





*W. H. Mayo*

ASSOCIATION FOR PROMOTING THE EXTENSION OF <sup>12</sup>  
THE CONTAGIOUS DISEASES ACT, OF 1866,  
TO THE CIVIL POPULATION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM.

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MOTION FOR REPEAL  
OF THE  
CONTAGIOUS DISEASES ACTS.

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SPEECH

OF  
DR. LYON PLAYFAIR, C.B., M.P., F.R.S.,

IN THE  
HOUSE OF COMMONS, MAY 24TH, 1870,

DURING THE SITTING WITH CLOSED DOORS.

(AUTHORISED EDITION.)

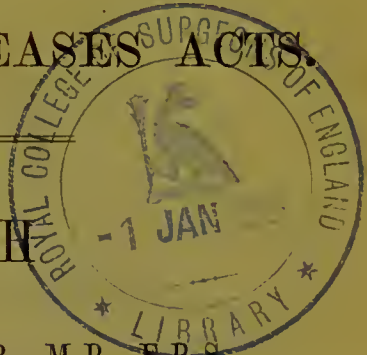
WITH A LETTER FROM A CLERGYMAN AT DEVONPORT.

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THIRD REPORT

ON [THE OPERATION OF THE

CONTAGIOUS DISEASES ACTS;

BEING A

REPLY TO RECENT STATEMENTS.

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*Price One Shilling.*

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JAMES WALTON, 137, Gower Street, W.C.

## S P E E C H.

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THE Honourable Member for Cambridge makes so many grounds of impeachment against these Acts that it is difficult to know with which we should begin. None appears to me more unwarrantable than the allegation that Parliament passed the Acts hastily, and if not secretly, at least inconsiderately. What are the facts? In 1864, the first experimental Act was passed. A Scientific Commission, excellently constituted of civil, army and navy surgeons, was then appointed. In consequence of recommendations of this Commission the Amending Act of 1866 was brought in by Government, and was passed by this House. In 1868 the House of Lords appointed a Select Committee to inquire into the working of that Act. In the following year this House appointed a Select Committee for the same purpose. Fortified by reports from both, and by the long and elaborate reports of the Scientific Commission, which had devoted a long time to the inquiry, this House passed the Amended Act of 1869. Few subjects have received such full and exhaustive inquiry before being made the object of legislation. The only complaint, then, that can be made is, that the Acts, though fully considered, were not fully debated. I believe that, in 1864, the debate was tolerably full, though this was not the case in 1866 and 1869. Well, there are some subjects which Select Committees consider more calmly and more thoroughly than a larger assembly, and doubtless the House thought that this question belonged to that class. But, in the present state of public opinion, it is now necessary there should be an open and free discussion, and I trust that I can take part in it in a way that will not prove offensive to any member of this House.

The very existence of the Acts carries us beyond the stage of proving their original necessity. Previous to 1864, the diseases to which they relate prevailed to such an extent in the army

that Dr. Parkes states they prove "equal to the loss of two regiments constantly." In our whole naval force, in 1862, about 7,000 persons were affected by them; and among the sailors of our navy at home, it is the Scientific Commission, I think, that affirms the constant loss to be equal to the complement of an iron-clad. I need not remind you that the Acts relate only to our combative services, and are not applied to the civil population. Apprehension that they may be extended lies at the root of much of the opposition to them, and if the proposal were made to do so, the question would have a greatly more serious aspect. But the real proposal before us is, that we should deprive our soldiers and sailors of certain sanitary safeguards which we have given to them. In order to keep our soldiers unincumbered, state policy requires them to be celibates, and keeps 90 per cent. in that condition. The nature of naval occupations operates in a similar manner. Hence the State is bound to provide sanitary safeguards against diseases, which, though certainly not the necessary consequence of celibacy, do in point of fact largely occur among, and are promoted by, celibates. But we are told that the Acts which we have passed for this purpose do not even accomplish their professed ends, and if this be true, I grant that they should be repealed. If the assertion simply means that they have not wholly stamped out disease, as the Animal Contagious Diseases' Act stamped out Cattle Plague, I admit that they have not done so, nor were they ever expected to act in this way. An epizootic can readily be dealt with, for it is easy to prevent the movement of cattle, or even to kill infected animals; but when human beings are the subjects of contagious disorders the case is very different, and it is rare that you can stamp them out, though you may largely mitigate their frequency and severity.

