

Mrs. J. E. Kelley, Governor of Holloway Prison, introduces

Finding Homes for Homeless Girls

A PROBLEM FACING disturbed girls such as borstal recalls, is that when they leave borstal or approved school they either cannot go home or have no home: they long for stability, warmth of affection and the feeling of belonging.

To help solve this problem the National Association for Mental Health, with financial assistance from the City Parochial Foundation, started a scheme whereby a social worker would try to find lodgings where the landlord and landlady were prepared to accept the girl as more than a lodger, and try to help her to settle down, which could be a lengthy process.

It was hoped that this would help the girls fit into the community and lead normal lives; it was also thought that the landladies might need a good deal of support as they would be dealing with very difficult, often very disturbed girls. Arrangements were made both to insure the lodgings in case of damage, and to pay rent and retaining fees in some cases where the girls left without notice or without paying. In the main it was hoped that the girls would go out to work and be able to live independent lives, paying their own way. What follows is the report of Miss Paul, the Scheme's first social worker, who found:

- (1) The girls feel there is no real substitute for home.
- (2) They are often quite unable to achieve the stability and relationships for which they long.
- (3) There was no difficulty in finding landladies willing to participate in this experiment. There appear to be many people willing to undertake a piece of social work in their homes but unable to go out to any sort of regular work, voluntary or paid.
- (4) Although 6 of the 29 girls settled happily, surely a worthwhile achievement with these very difficult girls, Miss Paul felt more should somehow be done.

It is now proposed to set up a non-residential centre to which these girls can always return, and where very little will be demanded from them. It is hoped to establish a round-the-clock service, so that emergencies can be met. It is thought after a period of drifting, but with the support and stability of the Centre, girls may become able to accept the landladies more easily.

The report, a valuable documentation of the day-to-day problems and events in a social worker's life, as well as a description of a particular piece of work, is by MISS BERYL PAUL for The National Association for Mental Health, 39 Queen Anne Street, London.

PURPOSE

WE HOPED TO FIND suitable lodgings in London and to befriend girls, between 17 and 22, who for various reasons had no homes or were unable to return to them and found it difficult to lead a stable and independent life. It was also intended to support the landladies of the lodgings selected as they in turn give support and help to the girls.

Main Sources from which Girls would be referred

It was agreed that the main sources from which the girls should be referred would be the following:—

Fairlop House, 59-61 Fairlop Road, Leytonstone, E.11.
N.A.M.H. hostel for E.S.N. school-leavers.

Duncroft Approved School, Moor Lane, Staines, Middx.
Approved School administered by the N.A.M.H.

Borstal Recall Centre, H.M. Prison, Holloway.

Young Prisoners, H.M. Prison, Holloway.

National Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child.

Mental Hospitals in the Home Counties.

Area of Operation

It was realized it would be better to select a definite area in which to operate. However

because various London areas are so very different and a girl from one area would find it hard to settle happily in another, it was decided not to be rigid in this respect. Where the girl stated a preference for a particular area I tried to comply. Where no preference was stated, because the girl was not a London girl, I used the area in which I felt she would fit best—generally using the Putney and Fulham areas or the north-western suburbs which were well known to me. Lodgings were also found in Peckham, Lewisham and Leytonstone.

Selection of Girls

Girls have come under the scheme at their own request after interview. No girl asking to come has been refused with the exception of several unmarried mothers with a child, who presented as big a problem as any; but unmarried mothers unfortunately proved unacceptable to landladies, so, early in the scheme, it had to be acknowledged that another solution must be found for them.

Type of Lodgings Required

When talking to the girls about the lodgings they visualized it became apparent that, with one or two exceptions, no one was in favour of a 'foster home' lodging or even of being 'catered for' by the landlady. The persistent plea was "I just want a room of my own, with cooking facilities where I can

cook what I like, when I like and where I can come and go as I please." With this maxim ringing in my ears and knowing the girls generally had a history of institutional care I decided to try and find them what they wanted in a setting which I felt they needed, a room of their own but in a house where the landlady would be willing to accept and encourage them to join her family circle.

