

The Rev. A. McCallum said the information had been given to the public by Mr. Monro in a very concise and very wise form, and anything further would have to be dealt with very carefully. He did not think the open Court was the place to deal with it. A meeting of the ministers of other denominations might be called to join with the ministers of the Presbyterian Church in considering the serious state of things; but they should be careful in dealing with a matter of this kind, considering the almost prurient desire of the public for anything that might gratify their curiosity in that way.

The Rev. R. Sommerville said the matter had been before the public, and this fact removed the objection raised by Mr. McCallum. He thought that Mr. Monro ought to take the Presbytery into his confidence, in order that they might assist him. They did not want him to go into any details that would shock people's nerves, but he thought they should have a report from Mr. Monro, as he was the convener of the Committee on Religion and Morals, and therefore the representative of the Presbytery.

The Rev. R. F. McNicol agreed that Mr. Monro was acting quite in order in objecting to give any report until he had called the committee together; but, he pointed out, the Presbytery might be prepared to give Mr. Monro suggestions as to the *modus operandi* in dealing with this terrible evil.

The Rev. R. Sommerville urged that the eyes of the public were upon them in regard to this question, and if they did nothing it would be said, and justly so, that it was "all cry and no wool." It was for the Church to see to its interests in the practical work of Christian morality. They did not want to know what was not desirable to know; but he thought it desirable that the committee should be requested to convene a meeting to take into consideration this large question. Mr. Monro had taken the lead, and their Church ought to take the lead all through.

The Moderator said he would not like to see a question like this discussed in open Court, and he suggested that Mr. Monro should, without giving any detail, report that certain matters had come under his notice privately, and ask the Presbytery to take action upon the matter.

The Rev. G. B. Monro said he hardly understood the suggestion; the members tied him down. However, he would briefly speak on the subject. As he had stated, the committee had not met formally, and he had no report to give in the name of the committee. The action which he had taken, and which had been reported in the public papers, and regarding which he had received letters from many people, and from all parts of the country, thanking him for it—that action was taken in his own name, and he took all responsibility upon himself. He had stated at a conference in St. James's Church that he intended to go round the city with a detective. He had heard and read a great deal about the immorality of Auckland, and he resolved to go round and look for himself. After the meeting he wrote to Inspector Broham, telling him of his intention. In reply, the Inspector wrote him a courteous letter, offering to place at his disposal the services of any officer of the Police Force. He (Mr. Monro) corresponded with Detective Hughes, one of the most experienced and intelligent of the detective staff, who replied, kindly telling him that he was ready to accompany him at any time he pleased. Accordingly he (the speaker) called at the police office one night, and met Detective Hughes. Before they started on the round of the city that officer showed him a number of books which opened his eyes. He showed him a list of the thieves and criminals in Auckland, and there were in these books the names of three hundred professional criminals—male criminals entirely outside the class he was going to speak about, and of all religions and of all nationalities. They started on their rounds—it was night—and they commenced at what might be called the lowest dens of the city, and went higher and higher in their investigation. He need not enter into any details.—(Hear, hear.)—They could fill all that up with their imagination. He and Detective Hughes visited twenty-four houses, as he had stated in his letter to the paper, not merely in the slums of the city, but in the respectable streets too. They conversed with the inmates, and he (Mr. Monro) took notes, and learned a great many things, as they could imagine. He learned that a great many of the girls were intelligent, had once occupied prominent positions, and were daughters of leading settlers and even citizens. As to the class of men whom he saw, he could only say that, as a minister of the Gospel, it had pained his heart very much. He hoped that the reporters would take down this statement, as he had been misunderstood in his reply, and it had been stated that he had blamed one sex only. He must emphatically say that he had not the slightest sympathy with the other sex, and if he had the power he would publish the whole thing.—(Hear, hear.)—But he had not the power, and he could not do it. He wished to mention another subject in this matter. He would direct their attention to what were termed houses of assignation. These houses were far more dangerous to the morals of the community than the brothels were, because in the brothels men ran the risk of detection and disease, but in the houses of assignation they could carry on their crimes in secret. There were respectable men and respectable women going to these places, and he had been perfectly shocked to find that they existed in Auckland. He had received letters saying that he had understated the matter. He had put himself to the trouble of inquiring from the detective staff, and they had said that he had understated it. He would like this to be understood: He did not write his letter in favour of the C.D. Act; but he had modified his views in regard to the C.D. Act—he might be right and he might be wrong—and in doing all that he had done he wanted to throw light upon the great evil that was ruining the youth of our city. During the time that the C.D. Act was in force there were seventy-five professional prostitutes in Auckland, and what is called amateur prostitution had been driven, if not out of the city altogether, at any rate into very great secrecy. He had found that the girls were only too ready to tell on one another, and the detective whose duty it had been to carry out the work under the Act had thus received great assistance—at any rate, this prostitution had been driven off the streets into secrecy, and juvenile prostitution had been very much lessened. At present, however, there were four hundred professional women of this kind known to the police, who also said—and he had no reason to doubt the truthfulness of these men—that about the same number were carrying on this vice in secrecy. Now, if there were eight hundred girls living in this way, think of the number of