

Doubly Afflicted Children Well and Truly Cared For.

THE ELLEN TERRY HOME situated in the pleasant residential outskirts of Reigate, the only home in England to be known for its unique and wonderful work for doubly-afflicted blind, mentally defective children, owes its origin to The Servers of The Blind League, when it was inaugurated by that Society as a Voluntary Institution some 25 years ago.

More accommodation was soon necessary for blind and defective children who were considered to be "ineducative," in need of care and training, and the League therefore in 1934 erected another house in the grounds of Terry Home—Daffodil House (a charming two-storey building)—all of which was taken over by the National Health Service in 1948.

A new Occupations Centre, converted from what were formally a coach house and a laundry, has been transformed into a separate Occupations Centre, and this well equipped building was officially opened on Wednesday, May 3rd, by Dr. A. Torrie, Director of the National Association for Mental Health, who, during the late war, was Director of Army Psychiatry. Alderman Mrs. E. R. Hoare, L.C.C., Chairman of the Fountain (Tooting) Group Hospital Management Committee, presided.

Included among those present were the Mayor of Reigate (Alderman Miss M. C. Donkin), Mr. W. G. Levander (Chairman Royal Earlswood Group Hospital Management Committee), the Rev. W. A. J. Genton (Vicar of St. Mark's, Reigate), Mrs. Milne-Redhead (representing the Board of Control), Miss Cockayne (Chief Nursing Officer, Ministry of Health), Miss Dean (Occupation Officer, National Association for Mental Health), Dr. Taylor (Psychiatrist, South-West Metropolitan Regional Hospital Board), Dr. Troupe (Senior Medical Officer to a hospital for mental Defectives at Melbourne, Australia), Dr. Hilliard (Group Physician—Superintendent), Mr. S. G. P. Wade (Group Secretary), Mr. C. H. Pearsall (late Group Finance Officer), Miss Bell (Matron of the Fountain Hospital), and Sister Williams, Sister in Charge of the Home.

In introducing Dr. Torrie, the Chairman said that when she first came to the Ellen Terry Home about eighteen months ago, confessed, that all the way down to Reigate she was thinking to herself, "How perfectly terrible!" she was going to see children who should be running round, happy and care-free like other children, but who were there with a double defect—mentally defective and blind as well. She thought it was going to be a case of "All hope abandon, ye who enter here!" "How wrong I was," she continued, "The moment I stepped into the Home I felt, here they were in a place that is really a home; a nice, comfortable Victorian house, with well lit rooms and staircases, and with a great warmth of feeling about it. One felt at once that it was a friendly and kindly place, and one soon found that there was a great deal of very good work being done there." The more she looked into the place, the more she realised what a tremendous ground there was for the development of that work.

The Servers of the Blind, continued Mrs. Hoare, had been unable to give the children all they would have liked, because they were handicapped by lack of sufficient money. Now the Hospital Management Committee had the public purse to draw upon, they had been able to make the Home smarter and brighter in appearance, and to give the children better living conditions, more toys, and all those things that made for their well-being. But they should never forget that it was the Servers of the Blind who laid those very firm foundations on which she hoped they would be able to build something bigger, better and more enduring.

Dr. Torrie stressed the social obligation imposed by the existence of mental deficiency, that the War Office had always



Miss E. A. Bell, S.R.N.
Matron of the Fountain Hospital, Tooting.

recognised its obligation to care for the health of the soldier and of his wife and children and that principle had now been extended to the community at large. The National Health Service was a form of compulsory unselfishness, and in paying their taxes, the citizens of the country were contributing to the good work done in places like that home, but, he thought, they would still feel that they wanted to do something themselves as individuals. The Ellen Terry Home was a child of the local community, and he assured those present that they still needed voluntary effort in a place like that. They needed more teaching staff, and he would like to see an additional member of the staff being paid by voluntary effort, so that they had the statutory service and the voluntary service working together.

"Doing something for the handicapped not only helps them—" but," concluded Dr. Torrie, "does something to ourselves; and when we stop spontaneous, voluntary giving, we dry up something in our own personalities, and become less civilised thereby."

A Tribute to the Nurses.

Dr. Hillier, in thanking Dr. Torrie for coming down to declare the home open, paid tribute to the nurses for their patience in their trying and often difficult work.

At the close of the ceremony, tea was served in the bright new centre. The opening of this new building leaves Daffodil House available as part of the residential accommodation of the home, which will permit of an increase in the number of patients from 31 to 41, and a further addition of patients and staff is hoped for by the proposed purchase of the adjoining property which, it is considered, will make the home a more economic unit and help to satisfy the steady demand for beds for blind mentally defective children.

In our tour of the home we felt that those responsible are to be congratulated on the happy atmosphere prevailing. The blind, so sensitive to their surroundings, must surely "feel" the charm of the sunny play-rooms and dormitories—the latter so neat—and the apparent tranquil kindness of the nurses who here are taught to be skilful in two different and very difficult types of work.

A. S. B.

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