Finding of Lodgings

This on the face of things seemed a formidable task because it was thought that:

(a) practically every available and suitable type of lodging in London had been drawn into the net either by the Children's Department, Voluntary Organizations or the Health Department through advertisements in papers, talks over the wireless or recommendations.

(b) the age group I was trying to place was probably the least acceptable to the community, quite apart from the type of girl I was asking the landladies to take.

(c) as no satisfactory references could be given, one could hardly ask for references from the landlady and obviously not everyone offering lodgings to a teenage girl under these circumstances would be doing it for the reasons we desired!

There was, however, one source of finding lodgings which I had used previously when placing girls

from a hostel and which had proved fruitful. I decided to explore this in greater measure. It was the advertising of 'Rooms to let' displayed on notice boards outside stationers and tobacconists all over London.

Fortunately, this proved to be a most productive source—there was certainly no lack of advertisements and with the exception of two, who were recommended by a local parson, all rooms have been found in this way.

At first I visited every address given in the area in which I was looking. This wasted an amazing amount of time and energy as I found on arrival many of the rooms had already been let. Others were unsuitable for various reasons. Many of the rooms were let by Greeks and Cypriots speaking little or no English who I felt would be unable to give the girls the support we wanted. Others were owned by West Indians and I thought should only be used for girls from the West Indies, while some had men only living in the house. Many landladies were unable or unwilling to cope with the kind of lodger I was offering.

However with time and experience I began to be more selective and to assess the advertisements, noting the following points:

(a) the date it was put in—advertisements are often left on the boards weeks after the room has been let.

(b) How it was worded— if it specially mentioned 'girl' or 'young lady' I mentally gave it a good mark as so many will not take the responsibility of young girls. If it said homely lodgings or comfortable room I also gave it a mark. If it said 'call after six' this usually indicated that the landlady was out all day.

I would then take note of the handwriting, the English and spelling which usually gave me some indication of the age, education and possible sex of the writer and often whether English or not. Having decided from the advertisement that it seemed a likely lodging I would go there, on my way noting the districts, availability of transport, shopping centre, work prospects, local entertainment and facilities such as cinemas, library and swimming baths.

At the address I would take in the street and the house. Much could be learnt from the general condition of the exterior of the house, the way the curtains were hung, the kind of curtains, the appearance of the garden if any, the washing on the line and the state of the empty milk bottles on the door step.

If the general impression was reasonable I rang the doorbell. When the door opened and I actually saw the landlady I had to make a spot decision whether to go through with it. If I decided she was a possibility I then went all

out! First I asked if the room advertised on the notice board was still available, if so I asked to see it and was usually taken straight to the room. Some landladies were obviously much more experienced than others in letting rooms and as we went up the stairs would tell me all the details I wanted to know, such as the electricity was included in the rent, but each tenant had their own gas meter or whether sheets and pillow cases were supplied and laundered or only supplied, or neither, the accessibility of the bathroom, how many there were and whether they had to be shared with other tenants. What other tenants were in the house, if any, whether the house was locked up at certain hours and the ruling if any, about boy friends. By this time I would have seen the room and decided whether or not the landlady was going to be suitable. If I thought she was I would then say "I think I'd better tell you before we go any further that the room isn't for me but a young girl I am interested in." I would then wait for reaction. If good or none I would next say, "shall I tell you a bit about her?" At this point I was usually asked who I was. I explained that I was a social worker concerned with girls between 17 and 22 who for various reasons could not or did not wish to live at home and that the majority were the misfits of this world who had been in trouble of some kind or another.

I explained many of them were borstal girls or young prisoners from Holloway, others were patients from mental hospitals who no longer needed hospital care but were not really ready to take their place in society without a lot of support.

