

WOMEN'S  
**Christian Temperance Union**  
 Of New Zealand.

Organised 1885.

"For God and Home and Humanity."

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Official Organ:

"The White Ribbon."

Editor: Mrs Peryman, Port Chalmers.

Associate Editor: Mrs Evans, M.A.

Business Manager: Mrs Peryman,  
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## The White Ribbon.

For God and Home and Humanity.

WELLINGTON, OCT. 18, 1917.

### SOCIAL HYGIENE BILL.

At last this long expected Bill has been brought down, and has caused the greatest disappointment to all the women's societies who for so long have been studying and fighting this evil. We print below a summary of the Bill and objections taken to it by the representatives of women's societies. Its great weakness is that it proposes to deal with an effect, and not to touch its cause. It deals with the disease, and not with the sin which causes it. It is not a crime for a woman to have venereal disease, but this Bill treats the woman so suffering as a criminal, and puts her into a prison hospital. It is a deliberate attempt to deal punishment to the most helpless class of the community, and let their patrons go scot free. Does anybody suppose that under this Bill the men who were responsible for the Ebzery case would have been taken up and compelled to submit to examination and detention?

The girls were treated as prostitutes; their far more guilty partners, though coming within the scope of the Bill as "consorting with prostitutes," would certainly go scot free. Why does not the Government attack the sin (the Minister of Health calls it a sin) of prostitution, and imprison men and women because they lead immoral lives, and not because they are diseased. For years our Union has urged that immoral men and women (90 per cent. of whom are physical or moral degenerates) should be detained in farm colonies, but so far Government pays no regard to their request. Our Dominion is, unfortunately, cursed with a Government which will submit its womanhood to any indignity in the attempt to make vice safe for men. Their medical advisers are at least a decade behind the medicos of Europe and America. The expert evidence given before the Royal Commission was all against any form of compulsion, and recommended free, voluntary treatment. Compulsion is wrong in principle, and has failed in practice. Flexner, in his "History of Prostitution" (a standard work), says that when the C.D. Acts were in force in England the proportion of recruits examined for the Army who were rejected for syphilis varied from 10.56 to 10.57 per thousand. After the repeal of the Act, the number immediately fell, and continued to fall almost continuously from 8.18 per thousand in 1886 to 1.85 per thousand in 1911. In Germany, where regulation was most strictly enforced, the number of recruits in the German Army venereally affected is practically constant at 7.7 per cent. It varies with the size of the town, and in Berlin rises to the enormous number of 41.3 per cent. It allows any woman's character to be taken away by a policeman, and compels her to submit to a medical examination. It protects her slanderer; it admits, and condemns on evidence which no Court of Law would accept.

When the Minister of Health brings in legislation to punish men of wealth and position who deliberately debauch young girls, and then shelter themselves behind scoundrels like Ebzery; when he protects young women at least to the age of 18; when he detains sexual degenerates of both sexes in farm colonies; then we will believe him sincere in his desire to stop this

evil. We still profess to be a Christian nation, and to take the Bible as our standard of conduct. Did the Great Master give a different standard of morals for the sexes?

Said a Police Commissioner in a large city: "All prostitutes known to the police became such before the age of 21, and the majority before the age of 18." Think of the young and tender girlhood sacrificed to man's lust. "The beauty of our womanhood is slain upon the high places."

The Minister speaks of this Bill as necessary to protect "especially our soldiers from disease." Surely the best way to protect them is to teach them to abjure the sin which causes the disease. Let the Minister keep alcohol from the soldiers. It is admittedly the greatest factor in causing this disease. An English Brigadier-General says: "Sexual immorality has no attractions for the average decent-minded man unless he were under the influence of liquor." America is working on right lines. She compels her soldiers to be abstainers, and severely punishes anyone giving them liquor. In an Army Division, consisting of 19,000 officers and men, the General posted guards over houses of prostitution, and no soldier was allowed to enter. Within three weeks all the houses were closed. Guards were planted also at front and rear entrances of saloons. Result, 20 cases of disease in five months. Why does not our Cabinet face this question as bravely? How proud we should feel of a Cabinet that trembles under the whip of the wealthy brewer and libertine, but boldly bullies and harries a few poor, sinful, outcast, and friendless women. Mark also that this Bill will leave the wealthy or influential prostitute (who all authorities agree is the greatest menace), and her patrons untouched.

The question for us to answer is this: Are we going to fight the sin of impurity, or are we setting up as our ideal a state in which man may sin and escape the consequences? Eternal justice forbids this. "The soul, the nation, that sinneth shall die."

In the after-war reconstruction how shall we fare in the industrial marts of the world, when we meet the nations who have cleansed themselves nationally from the sins of intemperance and impurity. By the very law of survival of the fittest we must go