

ADMINISTRATION CLASS, BRITISH COLLEGE OF NURSES.

A VISIT TO THE CHALFONT COLONY OF THE NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR EPILEPTICS.

Not many years ago one of our poets wrote of a place "Where the world is quiet." These words were recalled forcibly to me when we visited on April 9th the Colony at Chalfont. Poets have always praised the harmonious and seemingly uneventful life of the country, but it is only recently that the curative value of such a life to sufferers from nervous disorders has been appreciated. The National Society for Epileptics was founded forty-two years ago to provide a place where these people could lead a healthy and interesting life away from the petty worries which aggravate their illness. Prior to that time epileptics, although often perfectly sane, had been placed in mental hospitals, or had been left at home without the required care until they deteriorated.

Miss L. A. Parry, who has held the post of Matron for twenty-four years, conducted us round the Colony, which was unfortunately for us too large to be all visited in one afternoon. Miss Parry is in the happy position of being senior administrative officer in the Colony; there is no Steward. She told us that anything she asked for in the form of amenities for the Colonists the Committee gave her "with both hands." As a result of such a generous attitude the Colony has large and beautifully kept playing fields, a spacious Assembly Hall and a "Hut" for Scouts, Guides and Cubs which might be the envy of all packs. There are eighteen homes, each

designed by a different architect, and in consequence there is none of that monotony of architecture which so often makes institutions uninteresting. The visitor finds an attractive modern village, each house being in its own grounds with a path leading from its own gate through a well-planned and tended garden to a hospitable front door. The interiors are as attractive as the appearance from without; everywhere there is an atmosphere of homeliness, of a place lived in and enjoyed, not merely designed for show. There are homes of the two-storey and others of the bungalow type, the latter being the more modern. One end of the building is given up to the Dining and General Rooms, which can be opened into one large room, the partition being movable, and the other end contains two large Dormitories. In the central part of the building are the Sister's and Attendants' rooms, Kitchen, Pantry, Linen Cupboard, Bath, Wash and Cloak Rooms and a small room which can be used as an isolation ward. One feature which impressed our party was a little room between the dormitories, having a window opening on each and containing a bed. This, Miss Parry explained,

was where the Night Nurse or Attendant slept, it being unnecessary and even harmful for epileptics to have an attendant always present. The dormitories have lights which can be dimmed, as the patients must never be left in the dark.

We visited some of the workshops, a forge and a carpenter's shop and saw the colonists at work. All the repairs of the Colony and much of the furnishing are done by the men themselves. We had no time to visit the Farm, where many of the men find employment under the direction of the Farm Bailiff, but a glimpse of a beautifully kept orchard testified to ungrudging care and expert supervision. The homes for the women and children occupy one end of the estate, together with the School Buildings. The Laundry with its Sorting Room, the Kitchen and impressively stocked Store Rooms are grouped round the Passmore-Edwards House, which contains the Matron's Office.

The Colony has land to the extent of three hundred and fifty-eight acres. There are at present five hundred and ten patients housed in the eighteen homes. The cost of equipping a home is about £4,000, and many of them have been built by generous gifts. The charge for the maintenance of a colonist is £1 1s. per week, paid in some cases

by relatives, in others by county or district grants, and sometimes by the "Maintenance Fund" of the society. Convalescent patients from hospitals are received into certain of the homes and the charge for these is £1 5s. per week.

These patients' term of residence is fixed from month to month, unlike the colonists, who stay for an indefinite period. A period of two years' freedom from fits is usually considered to indicate a cure. An educational grant is allowed in respect of the School and the materials which the children use for their

craft-work are supplied by the education authorities. Although it is true that the colonists do much of the work, the heaviest tasks are not for them and it is necessary for them to be very carefully supervised in case they should come to any harm while at work. Instruction is given to the men in farm work, gardening, tailoring, shoemaking, carpentry and other subjects; the women are taught laundry-work, cooking, sewing, mending and such matters. Mentally deficient cases are not admitted to the colony, and as far as possible the colonists are taught to earn a living when they leave.

The day for the colonist begins at 8 a.m., except for the men employed at the milking, who rise at 6 a.m. As a rule work hours are from 8.45 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and from 1.30 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. The colonists work always in pairs, so that they may assist one another if taken ill, or summon an attendant. After tea they are free to play games, or to pursue a hobby. The nurses and attendants organise and take part in the sports, this being one of their duties and not considered part of their off-duty. Matches between homes and tournaments are played frequently and arouse



THE PASSMORE EDWARDS HOUSE.

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