

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD

EDITED BY MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK, REGISTERED NURSE.

No. 1,859.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1923.

Vol. LXXI

EDITORIAL.

CHILD ASSAULT AND VENEREAL DISEASE A MENACE TO THE FUTURE OF THE RACE.

As we go to press the Six Point Group is holding a meeting at Kingsway Hall, Kingsway, W.C.2, on Child Assault—in our opinion the most base of all crimes, and one which is most leniently dealt with by our man-made law. Viscountess Rhondda is to preside, and we sincerely hope many trained nurses will help to cram the Hall, as our profession should be in the forefront of the fight to detect and punish the degraded men who commit this special crime, so tragic in its nature, and so terrible in its results on standards of national health.

On November 8th an extraordinary general meeting of the National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases was held in the Robert Barnes Hall, 1, Wimpole Street, London, W., when Lord Trevelthyn, President of the Council, was in the chair.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, Commandant Allen, in moving a Resolution on Child Assault, stated that an undoubted increase in offences of this nature against children and young girls is proved by the number of cases investigated by the Women Police of this country, and also by the increasing numbers brought before the magistrates during the last two years and reported by the press. Many cases reported to the police do not come before the magistrates at all owing to insufficient evidence, and therefore do not become public.

Numerous cases, also, are not reported to the men police for the reason that the woman whose child has been assaulted does not like discussing the necessary details with a man, and although the police are invariably kind and considerate questioners, it is indicated that more complete evidence can be obtained by women.

The communication of venereal disease to very young children and girls is the greatest menace to the future of the race. The harm done to a child who is the victim of an assault

is incalculable. Many are infected with venereal disease, and sometimes the child assaulted is only two years old.

The fact that some men are still under the pernicious delusion that venereal disease can be cured in themselves by contact with a very young child is responsible for much suffering.

From press reports it is shown over and over again that the evidence brought forward has proved that the accused has hitherto borne a good character or is suffering from shell shock.

There are also cases where a man convicted of indecent assault on a child and merely fined has appeared again before a magistrate at a later date charged with a similar offence. This proves that fines are no deterrent at all.

Mistaken justice sometimes acquits men on the plea of old age, as instanced by a case in London about six months ago, when a man of eighty was acquitted, not because he was not guilty, but because he was considered too old. In the same court, on the same day, a youth of nineteen was acquitted because he was too young.

The following Resolution was carried unanimously:—

“That the National Council views with concern the extent of the crime of child assault. It is aware that many of these assaults lead to the communication of venereal disease to young girls. They consider that public opinion should be aroused to the evil and that the existing law should be stringently administered. They are of opinion that financial penalties do not act as a sufficient deterrent and that severe penalties should be imposed.”

The Council confirmed the recommendation of the executive committee that their representatives on the joint conference of the National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases and the Society for the Prevention of Venereal Disease should form a deputation to urge the Minister of Health to give effect to the recommendation of the Trevelthyn Report that duly qualified chemists should be permitted to sell materials for self-disinfection, accompanied by instructions, providing no commercial advertising were permitted.

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