

## THE MAUDSLEY HOSPITAL, DENMARK HILL.

Perhaps one of the greatest benefits brought to mankind in modern times is the enlightened treatment of the mentally sick. The passage of the Mental Treatment Act, July, 1930-July, 1931, marked an epoch, as it prepared the way for the evolution on the right lines of the treatment of mental diseases, and the progress in this branch of work resulting from these legal changes may be said to be phenomenal.

A leading centre and training school for Nurses in this increasingly important work is the Maudsley Hospital, Denmark Hill (under the London County Council), which, by the kind consent of the Authorities, the Administration Class of the British College of Nurses were privileged to visit on November 12th.

After her very kind welcome the Matron, Miss M. Walker, at once conducted the members of the Class through the Hospital.

First came the Male and Female Wards, apart from each other, and alike in structure, each having a ward containing 32 beds, adjoined by charming sitting and dining-rooms, home-like in appointment and furnishing, with tables, easy chairs, grand piano, and leading off these rooms sun balconies which give a sense of freedom; loudspeakers and head-phones are provided. Beautiful flowers and plants were to be seen everywhere.

An outstanding feature of the Maudsley Hospital is that all are voluntary patients; the total number of beds is 235, which includes a ward in King's College Hospital, which serves as an annexe to the Maudsley Hospital. The charge for cases living outside the London area is from £5 per week; patients resident in London pay what they can afford.

### Qualifications of Nursing Staff.

Sisters in charge of Wards are required to have the double qualification of State Registered General Nurse, and also that of State Registered Mental Nurse; next in rank are Nursing Sisters, who must be State Registered General Nurses, who are in training for qualification as Mental Nurses. Staff Nurses have qualification in Mental Nursing only, and Probationers are those in training for Mental Nursing only. Male Nurses, when on duty, are entirely under the supervision of the Ward Sister in charge, and are State Registered Mental Nurses.

With the increase in size of the staff there has gone a tendency for staff to remain indefinitely; a danger might arise of such stability becoming excessive. The hospital has as one of its important functions the training in mental nursing of those who have already taken a general training elsewhere. It is also desirable that those who start by taking a training in mental nursing as probationers here should afterwards supplement this by a general training. The result in each case is to open up to the doubly trained nurses excellent prospects of promotion to the higher posts in the field of mental nursing.

Hitherto those who have trained as probationers here and have passed the final examination have been retained as staff nurses almost automatically, if they have so desired. Such an arrangement, however, was liable to lead to a dead end, no further promotion being obtained either here or elsewhere. In the same way a nursing sister was usually retained without question after completion of mental training. It did not follow that every nurse with a general training to whom it would be unreasonable to refuse the opportunity of qualifying in mental nursing was one whom it was desirable permanently to retain on the staff of the Maudsley. Frequently during the course of training it might become apparent that a nursing sister was not well suited for higher responsibility here. Further it was clear that the automatic retention of nurses which had prevailed hitherto would be liable in the long run to result in the

accumulation of an unduly senior staff and one perhaps disproportionately composed of those who had proved incapable of getting promotion elsewhere.

As a precaution against the disadvantage inherent in the existing system it has been decided to assimilate the position here to that which exists in most of the general hospitals which are training schools for nurses, including those of the Council. In future probationer nurses and nursing sisters in training will not be placed on the establishment but will remain on a temporary status until the end of their training in each case and retention thereafter will be limited to the extent which the requirements of the hospital demands.

There seems no reason to fear lack of opportunity for promotion to higher posts elsewhere for those who have completed their double training here. Of the nurses with a general training who have served in various capacities at the Maudsley since its opening 14 now hold positions as matron elsewhere, and eight others have held positions as assistant matron. During the last four years alone 10 members of the nursing staff have obtained promotion to the rank of assistant matron elsewhere; one to the rank of sister tutor and two nursing sisters have taken posts as sister in other hospitals.

### The Library.

The Library was next visited; here books for patients are available any day. The books are largely supplied by the British Red Cross Society, and during a short conversation with the Librarian, whose service is voluntary, it was learned that "thrillers" and "biographies" are perhaps the most popular with the patients, although humorous works and books on fiction and adventure are much in demand.

Passing through the Gymnasium, we came to the Artificial Sunlight Department. The pleasing colour scheme of all the departments is pale walls contrasting with eau-de-nil green leather upholstery.

### Occupational Treatment.

Instruction in handicrafts is conducted on most up-to-date lines. Among the very various crafts taught are hand-weaving of tweed, *i.e.*, most fascinating scarves, etc., the old honeycomb design was much admired; leather work, making leather toys, bedroom slippers and leather covered boxes; raffia work, seating stools, making tables, and arrangements have been made for members of the nursing staff to have expert instruction in this branch as a part of their training.

In an Annual Report it is stated "This sort of occupational treatment continues to be run almost on a self-supporting basis (apart from the salary of the Officer-in-charge)."

To some extent patients make articles to keep, and purchase material at a small percentage above wholesale price. In a majority of cases they prefer to use materials supplied by the hospital, the produce being sold in the canteen to patients and their visitors, and to the staff.

Considerable numbers of patients continue, after discharge, the handicraft they have learnt here, and write for help and advice. One woman ex-patient has worked successfully at raffia work for a West End shop during a considerable period after leaving, and a man who was temporarily unfit to resume his own work executed a number of private orders for leather handbags.

A notable feature of the Hospital is a very fine new Out-patients' Department which, for adults, is the largest organisation of its kind in Great Britain devoted to mental cases in the widest sense.

The numerous consulting rooms required, so charmingly furnished in limed oak with grey and green loose covers, impressed the Class with the very highly technical work

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