I am desirous to state the case clearly, and without any favourable leaning to the statistics of the subject; but I must make a short explanation. There are two forms of the diseases under these Acts: The one is a minor form, which has existed from the earliest times, and is constantly alluded to by classical authors. It inconveniences the individual affected, but only rarely injures his constitution, is local in its character, and is not transmissible to his offspring. I at once admit that the Acts have not diminished the frequency of this disease, though they have mitigated its severity and duration. The major disease, which we chiefly aim to subdue was not known to Europe till the end of the fifteenth century, and is of all diseases one of the most terrible; for it often saps the constitution of the patient, and

is transmissible by descent to his innocent offspring. The Acts have had small effect on the minor form, but they have been most beneficial in repressing the major form of the disease. The statistics which I intend to offer are furnished to me by Dr. Balfour, the eminent statistician at the head of the statistical department of the army. It is well known that he was not favourable to the introduction of the Acts, and that at first he doubted their success; but he has informed me himself, and has authorized me to state, that he has been obliged to change his opinion, from the favourable results which have followed their operation. In 1869 there were 7 protected stations and 15 unprotected stations of our home army. A partial protection had been given to some of them by the experimental Act of 1864; and in the period of three years ending 1866, we find a small difference in their favour, for the ratio of the major disease in its primary form, to 1,000 men was 93 in the protected and 107 in the unprotected stations. The first efficient Act was passed in 1866, but was only brought into operation at the end of that year. In the next period of three years ending 1869 we find a large reduction, for the ratio in the protected stations is 71, as against 111 in the unprotected.\* You will observe that the average ratio in the unprotected stations is sensibly the same in the two periods, but it is continually decreasing at the protected stations, for in 1867 it was 86, in 1868 it was 70, and in 1869 only 58; while in the unprotected stations it had remained constant, varying only between 110 and 112. The mode of comparison adopted eliminates all sources of error from the varying character of the disease. If it be true, that there is a progressive diminution of the disease, the protected and unprotected districts will be equally affected by it; but it is quite untrue, for the entries at 9 of the 15 unprotected stations are higher in 1869 than in 1868. The Registrar-General tells us

\* Mr. Henley, in his reply, accused me of want of candour in not going back further than the year 1864. I could not do so for two reasons. In the first place, there are no separate returns for "primary sores," or what I term the major disease in its primary form, previous to that year; and in the second place, as I was comparing three years before the Acts of 1866 with the three years subsequent to the Acts, I was obliged to take 1864 as my initial year. Mr. Henley's contention, as I understood it, was that as the personal examination of soldiers was discontinued in 1859, a large increase of disease followed. This is not the case, as the following ratios, supplied to me by Dr. Balfour, will show. They relate to all classes of enthetic diseases:—1860, 369; 1861, 354; 1862, 330; 1863, 307; 1864, 291; 1865, 233; 1866, 258; 1867, 291; 1868, 232.



