

## Some Statistics of Criminal Assault Upon Young Girls.\*

By MISS MARY BURR,

*Delegate to the International Congress of Nurses of the National Council of Trained Nurses of Great Britain and Ireland.*

Statistics are usually considered very dry, but when those figures mean ruined lives, as they do in this paper, then they assume an aspect which should command our very closest attention. In endeavouring to gather these statistics, it was originally intended to draw as far as possible upon private sources. These, however, proved inadequate, and a dozen different societies which deal with wronged women and children were approached for whatever information they could give.

The results proved somewhat curious; from only two did I receive any definite information—the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and the Church Penitentiary Association.

Of the other societies, six referred me to someone else, and even the National Vigilance Society, from which I expected much, referred me to the Director of Public Prosecutions; the remainder said they did not deal with such cases.

One lady flatly refused to furnish information which she considered private to a Congress of which she knew nothing.

It made one wonder if this work, which so closely affects the national well-being, is a private preserve, reserved to those who work in it. It almost appears so. Information was sought on four points only:—

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

The idea was to find out as far as possible the extent of this awful evil; what proportion of the offenders were punished and the degree of punishment inflicted, because, of various cases which had come to my knowledge, only a very small proportion were brought to justice. As so little information was obtained from the societies from which I had hoped to gain so much, I took the advice of one secretary, and bought the Blue Book of Criminal Statistics, and here is the result.

Comparative statistics are given for 15 years from 1893 to 1907; the details of 1907 only are given. In those 15 years there were 2,302

cases of defilement of girls under 13 years of age, and 2,442 cases of defilement of girls under 16 years of age, making the terrible total of 4,744 cases reported to the police.

Of these 3,425 were tried—1,660 for assault on girls under 13, the remaining 1,765 being for girls under 16.

The details of the cases for 1907, which are included in the above figures, are as follows:—Reported to the police, 149 cases concerning girls under 13, and 178 concerning girls under 16; total, 327. Of these, 97 of the first and 135 of the latter were tried, a total of 232 cases, roughly about two-thirds. Five cases were thrown out, 82 were acquitted, 145 convicted. The punishment of those convicted was penal servitude in 23 cases for terms varying from four to twenty years, five and seven years being the usual sentence; one man was flogged; the remainder received terms of imprisonment from fourteen days to two years.

One curious fact in this grim document is the distinction drawn between girls under and over 13.

All the sentences of penal servitude were given in the former cases, and not one in the latter; apparently a girl over 13 and under 16 may be treated in the most dastardly manner and the sentence be anything between fourteen days and two years.

This does not conclude the terrible sum of immorality among the males of this Christian land, for during the years quoted—1893 to 1907—there were also 3,407 cases of rape, and 12,280 cases of indecent assault upon women over 16, reported to the police, altogether making the ghastly total of 15,687 cases reported, and with the 4,744 cases under 16, we have the tremendous number of 20,431—an annual average for the fifteen years of 1,362 women's lives wrecked. Such is the information from the blue book.

The Rev. Thomas George Cree, Hon. Secretary of the Church Penitentiary Association, sent me a very interesting little pamphlet, "Juvenile Immorality," in which he states that he sent out a circular to all the homes and refuges on their list asking for the number of such children under 16 dealt with during the last three years (up to October, 1908). Replies from forty penitentiaries were received; seven did not take such cases, the 33 which did returned 347 cases. From 55 refuges the number of cases returned was 745; total for three years, 1,092.

Some of the details are as follows:—8 cases between 6 and 8 years of age; 18 between 9 and 11 years; 11 cases of 12 years; 14 cases of 13 years; 121 cases of 14 years; and 301 cases of 15 years.

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