It was interesting to discover that society seemed divided—those who were horrified at the thought of taking someone into their house from Holloway but felt they could cope with someone from a mental hospital and vice versa, so a stock question became "Which horrifies you least, a girl from Holloway or one from a mental hospital?"

Although it was originally intended to build up a panel of landladies this did not in fact come to pass, partly I think because it emerged very early in the scheme that when finding landladies through this source the primary reason behind any of them taking a girl was their need for money. The room had to be let and any feeling of social responsibility or sympathy was secondary. As this was the case and the demand for rooms far exceeded the supply it was obviously impossible to offer them a retaining fee—it had to be the full rent or nothing. It seemed to me that it would have been an unnecessarily costly business to pay full rent for a dozen or so rooms with comparatively untried landladies, especially when the majority of the rooms would be

empty for possibly months at a time.

Realizing this and at the same time the fact that landladies suitable for the scheme were on the whole quite prepared to take the type of girl with whom I was concerned, I decided to find lodgings as required. The landladies' attitude in general appeared to be that letting rooms was a risk anyway, several told of tenants who had done moonlights flits, taking linen and blankets with them and owing rent. Others had the police knocking them up at the dead of night after discovering that a wanted person was their tenant. They felt that, as I would be 'on call' and the scheme gives the assurance of regular rent regardless of the tenant's unreliability, it would be a better prospect than taking someone out of the blue.

The question of subsidising the landlady was not introduced at this stage. I felt from the beginning that if this was emphasized too much the whole scheme might turn into a money making racket for landladies and we might have found we were getting the wrong kind of landlady who would be willing to take a girl just for the extra rent this entailed but would be quite incapable of giving the girl the help and support she needed.

I decided, therefore to bide my time and offer to subsidise a landlady only when she had really proved her worth and was doing the job envisaged. With the agree-

ment of Sir Donald Allen and the Steering Committee the name was therefore changed from the Subsidised Lodgings Scheme to the Experimental Lodgings Scheme. At no time was a subsidy accepted. Landladies who proved worthy of it all declined when offered a subsidy, saying that they were quite satisfied with the rent they received and were only too pleased to feel they could do something more for humanity than just letting a room.

The only form of subsidy used was when the rent of a particular room was higher than the girl could afford. If I felt the landlady was of particular value, rather than lose the room I arranged, with her consent, that the girl should pay a proportion and I should pay the balance; if the rent of a room was £3.10s. a week the girl paid £2.10s. and I paid £1. This was done in the case of three rooms only.

The rent was also paid to retain a room when a girl absconded and the landlady was prepared to have her back should she "surface" or to take another girl.

As the majority of the girls had to have an address before release, lodgings were usually taken a week in advance, rent being paid from the scheme; the girl was then able to visit during that week. This gave landlady and girl a chance to meet and so relieve tension of both before the girl actually became installed.

Landladies

Twenty-six lodgings have been used during the past year. 18 of the landladies were married, five were widows and three were single women. Their ages ranged from 33 to 60 years.

Of the 18 married, 11 had children between the ages of six months and 13 years. Five had grown-up families and two had no families. Four of the widows had grown-up families.

None of the husbands were professional men, but followed various occupations such as salesmen, plumbing, carpentry or railway work. Each one was interviewed before a girl was accepted and the husband and wife then agreed together to take a girl into their home.

There were occasions when a special landlady needed to be found as in the case of the young lesbian girl who had previously broken up two families. She was a London girl and a well known character in many districts and not too welcome. I suddenly hit upon the answer when I saw an advertisement offering 'homely lodgings to a young boy' and on investigating found the lodgings were in the home of a couple both in their late fifties who took only male lodgers. On hearing the tale they were quite prepared to accept Sylvia into their home.

Coloured girls also presented a problem, especially those who had lived in children's homes and insti-

tutions of some kind all their lives. Having grown up among white people they had no desire to live with coloured people. One in particular insisted that she wanted an English family in Peckham. Here again I was fortunate in finding lodgings where the landlady was coloured but the rest of the household white.

