the investigation and asked for official information. This was declined. Later, the Home Office issued a letter to every prison prohibiting the members of the staff from giving evidence. Before this letter was circulated, however, evidence had been obtained from 50 prison officials—Anglican Chaplains, Roman Catholic Priests, Visiting Ministers, Medical Officers, and Warders of the different grades. Evidence was also received from 34 agents of Discharged Prisoners' Aid Societies, and 22 Visiting Magistrates.

Of Special Interest to Trained Nurses.

To trained nurses the interest centres in the questions of hygiene, psychology, and the care of the sick, and the Report supports facts already published in this journal showing that certain regulations and customs are in urgent need of revision or abolition on the score of hygiene.

Enlightenment on these things has only come slowly to the public, the prison doors are closely barred, and what goes on behind them is unknown and therefore is not a matter of concern to the general public. Also, till recently, there has been silence on the part of those who, having served their sentences, have returned to the outer world. For the most part they lack self-expression, or if they belong to the educated classes, the last thing they desire on regaining their liberty is the light of publicity. But this does not apply to the political prisoners—women suffragists and conscientious objectors—who, in the last decade or more, have "done time," with the result that we know more of the conditions prevailing within our prisons than ever before.

The Criminal Classes.

Sir H. Smalley, Medical Inspector of Prisons, reported in 1909 that "Prisons are largely peopled by the very poor, the very ignorant, the physical and mental weaklings, the unemployable, and the unskilled, to say nothing of the drunkards." Dr. James Devon, a member of the Board of the Scottish Prisons Commission, and previously a medical officer at Glasgow Prison, expresses the view that "poverty and destitution are at the root of most offences against the law. Everybody can see that a man may be tempted to steal if he is destitute, but those who have never felt the pinch of poverty, combined with the absence of friendly aid, can hardly imagine how men are embittered and goaded into acts of brutality—how continually they have to dodge rules and laws that never incommode their more fortunate neighbours; how hopeless they become and how broken in spirit; how easy it is for them to drift into courses condemned by those whose life is brighter, and whose opportunities are greater."

And in his book, "The Criminal and the Community," Dr. Devon emphasises that "it is particularly the overcrowding of the poor in large towns that causes crime. He points out that the discomfort, irritability, and other mental conditions which result from overcrowding, lead to crimes against the person, just as hunger and want lead to crimes against property."

It is interesting to note that in their report for 1920–1921 the Prison Commissioners emphasise the relation between unemployment and crime. Experience has shown, they say, "that when the Board of Trade percentage of unemployment reached its highest figures, the prison population invariably rose accordingly, and that in time of industrial prosperity the fewest prisoners were received." They explain the comparatively small increase in the number of prisoners during the trade depression of 1920–1921 as due "principally to the effect of unemployment pay, which has prevented acute distress."

In his book, "Prison Hospital Nursing," Sir H. Smalley divides criminals into: (1) Accidental Criminals, (2) Habitual Criminals, (3) Weak-minded Criminals, (4) Insane Criminals.

As a type of an "accidental criminal" an instance is given, by a visitor to a prison, of a girl of 21: "Was taken up by an American officer, got used to free spending with him. When he left her went as maid in a nursing home, where she stole £19 from a patient while the latter was under an anæsthetic. She was remanded several times and allowed bail. When she found that imprisonment was certain she swallowed a bottle of poison. . . . She was rather a sweet-looking girl, probably a little slippery and weak, but not in the least what one thinks of as a criminal type."

Of the "weak-minded type" the following instance is given, also by a visitor: "In a cell padded with mats sat a poor epileptic, so plainly mentally deficient that it seemed absurd she should be trying to read 'The Chaplain of the Fleet.' I held out my hand for the book. She took my hand, shook it in a characteristically silly way, and said brightly that she felt a 'lot better to-day.'"

What trained nurse can suppose that prison is the right environment for a woman of that type? Sir H. Smalley's comment on this and other cases is: "All this is very pathetic, and certainly calls for some other method of dealing with these unfortunate people than that of constantly sending them to prison."

The authors summarise the position thus: "Many of those who are in prison have no doubt sinned against their light; a proportion of them have deliberately adopted a dishonest course of life as their means of livelihood; but for the most part they are victims of social surroundings and poverty—a wretched collection of human beings, physically weak, under-nourished, mentally undeveloped, lacking in will power, the outcasts of our civilisation. Let the fact be borne in mind throughout these pages that if those whose lot is described have sinned against society, society has in the first place sinned grievously against them."

Women in Police Cells.

The need for women prisoners in police cells to be in charge of women is emphasised by the following illustration.

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