

The Hospital World.

CHELSEA HOSPITAL.

How many people who are accustomed to the sight of the Chelsea Pensioners in their picturesque scarlet coats and peak caps have ever penetrated into the Hospital which is now their home. Assuredly it is well worth a visit.

Intent on seeing the Infirmary, where about a hundred of these veterans are cared for, I recently visited it, and was most courteously taken round by the Principal Medical Officer, Surgeon-Colonel Ligertwood, and the Lady Superintendent, Miss Norbury.

The history of the foundation of the Hospital is interesting. The State documents of the time have been mislaid, but tradition says that in the time of Charles II. a college for the sons of Presbyterian ministers was supported on the site of the present hospital by the King. Passing by the College in her carriage one day, Nell Gwynne was stopped by a one-legged soldier, who, penniless and homeless, begged for alms. The next time she saw the King she rated him soundly for maintaining a school for the sons of "lazy parsons" while his own soldiers were in want. His Majesty replied he did not believe it, but Nell persisted in her demands, and eventually offered to the King some land of her own in Pall-Mall (the site of the present War Office) if he would give her the land at Chelsea and build a home for disabled soldiers upon it. She got her way, and to-day a picture in the Great Hall of the Hospital, in which both the King and herself are depicted, bears witness to the incident.

The Hospital, which was designed by Sir Christopher Wren, is a fine building, forming three sides of a quadrangle. In front, the Governors own land as far as the King's Road, Chelsea, and at the back the grounds slope down to the river from Chelsea Bridge to Tite Street. The views are beautiful and picturesque, and it is difficult to imagine that one is not in a country park instead of in the heart of London.

The Great Hall, which is lined with old oak, is a handsome and interesting building. At the further end is a raised platform, and here the Duke of Wellington lay in State after his death. Overhead, right down the Hall on each side are flags, trophies from all over the world of the valour of our troops, though in some cases little more than the poles are left. Lower down, the walls are hung with old engravings of heroes in great battles of the world.

The body of the Hall is furnished with massive oak tables and benches. At one time the pensioners dined here, but it is now found better to

serve their meals to them in their own cubicles, and the Hall is used as a recreation and reading-room.

Directly opposite the Hall is the Chapel, where on all sides again there is evidence of the master-hand of Sir Christopher Wren, while the beautiful carved gates of the altar-rails are the handiwork of Grinling Gibbons. Amongst the many interesting flags is a French Republican one, which was taken in Egypt. It is a peculiarly arranged tricolour, with the cap of liberty in the centre. One wondered as one gazed at it what scenes it had silently witnessed.

The more able-bodied of the pensioners have charming little cubicles—in which they can, if they desire it, be completely private—in large, airy wards. In the comfortable ingle-nooks, screened from every draught, these warriors can foregather over the fire, and tell of doughty deeds and fight their battles over again. Amongst these I found a pensioner who had once worked at the National Hospital, and in hospitals under the Metropolitan Asylums Board. He brightened when I asked him if he knew Miss Mollett at the National Hospital, and said that when she was at the Chelsea Infirmary she came to see him, but that unfortunately he was out.

The in-pension establishment is designed as a refuge for deserving out-pensioners who are incapable of supplementing their pensions by their own labour. Good character, before and after discharge from the Army, is an indispensable qualification.

In the infirmary are the blind, the halt, and the maimed. Sufferers from sun-stroke in India, from old malaria, from rheumatism, and asthma, and many other chronic and some acute diseases. It was, therefore, a shock to learn that though the Lady Superintendent herself is a trained nurse, the staff working under her are untrained except by the experience they gain in the wards. "We hope eventually we may have some trained nurses, but the place is worked under a Royal Warrant, and the regulations are, therefore, very difficult to alter," was the answer I received when I suggested that at least the Head Nurse in each ward should be trained.

As a matter of fact the nursing posts are reserved for widows or daughters of private soldiers and non-commissioned officers. There are three classes of nurses. Those in the third class receive 1s. 6d. a day, in the second 1s. 9d., and in the first 2s., with a pension at the end of a certain term of service, which may reach to £40 per annum. They have comfortable rooms, good times off duty, and an ample provision of uncooked rations. They do all the ward work besides the nursing, and as all the floors and tables are of white scrubbed

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