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EDITORIAL.

H.M. PRISON NURSING SERVICE.

As the youngest of the Nursing Services, Prison Nursing should make a very broad appeal to those women who have a definite interest, not only in disease, but in the mind of the patient behind the disability, and it undoubtedly offers a wide scope for the exercise of tact, and mental treatment as an aid to physical and moral readjustment.

Those who contemplate taking up this special branch of Nursing must remember that during recent years prisons have undergone extensive reforms, and to approach the work in a wholly sentimental attitude will result in disappointment and will not effect the results anticipated. To many nurses whose primary concern is the recovery of the patient, the discipline to be enforced will often seem irksome and unnecessary; but it is the very absence of any kind of discipline in the lives of the inmates of a prison, which is so often the cause of their imprisonment, that to educate them to see the value of wholesome discipline is an ever-pressing duty with those who are associated with them. Moreover, it must be realised that discipline means privileges, and those prisoners who make good have proportionate advantages granted them.

The routine of a prison is of necessity very unlike that of any institution to which the trained nurse may be accustomed, and ignorance of daily procedure would land those in charge into difficulties not only detrimental to the community, but most embarrassing for the particular authority involved, and special training of two months' duration has to be undergone before the nurse undertakes those duties for which she has been appointed.

"Familiarity breeds contempt," and the keynote of success in the treatment of prisoners is to gain their respect. To the woman accustomed to respect, this may seem an easy matter of achievement; but within a prison one often has to deal with the type of mind which has ceased to respect anything, or

any code of moral behaviour, so that the task is harder than it may seem. Then again, so unstable, very often, is the mind of the patient that a successful treatment one day may be wholly ineffectual another, and the exercise of right judgment and imagination is indispensable. Notwithstanding the necessity of enforcing discipline, and remembering always that in some way or other prisoners have violated the social law, sympathy that carries help with it is essential to secure the confidence and co-operation of those who, after all, one is there to serve.

Since much of the work of the trained nurse in a prison is purely observation work, women who care only for acute nursing should not enter the Prison Nursing Service; there is no doubt, however, that the nature of the work demands a very fine type of woman—the type that realises the many factors involved, in producing both health and happiness in life, and whose dual aim is to restore to society those women who have failed to grasp the elements of social living.

The qualifications necessary to enter the Prison Nursing Service are the Certificate of three years' general training in a recognised hospital, and preference is shown to those holding, in addition, either the Certificate of the Central Midwives Board or that given by the Medico-Psychological Society.

The duties include nursing, supervision of observation cases, serving meals, supervision of cleaners, the care of infants in the crèche, and sometimes the escorting of prisoners when transferred to infirmaries, or attending Court.

Appointments are pensionable, provided that the service is ten years or more; and after twenty years each year is counted as two in calculating the pension due.

To those women who share with Elizabeth Fry the spirit of the pioneer, we would make a special appeal that in undertaking prison work they should be not only prepared to face difficulties, but prepared at the same time to overcome them, and determine that England's youngest Nursing Service shall be the finest.

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