When girls absconded landladies were mostly prepared to accept them back or to take another girl. Unfortunately, except in one case, the question of a girl returning did not arise as she either did not surface or was re-called to the Borstal Centre. Four landladies, however, took a second, and one a third girl.

Girls Coming Under the Scheme

Selection: Although there was no selection apart from age limits and the almost complete exclusion of the unmarried mother and her child, it soon emerged with great clarity that the girls with the greatest need for help and making most demand on the scheme were those from the Borstal Recall Centre and Young Prisoners from Holloway. Perhaps it could be emphasized again here that every girl that has come under the scheme has been self selected and no regard has been given to her potential or previous background. It would indeed have been difficult to select from this particular group as their behaviour in the Recall

Centre often proved quite misleading.

Getting to know them: Borstal girls and young prisoners usually approached me the month before the Licensing Board. By this time the After-Care Officer, working in Holloway, had also contacted me. This gave me about four weeks in which to make an individual contact and to interview them on their own. I was, however, able to get to know most of them in a superficial way by attending the group meetings which took place in Holloway four mornings a week, from 8.00 a.m. to 9.30 a.m.

Here I saw them in their many moods and in action within a group. They in turn grew used to me and were able to accept me more as a friend than a stranger when a more individual contact became necessary.

The individual interviews in Holloway varied very much. On the whole I did not feel the initial interviews were of great value. They usually took place in a side room on the wing of the Recall Centre, which in itself was rather formal and inhibiting and the conditions were so unlike real life that although at the time the girls may have meant what they said the picture naturally changed with the changed conditions outside. Some were out to make an impression by telling me how ashamed they were at what they had done and they definitely had

learnt their lesson and intended to go straight. Others would give a hard luck story and were obviously still carrying a chip on their shoulder. Some would talk at length about their family and early life, some were more reticent.

Occasionally I would see a girl in her room and this revealed much more. Each girl's room presented a very different picture and it was easier to make a more natural contact with them as there was a visible sign of some individual interest which could be admired or discussed and would give a lead for conversation, such as a family photo, a pin up, a particular book, drawings or even just the general appearance of their room.

The second interview was generally more useful. Knowing that the majority of the girls were against any form of officialdom, my main object was to get over to them that my function was not in any way official. I made it clear to each that she would still be responsible to an After-Care Officer and that I hoped to help her as a friend so that she would not have to go into yet another hostel on her release. Talking on these lines I would then discuss the kind of lodgings the girl wanted and whereabouts in London she would like to live. I would explain to her that some landladies were fussy about one thing and others about another, so it was as well to know from the start

what type of landlady she would best fit in with. For instance, I would say, "If you are going to want to stay out till all hours of the night it is no good finding you a landlady who locks and bolts her door at 10.00 p.m! Or if you do not like children you will not want to be pestered by them running round the house at all hours. Again if you want to have boy friends in, it is no use finding you a room that has a ruling of 'no boy friends.' If the landlady has not a very high standard of cleanliness it would be no use putting you there if you had some bee in your bonnet about cleanliness."

The girls were very quick to cotton on to this line of talk and soon told me their likes and dislikes. Often it would come out why they had not settled in former lodgings.

Having established the sort of lodgings required and at the same time gleaned quite a lot of information about the girl herself I would go on to ask her how much she felt she would be able to afford. This brought us on to the topic of work and the sort she wanted; here I was able to discover if this was one of her big difficulties—the keeping of a job and why. So I was able to build up a picture of the girl and her needs and difficulties. I would then tell her that as soon as I had found lodgings I thought she would like I would ask Mrs. Kelley, the Governor of Holloway, for permission to take her to see them,

A Day Out

This always proved a red-letter day and was enjoyed by the girl and myself. They had usually been told the previous day so were able to curl their hair with special care the night before! The girls were allowed to wear their own clothes for the outing, which to them was a great thrill and to me most revealing. On the whole most of them were quite presentable and in fact looked very attractive.

