

The Indian Army Nursing Service.*

By Miss ANNIE ARKLE, I.A.N.S.

The Indian Army Nursing Service was initiated by that good friend of the British soldier, Lord Roberts, in 1888, and, although it has been in existence only fourteen years, there has been a great advance in the understanding of nurses and nursing in India and of the necessity for nursing, and in the care given to sick soldiers now acknowledged to be necessary for them.

Candidates for the Service apply to the Under Secretary of State for India, and must have had *at least* three years' training in a civil service hospital. The Service is composed, first, of lady superintendents, of whom there are four (one in each command); and nursing sisters, of whom there are between fifty and sixty. We are an integral part of the military-medical department and are subject to court-martial in the usual way. Promotion of nursing sister to lady superintendent is made by the principal medical officer of His Majesty's forces in India on the grounds of experience, administrative capacity, and personal fitness. Last year six (I think) sisters were sent to China when war broke out.

The duration of the term of service is five years, after which time the sister is entitled to one year's furlough out of India on two-thirds pay with free passage from and to her station. At the end of five years she can leave the service or sign an agreement to return for another term. In the event of her leaving, she will receive a gratuity of 500 rupees (about 150 dollars) after the first term, 1,500 rupees (about 450 dollars) after the second term. (The gratuity given to a lady superintendent is proportionately higher.) If she agrees to return, she receives two-thirds pay while on furlough. Should she leave before her first term of service is completed (for any cause save sickness), she will be obliged to pay the sum of £25 (125 dollars) or give six months' notice and pay £20 (100 dollars).

After fifteen years' service the sister receives a pension of about 250 dollars per annum. After twenty years' service this pension is increased to about 300 dollars, with an addition for every year's service as lady superintendent.

In addition to free quarters, fuel, light, and punkak-pullers, the lady superintendent receives 300 rupees a month, the nursing sister 175 rupees. When she becomes "senior sister" in a station (where there is no lady superintendent) she receives 200 rupees. There is always a small compensation allowance varying with the rate of exchange.

* Read at the International Congress of Nurses, Buffalo.

Pony allowance of 30 rupees a month is allowed on field service provided a pony be kept.

The lady superintendent has control over all the sisters in her command. Once every year she visits the nursing staff of all hospitals in her command for the purpose of inspection, and afterwards submits a full report on the manner in which each sister has done her duty, which reaches the principal medical officer of His Majesty's forces in India through the prescribed channel. Should the report not be favourable, it must be shown to the sister concerned, who has the opportunity of making an appeal, and has the right to have the matter inquired into by a board of officers in the usual way.

The senior nursing sister does the housekeeping, and is responsible that order and regularity be carried out in the quarters and in the wards.

When a new sister arrives at a station, she usually pays an entrance fee for the use of crockery, cutlery, glass, &c.—in fact, for all those things we need in the quarters, not provided by Government. This is very hard on a sister who is moved often from station to station, and much expense would be spared the sister if the Government would grant a small amount yearly to cover these expenses.

The hours of the sisters on duty vary in some stations. As a rule there are three sisters in one station. No. 1 sister comes on duty at 7 a.m. and remains until 2 p.m. No. 2 comes on at 2 and stays until 8 p.m., or 9 when there is anyone very seriously ill in the ward. No. 2 again comes on the next morning at 7 a.m., while No. 3 is doing night duty from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m. Night duty we take for a week in turn.

During the term of five years the sister is allowed two months' privilege leave on full pay. She can also occasionally get (if convenient) ten days' station leave, and sometimes even three days' district leave is given. Sick leave up to a maximum of six months is allowed during the term of five years. This leave *must* be taken in India!

For each ward with an average of twenty-five beds there are two orderlies. The orderly's relief is changed every six hours, and in most stations there are four reliefs. Sometimes when special orderlies are required there are as many as eighteen or twenty doing duty in the wards where the sisters work. Before the orderly gets his certificate he is put through a course of stretcher drill by the medical officer, after which (if he passes his examination) his nursing certificate is given, signed by the medical officer and the sister in charge. One great difficulty in training orderlies is the little time one sometimes has in which to do it.

Frequently from stations where no sisters are sanctioned men are sent from the regiments, and are expected to be efficient nurses at the end of three months. This clearly is impossible, and the certificates are not worth much. Now, in stations

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