

Prison Life at Holloway.

Prisons have always possessed an unusual interest for me, and recently, intent on learning something of the provision made for the sick in H.M. Prison at Holloway, where London's criminal women are sent when convicted, I found my way there, armed with a permit from the Prison Commissioners, and passing through the great gate, shown in our illustration, was received by the Medical Officer and Deputy Governor, Dr. G. B. Griffiths, who, in spite of the fact that he is an extremely busy man, most courteously, in conjunction with one of the head wardresses, devoted considerable time to taking me round the building.

The first impression one receives of the building is that it is a hive of industry, and that surely the law and order, the discipline and activity which prevail, must have some influence on the lives of those who are incarcerated there, many of whom come from the class who have "never had a chance." Rules and regulations cannot fail to be irksome to undisciplined characters, and yet, whether one visited the great kitchen, the workroom, or the laundry, where every prisoner was fulfilling her appointed task, in no case was there any evidence that the task was excessive. The impression received was that the prisoners were wonderfully free from care. It was the officials who bore the stamp of anxiety and strain, and indeed the duty of controlling so large a number of criminals (there are usually about 800 prisoners at Holloway) can be no light one.

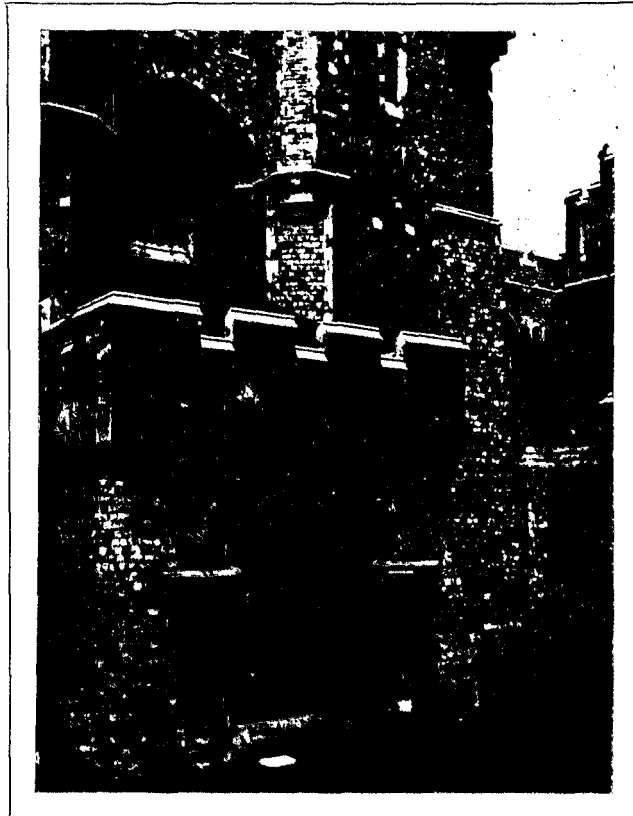
Here, it may be pointed out, that while there are some 4,000 or 5,000 men in the metropolis known to the police as belonging to the criminal

classes, there are only about 1,100 women similarly known, a fact which speaks well for the virtue of London's women. Of these many have got into trouble through drink, and are orderly enough when removed from that potent source of temptation. Thus, if we had more inebriate homes, even fewer women would drift in and out of prison, and become habituated to the disgrace.

Passing from the administrative quarters to the prison itself, one finds great wings radiating from the centre. Tier upon tier rise the different storeys, easy to be seen, as throughout the prison the cells open on to galleries running round a central well, the space being covered on each floor simply by wire netting. Open spiral staircases lead from floor to floor, and by means of enormous windows and top lights, the whole place appears extraordinarily light and spacious. A general inspection of the wings can thus easily be maintained, and, further, should a wardress require assistance at any time it is easily summoned.

The dominant note of the prison is its cleanliness. Every cell with its simple furniture is scrubbed as clean as soap and water can make it, every tin shines its brightest, and the same perfection of cleanliness was apparent throughout the whole building. "Everyone does a little beyond her own door, that is how it is worked," said Dr. Griffiths in answer to an enquiry. One could not stifle the reflection that had the prisoners been born into an environment of purity—the birth-right of every human being—instead of from their youth up coming into contact with all uncleanness, there would be little need of penal rule.

One of the first places we visited was the chapel where a party of prisoners under the



THE MAIN ENTRANCE HOLLOWAY PRISON.

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