

ed system should be abolished without delay. The effect of this action on the part of the women of India was immediate. The Viceroy announced that all further recruiting should be stopped at once. This decision was soon after confirmed, and by November, 1921, there will be no Indian working under indenture.

It will be readily understood, however, that the evils arising from the indentured system are not likely to be eradicated for many years, and only then if some special means are taken to accomplish reform in the social, moral, and religious life of the people. It is at just this point that the sympathy and co-operation of the women of Australia and New Zealand is asked for.

Early last year Professor Andrews made a tour of the Australasian States addressing meetings of women that he might arouse their interest and sympathy for their Indian sisters in Fiji. As a result of his efforts a Commission was set up to enquire into the social and moral conditions of Indian women in Fiji. The co-operation of all the women's societies in Australia and New Zealand was invited, and the executive of the New Zealand W.C.T.U. decided that our Union should be associated with the Committee.

Miss Garnham, a missionary on furlough from India, offered to visit Fiji and conduct investigations for the Committee. Her offer was accepted. She visited Fiji, and spent over three months in making the necessary enquiries. On her return at the end of November she presented a very complete report, which has since been published. A few extracts from this report will serve to show the conditions she found.

The quarters or "lines" in which Indians working on plantations live are built according to Government Regulations, and consist of long double rows of "apartments" under one roof. An apartment measuring 10ft. by 12ft. is considered a suitable dwelling for three single men, or for one man and one woman, with not more than two children. Of these lines Miss Garnham says:—

"When it is remembered that there are roughly three times as many men as women living in the lines, the danger of this method of housing will be more fully realised. It is true that some planters arrange for single men to live in a row of lines separate from

the married people, or at one end of a row of dwellings, while the married folk live at the other, though even this is not always insisted upon, and the married quarters are by no means barred to men. I had evidence from various sources during my stay on the island that life in the lines is unspeakably corrupt.

"Indians speak of the lines at the mill-centres as "prostitution houses," and many men whose period of indenture had expired told me how glad they were to be away from the lines, and to settle in places where their wives were protected. It was quite impossible, they said, for a woman to preserve her chastity in the coolie lines.

"This utter abandonment of morals is unfortunately not confined to the adult section of the community. I have heard little children speak of things which showed an appalling knowledge of vice of the worst kind. Children over three years of age, whose mothers are working on plantations, are quite uncared for as a rule, while the parents are at work. This neglect of childhood is one of the gravest features of life in the lines. It is scarcely to be wondered, in the circumstances, that Australian women in charge of the Methodist Mission Orphanage find that tiny children brought to them show a knowledge of evil that is exceedingly difficult to counteract."

Miss Garnham makes it quite clear that this moral degradation arises from the fact that the social and moral welfare of the people have been sacrificed to the interests of capital.

"It is important to note," she says, "that under the indenture system labour units, not families, were recruited. In some cases married couples were introduced, but only because both were labour units. Thus only women who were willing to work in the fields were recruited. To bring out married couples simply because they were married was not in the scheme at all; it would have meant greater expenditure in introducing the people into the colony—and so apparently the cheaper method was followed. It is just here that the greatest mistake was made, for clearly the introduction of families would have obviated much of the evil in Fiji to-day. Moral interests were evidently sacrificed to money, and the fact that the prosperity of a colony depends largely on the moral and social welfare of the

people seems to have been disregarded.

"I was told in Fiji that the colony could never meet the expenditure involved in thus bringing out more women, and was asked how the financial outlay could be met. Since the sugar companies and planters have benefited from the immigration of Indians on a cheap scale, it appears just that they should pay at least a part of the cost, but it is difficult to see how it could be recovered from them. Those responsible for the introduction of the system should also take their share, and it may be possible to work out a scheme by which the Imperial and Indian Governments could assist financially.

One fact that needs to be emphasised in order to give a true picture of the hopelessness of the present condition of the people, is that a very high percentage of men and women have left wives or husbands and children in India. As everyone knows, most Indian people are married while quite young, and there are practically no bachelors or spinsters in the country except in Christian and 'reformed' Hindu communities.

"I found that very few women had come out with their husbands. They had been induced by various means to leave their homes—and men had for the most part come without their wives. A big tragedy lies behind this fact.

"Some men and women, although already married, form other alliances soon after arrival in Fiji. This is one of the reasons why many men cannot return to their own country. It would mean in most cases that they would be forced to desert wives and children in Fiji in order to return.

"It is very evident that a great deal of fraud and deception was practised by recruiters in inducing Indian men and women to leave their homes in this way. The people themselves told me how they had been persuaded to come away, and how little they knew of the distance of Fiji from India, and of the conditions obtaining in the colony. How should they, who only know their own little district, be expected to understand how far they would be taken from their own homes, of the impossibility of return, of the complete change in the mode of life entailed, of the increased cost of living, which would swallow up all the extra wages they thought they would be able to earn? Many expressed to me their feeling of utter