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EDITORIAL.

NURSING IN PRISONS.

It is not often that the light of publicity is shed upon the internal management of our prison system, but two important written questions addressed to the Home Secretary on this subject, and his replies, were published in the Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates of October 27th.

The first related to the time for the closing of cells in Holloway and Brixton prisons.

QUESTION I.

MR. MILLS asked the Home Secretary the number of persons under 21 confined in Holloway and Brixton prisons respectively; whether the cells are closed for the night at the hour of four o'clock in the afternoon; and, if the answer is in the affirmative, for what reason has such a rule been made?

THE REPLY.

MR. SHORTT: There are 43 prisoners under 21 at Brixton and 35 at Holloway. At Brixton the cells are locked up at 4.30. At Holloway the cells are locked at 4.35, except on Saturdays, when they are opened again from 5.30 to 7 p.m. The early hours for closing are made necessary by the reduction in the number of hours of duty for the staff.

We have far to go yet in humane administration if prisoners of all ages and grades are locked in their cells at 4.30 (or 4.35) p.m. until the next morning. The effect of this solitary confinement on young girls and lads, mentally unstable and without resources, is an extremely severe punishment. The hygienic aspect is also important.

The reason given for this incomprehensible and cruel system—*i.e.*, that the early hours for closing are made necessary by the reduction in the number of hours of duty for the staff—is inadequate. Why not increase the staff, and arrange for their hours off duty by a system of relief?

QUESTION II.

SIR S. HOARE asked the Home Secretary

whether a wardress with no nursing experience has recently been placed in charge of the convicted hospital at Holloway over the heads of five trained nurses; whether this appointment was made on the advice of the Voluntary Advisory Nursing Board; and who are the ladies and gentlemen who constitute that board?

THE REPLY.

MR. SHORTT: It is not the case that a wardress with no nursing experience has been placed in charge of the convicted hospital at Holloway. The officer selected has had much nursing experience, as she has been engaged on hospital duties for 17 years, and was selected to be a hospital officer in 1913, since when she has been wholly employed on hospital work. She is reported by the medical officers to be fully qualified and very capable. The Voluntary Nursing Board was not consulted as to the appointment, nor have they made any representation on the matter. It consists of:—The Medical Commissioner (Chairman); Dame Sarah Swift; Miss Hogg, Matron of Guy's Hospital; Miss McIntosh, Matron of St. Bartholomew's Hospital; Jessie, Lady Camoys; Dr. Mary Scharlieb; Miss Edith Blunt; the Governor of Holloway Prison; and the Hospital Lady Superintendent of Holloway Prison.

We surmise from the reply of the Home Secretary that a wardress at Holloway Prison, who has gained her nursing experience in the Prison, has been placed over the heads of five trained nurses. The Voluntary Nursing Board would appear to be somewhat ornamental, as they have not been consulted as to the appointment. But, if they have not made any representations on the matter, we suggest that they do so forthwith, and represent to the Home Secretary that now that a Nurses' Registration Act has been passed, Government Departments should employ only those nurses who conform to the State requirements.

Registered nurses should also make it a *sine qua non*, in accepting appointments, that those they work under are also registered.

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