

In one town the Chief Constable reports that hardly a child over 14 years has not fallen. From another, that children under 14 absolutely solicit in considerable numbers. In another, lads marked with badges solicit. On inquiring why prosecutions are so few, the reply comes from all quarters that so often the culprit is the father, step-father, uncle, or brother of the victim. In a covering letter, Mr. Cree writes that, besides the numbers already quoted, fully 1,000 more cases were known, but the parents would not allow the rescue workers to deal with them.

He says convictions are very few, as relations are often the culprits, and prosecutions must be taken in hand within six months after the commission of the crime; and, when there is danger of an infant being born, the child is restrained by threats from saying anything until its state is manifest.

Also young children are subject to cross-examination by lawyers, and he states a case of a child of ten being cross-examined for a full hour, but the evidence could not be shaken, and the case was sent to the Assizes.

From the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to children came the statistics for last year—838 cases, 146 prosecuted, 46 being dismissed.

Of collected cases there are 20, 18 of these being under 16, one being only 3 and another 5 years of age. In two the fathers were the culprits, and in one the brother was suspected. In six of these cases nothing was done, either because parents would not prosecute, or for want of sufficient evidence. Two of these cases were very bad. One, a girl, went to a gardener's for fruit at midday on Sunday, did not return home until 6.30; then went out, presumably to chapel. Nothing more was seen of her until her body was taken from the river on the following Tuesday morning. On examination, the child was found to have been violated. The gardener was severely censured at the inquest, and an open verdict given.

The other was of a child of 12, who was outraged while her mother was lying dead. The child accused her father of the crime, but, as it could not be proved, he was let off.

Out of 11 cases which were investigated, 3 were discharged, 1 because there was, as the Judge said, "No corroboration," and 1 "not proven." Of the 6 convicted, one was let off with a fine, and the others received sentences varying from 6 months to 10 years.

Of the two cases over 16, one was a girl of 17 mentally deficient, and the culprits (several youths, one of whom confessed to the wrongdoing), were all discharged by the magistrates. The other, also a girl of 17, was seized from

behind, a drugged handkerchief stuffed into her mouth, and she was dragged into the bracken off the high road across a Surrey heath. There she was assaulted, and when she recognised her assailant, he tried to pour poison down her throat, fortunately without much success. Chiefly because of the attempt to poison he got seven years. I think it should have been for life.

If such is the condition of things as they are known, what number of cases are there unknown? If there are 327 cases reported during a year, how very many hundreds are there unreported? Yet men who are supposed to protect the weak take every advantage of that weakness. Governments come and go, yet this terrible evil remains unchecked. Why have not these cases been put in the same category as murder? Do our law-makers consider it worse to kill the body than to outrage its honour and sully its soul?

It is useless to try, as some may do, to blame foreigners; only one culprit among all the reported cases for 1907 was an alien.

These men, who defile women and violate their own offspring, are British. They have the power of helping to make the laws which we women must obey, and, judging from these statistics, make them as easy as possible for the indulgence of their own lusts.

If this is not so, why must cases be instituted within six months of the offence? Why must a child, whose whole moral and physical nature has been so recently outraged, be subjected to cross-examination by a lawyer (a man) upon so delicate a matter?

And, lastly, how is it possible to expect corroborative evidence in the majority of such cases?

If such a state of things is the result of the absolute political power of men, the sooner women have votes the better it will be for the nation, and the sooner will its moral and physical condition be improved.

LEGAL MATTERS.

At the Leicester Assizes last week, the miscreant, John William Glenn, a shoemaker, of Melton Mowbray, was sentenced to fifteen years' penal servitude for his most brutal assault upon Miss Mary Jordan, a hospital nurse, which we reported last week. The whole circumstances were too terrible, and we offer our most sincere sympathy to Miss Jordan in her fearful suffering. The fact is that in Christian England it is not safe for women to walk alone on country roads even in the daytime, and it is doubly dangerous after dark. Wild animals of the type of Glenn, when convicted of their appalling crimes, should be kept under control for life, and the public safeguarded from them as from dangerous lunatics.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)