

## THE ROYAL AIR FORCE HOSPITAL, HALTON.

It was with especial pleasure that we accepted the invitation of the Air Council to the opening of the Royal Air Force Hospital and Nursing Sisters' Quarters at Halton, Buckinghamshire, by Her Royal Highness Princess Mary, Viscountess Lascelles, G.B.E., on October 31st, for we can never cease to be thrilled by the wonder of this newest of our fighting Forces. We are accustomed to, and, to a certain extent, take for granted, our splendid Navy and heroic Army, but the Air Force is still a thing at which to wonder. Young, as those who compose it are young, it yet possesses in a high degree the qualities of intrepid daring and cool resource characteristic of the Senior Services. And to say that it attracts the splendid youth of this country is to say that a life of adventure and danger, with unsurpassed opportunities for self-sacrifice, service, and heroism always attracts the bravest and best as surely as a magnet attracts steel.

the accommodation of officers and men, wives and children of the Force, of which the Matron is Miss Welch.

A quick run down from London to Wendover, through beautiful leafy Buckinghamshire, where the beeches, in the glory of their autumn tints, showed golden and brown, and after lunch at the Officers' Mess, by invitation of the President and Officers, who entertained their guests every kindness and courtesy, we made our way to the Hospital for the Opening Ceremony.

The Princess, attended by a lady-in-waiting, who arrived in a downpour of rain, was received at the main entrance by Sir Samuel Hoare, Bart., Secretary of State for Air, Air Vice-Marshal C. L. Lambe, Wing Commander Shorten, F.R.C.S., and other officers of the R.A.F. Sister W. M. Molesworth offered for her acceptance a basket of lovely mauve orchids and white heather. Sir Samuel Hoare asked Her Royal Highness to declare the Hospital open and to name it "Princess Mary's Royal Air Force Hospital" in the following words:—

I am greatly honoured and delighted to ask your Royal Highness to open the Halton Hospital. The hospital

AIR VICE-MARSHAL  
D. MUNRO, C.B., C.I.E.

OFFICER COMMANDING HOSPITAL,  
WING-COMMANDER SHORTEN, F.R.C.S.



THE RIGHT HON.  
SIR SAMUEL HOARE, Bt.,  
G.B.E., C.M.G., M.P.,  
Secretary of State for Air.

HER ROYAL HIGHNESS  
PRINCESS MARY  
VISCOUNTESS LASCELLES, G.B.E.

MISS M. WELCH, S.R.N., F.B.C.N.,  
Matron,  
Halton Hospital.

To sail away into the blue ether, with one's life in one's hand every time, to learn how to defend one's country from this vantage point, in loneliness or with others, these are the lessons which are learnt every day by the members of this gallant Force.

A life "free as air," that is one side of the picture. But another is that when, with appalling suddenness, there comes a crash, and a machine which a moment before had seemed instinct with life comes to earth on broken wing, then the freedom of the air for its occupants is exchanged maybe for a life of crippled inaction.

It is good to know that when such disasters occur there is a peaceful arm to the Service which quickly comes into action, including the Medical Service of the Force and the highly skilled Princess Mary's Royal Air Force Nursing Service, under the direction of Miss Joanna M. Cruickshank, C.B.E., R.R.C. At Halton is now the newest and largest of the hospitals of the Air Force designed for

is to be the principal hospital for the R.A.F. and is on that account of the greatest importance to the whole service.

It will be one of a strictly limited number of Air Force hospitals. It is not our intention to duplicate hospital accommodation where military, naval and civil hospitals are available for our needs. At present, I am glad to say, we are making extensive use of naval and military hospitals. Last year more than 1,200 R.A.F. cases were admitted to naval and military hospitals. These figures prove the sincerity of our desire to make use of suitable accommodation wherever it may be and not to adopt the selfish and extravagant policy of insisting upon special Air Force accommodation for every Air Force case.

The hospital that your Royal Highness is now opening has been built in full accordance with this principle. Here at Halton we have the biggest Air Force station in the world, situated in a district where there is no alternative accommodation. Hitherto the hospital has been housed in huts

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