

problem of eradicating venereal disease would be vastly simpler. What an outcry there would be if 80 per cent. out of 600,000 persons annually were compelled by inexorable destiny, the logical result of man-made social conditions, to be exposed to small-pox.

In combating venereal disease there must be first the fundamental restriction of the traffic in alcoholic poison, for this was the main reliance and indispensable instrument of all corrupting agencies.

Next, better school laws, largely made and enforced by women. The last report of the Chicago Law and Order League stated that in the man-ruled schools of that city, conditions of sanitation were responsible for much of the infection that had sent 600 children into the venereal wards of the county hospital. Again, in New York City, when Miss Rogers, head of the school nurses there, tried in co-operation with earnest women principals to trace to its sources a series of cases of vaginitis which ran through the schools, their inquiries were stifled by the medical officers of health, who said that the nurses were going beyond their province.

Next, better labour laws. Miss Minor, Probationer Officer in New York City, in the last report of the Consumers' League, said: "Hundreds are victims to our industrial conditions—low wages, irregularity, and lack of work." Child labour, to which male employers clung so tenaciously, was one of the first predispositions to immoral life, and to black as well as white plague, and vainly had the disfranchised women appealed to the much-vaunted chivalry of man for the protection of the young.

The most painful evidence afforded in the United States of the vaunted chivalry of man had been the recent decision of the Supreme Court setting free a number of men who had been convicted of carrying on the white slave traffic as a business, on the ground that the constitution of the United States did not enable the Federal Court to deal with them. The system of dealing with prostitution in the lower city Courts was, as every one knew, nothing more or less than an organised system of blackmail of these defenceless women.

It was, therefore, impossible at the present time to punish dealers in the white slave traffic. This added satire to the brutality of the lynch laws for black men. The agents of the white slave traffic were all white citizens. A social order, with child labour abolished, young girls paid living wages, widowed mothers pensioned by the State, so as to enable them to stay at home and care for their children, etc., must go far towards reducing the *unwilling* numbers now forced into the ranks of those who propagate venereal diseases. Then only, when there were simply the prostitutes by preference to consider, could legislation be so directed as to be something more than a farce. Education must be estimated at its full value, but could not be relied on alone; it must go hand in hand with enlightened legislation.

As to the part nurses should take in this movement, Miss Dock said she was not one of those who insisted that the nurse's submissiveness must never lose its classic form. Her professional subordination, right and indispensable in the sick room or

hospital where she freely contracted to be under the absolute orders of those physicians who undertook and carried the responsibility of the patients, must not be carried unquestioningly into her social and human relations, but might there be modified by her opportunities and duties as a human being. The older and narrow idea of a nurse reduced her to a kindly and animated machine. Logically carried out, it made her capable of palliative labours only, whereas the only hope of humanity was in preventive work.

Preventive medicine was only in its early stages, and the nurse must not be shackled at the outset of her career with obsolete notions of self-effacement, but must be alert to follow and assist the advance guard of medical progress.

Miss Dock urged that nurses should (1) Study and inform themselves on the moral prophylaxis question, so as to be capable of intelligent action when opportunity showed itself. (2) Join the national or international societies as working members. (3) Take every opportunity of giving simple talks and frank, plain instruction on sex physiology and hygiene, sex morality, and the dangers of ignorance, in schools, social settlements, Young Women's Christian Associations, before groups of girls, mothers' clubs, and young teachers. Explain that the highest medical authority upholds the single standard of morality, and declare the old ideas of the physiological necessity of sex impurity for young men to be false. (4) Do all possible to promote fuller and broader instruction in training schools on the causes and prevention of venereal diseases, so that the oncoming generations of nurses might be better equipped than those of the past ages to enlighten, warn, and teach, and, we might hope, legislate. Naturally, in the case of individual patients the nurse's lips were sealed. Knowledge came too late, and truth would be a useless torment. But young mothers could be encouraged to teach their children. We must try to help to bring up a more intelligent race of women, who would in turn produce a more man-like race of men.

SOME STATISTICS OF CRIMINAL ASSAULT UPON YOUNG GIRLS.

Miss MARY BURN, who presented the next paper, dealing with Statistics of Criminal Assault upon Young Girls, said that statistics were usually considered very dry, but when they meant ruined lives they demanded the closest attention. It was originally intended to draw as far as possible upon private sources, but these proved inadequate, and a dozen societies dealing with wronged women and children were approached for information on the following points:—

1. The number of cases of criminal assault upon young girls and children met with in their work.
2. The number in which prosecution followed.
3. The result of the prosecution.
4. The ages of the victims.

Only two associations—the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and the Church Penitentiary Association—gave any definite information; even the National Vigilance Society referred her to the Director of Public Prosecutions, and one lady flatly refused to furnish information which

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)