

PENAL REFORM LEAGUE.

DEPUTATION TO THE HOME SECRETARY.

That two events of great importance should take place on the same day is not in any way an abnormal thing, especially at a time when great events are taking place—both good and bad—with great frequency. It is, however, an unusual thing that two events should take place exactly simultaneously, and both crowned with a large measure of success for the Nursing profession! We are disposed to regard it as a portent.

On the morning of March 28th, while a large number of nurses, in and out of uniform, were hurrying to the House of Commons to hear the debate on the second reading of the Central Committee's Bill for the State Registration of Trained Nurses, a very representative deputation, organised by the Penal Reform League, was assembling at the Home Office to put their case for *many* reforms before the Minister. Lord Henry Bentinck, in introducing the deputation, spoke of the need for better conditions for juvenile offenders. "There is little done," he declared, in this country for them and greatly deplored the fact that many of them between the ages of 16 and 21 had been sent direct to prison. He pleaded for further provision of places of detention for them. Captain Arthur St. John, founder of the League, followed. Those who know him and his great work for this cause, are well aware that he has long advocated that reception houses—quite apart from prisons and police stations—should be used for all arrested persons before conviction, and that offenders between the ages of 16 and 21 should not be imprisoned at all. He spoke on these lines and concluded by saying that what was fundamentally needed was "more knowledge and more love."

MISS BEATRICE KENT PLEADS FOR TRAINED WOMEN NURSES IN PRISONS.

Women administrators was the point dealt with by Dr. Elizabeth Knight, of the Women's Freedom League, and she pleaded for a Women's Committee of Directors or Managers—women governors for women's prisons, and women medical officers for the same. Miss Beatrice Kent, representing the Royal British Nurses' Association, supported the movement for having trained women nurses in all prisons. She said: "My Association is greatly in favour of the principle, but we desire also they should be very *especially selected* women, with a knowledge and a sympathetic understanding of the psychology of the prisoners. I should like to draw your attention, Sir, to the fact that two trained nurses were appointed last year for a period of four months, to Holloway Jail; one of them was well known to me. From all she told me, it was very evident that their services were appreciated, and were very beneficial to the prisoners. I would like to give a concrete example of it.

On one occasion the doctor said to a patient: "I think the treatment I am giving you is doing you a great deal of good." The girl replied:

"Yes, Sir, it is, but that is not all." "To what else do you attribute the improvement?" "To the nurse, sir; if it had not been for the daily dressing and constant care of the nurse I should not be as well as I am." The doctor replied: "Well, I have heard others say that." Another thing I should like to mention in this connection. In reply to the very simple question of the prisoner-patient to the nurse, namely, "Are you coming to-morrow?" (the nurses were off duty every other Sunday) an officer said sharply, "Hold your tongue, it is no business of yours—don't talk." A day or two before the nurse finally left, the governor sent for her and the following remarkable dialogue took place: "I hear that you talk to the prisoners." "Yes, I talk to them." "Well, you are not to talk to them; you are here to nurse them, not to talk to them." "Is it treasonable to talk to them?" "No, it is not treasonable but you are not to do it." Before leaving, the nurse received a little note from her patient, containing the simple words: "Thank you, nurse, for your kindness." I contend, Sir, that if a woman enters the nursing profession from the highest motives, and not as a mere machine, she would quite naturally talk to the prisoners, and talk to them kindly, too; she could not help it. All these things are wrong and ought to be remedied, concluded the speaker. Other members of the deputation dealt with various other aspects of penal reform. Lady Aberconway spoke on education; Miss Sayle, of the Women's Sanitary Inspectors and Health Visitors' Association, on sanitation; Mrs. Harvey Vaughan Williams, Chairman of the Women's Local Government Society, on women in Court; Miss Kilgour spoke on the same subject as Dr. Knight, namely, women administrators; and Mrs. Despard on Reception Homes. It was a highly interesting and important meeting, and if the members did not get as much encouragement and gratification from Mr. Shortt as they could have wished, trained nurses will rejoice to hear that he was quite in sympathy with the demand for fully trained and suitable nurses for all prisons. There will, therefore, probably be another branch of nursing open to patriotic nurses, and if the position is made sufficiently attractive as to pay, hours and accommodation, we doubt not that applicants will be found.

A ELIZABETH FRY LEAGUE OF PRISON NURSES.

The Editor of the B.J.N. has long had a vision of an "Elizabeth Fry League of Prison Nurses." We may now reasonably hope that the vision will soon materialize. It would be an ideal thing. We owe a debt of gratitude to the Penal Reform League for placing this vital question upon their agenda; it is up to us now to press for its furtherance and to see that the sympathy of the Home Secretary is quickly translated into action.

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