there is a constantly increasing mortality from the major disease in England and Wales. In 1859 the deaths from it were 1,089. If the mortality increased only in proportion to the population, it should have been 1,180 in 1866, but unhappily it was 1,886. I have confined myself to Dr. Balfour's statistics for the primary form of the major disease, because I believe that they are strictly and scientifically accurate. But lest it may be supposed that I ought to include all enthetic diseases, I will quote the police returns which do refer to them, and include sailors as well as soldiers. By these returns, Portsmouth is the only town which does not stand well. The reason for this is, that there has been an increase in the minor disease in that port, although there has been a satisfactory reduction of the major form. But I will admit it to be a case of failure and refer to the other stations. In the year 1862, before the first experimental Act, the mean percentage of men affected by all this class of diseases in the army was 29. In the year preceding the operation of the Act of 1866, the percentage of men attacked at the protected stations was 22·8, and in the first quarter of this year it was reduced to 11·2, or less than one-half. Perhaps the operation of the Acts would be better shewn if two cases were taken as illustrations. Last year, on the 1st of March, a battalion of Guards left London for the the newly-protected station of Windsor, which formerly had been notorious for its unhealthiness. During a stay of four months only thirty cases of disease occurred. Then the battalion returned to London, and in the next four months 108, or three and a half times more cases arose. Again, the 5th Fusiliers last year left the protected station of Aldershot for the unprotected towns of Glasgow and Ayr. Their daily roll of cases very soon doubled in the latter places. But it is not only as regards quantity of disease that the Acts exercise a favourable influence; the quality is materially changed. By this I mean that the severity and duration of the malady are lessened, and that primary cases now seldom pass into constitutional affections. In the first year of the operation of the Act of 1866, at Devonport, the duration of treatment averaged 85½ days; in the second year, 66½ days; in the third, 53 days; while in the last quarter of 1869, it was reduced to 37 days. In the Metropolitan Female Lock Hospital, in which both patients from protected districts and those coming from London itself are admitted, it is found that the former are now cured of the major disease, on a mean of three years, in 45 days, while the latter require 56 days: and in regard



to the minor disease, on the same average, the first require only 25 days for cure, the second 39 days. I trust that I have answered conclusively the allegations made, that the Acts have had little influence on the extent and nature of the diseases. As regards the unfortunate women, I do not possess full statistics, but I have them for several stations. Thus, at Chatham, when the Act was first introduced, seventy per cent. were found to be suffering from disease. In the last quarter only six per cent. were in that condition. No doubt, this is a remarkable instance, and a fairer result might be got by comparing such a town as Winchester, where the Act was only introduced this year, with Devonport, where it has been in operation since 1866. In Winchester, during January and February, 43 per cent. were in this condition, while in the same month at Devonport only 14 per cent. were affected.

In our foreign possessions similar Acts are in operation. In Malta, traders in vice have been subject to inspection, since the time of the Knights, though simply by custom, for a law enforcing it was framed only in 1859. That law made the custom efficient, and its results are stated in a passage which I will read from Mr. Inglott's evidence:—"The operation of the law had the effect of checking public prostitution to a great extent, besides of almost annihilating the disease." In almost like terms, Sir Henry Storks describes its effects in the Islands of Corfu, Zante, and Cephalonia, before our connection with them was severed. If we go beyond the experience of our own Army, and take that of foreign nations, which pursue a like system, the evidence is conclusive. In England our troops lose seven days of service, while those of France lose only four days, and those of Belgium only three days.

I have simply confined myself to answering the allegations that the Acts have failed in their sanitary aspects. But this is a small part of the issue. The main contention is, that the Acts are opposed to religion, justice, morality, and public liberty. The religious objection belongs more to a past than to the present age, but it must be combatted, because even now a few men of knowledge are influenced by it. Thus a Fellow and Member of Council of the Royal College of Surgeons announces his belief that this disease is not an evil but a blessing, and "that it was inflicted by the Almighty to act as a restraint upon the indulgence of evil passions." A similar view was expressed in this House in 1864 by the Right Honourable Member for Oxfordshire, whose honest expressions of opinion, we always admire.

