

WRECKED LIVES: the POISON of the BUTTERFLY

JIM CRUSTELL

DEFENDING MEN PROVED INNOCENT BY LAW

Fare Ignominiously through Childish Pranks

"I HAVE seen a hideous procession of dirty-minded little girls pass through this Court, but I have no hesitation in saying that this one is the queen of them all."

The Chief Justice of West Australia made these remarks at the conclusion of a case in which a young girl alleged a serious offence against her schoolteacher.

STANDING by itself, the case might have been regarded merely as a passing phase, in which the warped mind of a neurotic female had led to a cruel, but, fortunately, rare hallucination. It is deplorable to con-

template, however, that such happenings are much too common throughout the Commonwealth, and no doubt the judges of every other State could, with equal truthfulness and feeling, make similar observations. Of late, cases in which puerile, dirty-minded, neurotic, or hysterical females have brought false charges of sex offences against men have become so frequent that serious thought must be given to the problem of how to protect the youth and the man. A lot has been done to protect and safeguard the female, but what of the male?

During the year 1930 67 males were arrested in New South Wales on serious charges preferred against them by females. Of these, 25 broke down at the lower Court, and 34 were sent on for trial. In the cases sent on to the Judge at the higher

were sent on to the Judge at the higher Court, 50 per cent. collapsed, and the accused was discharged.

In 1931 76 males were arrested at the instance of female accusers. At the Police Court 55 of the 76 were discharged by the magistrate, and only 19 were passed on to a jury. With one or two exceptions, the accused were acquitted.

Police officials and legal authorities believe that in the sex offences alleged against men, 75 per cent. of the statements made by accusing females were absolutely without foundation.

The Western Australian case referred to above, hideous as it may seem, is only an example of the majority. In it a girl 13 years of age, alleged that the master of the school, a married man, interfered with her when she went up to his desk to have her work revised.

The schoolmaster was sent for trial, and notwithstanding a most searching cross-examination by counsel for the defence (Mr. Clifton Penny, now of Sydney), she stood as solid as a rock. It was im-

also admitted that she was in the habit of reading them to the other girls in the school, not omitting even the tiny tots in the infant classes. They were the filthiest letters ever written. They were nauseating, revolting, and they as-



possible to shake her story. Fortunately, however, after a trial extending over three days, the jury disagreed, much to the surprise of the presiding Judge and both the defending and prosecuting counsel.

A second trial followed; but, in the meantime, counsel for the accused had an exhaustive inquiry made into the girl's antecedents, her mode of living, habits, and choice of companions. Among the discoveries was a bundle of letters which were found in a drawer of the girl's school desk. These letters settled the matter.

At the trial, the girl again adhered without making one slip, to her original statement. Then the letters were produced, and with the Judge's consent, Judge's consent, were read by Mr. Penny to the jury. The girl admitted that the letters were hers, and in her hand-writing. She also admitted that

tounded Judge, jury, counsel, and everybody who heard them read.

Finding herself cornered, the girl broke down, and confessed that her whole story was a wicked fabrication.

Needless to say, the jury, without leaving the box, acquitted the schoolmaster. Subsequently the townspeople presented him with a testimonial, and, to the credit of the Government, be it said, he was promoted, his salary was increased, and he was sent to another district.

What agony the accused must have suffered during those long weeks of waiting and trial! Could it be possible to offer the innocent man suitable or adequate solatium

for the horrible nightmare through which he passed? His poor wife haunted counsel's office day and night, and pleaded piteously that he might find a means of saving her husband. It was generally believed that nothing but a miracle could save him, for no one could understand why the jury disagreed at the first trial.

Miracles, however, do happen, and the Western Australian case under review is proof of it.

Another case nearer home might be recalled to show what snares and pitfalls there are to endanger a man's life and liberty.

Not so very long ago a married woman at Windsor accused a police-constable of rape.

It was part of the constable's duty to collect the stock records for the district, and during his rounds he chanced to call at the house occupied by the woman and her husband. He switched his horse to a fence-post, and met the woman on the verandah. There they discussed the business on which the constable was bent. The husband was away at the time, and the conversation drifted on to general subjects, which caused the policeman's stay to be somewhat protracted.

In due course the constable left to continue his rounds, but he got

to continue his rounds, but he got the shock of his life when, a few days later, he was charged with an offence against the unprotected female.

At the Police Court the evidence was a most damning character against the defendant: but the

A Concoction

case did not get any further than the Police Court.

In the course of cross-examination, which lasted about an hour and a half, the whole fabric of the Crown case fell to the ground. The woman admitted that her story was false from beginning to end. She said she had concocted it because she thought her husband might be jealous when he found out that the constable's horse had been tethered outside her house so long. She declared that there was not a word of truth in her story about the constable's attack upon her.

It was fortunate that the cross-examination was entered upon at the Police Court. It caused the Crown Prosecutor to support the contention of the defence that the case could go no further, and the constable left the Court without a stain upon his character, beyond that made by the scraps that always stick when mud is thrown.

The citizens of the district showed their feelings in the matter when they presented the police officer with a roll of bank-notes. The Police Department, however, dis-

missed him from the Force, it being considered that he had been indiscreet in tying his horse to the woman's fence.

Now, when that ex-constable sees a strange woman approaching, he wheels his horse round and gallops like a madman in the opposite direction.

Numbers of similar cases could be cited. Among the most notorious of recent years was one that shocked our moralists and turned a young man's hair prematurely grey.

A well-formed girl, just under 16 years of age, accused a youth of an offence. The girl's physical development so belied the statement regarding her age that the detective in charge of the case applied for her birth certificate. She appeared to be well over 18, but she wasn't.

The youth was committed to the higher Court, and, during the trial at Darlinghurst, the girl admitted that there was no truth in her story.

In discharging the accused, the presiding Judge remarked that the girl was a menace to society, and especially so to the thoughtless young men of the community.

The matter did not stop there, however. Some little time later the girl got into trouble, and she subsequently accused the young man of being the

father of her child. The case, which was heard

in the Children's Court, lasted a fortnight, at the end of which a verdict was given against the young man. Defendant's family appealed, and after a long hearing the Appeal Judge upheld it, and set aside the magistrate's order.

Worse was to come. The girl induced the Child's Welfare Department to again charge the young man for the support of the child. He had to defend this case, and, during the proceedings, the girl flatly contradicted, in 20 or 30 particulars, the evidence she had given at the first trial.

After a protracted hearing the youth was again discharged, and he

youth was again discharged, and he is now wondering what will be the next ordeal he will have to face as the result of his chance acquaintance with a dirty, designing huzzy whom a Darlinghurst Court Judge has declared to be "a menace to society, and especially to young men."

What was subsequently found out about her career is too sordid to mention, but for aught we know to the contrary, she is still at large as a menace to society.



" AND THAT IS THE MAN."
PREVALENCE OF YOUNG GIRLS'
ACCUSATIONS.