

The White Ribbon

FOR GOD AND HOME AND HUMANITY

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TWO ROYAL COMMISSIONS UPON SOCIAL DISEASES.

Alarmed at the spread of secret diseases, the British Government set up a Commission to enquire into their extent and means for preventing them. New South Wales also has a Royal Commission sitting on this subject. Medical science has made great advance in diagnosing these diseases, and they now tell us that all cases of general paralysis of the insane, many cases of locomotor ataxia, aneurism, disease of the arteries, are late effects of venereal disease. The number of soldiers rendered incapable of serving their country by these diseases has also directed special attention to them. "Cairo," says a nurse, "is absolutely unspeakable." And yet we are told that Cairo has 20,000 registered prostitutes (some say 70,000). In spite of their boasted registration, venereal disease is rampant in Cairo. We have summarised the evidence given at these Commissions for the benefit of those who may not see these Reports. Unless otherwise stated, all quotations are taken from the reports of one or other of these Commissions. We commend this evidence to the careful attention of all White Ribboners.

I.—Regulation.

Regulation of vice has been in force on the Continent for about a century. It was first introduced by Napoleon, and was an attempt to secure that soldiers breaking the moral law should escape the physical consequen-

ces. Sometimes the house of ill-fame was licensed, and in some cases the women were licensed. They had to be examined at regular intervals, mostly fortnightly, and if free from disease were given a certificate to pursue their awful trade. This system has now been pronounced useless as a prevention to the spread of venereal disease. The International Congress held in London in 1913 almost unanimously condemned regulation. Such authorities as Dr. Blachtro, of Berlin, and Dr. Finger, of Vienna (who are leading men in connection with venereal disease) and many other authorities condemn regulation.

Dr Paton, Director-General of Public Health, and for 18 years Government Medical Officer of Sydney, said he would not recommend regulation. It was a fact that the majority of medical authorities on this subject were of opinion that registration and examination were of little value. A grave objection was that it gave a false sense of security. A most competent man might examine a woman, and pronounce her free from disease, and yet a couple of nights afterwards she might transmit syphilis to a man.

Dr L. P. Johnston, Hon. Physician at St. Vincent's and at Sydney Hospital said that when in Europe he had enquired into systems of registration, and found them generally recognised as failures. He saw an examination carried out, and it was of no value in chronic cases, and very little value in acute cases. He could not recommend any system of regulation,

Dr E. C. Corlett, Secretary for N.S.W. of a committee appointed by Australian Medical Congress to investigate syphilis, said the committee had considered the question of regulation, and turned it down at once, almost unanimously. It was a fact that the vast majority of medical experts pronounce various forms of regulation to be worthless.

Dr. E. H. Molesworth, Senior Physician for Department of Skin Diseases at Prince Alfred and St. Vincent's Hospitals, said, in Paris, Berlin, and Vienna he inquired into the system of regulation. Medical men said it was not a success as far as their experience went. He used to be in favour of regulation, but was not so sure about it now.

Dr G. E. Bennie, Senior Physician at Prince Alfred Hospital said he could only judge from experience of other countries that regulation had not been a success, it had not been successful in the prevention of these diseases.

James Mitchell, Inspector-General of the Police Force in Sydney, said he had no sympathy with the idea of registering houses of ill-fame. It would not lessen prostitution nor the danger of contagion to the general public, and it would publicly proclaim the fact where illicit intercourse might be obtained.

Dr Arthur, M.L.A., Chairman of Sydney Royal Commission, in an address delivered to the officers of the Australasian Force, said: "The modern trend of expert opinion is to the effect that the system known as