Some were apologetic about the condition of their clothes saying, "I must have been picked up in a bad state," others that they'd left all their clothes at their lodgings and only had what they stood up in, which might be summer attire when it was winter and vice versa according to the time of year when they had been apprehended.

On one occasion I was greeted by a rosy cheeked little boy! She was, in fact, Sylvia, the lass who has strong lesbian tendencies, dressed completely in men's clothes. As this was her normal mode of dress it had been decided that it would be better for the landlady to see her as she would be. Sylvia was quite unabashed by it and seemed unaware of the looks she aroused on our travels.

Once we were outside the prison gates most of the girls appeared to be hit by the noise and traffic and would instinctively cling to my arm. Many, not London girls, were quite unused to the noise

and rush of everyday life that Londoners accept. Even those that know London found the sudden change from the comparative calm inside too much for them at first.

From Holloway we would walk to Caledonian Road Underground Station, this gave them time to realize that they really were outside and to accustom themselves to passers-by without feeling everyone was looking at them! When we were getting near the station I would say to the girl quite casually, "You do smoke, don't you?" The answer was always "Yes." I would then say, "Well, while I get the tickets you pop into the little shop near the station and get yourself some fags," and hand her 2s.6d. This I felt did several things for her. It gave her confidence by going into the shop on her own. She was able to make a definite choice of the cigarette she liked best and was able to handle money again. The girls' choice of cigarette and comments on returning to me were interesting, some bought the cheapest make and returned the change to me with great alacrity. When asked if these were what they normally smoked they said, "Oh no, Miss, but it's your money." Others would say "I hope you don't mind I got the expensive ones," and pass over the 1½d. change. Some came out saying they felt quite embarrassed going into a shop again, while others did not turn a hair.

After this we would catch the train. Little talk could take place on the underground because of the noise and the girls usually just sat and smoked. Each girl varied as to the attention she paid to other passengers. When we reached the end of our journey there was either a bus ride or a short walk. During this time the girls would question me again about the landlady and her family, obviously feeling a bit apprehensive. "Do you think she will like me, Miss?" "What did you tell her about me?" "What did she say?" "Do I look alright?" As we drew nearer the house they usually became very silent but the landladies always turned up trumps and made them feel welcome at once. Often there was a child or animal to break the ice and always a cup of tea. The girls naturally varied in their behaviour, some were able to talk quite chattily, others were very subdued and could only answer questions, some talked too much in their nervousness, but one and all always seemed agreeably surprised by the room offered to them and quite determined it was just what they wanted. After we had inspected everything and asked all the things we could remember that we wanted to know and met any other member of the family who was home, we would leave.

On the return journey most of the girls were much more relaxed in their conversation—the great

ordeal being over. Many would talk about the room in comparison with other rooms they have lived in or their own homes. The landladies would also come in for a lot of talk on the girls' part—really thinking aloud. We would also talk about when they would be coming out and the day of their release. Would I meet them? What about jobs? Did I think it would be easy to get one? "I don't want to work in a factory" or "I've never really kept a job for more than two weeks. Will you come with me to get one?" "That's why I never got on my feet last time I came out, I couldn't get a job." "It's not easy by yourself; I never know what to say," and "What shall I do about my insurance card, I've lost it." All these questions would come out.

I would assure them that the day they were released I would devote to them and go with them to the National Assistance Board, the Employment Office and if possible for an interview for a job. I told them I felt it was better for them to get working as soon as possible as they would naturally find it strange when they were first free again and having something to do would help them and they would also meet other people with whom they could make friends.

I explained again that although they thought it was going to be wonderful in a room of their own

there would be times when they would be very lonely, especially after living in a community for the past six months. They usually replied that they had always longed for a room on their own and how now they really intended to make good and I think they honestly meant it.

