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## EDITORIAL.

### LITTLE CUCKOO FLOWER.

#### SATISFACTORY LEGISLATION ON CHILD ASSAULT REQUIRED.

The Criminal Law Amendment Bill now awaits its Report Stage in the House of Commons; and how necessary legislation is, to further protect girls and little children from criminal assault, may be realised from the three following cases, all reported in the press on one day.

1. At the London Sessions a detective, giving evidence in the case of a man (James Brennan), subsequently sentenced to two years' hard labour for an offence against a little girl of six on Clapham Common, said that such attacks on young girls were prevalent on the Common. Brennan had been twice convicted of assault on little children, and had been sentenced to ten years' penal servitude for attempted murder and house-breaking at Croydon.

2. At Leeds Assizes, Joseph Rushworth was sentenced to three years' penal servitude for a most brutal attack on a girl of twelve. Evidence was given that the girl was passing through New Wortley Cemetery, and when behind the chapel was caught by the throat by the prisoner. She next remembered finding herself on the floor of the chapel cellar with the accused striking her. Two men heard her moaning, lifted the cellar grating, and found the girl with her hands tied together and the prisoner kneeling over her. She was in acute distress, and her face streaming with blood. The police evidence showed that in 1920 the accused was sentenced to eighteen months' hard labour for a serious offence against a young girl, and at that time there was another charge outstanding against him for a similar offence. The police stated he was a very dangerous man, and there had been many complaints of his molestations of young girls.

(3) At Lewes Assizes, Mr. Justice Horridge

sentenced Jack Wells (or Cody), who was found guilty of choking a child, aged eight, with intent to assault her, to three years' penal servitude, and fifteen lashes of the cat. The child's mother sent her on an errand with a shilling wrapped in paper. When in a lane, the man hailed her and said he was going to take her home. He picked her up, put his handkerchief in her mouth, and lifted her over the wall into the park. She pulled the handkerchief out and screamed. He put it in her mouth again and pulled her along into a copse, where he took the shilling from her, and when she screamed again showed her a razor and threatened to cut her throat. As she continued to scream, he put his hand round her throat and squeezed it till she became unconscious. When she recovered consciousness he was gone. He was arrested next day and identified by the child from amongst a number of other men. Medical evidence was given to prove that the child's condition was consistent with her story. Her lips and face were bruised, the soft palate scratched, the inside of the throat inflamed, and the outside swollen and tender. The eyes were bloodshot, the forehead bruised. The child was now suffering from a venereal complaint, as the accused had been.

Such are the terrible details as disclosed in the judicial atmosphere of the courts. But it is impossible to estimate the suffering, the physical and mental injury, the horror and terror entailed. Imagine an innocent, happy child suddenly engulfed in so horrifying a situation. Imagine the feelings of the parents of a child so defiled. The story of "Little Cuckoo-Flower" which appeared in this Journal, is a concrete example of the consequences of such a catastrophe. If the Criminal Law Amendment Bill can do anything to increase the punishment of such brutal crimes, and to afford greater protection against them, then every ounce of weight which we can throw into the scale to ensure its passage into law should be placed there.

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