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## EDITORIAL.

### THE VERY GATES OF HELL.

The Church in this country is indebted to the Bishop of Ely for having brought before the Upper House of Convocation of Canterbury, in session at the Church House, Westminster, the question of criminal assaults on young children, and for embodying his views in the concrete form of a resolution as follows:—  
“That this House desires to put on record the distress and apprehension which it feels at the large number of assaults on young children which are now reported, and to express its earnest hope that public opinion will actively concern itself in supporting legislative proposals dealing with these evils and in remedying conditions of life (such as ignorance and overcrowding) conducive to this kind of immorality; and further that it will uphold Judges and magistrates in their efforts to put down a species of crime which is horrible in itself and full of danger to the morals of the rising generation.”

Speaking on the Resolution, the Bishop said that though the state of things might not be worse than in bygone years, the actual number of criminal assaults on children was a dreadful and menacing fact. He believed a large number of these crimes were incestuous—some said as many as twenty per cent.—and he thought that Judges and magistrates would welcome a strong and calm manifestation of public opinion, such as would uphold them in passing sentences which would have a really deterrent effect.

The Resolution was seconded by the Bishop of London, who, as our readers are aware, has introduced a Criminal Law Amendment Bill into the House of Lords, by which the age of consent would be raised to 18. Dr. Winnington Ingram said that the conscience of Churchmen was not so inflamed, or so keen, as the Nonconformist conscience. He had had 200 Resolutions from Nonconformist bodies backing up his Bill, and only one or two from Church people. He did not mean that the Church was not keen on the matter, but the

public opinion of the Church needed focusing and arousing. The Bishop asseverated that in an enormous number of cases these crimes against little girls were committed by relatives, often fathers or brothers, and put his finger on the plague spot in pointing out that this resulted from the fact that a great mass of the population were packed away under conditions which made morality very difficult indeed.

It is the old moral preached long ago by Charles Kingsley, whose ardent and sensitive spirit was aflame with the wrongs of which he knew, and which he passionately voiced in his poem, “The Bad Squire,” when he wrote that:—

“Packed in one reeking chamber,  
Man, maid, mother, and little ones lay.”

One section of the community, and that the most defenceless, suffers this shame, and the ears of another are too delicate to hear about it. Until women claim the right to know and understand, so that they may help to heal this open sore, so long do they fail to realize the responsibility and the dignity of their womanhood.

Every Bishop who spoke had something of value to add to the discussion. The Bishop of Winchester said that though the number of offences of this kind of which they were cognizant was terribly and tragically large, it was very much less than the number which actually occurred. He advocated corporal punishment for offences of this nature.

Again, the Bishop of Lincoln told Convocation that the cause of extreme acts of militancy on the part of women Suffragists was the apathy of men to this class of crime, and the belief that in having no vote they were deprived of one great means of redressing the wrongs of womanhood.

The Archbishop of Canterbury said that the subject was so grave that it made one feel that in touching it they were touching the very gates of hell, but they had the promise that even the gates of hell could not prevail against the Church of the Living God.

Let us remember that the duty of the Church of the Living God is to be the Church militant here on earth.

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