

only the help of an inspector of police. Women should invariably be present in court in these cases. Again, how could such cases be dealt with by men with every desire to do justice. If women had a voice in the sentences passed they would be different. Justice would never be done until both men and women tried boys and girls.

Then, the proceedings in these courts were criminal. She maintained that no child was a criminal, and the procedure should be reformatory and preventive.

#### LEGISLATION FOR THE FEEBLE MINDED.

Miss Anna Kirby spoke of the enormous potentiality of the feeble minded for ill. She gave statistics showing that in workhouses ten to twenty per cent. of the inmates were feeble minded; in prisons fifteen to twenty per cent.; in rescue homes fifty per cent.; in inebriate homes, sixty-two per cent. In 100 Magdalene homes 2,531 of those passed through in five years were known to be feeble minded. She gave some appalling genealogical tables, showing a family history for four generations, which she stated were a typical history of hereditary taint.

In one way and another the feeble minded drifted into institutional life for which they were ill adapted and were therefore already kept at the public expense. Their environment should be adapted to their needs, and this was best done before they came into contact with the law.

#### SCHOOLS FOR THE PHYSICALLY DEFECTIVE.

Miss Cantor, Hon. Secretary of the Invalid School Nurses' Association, spoke of the necessity for the work of nurses in schools for the physically defective. Their main object was to so watch and care for the child's physical condition that he was in a fit state to materially benefit by the education provided; otherwise all the efforts of the teachers to fit the child when leaving school to become a wage-earning self-supporting member of the State were wasted.

#### THE SOCIAL EVIL.

The programme was so lengthy that Mrs. Clare Goslett had, perforce, to omit her paper on "The Social Evil," but she spoke briefly on this great evil of prostitution, combatting the idea that it was necessary that there should be a great class of women outcasts. In reality, it was a gigantic branch of trade—a commercialized traffic, wrongly called the White Slave Traffic, as it included women of all colours. No trade could exist unless the commodity was wanted, and no profit could be made unless there was a demand for the goods offered. Nurses had special opportunities of forming opinions on this subject, and should go for the causes of the social evil; the age of consent should be at least 18. Then, why was it punishable for women to solicit, and not for men? They should try to upset the double standard and the doctrine that there were ten commandments for women and only nine for men. She referred to the wide-spread belief that if a man contracted

sexual disease, he could get rid of it by contact with an innocent child. That, she said, was why children went to the lock wards of hospitals.

#### ORGANIZATION.

At the Evening Session Mr. J. S. Pollitt pleaded for the formation of a National Association of Nurses, in connection with what he called the "Blackburn Proposal." He did not, he said, expect much of a response to his letter in the press, but he did expect 5,000 replies. He got 210. In the discussion, which followed, Miss Sidney Browne suggested that Mr. Pollitt should approach the chairmen of hospitals, and then address the nurses as Mr. Dick did, in connection with the National Insurance Society; then a hundred-thousand of answers might come in. Dr. Potter inquired what would be done with the money which did come in, and Mr. Pollitt replied that was entirely at the discretion of the committee. A Secretary, staff, and office would be wanted; there would not be much left.

Miss Stower followed, explaining the aims of the National Association of Registered Nursing Homes; also Miss C. J. Wood, who gave some "Business Hints for Nurses," out of a long experience; and Miss Rosa Leo emphasised the importance to nurses of the Art of Speaking and Reading Aloud.

#### A POSSE OF PAPERS.

On Friday, April 25th, the subjects discussed were "Finance" and "Nursing Abroad"—the latter occupying the Evening Session. Ten papers were down on the programme for this two hours' Session; and yet an eleventh was excluded for want of time! It was enlivened by Miss A. E. Windsor, who informed the audience that nurses must "first be born, and then very carefully created!" And, again, in regard to the nurse's training, "if she takes her C.M.B., which is an indispensable qualification for all foreign work, she may possibly dispense with obstetric work." Miss Windsor did not inform the meeting how these miracles were to be achieved, but a professional blue pencil would have eliminated such *faux pas*.

The lay nursing press, which had so much to do with organising this Conference, is to be congratulated on the haul of copy acquired from trained nurses and others without paying a cent for it.

#### THE FEEBLE MINDED.

In connection with the Nurses' Social Union, a paper was read by Dr. Exley, New Wortley, Medical Officer to H.M. Prison, Leeds, on the above subject.

The lecturer said that the problem of the feeble-minded is one which is of vital importance not only to individuals, but to the nation at large. He went on to say what was and what was not feeble-mindedness; and described the differences between insanity, dementia, and amentia. The mental deficiency of which he intended particularly to speak was that of persons whose minds had never and can never properly develop.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)