I do not pause to remind those who share such opinions that it is strange thus to characterize a new disease, only three centuries and a half old, as a special punishment of modern profligacy, when ancient profligacy, that has existed since the world began, was not so punished. But I prefer to remind them that similar opinions in regard to disease have constantly prevailed from the earliest antiquity, and have as constantly been disproved by the progress of knowledge. It is a very old notion that diseases must not be combatted because they are divine punishments for sins relevant or irrelevant. Such views have, indeed, become more rare in modern times, because we are constantly reminded in the progress of science that there is far more of mercy than of wrath in divine arrangements. The angel who stood in the path of the Prophet had a sword, but still we are told it was an angel of mercy. Yet whenever we reach a stage when a disease is proved to be preventible, it is found that a few religious enthusiasts cling to the wrath and spurn the mercy. We need not go further back than to Jenner's great discovery for a proof of this. Vaccination gave us a protection against a disease only less abhorrent and repulsive than that under consideration. But its introduction was fiercely opposed, because it was alleged to be repugnant to religion, morality, law, and humanity. Large associations were formed to prevent its adoption. The pulpits resounded with attacks on the impious and presumptuous man who dared to interfere with a visitation from God. The introduction of disease from a cow into the body of a man was thought to give him bovine and beastly propensities. Excited by this clamour, the people rose in riots and pelted the vaccinators with stones, just as the Scotch peasantry pelted their first benefactor who introduced potatoes, with his own tubers, because they believed them to be an irreligious crop, as they were nowhere mentioned in the Bible. But we have lived down this clamour, and 80,000 lives of our present population are annually saved by Jenner's discovery. Misdirected religious zeal of this kind opposes many great benefits. When my lately deceased friend Sir James Simpson introduced chloroform,—that great boon to suffering humanity,—he too was denounced as irreligious, because he was interfering with a divine punishment for woman's primeval sin, "that in sorrow and travail should she bring forth children." And so in regard to the maladies under discussion. When these diseases assumed their terrible epidemic form at the end of the fifteenth century, the afflicted patients, supposed to be stricken by a divine punishment, were refused admission to hospitals, and

this refusal, as a traditionary usage, still prevails to a large extent, and has compelled a separate class of hospitals to be erected. This special provision shows that we have advanced somewhat in Christian humility, and that few dare to express the arrogant conceit that they, as the only true exponents of divine punishments, are entitled to exclude any class of the afflicted from mercy and compassion.

I quite admit, however, that the allegations of the injustice and immorality of the Acts demand our serious attention. The injustice is said to rest in the fact that they apply restrictions upon women which they do not upon men, although both are equally propagators of disease. Unquestionably, both are. To discuss which are most effective in the dissemination would be as little profitable as to debate which side of a pair of scissors was most useful in cutting, or whether the upper or lower jaw was most effective in chewing. But the law never deals with things in this abstract fashion. The law regulates all trades which are liable to abuse, and in doing so looks to the vendor only, although a purchaser is equally necessary for the trade. The fact that women only are the subjects of these Acts arises from the circumstances that they alone are traders in this form of vice. There is another quite distinct law in relation to the traffic which will illustrate my meaning. If a woman make a direct solicitation to a man, she is liable to arrest, without warrant, and to imprisonment. No one says this law is unequal, because the man is not subject to like punishment for soliciting a woman, for it is not a law framed on abstract principles of morality, but simply for the regulation of a traffic, which the law has never been able to repress, though it has often tried to control. Nor does regulation imply recognition. As long ago as 1430, the Bishop of Winchester was charged by Ordinance with the regulation of eighteen houses of bad repnte, which stood then, and for centuries after, on Bankside, Southwark. But this did not give episcopal sanction to the sins committed in them. This form of immorality is, like drunkenness, not an abstract necessity, but it is a fact too common and too serious to be ignored, and the law tries to diminish the evils of both by forcing the traffickers to carry on their trade with the least injury to the public. In neither case does the law stamp sins as virtues. You restrict and control the sale of poisons, without thereby giving State recognition or sanction to the poisoner. When, then, you pass a law that common women shall be subject to certain restrictions in their vicious traffic, you follow out the traditions of



