arduous but very necessary duties of bedside nursing, while it is impossible to teach those with little education.

Nevertheless, the majority of nursing sepoy are not only extremely smart men but very good nurses, and the sisters speak very highly of them.

They serve a term of six years service on the active list and twelve in the reserve. This is not popular, because they have to come up every year for their monthly training, which makes it difficult for them to get posts and keep them. A very few are kept on in the Army as Naiks or Havildars but not in the wards. These do not go to the reserve stations but are kept on for 20 years. They are given two oral examinations by the matron and medical officers of their hospitals and the syllabus consists of:—

1st Examination

1. Moral qualifications required in a nursing orderly, obedience, sobriety, truthfulness, patience, etc.
2. Cleanliness and ventilation of wards and annexes, floors, lockers, beds, cupboards, etc.
3. Bedmaking, how to make a bed to receive a patient on admission, undressing, bathing and care of helpless patients.