

**MRS PERYMAN'S ADDRESS ON
MUCH-NEEDED SOCIAL RE-
FORMS, delivered at the Wanga-
nui Convention on Tuesday
Evening, March 21st.**

We have often thought that when once a question was settled right, it was settled for always; but our experience with reference to the C.D. Acts proves that the price of safety is vigilance. Women, for 18 years after their enfranchisement, worked against the C.D. Acts, and at last got them removed from the Statute Book, and thought therefore that this question was finally settled. Yet now we are threatened with the re-introduction of something very similar.

I am speaking to-night, not from the attitude of the man of the world, but from that which Christian mothers should take up, a mind perfectly open to truth, and free from prejudice. Naturally, we do not like to discuss this subject, but when our national existence depends upon our banishing the evil, we must act with decision. Let the glorious sunlight fall in upon a dirty spot, and you have done a good deal to clean it up. Slavery existed from the earliest times, and it took a very long time to get rid of it. Now we are right up against the worst possible form, sex slavery. The old lie is still being quoted, man's physical necessity requires the degradation of woman. If there were not this class of woman, we are told, it would not be safe for other women to walk the streets. Are we strong women, then, going to put the weak and helpless in front of the battle, so as to protect ourselves? If women will stand together they will do much to solve the problem. Righteousness and science go hand in hand, and modern science is only just catching up to God's word, where we read, "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." When God created the human race, can we believe that He required the degradation and awful slavery of thousands? This old lie is responsible for the double standard of morality. For instance, in the case of an illegitimate child, the mother's name **must**, the father's **may**, be registered. When the Bill dealing with this was before Parliament, one member proposed that both parents should be treated alike, and what was the

answer? "No! the fathers of these children are married men; it would never do to let their wives know." Are we women children, to be blindfolded? This same old lie is responsible for the White Slavery trade and all its horrors. Girls have to be drugged and dragged and stolen to supply the trade. If you uphold this lie, you must be prepared to give your own daughter.

In a hostel in San Francisco girls from Japan and China were kept as slaves. One of the mission sisters succeeded in getting in, and arranged to take away one girl who longed to get out. According to a preconcerted plan, the girl waved a handkerchief at the window, then she disappeared, and by no means was the sister able to gain entrance, but after some time she learned that that girl had been seen, had been dragged from the window, and kicked to death.

Sin always brings disease. We may try to make it safe for men to sin, but we can't succeed. God has set His seal against that. Sometimes we are told we are making a fuss about nothing with reference to our soldier boys at the Front. But facts must be faced. Of those who have volunteered some have been diseased before they go, and many more have been sent back diseased. The authorities realise this disease must be stopped. They know they have not a hope of getting the C.D. Acts restored, so they try to get similar legislation for both sexes. But it is the women that are thought of first. All last session, in the discussion, not once was it asked that men be stopped—always women. What sort of man is he that can lead an innocent girl to the altar, then go home and make her diseased with a horrible disease?

All the weight of evidence is against these Acts. Without exception the medical men at Home say that where these Acts are enforced, the disease is worse. They do not prevent the evil, but aggravate it. When first they were put on the Statute Book at Home, they were protested against by Florence Nightingale and others on these grounds:—

(1) They placed the persons and honours of women in the power of police. Cases are known of innocent girls having been victimised.

(2) An offence, to be dealt with in Court, must be clearly defined. That

is impossible in the present case, if there were such an offence, the men would be guilty equally with the women.

(3) It is unjust to punish the victims, and let those who caused the suffering go free.

(4) The punishment is of a degrading character.

(5) The attempt to regulate vice made young men suppose that the state was rendering vice safe.

Nowhere have these acts put out disease, which is a national curse, and unless we grapple with it, it will be our national ruin as it was the ruin of ancient Rome and ancient Greece, and in modern times, of Spain in the Netherlands. Contrast the Jewish people, whose virility of race is chiefly due to the fact that they are for the most part free from this vice.

The Government is convinced that in face of the number of soldiers that have been sent back from Egypt suffering with venereal disease, something must be done, and is willing to adopt any workable suggestion that may be made. The medical men are trying to deal with it, but we must not be led astray into thinking that any re-introduction of the C.D. Acts, even in a modified form, as in the proposed Public Health Amendment Act, will do away with the disease. Compulsory treatment defeats its own object, for these diseases, unlike diphtheria, etc., can be hidden, and if the people knew they would be detained, they would not go to a doctor.

The best suggested measures for the evil are:—

(1) Voluntary treatment, paid for by the Government. This has already been tried in Sydney, and is doing good.

(2) Most will be done by education. We must educate all Union members to understand the subject, and realise its awful importance, and educate the boys and girls that they may not through ignorance fall into impurity and evil ways, and may be strong to withstand temptation. The best professors are now teaching that purity of life is essential for strong manhood, as for strong womanhood.

(3) Remove all sex disabilities that the best women may enter Parliament and influence directly the country's laws, and may act as magistrates, jurors, and policewomen. It is a barbarous custom for women and girls to have to give evidence in cases of