our legislation with perfect fairness. To apply such restrictions to the purchaser, as well as to the vendor, would be a greater interference with liberty. Not so much, I admit, in respect to our combatants, for they contract with the State to give efficient personal service, and anything that interferes with their personal efficiency may be regulated by law. But this is a purely sanitary matter, and such inspection is altogether irrespective of different treatment of sexes. As a fact, this inspection for some time regularly made in the guards, is being gradually extended to the whole army. A further contention is, that the Acts infringe the liberty of the subject, or rather the liberty of the trader in this vicious traffic. Unquestionably they do, and so do a hundred other Acts, when a subject uses his liberty to the injury of the public. If a parent take his child to an hospital in a public cab, when suffering from scarlet fever or measles, the law punishes him. If a lunatic carry a firebrand through the streets, he is locked up. If the Irish press disseminate political poison, the law prevents it; and if a woman spread physical poison through our troops, we prevent it also. Besides, any woman can put herself outside the Act by simply renouncing her sinful practices. The restraint put upon her is in connexion with an injurious trade; if she abandon the trade, the law for her has no existence. It is when liberty becomes licence that you interfere. I find that this argument about liberty is much used in the Petitions and communications from Scotland. Why, we Scotch have the credit, as I think it, or the discredit as the opponents would deem it, of having found out how to arrest these contagious diseases, and they applied it, as these Acts do not, for the protection of the civil population. In the year 1497, the Aberdeen magistrates shrewdly suspected that the disease was not an epidemic, and they ordered all diseased women to abandon their evil courses, and shut themselves up in their houses till they were cured, branding on the cheek, with a red hot key, those who came out too soon. And six months later the Privy Council ordered the magistrates and town council of Edinburgh to collect all diseased women, along with their doctors, on the sands of Leith, boats being provided to transport them to the island of Inchkeith, where they were to remain till cured, on pain of being branded in a like way. Really, the North should not be so hard on its gentler southern progeny.

The opponents to the Acts bring a serious charge against them that in their operation they degrade the unfortunate women and prevent them rising from their low estate. This would be a

most lamentable result, if it were true: but so far as you can rely on evidence, it is directly contrary to the truth. And this evidence is unimpeachable, for it consists of the concurrent testimony of chaplains, medical men, and the police, all of whom cannot be in league to pervert facts. Thus, speaking of Alder-shot, Dr. Barr describes the condition of those unfortunates, both before and after the Acts, in significant terms, painful indeed from the picture which he presents. After stating that they were dirty, starved, covered with vermin, and clad in unwomanly rags, he says, "Thus, less than two years ago, in a terribly morbid condition, with the habits of beasts and the appearance of beggars, the majority of these outcasts of society were alike endless sources of sickness among the troops and disgust among the respectable inhabitants of the neighbourhood." This was their state before the Act. Now, we are told, that they have acquired habits of cleanliness, that diseases, such as itch, arising from filth, have disappeared, that the use of profane language in the wards occurs very seldom, "and that the chaplain has on several occasions mentioned the pleasure with which he has noticed their uniformly decent behaviour, as well as their quiet attention to his ministerial addresses during the religious services held by him." Captain Harris, in his report to the Chief Commissioner of Police, describes the general improvement, at all the protected stations, as follows:—"The improvement which has taken place in the persons, clothing, and homes of the common women, as regards cleanliness and order is most marked. Many of the women formerly looked bloated from drink, whilst others were greatly emaciated and looked haggard through disease. Their language and habits are greatly altered. Swearing, drunkenness, and indecency of behaviour have become quite exceptional. The women now look fresh and healthy, and are most respectful in their manner; in fact, these poor creatures now feel that they are not altogether outcasts from society, but that there are people who still take an interest in their moral and physical welfare." Like testimony, less graphically described, perhaps, but in substance similar, reaches us from all the protected districts. It is surely more hopeful for the reformation of these poor creatures, that they should be redeemed from savagery to something approaching to civilization, even if they are not at once reclaimed to virtue. But if evidence be worth anything, there is not the slightest doubt that large numbers of them have been reclaimed from vice, and now lead virtuous lives. Where there have been many years' experience, as in Malta, this reclamation

