

SEXUAL PERVERTS.

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In the MEDICAL PRESS of December 27th, a very instructive case is referred to where this month a man was sentenced to penal servitude for life for a sexual offence. He had been sentenced twenty-nine years ago for a similar offence with penal servitude for life. After serving fifteen years he was released. Soon after he was again sentenced for two years with hard labour.

Max Nordau says that sexual perversion has the same insatiable desire upon the erotomaniac as has alcohol upon the dipsomaniac. If this be so—and I know of no one having questioned it—surely it is time that medical practitioners looked more closely into this

sad disease. The sexual pervert is a fairly common person. It is difficult to believe that any sane man will prefer morbid sexual acts when there are so many prostitutes willing—nay anxious—to oblige him by a fee ranging from a few coppers upwards. Last December, at the Liverpool Assizes, a man was sentenced to 25 years' penal servitude. For what? For criminally assaulting a baby five weeks old! I took some interest in this case, and found out that the man had been in the army in India, that he had had a severe sunstroke, that he had been dismissed, and that his mother was in an asylum. Now, what is the use of treating this poor sexual pervert—this sad product of our civilisation—as if he were a criminal, and responsible for his actions? There is neither justice, law, nor pathology in such punishment. There are thousands of cases of this kind in our country. Why do we not study the causes as we would study the causes of plague, typhoid, or yellow fever? If they are diseased conditions, why not study them?

I have, at considerable time and expense, collected the following statistics, and I think their perusal will teach practitioners—medical and legal—to honestly study these sad derelicts. The statistics are for one year only, and relate to persons convicted at Assizes, Quarter Sessions, and Courts of Summary Jurisdiction in the United Kingdom, 1902:—

	No. Tried.	No. Convicted.
Unnatural offences	33	31
Attempt to commit unnatural offences	58	33
Indecency in males	72	42
Rape	197	97
Indecent assault on females ...	621	420
Defilement of girls under 13 yrs.	114	82
Defilement of girls under 16 yrs.	179	83
Indecent exposure	2,000	1,741
Prostitution	14,907	12,356
Incest	14	1
Lewd and libidinous practices...	65	54
Procuration	43	28
Indecent advertisements ...	94	83
Brothel keeping	1,349	1,173
	19,746	16,204

It is to be noted that the above are only those who have been brought to the notice of the police. Is it too much to suppose that at least four times this number of cases take place? It would be most instructive to find out the number of times each sexual pervert was punished for the same offence. At present I am engaged in trying to find out. It took many years for us to find out that "Jane Cakebread" was not accountable for her actions, and for this reason I think this poor dipsomaniac deserves a public memorial. She taught us much, and may, I think, be described as the actual founder of all our legislation relating to inebriety and inebriate asylums. Lately I have been told of the sad case of an old man who has been sent to prison for the thirtieth time for indecent assaults on children. Does any man—any honest man—suggest that this person is not a sexual degenerate?

We have a large number of such degenerates at present in our prisons, where they are kept at the expense of the already overtaxed taxpayer. Is it too much to ask that these persons shall be sterilized by the operation which I have suggested for this class of degenerates—i.e., division and ligature of their spermatic cords (sperrectomy)?* If it be right to remove the ovaries for a physical disease of these organs, or to remove the healthy ovaries for a distant disease—such as mollities and ossium fibroids, or deformed pelvis—surely it is equally right to treat these poor sufferers, and relieve them of the cause of their diseased actions. I have no sympathy with those who taboo such degenerates. Medical science is, or should be, above cant and cowardice. It purifies everything, because it is seeking after truth. Both the doctor and the night soil's

man have to tackle unpleasant work; but this is no reason why the work should be left undone. If we know that these perverts are a result of disease, surely they have a right to claim our earnest attention. If we neglect them we fail—through contemptible cowardice—to do our duty to a diseased portion of humanity, a portion who are not often diseased because of their own action, but because they are frequently the products of mentally diseased parents.

* Proposed sterilisation of certain mental degenerates, 1903.