in the right place) with the heaviest punishments. The 43rd section of the Act above cited fixes a monetary maximum penalty of £20, or six months' imprisonment with hard labour for this class of cases if dealt with summarily. Yet month after month two classes of assaults—violent and indecent—come before the various sessional and stipendary benches, and in too many of them the pecuniary punishment is resorted to, and that most inadequately. Short space has elapsed since a ruffian attacked and struck a woman—a respectable married woman, a perfect stranger to him—more than twenty times, at a railway station, and otherwise roughly used her. His punishment was a fine inflicted by a London magistrate. Also, a young lady near Bolton, was brutally assaulted and thrown down in a footpath crossing some fields, while according to the report, her hair was torn out and head injured, and the bench of magistrates sentenced the ruffian to three months' imprisonment. Many similar instances of misplaced lenity must occur to every reader of police reports. It is unsafe for any girl to walk alone in street or lane; and so it will be till every vagabond who waylays or molests them is doomed to six months' hard labour for each offence.

It is the height of absurdity to doom the perpetrator of small thefts to long terms of carceration, and to allow the criminals who attack defenceless women in any shape to escape with a trumpery fine. Moreover, it offers a premium to well dressed scoundrels to follow, annoy, and attack any female who may be solitary. And lastly, it teaches the lower classes to imagine, that so long as they let stealing alone, they may assault and insult with impunity. One special observation may be made on both classes of assaults, common and aggravated, before we quit this branch of the subject. It is not considered by many magistrates how many after-effects may follow assaults. Even a common attack on a man of business habits and regular life throws him, so to speak, or may throw him, out of gear, and affect his nerves for several days, long after his assailant has paid and forgotten the fine. And with respect to women, the argument is the same. Let our lenient justices consider their own feelings if their wives or daughters were indecently or brutally assaulted. Let them consider the victims' outraged feelings, their terror, their nervous and hysterical tendencies, their constant fear of similar attacks, and the agitation and anger of their male relations. When a paltry fine punishes a brute for attacks on defenceless girls, does it compensate for a thousandth part of these consequences? Even a sentence of six months' hard labour would hardly do it, much less a paltry fine.

And in many cases, even where the full two months or six months are allotted, the case ought to be sent for trial. A practice has grown up among magistrates of dealing summarily with assaults that ought most assuredly to be made the subject of indictment. Whether it be from anxiety to save expense, or whether it be from any other cause I cannot say, but certain it is that many cases are adjudicated on summarily that ought to be brought within the jurisdiction of a court impowered to inflict a heavier sentence. From whatever cause it may proceed, any adjudication by magistrates on a case unfit for summary jurisdiction, should be carefully discountenanced. Most especially is this rule to be followed in all cases of assaults on women; the case of Thompson, 30 L, J., M. C. 19, was one wherein the Court of Exchequer unanimously decided that in a case where conviction for an aggravated assault had taken place and rape had been proved, the justices should not have summarily convicted, but should have committed for trial.

A case of the most astounding description was reported in Feburary last, in some of the London papers. It was one decided at the Aberystwith Petty Sessions. A young woman having been feloniously assaulted by two or three men (proof whereof, the surgeon gave), the chairman of the bench calling the prisoners "blackguards and cowards," sentenced them to short terms (none over four months) of imprisonment. The Welch papers commented indignantly on this case, and it is impossible (so far as the newspapers may be relied on) to understand the decision. At the very least (if the evidence is correct), an indictment and assault with intent &c., should have been preferrred. But beyond this, rape, so far as one understands the report, was proved. If so, it was dealt with not even the maximum for an aggravated assault. No further inquiry has, we believe, been made, and of course our remarks are simply based on the accounts in the local and London papers.

Now, in all these cases, no consideration of expense, no regard for convenience, no undue lenity should be allowed to prevent prisoners being committed to the assizes. Indeed, it is difficult to overrate the importance of punishing crimes against defenceless women with the utmost severity.*

3. Inflicting grievous bodily harm. We deliberately assert, that cases often disposed of by a magistrate under the mild *soubriquet* of "an assault," are properly subjects for indictment under the foregoing phrase. Biting off portions of the human face, knocking teeth out, and breaking noses, are all, in our opinion, inflictions of grievous bodily harm; yet how many cases of this kind are disposed of by magistrates. Now, at the outside, two or six months' incarceration is, as we have shown, all that a magistrate in Petty Sessions can allot for the worse case of this kind. By indictment, such cases are punishable by two years' hard labour or penal servitude.

As sentences of three months' and six months, hard labour are common enough for

* A bench of rural magistrates lately sentenced a man, who put his baby on a blazing fire to six months' hard labour. He was charged according to heading of report, with "inflicting grievous bodily harm."