Before returning to Holloway we went for a meal and I think without exception they chose sausage, egg and chips! The return journey was even more horrifying than the outward one as we usually ran into the 'rush hour' and I was clung to even more tightly! As we approached the prison the girls would often remark rather wistfully 'home again' and then add in a rather grim voice 'but not for much longer.'

When we reached the gate they would hand me any cigarettes they had not smoked which I promised to keep for them until they came out. I was always surprised how few out of the packet had gone by the time we got back.

Free at last

I usually saw a girl the day before she was coming out to assure her that I would be waiting at the gate, dead on 8.30 a.m. and to arrange to lend her a case for her few possessions if she wished. The thought of coming out with a brown paper parcel filled them all with horror as they were sure

that everyone would know where they had come from. A case anyway seemed to give them status and so, even if it was practically empty, and alas in many cases this was so, we carried it proudly to the new lodgings and always stated on our arrival that we had come to leave our luggage before going to look for a job!

As the officer who had come to see them off bade them farewell and the great doors closed with finality behind them the girls instinctively seemed to catch their breath and were momentarily quite stunned. The sudden realization that the often longed-for day had actually arrived and they were once more free citizens was regarded with mixed feelings by most of them.

On one hand they were eager and keen to make a go of it and many would say as the doors closed, "That's the last you'll see of me," but the tone was usually fierce and unconvincing as they knew now they were once more on their own without the security those walls had given them for the past few months and with only the fear of the unknown future stretched out before them. Most were nothing more than frightened children.

This moment quickly passed, however, and they were once again on top of the world, free at last!

As we left the prison so early and few of the girls had ever eaten any breakfast because of the

excitement we usually made our way to a café before starting out on the day's adventures. Here we would plan our day. According to where the lodgings were in relation to the National Assistance Board we went first to whichever was the nearest. I also soon discovered that the earlier one was able to go to the National Assistance Board the better, as the girls found it very difficult to wait too long anywhere. I also discovered that Friday was a hopeless day as they were packed out at all times, so if at all possible avoided the girls being discharged on a Friday.

Thursday I found was in fact the best day for them to be released as the N.A.B. was reasonably empty. It gave the girl a chance to get fixed up with employment to start on Monday and the weekend to settle into her lodgings and become accustomed to the world outside again.

The visit to the N.A.B., though naturally difficult for the girls owing to the number of questions to be answered, was made as easy as possible by the understanding approach always shown by the officer dealing with the case. On arrival the girl handed in the letter she had been given from Holloway and we sat down. We managed to work out quite a good technique as I soon learnt the questions likely to be asked. While we were waiting to be seen I would say to the girl "I know you will find

this questioning rather trying but it's one of those things that have to be done—perhaps if you can tell me some of the answers it will get it over quicker." I would then ask her the various stock questions, writing down the answers and at the same time I was able to discover quite a bit more about her early life without her realizing it. When it came for her name to be called I would go and talk to the clerk first and then we would answer all the questions together. This seemed a far less painful business for the girl and she finally came away in a very good mood. She felt rich, not having handled any money for so long, and the interview had not been the dreaded affair she thought it would be. Every girl remarked how much better it was to have someone with them.

After this visit we would then make our way to the Labour Exchange—here we were expected as the Prison Welfare Officer had arranged for each girl to be interviewed before her release and her papers had been sent. The girl was also given a letter of introduction. Most of the Interviewing Officers were especially appointed to cope with this category of the community and were exceptionally helpful, although the girls were not always easy or co-operative about the type of job they wanted or could do. We usually came away with a card for an interview with a prospective employer,

which we went to later that morning or afternoon. On the whole we were very lucky about getting jobs straight away, occasionally girls had known before their release what sort of work they wanted to do and I had been able to make enquiries beforehand and enlist the help of the managers of various firms, but the majority went through the Labour Exchange.

