

The White Ribbon

FOR GOD AND HOME AND HUMANITY

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INDENTURED LABOUR.

SLAVERY CAMOUFLAGED.

"Then run aloft St. George's Cross,
All proudly let it wave,
The token proud that under it
There never treads a slave."

So we used to sing, but gone are the days when we could proudly boast that when a man touched British soil he ceased to be a slave. At a cost of twenty millions our Empire purchased the right to free all the slaves in its wide Dominions. Our great sister Republic paid a yet heavier cost, and washed the dark blot of slavery off the bonnie Stars and Stripes in the blood of her bravest and her best. Now we are reversing these acts. With 40,000 coolie slaves in the sugar compounds of Fiji, with the Government of the Dominion affirming the desirability of indentured labour for Samoa, we have become once more a slave-owning Empire, and alas! democratic New Zealand is going to allow Samoa, under our influence, to import Chinese slaves, yclept coolies, to till its soil. What is indentured labour? Readers of this journal know what Dr. Andrews, who was sent out to study it in Fiji, reported. Mr Massey said in the House: "Indentured labour may be slavery under some flags, I admit, but it never is slavery in a British country." We would strongly advise our Premier to study carefully "Fiji of To-day," by Rev. Dr. Burton. Dr. Burton is a New Zealander, the son of one of the oldest and most honoured White Ribboners of Masterton, and he thoroughly knows the subject he is writing upon. He tells us that in a few years Fiji will once more be a heathen

isle. Fijian Christians are dying off, and Indian coolies are flooding the islands. Of these he says: "The coolies laugh at our Christianity. They salute our flag, and spit venomously on the ground the moment our backs are turned."

Dr. Burton tells how, when the sugar companies started in Fiji, the Fijians refused to work in their mills, the land so bountifully supplied their wants that they had no need to work for wages. Then 40,000 coolies were imported from India, bond slaves, herded in compounds for five years. At first women were not imported, but the condition of affairs became so unspeakably vile that, to quote Dr. Burton, "The sins that brought down fire on the Cities of the Plains are rampant, and bestiality runs riot."

Our readers will not have forgotten the terrible condition of affairs as regards the women reported by Dr. Andrews. How every woman sent out became the sex slave of four men, and then Dr. Burton described the coolie compound in Fiji as "the most degrading sight on earth." The doctor gives instances of brutal punishments administered, of women and children being flogged.

We were terribly shocked by the Belgian atrocities in the Congo, and thanked God we "were not as other nations," but many of the Congo horrors can be paralleled in the mine compounds of South Africa and the sugar plantations of Fiji, both beneath the British flag.

The reason for indentured labour is the same old one, to make wealth for the few at the cost of suffering to the many. The cotton plantations of America, it was affirmed, could not be profitably worked without black labour, and so came slavery and its

attendant evils. To fill the pockets of the opium growers of India, Great Britain, at the point of the bayonet, forced opium upon China, and the degradation of the opium-eater swelled the pockets of the opium-grower. Women of New Zealand, are you going to turn a deaf ear to the appeal of your dark-skinned sisters? Their low wail of misery comes incessantly to our ears; they cry to us in the words of Holy Writ, "Thou shalt speak for us who are dumb."

Let politicians speak as smoothly as they please about the necessity for production, the fact remains that dark labour is cheap. If good wages and decent conditions of living were provided, free labour could be obtained, but it would cut down dividends. Shall we allow, in lands under our control, men and women to be "tortured to make fat dividends" for sugar, rubber, or any other companies?

Our Government endorsed the principle of indentured labour for Samoa a few short weeks ago, and already in one Dunedin paper has appeared a letter asking for coolies to be imported into New Zealand to supply the lack of domestic help. And so the vicious system would grow and spread. What can I do? Every woman can find out how the candidates for her electorate stands on this question, and can make sure that no supporter of indentured labour secures either her vote or any vote that she can influence.

Slavery, with vice and immorality attendant upon it, has brought great Empires of the past to ruin, and as patriots we will fight to the last against its re-introduction into our own Empire. Our Empire must be good as well as great, and our glori-