



of debauchery'<sup>3</sup>. Of course some of the fears probably arose from that long-standing mistrust in Britain for all things Continental. British reprobates did take themselves off to the 'flesh pots' of Europe and the Continent had always been the haven for bankrupts and other outcasts. However, there was some foundation to the concern. English law allowed very young girls to take part in sexual activity. In Europe the age of consent was around 21, but in 1861 the British Parliament had established it as 12 and although it was fairly quickly revised to 13, social reformers continued to agonize throughout the following decades that such a young age limit left the poor and working classes vulnerable. Many of the groups already mentioned made this issue a focus for their energies. One other such group was headed by the prominent reformer Josephine Butler who famously campaigned for the abolition of the Contagious Diseases Act but who also concerned herself with many related issues and added this one to her list.

The Contagious Diseases Act had been established





Stead was to have used Jarrett as a source of information but instead, without Mrs Butler's knowledge and it would appear without the full understanding of Jarrett herself, he used the former streetwalker to provide the details of the case of 'Lily', the thirteen year old child in his incendiary piece 'A Child of Thirteen Bought for £5'.

'Lily', claimed Stead's article, was purchased from her mother for prostitution. She was confirmed a virgin by an examination and then raped while drugged, the template for what Stead and others alleged was happening to very young girls throughout London. The essence of 'Lily's' story may indeed have been plausible, however, it was Stead's declaration that he could 'verify the facts' which eventually led to his downfall in this case. Stead had in fact set

