

The White Ribbon

FOR GOD AND HOME AND HUMANITY

VOL. 18.—No. 216.

WELLINGTON, N.Z., JUNE 18, 1913.

2s 6d Per Annum, Post Free.
Single Copy, 3d.

DISABILITIES OF WOMEN IN ENGLAND.

Before the Physical and Moral Health Society in Wellington, Lady Stout delivered a most interesting lecture on the above subject.

The speaker said that for four years she had been living in a country where women are classed with criminals, lunatics, and children, and now she was pleased to be back in a Dominion which recognised them as citizens of the Empire. It was almost impossible for women born and brought up in New Zealand to understand the position of their sisters in the Old Country. Women barristers are not allowed to practise there. Miss Christobel Pankhurst holds a better degree than Mr Asquith, but her sex debars her from practising. Women were not allowed degrees in colleges unless they took the honours course. Even in the County Council Cookery School boys were given preference by being allowed a year's free course, while girls had to be content with a three months' course.

In New Zealand a child could only be adopted with the consent of the Magistrate, and no premium was allowed. In England unwanted children were taken for the sake of the premium, and then died for want of proper care and attention.

In New Zealand, if a man leaves his property away from his wife and family, the Court steps in and rights the wrong, but English law does not allow the Court to interfere.

In England, before a wife can sue her husband for maintenance, she

must enter the workhouse and be absolutely destitute.

The colonies provide St. Helen's homes and maternity bonuses for mothers, but Mr Lloyd George's Act pays the maternity bonus to the father.

In regard to white slave traffic, which was such a fearful scandal in England, the women had worked hard to secure the passing of the Criminal Law Amendment Act. A similar Bill had been turned down 100 times. Only 20 members out of 600 would promise to support it. The Women's Liberal Federation saw that if women were to deal effectively with this evil they must have the vote. They therefore urged the Liberal Government to bring in a Woman's Suffrage Bill, and the reply was that they had no time to do so. This was on Friday. On Monday the Women's Federation met, and expressed great anger against the Government, which only just escaped an adverse vote. On Thursday the Liberal Government brought down the White Slave Bill, which was passed on Monday, but it was inoperative, because only sergeants of police could arrest procurers. The women expressed great indignation, and a large protest meeting was held. The Duchess of Bedford (only Liberal Duchess) was in the chair. The Government got frightened, and as a sop to Liberal women brought in a further amendment in the Bill.

The White Slave Traffic is not exaggerated. Twenty-five years ago it was considered indecorous to speak of this matter; now kings and queens meet with other workers to

discuss plans for helping the National Vigilance Association.

Two young girls, 14 and 15, were sent from a Kentish town to London. Their aunt met the train, as arranged, but no girls were there. There has never been any trace of them found since, and the mother is now in an asylum. This kind of thing is happening every day. 1500 girls disappeared in a few months. Women dressed in nurses' uniforms are used to decoy girls to ruin. A New York syndicate made £40,000 a year by buying and selling young girls.

In England there is no protection for women and children. A Magistrate may order a flogging or six months in prison for stealing a purse, but often only a fortnight's imprisonment to the man who ruins his own child under 13 years of age. A suffragette gets six months for breaking windows (injuring property); a man gets a week in gaol for brutally assaulting and nearly killing his wife (injuring person). An unfaithful husband becomes fascinated with another woman, and takes her to his home. The wife seeks a Magistrate, and all the help he can give her is this advice, "Go home and make the best of it; I can do nothing for you."

In many instances girls were so poorly paid that they were driven to evil lives to earn a living.

England's real peril was the slums. Within a stone's throw of the House of Commons were some of the worst slums in London. In England were three million people living on the verge of starvation.

England's safety lay in the woman's vote. Four years ago there were