On the way to the interview I always asked them if they wished to go into it on their own or for me to come with them. One and all voted for the latter. The great question then came up, "What am I going to tell them?" I replied "Well it's up to you, but naturally you will be asked where you last worked and most probably need a reference. You can hedge around it but if you really want my opinion I feel you would do better to spill the beans and be done with it. If he is worth having for a manager he will probably take you on and no one else in the firm need know a thing about you, if on the other hand he feels he cannot employ you then you are probably as well off to be away from that firm and find another job where you will be welcome."

The girls usually agreed to this, taking courage from the fact that I would be with them.

I have been greatly encouraged by the amount of good will amongst employers and the real encouragement and kindness they have shown to the girls. There

have been comparatively few who have been unwilling to at least give them a chance. More often than not they have been at great pains to make them feel wanted and a necessary part of their team. I often have felt if they had noticed the look of both surprise and real joy which showed on a girl's face when told she can have the job, they would have been rewarded. With money in their pocket and a job fixed to start on Monday she is walking on air by this time! Many have said at this stage "I just can't believe it, my luck must be changing!" If we had not already had lunch this was definitely the time to celebrate and without more ado we would make for food! The business of where one eats is quite a thing with this type of girl. I had learnt this previously from my hostel girls. Not necessarily because of the actual food but the importance set on the type of restaurant chosen.

If you go to a coffee bar the girl at once feels you are ashamed to be out with her, if on the other hand you select quite an ordinary restaurant "It's too posh." If you go to Jo. Lyons you have no imagination, so says the girl. What is left? I solved the problem by taking them to a continental or Chinese restaurant. Here the clientele is neither too posh nor too low but just cosmopolitan. This went down well with the girls, especially as few had been to such places before. The

more adventurous ones were game to try the unusual dishes but the conventional ones were able to choose a more familiar dish. It gave them something to talk about.

Fortified with food we would then make our way to our last call, the National Insurance Office. Here more questions had to be answered and usually a form for a 'lost card' filled in and we would come away with a sigh of relief from us both and the necessary document to enable her to start work.

It is certainly a business to establish oneself in the world again. I could understand how disheartening and wearying it must be to do it by oneself and was not a bit surprised to hear from several of the girls that when they came out before they just had not gone through with it and so from the first day had started drifting.

With everything accomplished, however, I would say to the girl, "Now you can put the past behind you—you are a free woman with a place of your own, a job to start on Monday, money in your pocket, what else do you want!" Then I would say, "Food to keep you alive" and we would do the last of the tasks necessary and by far the most enjoyable for the girl and make our way to a food store to buy the groceries she would need.

I found the girls varied very much in their knowledge of shop-

ping and their needs, but together we would remember most of the necessary items and would then make our rather weary way back to the lodgings.

Often it might be nearly four o'clock by the time we finally arrived back at the lodgings. If the landlady was in she would probably appear and ask how we had got on. The girl would then happily tell her about her job and the day's proceedings. I would usually leave at this point suggesting to the girl that she got her bits and pieces unpacked and promising to look in later in the evening if I felt she was not too settled. Otherwise I would give her my home and office telephone numbers and tell her to call me any time she needed me. I also promised to look in the next day.

From this point no settled pattern evolved. The girls varied in the demands they made on me with regards to phone calls and visits and in their length of stay in their lodgings and their jobs.

There were only five girls from sources other than Holloway. Two unmarried mothers, one of whom I knew from my previous work and was already in lodgings. The other I was able to accept because a local vicar had offered me lodgings in Putney for a mother with baby. I also accepted two girls into the scheme from the N.A.M.H. hostel for E.S.N. school-leavers, one after several interviews and the other on the recommendation

of the Warden. The fifth was known to me since she was 15 years of age when she was in the care of the L.C.C. Children's Department. She was now 19 years old and virtually on her own in the world. She was taken into the scheme mainly so that she would be financially helped, without which the strain of trying to make ends meet might have proved too much for her

What Success?

Of the 29 girls placed in lodgings only six can be regarded as likely to remain settled and two of these would have settled without my help. Reasons for the inability of so many to settle were complex and varied from girl to girl.

