

things every educated woman of to-day has heard expressed in more or less scientific terms. She has learned to pity bad people. She has learned that her disinclination to pick pockets and tell lies is simply an uninteresting want of complication in her anatomy, and she stands aside wondering and pondering, as one by one the inmates of convict-cell, prison and reformatory are converted into so many invalids.

Just at present little liars are the subjects of a good many learned discussions, and the results that have been arrived at are anything but flattering to the children of France specially, and the universe generally.

According to M. Jacques Rigaud, the "age of innocence" is the age above all others in which prevarication and deceit are the order of the day. To quote from that gentleman's recent article in the *Figaro*,—"The lie that is neither willed nor calculated, is a symptom of disease . . . . It is with this category of patients we must class the child that lies. It suffers from an accidental and transitory loss of balance. This generally disappears with age. Nothing of it remains with the adult" (?) "The defect is inherent to childhood, and the remarkable frequency with which it has been detected, has of late years given magistrates much cause for reflection. They have at present agreed, that in lawsuits and criminal courts, less importance shall be placed on the testimony of children than was formerly the case. . . . There was a time when the testimony of a child was joyfully accepted—when it sufficed to convict the accused. . . .

We ourselves have heard children questioned paternally, and have listened respectfully to this truism, sanctioned by centuries (though false), 'at this age one does not lie.' We have had reason to conclude, later on, that at this age, above all others, one *does* lie. . . ."

It is the curious case of a child suffering from what Monsieur Rigaud defines as "accidental and transitory want of balance," that has recently called for numerous paragraphs on the "disease of lying." A boy of 14, in Paris, came of his own accord to a policeman, revealing to him, with every mark of terror and anguish, that an accident had placed him on the track of a crime. Taken before a police officer, he described to him the agitating sight he had beheld: An individual walking rapidly, carrying a basket that dripped blood, and out of which there suddenly fell a pair of human feet—freshly chopped off. No detail in this sensational account was wanting. With every symptom of distress, the boy sobbed out his ghastly tale. He wept realistically. He shuddered. He was overcome with horror.

And the whole was farce. The boy had tracked no mystery. He had seen no basket, no blood, no freshly chopped feet. He was not even under a delusion; he simply lied. The last statement contains no curiosity, the curiosity lay in the child's dramatic talent. He acted to perfection, and had the magistrate been a trifle less keen, a little less experienced and observant, the police of Paris might be hunting for that bogus basket to-day.

And the incident (as a type) is common enough. An old French priest remarked, that repeatedly in the long course of his experience, children had come before him in the confessional avowing that their false testimony had condemned innocent men.

Perhaps we shall have an infirmary yet for small liars; and nurses will make a special study of this special class of patient. Who knows?

## Hospital Engagements.

IN accordance with the wishes of many readers of the *NURSING RECORD*, our representative prosecuted a further canvass among some Secretaries and Hospital Matrons on the vexed question as to whether an engagement between a Nurse and one of the medical staff should be the signal for the departure of the former.

"I shall get into trouble between the Matron and the Nurses," said a well-known and genial Secretary. "You know the new woman, and by that I include the new race of Nurses, does not allow her own particular questions to be settled by the 'mere man,' and if I express my views I shall quite expect a deputation of white-capped Sisters, Staffs and Pros. to invade my office and demand my right to settle their engagements, the 'to be or not to be' of their marriages," and he laughed at the prospect of so fiery an ordeal. Whereupon our representative promised him by all the faith and honour of the daughters of Eve that no tortures should extract from her his identity, "But do, please, give your views on this question, which is really an interesting, and altogether an important one to the Nurses."

"I read the interviews on the subject in last week's *RECORD*, and weighed the pros and cons. It appears to me very much a question of a gradual wearing down of prejudices, especially that prejudice which would fetter women's freedom, and give them only the liberty accorded to school-girls. You have only to read the rules and regulations of some Hospitals to show you that the Nurses are treated more or less as if they were the inmates of convents, or established in penal settlements! Why, I have known the case of a Pro. being sent away from a London Hospital just because she stopped a house-surgeon on the stairs to ask him a question about a patient's poultice. That was in the dark ages of Hospital life, but the spirit has not quite died out.

"You women will have to realise that the freedom of your sex is not built up in a day. Why, to depart somewhat from the subject, I am told that at the Pioneer Club, whose membership is made up of the so-called advanced women of the day, that the bedroom lights must be out by eleven p.m.; that one whole side of the hall is entirely papered with the rules and regulations which these fully-grown women of the world are expected to keep, and that nothing stronger than the beverages usually associated with Bands of Hope are *allowed* to be served to the Pioneers, who are, presumably, the elect of the advanced women of England.

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