

MRS. SANGER PUT NEAR MANIAC

Dorothy Day

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CONDITIONS IN LONG ISLAND PRISON ARE AS BAD AS BLACKWELLS,
SHE SAYS

Although Mrs. Sanger is acting the part of a model prisoner, according to Commissioner Burdette G. Lewis of the department of correction, in Queens County jail, where she had been sent for 30 days for the dissemination of birth control, she is not at all happy in the role.

In a letter yesterday to her sister, Mrs. Ethel Byrne, who was recently pardoned by the governor, Mrs. Sanger says that she is miserable and discouraged most of the time. Conditions at the jail in Long Island are quite as bad as those at Blackwell's Island. The food is not good and Mrs. Sanger is forced to go hungry all the time. She also mentions in her letter that she cannot sleep because there is a crazy woman in the next cell who screams and moans all night, every night. "It would not be so bad," Mrs. Sanger said, "if she just babbled. I could get used to the monotony. But she carries on at the top of her voice. It is impossible to sleep."

Mrs. Byrne is able to be up and about now, although she is still weak from the ordeal she went through on the island. "After all," she said, "the prison officials were very nice to me. They might have thrown me in the cooler, you see, for ten days or so to break my spirit. That was the usual way they made you come to terms. I didn't see the cooler myself, but a girl who waited on me had been there once and she said it was a small, black cell down in the basement with only a window as big as a porthole for air. There are absolutely no accommodations there. Twice a day they hand you in a slice of bread and a glass of water.

"This girl who was waiting on me was a very intelligent colored girl. She was more ready to talk than most of the prisoners and had more spirit. She had been put in the cooler for striking a warden. Her roommate had become obstreperous and broken a window, and when the keeper came and dragged her through the broken glass so that her arms and face were all cut and bloody, the colored girl became aroused and picked up the water bucket and hit the warden over the head with it. They put her in the cooler for eleven days, and when they took her out she was unconscious.

"So you see what might have happened to me. I got off comparatively easy."

Mrs. Byrne is going away from the city for a week to visit some friends. She is making no plans for her future fight, but is content to rest now.