Nevertheless, certain factors were common to many and may be considered worthy of note when placing other girls. What struck me first and foremost was that the girls hankered after their own families. This was often so even after they had stated they never wished to see them again. As soon as they were outside or immediately before their discharge from Holloway their thoughts seemed to centre on home and family and they often wrote to them telling of their discharge and giving their address. They obviously longed for some sort of contact even if only a letter. Meantime they found it very difficult to make a relationship with any-

one else. Often they would rush off to their homes unable to contain themselves any longer, just hoping that things would be different and that they would get on better with their families.

I feel if these girls could be helped to come to terms with reality regarding their families, before discharge, then this scheme is more likely to be able to help them. Until this has been accomplished I am convinced that little can be done to help a girl progress in any way. Also I feel much more should be done while a girl is in a residential setting, of whatever kind, to prepare her for the outside world in other respects.

Even those deprived of their freedom must somehow be made to face up to reality and be allowed to accept responsibility so that they are more prepared to meet the challenges presented outside. At the moment the majority are quite unable to do this.

Another difficulty is that many have tasted the way of easy money and work for them holds no attractions. Others are hindered by their inability to stick any length of time in one job, or in fact in any job at all, due to instability of one kind or another. Added to this is the fact that few are trained for any specific job, and are therefore unable to undertake much in the way of interesting work, having to accept the more repetitive jobs which they find not only

frustrating but the small wage received at the end of the week is no encouragement to them.

Finally where a girl was on statutory after-care the ultimate responsibility for her rested with her After-Care Officer who had to be kept informed of the girl's movements. Major decisions such as whether the girl was recalled or not were made by her. It was therefore impossible to take any 'calculated risks' which I feel might

have paid dividends with some girls. For example, it had been my previous experience that if a girl absconded, often several times, but knew she could return of her own accord, the need to abscond would gradually die. With these girls, however, often the fear of being recalled prevented them from surfacing and returning to their lodgings. This severely limited the chance of their being helped by the scheme.

Prisoners as "Ordinary" People

Sir,
Thank you for the review of *Twelve Months*, Mrs Brown in your Spring issue.

Your reviewer is concerned about "the exaggerated description of conditions (in prison) that the book will convey to the public and which do not now exist." The recent series of documentary films on ITV convey plainly to the public that such conditions do very much still exist. The discussion between Holloway officers on the problem of young offenders showed that that remains the same, too. Nor did the comments and attitude of the prisoners seem changed.

Certainly it is good to see the modern lines of Styal and Blundeston, and no doubt as the years go by all the old establishments will be replaced by similar designs, or better. Meanwhile, however, the large majority of prisoners must be detained in the old surroundings, much as your reviewer may wish this fact away.

Your reviewer is in agreement with me in saying that "the majority of prisoners are ordinary people." Our difference is that I believe that the way to ensure that they remain ordinary people is to treat them as such, and that the Norwich Scheme, group counsellings and mod. cons. are only fringe attempts to do this. To bring the life of the lawbreaker as close as possible to that of the law-abider will require more realistic, everyday demands and responsibilities: productively organized full-time work, at full wages, with full responsibility for repaying out of effort and earnings the damage and loss caused by offending against others.

Work and payment of dues are common morality and the common lot: why your reviewer considers them "retrograded steps" when applied to prisoners is beyond me.

Whether the book portrays all but one of the characters unsympathetically and caricatures the staff are, of course, subjective opinions which must be decided by readers for themselves.

By the way, the price of the book is 18s. 0d. and not 38s. 0d.

Yours etc., KATHLEEN SMITH.

We regret the error in the price of Twelve Months, Mrs. Brown.

Miss Smith's latest book A Cure for Crime also published by Duckworth (this time the price is 12s. 6d.) introduces a proposal for "Self-determinate" sentences.

It will be reviewed fully in a later issue. EDITOR.