

The Woolwich hospital is next in size to Netley, and stands alone on a high hill.

As I drove up to the gates an orderly stepped out. I gave him my card, asking for Miss Jones, the Matron.

The orderly conducted me to what in common language would be called the "Home," but which in nursing military circles is called the "quarters," while the stately dining hall, with its handsome furniture and red leather chairs (as I looked at them with awe I thought of the cane chairs we sat on in my hospital) is called the "mess room."

Just as I stood waiting and wondering whether those ladies had an Indian butler and black servants to wait on them, in walked a familiar figure in the person of a British parlour maid, her dainty cap and frilled apron and black frock, reminding one of the world one had just left behind one, but, alas, this familiar object was not allowed to put her feet on the threshold of the hospital, and it was only by description that I discovered the Matron's office.

Miss Jones then very kindly showed me over the hospital. As I have said before, the Woolwich Hospital is second in size after the mother hospital, Netley, and contains 600 to 700 beds, and though it was built shortly after the Crimean War, yet it is planned according to the most up-to-date ideas, each ward being quite separate and having windows on three sides. It is an immensely long building, and the only way I can describe it is by thinking of a centipede, a long centre passage constituting the body, and the wards branching out on either side being the legs. The design is a simple and practical one as they face each other, and the Sister-in-Charge can see from the end of one ward to the end of the other. A Staff Nurse is in charge of each ward, and from two to three orderlies under her. There are three ranks amongst the orderlies—*i.e.*, first, second, and third year. They are trained by the staff nurses, and have to study and pass examinations, and when they rise to the highest ranks they have every chance of becoming non-commissioned officers. They are chosen from the general service department, and though they have to do ward work which would be equivalent to that of a probationer, yet the roughest work, such as scrubber's and wardmaid's work, is done by the general service orderlies.

One could not enter the wards without breathing a military atmosphere and noticing military precision.

The lockers, with the regulation bowl, plate, and mug, &c., at symmetrical angles; the towels folded just so and placed just there; the boots at the foot of the bed, drawn up ready to salute; shining brasses, polished irons, irreproachable cleanliness facing you everywhere.

I thought of the dishevelled scrubbers with the Monday morning black eye, and the impudent, noisy

wardmaids, and wondered whether it was not a relief to have orderlies to do the work instead of those trying females.

The operating theatre, with all its up-to-date apparatus and appliances, glittering and spotless; the garden, with its trim walks, the flower-beds so brilliant in colour, all betokened military order and discipline and a sufficiency of hands to do the work.

Nor was there any feeling of a lack of up-to-date-ness in the arrangements, fittings, and utensils. The extra sheds that were built in the time of the recent war in order to accommodate the surplus numbers are now used as infectious blocks and for various diseases, some of the wards of the second floor are used for open-air treatment, whilst still another department has been reserved for special wards for the officers. Bright flowers and plants were seen everywhere, showing that the Sisters and nurses were bestowing every thought and attention on the sick and convalescent Tommies.

The convalescents are well provided with a lecture and concert hall, a dining hall and a vast sitting-room, which contains a billiard table, games, books and papers. As I saw the Sisters and staff nurses flitting about their work, with happy faces, in their grey dresses and scarlet capes, relieved with the whiteness of their aprons, and their graceful caps falling so prettily on their shoulders, forming a pretty background to their faces, I forgot all about the swords, war trophies, and cannon balls, and thought of the good work my colleagues were doing, their kindness, their good and gentle influence over those men who have fought and given their lives for the honour and protection of their country, or just returned from exile in foreign countries with unhealthy, malarial, or intolerably hot climates, where life seems only a burden. How it must mitigate the sadness of coming back home on the "sick list" when they reach such a bright and beautiful place, and are received by the kindly Matron, Sisters, and nurses, and though the excitement of war cannot always last, yet there must always be much noble work to be done in times of peace.

Apart from the lofty and exciting side of military nursing, we must not forget the practical and pleasant side of it.

From a pecuniary point of view no hospital pays so highly; the salaries running thus:—

Matron-in-Chief	...	£300 to £350
Principal Matron	...	£175 to £205
Sisters	...	£50 to £65
Staff Nurses	...	£40 to £45

And though Staff Nurses do not necessarily become Matrons, yet they eventually may rise to be Sisters, so that even if they stopped at £65 per annum, with a pension at the age of fifty or fifty-five, they are far more comfortable, less hard-worked, and better paid than any other branch of the profession.

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