

departure from routine can be achieved without special legislation when the officials concerned make up their minds to it? Another instance of this is the employment at Aylesbury of a lady gardener to instruct the prison officers, especially those of the Borstal wing.

The average hours at Holloway Prison are nine hours a day, with overtime made up, and alternate week-ends off. The hours at Aylesbury are longer, but with greater liberty for rest.

The prison hospital is not such a gloomy place as the outsider would expect. For my part I was agreeably surprised. Except for the double row of locked cells, it looks very much like an ordinary hospital. Considerable improvements have been made lately. Some new baths have been put in at Holloway, and more improvements are under construction there, such as a new surgery for the treatment of venereal disease, and a labour ward. At Aylesbury the hospital looks particularly bright, and the windows on one side look on to a private garden with comfortable seats for the use of the patients. The relations between doctor, nurse, and patient were less official, and appeared more free from constraint than I had expected. The patients responded to my questions freely and naturally, and no one, either patient or officer, seemed to be particularly in awe of the doctor. Indeed, their relations seemed quite friendly. Of course, I am only giving the impressions of an outsider's visit. The only absolutely satisfactory and convincing way of testing the prison régime would be to become an ordinary prisoner or a warder—preferably both. I have neither qualification.

Neither do I make any complaint of the actual nursing. It may be quite as good as the medical officers think. But, however good the nursing may be, I venture to advocate the presence in all prisons, those for men as well as those for women, of carefully selected, fully trained nurses to act as hospital sisters, to go round the cells and make the acquaintance of all the prisoners, help the medical officers in looking after the many details of their health and well-being, attend to minor ailments, &c., see to the general sanitary conditions, and promote a good tone and atmosphere throughout the prison. It seems to me impossible for two medical officers alone to attend satisfactorily and in detail to the health of 700 to 1,200 prisoners, without the help of trained nurses in the way suggested.

I would strongly urge that these sisters must be cultured women of character and initiative, such as one finds amongst the ward sisters in

the best hospitals. Such nurses as I have in mind, coming with habits formed in the outside world, and especially with the best hospital spirit, could introduce a hundred and one common-sense and economical improvements of detail, and would help to break the bonds of red tape and unpracticalness in which the prison service seems in some respects to be bound.

Every nurse will know that there are many little things which she could do to help the medical officer and to make the prison a better place both for the prisoners and for the officers. I happen to have been one of the first batch of sisters who went out to the Army hospitals in India. Many medical officers said that we were not required, that there was nothing for us to do. But in a short time they found that we were very necessary. We saw that we were wanted the first day. I am quite sure that it would be the same with the prisons. I visited the hospital of a men's prison the other day, and all seemed clean and well managed. But I felt that if I had been young again I should have liked to volunteer my services there. It reminded me so much of Army hospitals I had visited before the advent of sisters. Well, there are plenty of energetic nurses as young as I used to be. I assure you the prisons have need of them.

Another point should be emphasised. Whether you have trained nurses or not, it must be obvious that no good work can be done under the fear of punishment, and it is a degradation to our vocation that those engaged in it should be subjected to such insult. I asked one governor if the nurse in charge was subject to fines and punishments. He said "Yes," but added that he could not conceive of such a thing as a fine or punishment being imposed on her. I said: "Naturally, one can see that Miss — is trusted and has made her own position here. But it is surely unfortunate that she is liable to such penalties." He seemed to think that the penalties were necessary. I objected, and put the case of medical officers, suggesting that the prison nurses should be treated just as the higher male officials were treated. To this he seemed to make no further objection.

Although I thus protest against punishments, particularly on behalf of nurses, I do not wish it to be inferred that I approve of such punishments for other workers. On the contrary, I emphatically say that if we want to raise the tone and status of those who represent the community in its dealings with criminals, we must abolish all such devices for keeping them up to the mark, and invite them

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)