is described as one of the most marked and happy features of the Act. In every protected district the evidence is concurrent and decisive. In some of them the decrease has been 25 per cent., in others much more. I shall leave the remarkable case of Devonport to be dealt with by my honourable friend who represents that town; and I will simply give the aggregate result for the whole protected stations. Since they were brought under the operation of the Acts 7,766 common women were registered, of whom now only 3,016, or less than a half, remain. Hence, 4,750 no longer practice their vocation in these towns, though only 107 are known to have died. What has become of that large number? The answer is very satisfactory: 385 have married, 451 have entered homes or refuges for the outcasts, and 1,249 have been restored to their friends. In short, 27 per cent. are known to have returned to a respectable life. Then, 2,558, or 32 per cent., have left the stations—and their places have not been supplied—many, doubtless, to pursue their miserable career elsewhere, but many also, as the police believe, and as in charity we are bound to hope, to return to their own homes. These are most striking results of the moral effects of these Acts, and dwarf all voluntary and philanthropic efforts to reform these fallen creatures. The opponents of the Acts meet such statistics by saying that the women have been simply driven from open to clandestine practices. But this is utterly opposed to all evidence. For it is notorious that there is much more decorum and discretion among women who were on the verge of becoming vicious at those stations. Afraid of being classed among the fallen, they have withdrawn from attendance at singing saloons and other places of resort, and are thus removed from dangers to which they were exposed. Nor is it compatible with the complaints made by the opponents of the Acts, that the police are too effective spies, for if they are, how is it that these clandestine women escape their vigilance. The least consideration shows that clandestine and open fallen women must be in intimate connection, for the former give the chief supply to the latter, and the first class fast merges into the second class. But the large and positive diminution of the open fallen is a proof that the clandestine class is diminished also.

Nor is this reform surprising when we recollect the humanizing and religious influences under which these unfortunates are brought. From the unattractive and sensational literature on this subject, which has been sent to us for the last few months, one would be inclined to believe that the hospitals to which these



poor creatures are taken are prisons and places of torture. Well, in former periods of history, when false public opinion was strong enough to shut out these unfortunates from mercy and compassion, such hospitals deserved this description, but now the hospitals are conducted with kindness and consideration to the fallen, both by medical men, chaplains, and nurses. So little are the unfortunates accustomed to these humanizing influences, that their hearts become touched, and, in enforced leisure, they are awakened to the shame and misery of their lives. If you will not believe statistical facts at least let us believe the chaplains, and the chief clergy of all denominations, who testify to these results. Many letters and communications from them I should like to read if time permitted. But we have their printed testimony also before us. Against all this evidence, you have ranged, on the other side, only the fears of the opponents that the natural tendency of inspection must be a further degradation of the fallen. Well, I would treat those fears with that respect which is due to all sincere convictions, especially as they are the offspring of virtuous minds, who cannot conceive the extent of degradation of the unfortunates. It is unquestionable that the glory and protection of a woman is her modesty, and far be it from me to say that even this is utterly annihilated among the fallen. Yet it must be clear that traders in immorality, whose bodies are the subjects of commerce, can not have those feelings of delicate susceptibility which are claimed for them. But it would be a terrible thing if any innocent woman could by an unfortunate miscarriage of the law come under the provision of the Act. Women, as a class are as much outside legislative interference, as their virtue and goodness are outside and far removed from the sins of the fallen of their sex. In the operation of all laws there have been isolated cases of miscarriage of justice. Possibly one or two instances of suspicion have been thrown over innocent women by these Acts, but the alleged cases, even doubtful as to fact, have been more rare than those in which innocent persons have been hanged for murder. When a misadventure occurs in the application of a law it is a subject for deep regret, and a warning that our safeguards against such possible contingencies should be multiplied; but it is no argument for the abolition of a salutary law. The law, as it now stands, is singularly careful. It takes no notice of individual immorality, but only of the professed immoral trader who plies her trade to the detriment of the public forces. It does not allow any common policeman to be the indicator of the trader, but reserves the

power to a skilled and cautious inspector. No such woman need come under the Act unless she pleases, without going before a magistrate, either in public or in private as she prefers, so that the constant statements made that any woman can be arrested and detained on mere suspicion are absolutely untrue.

In conclusion, I trust that I have treated this delicate subject as little offensively to the House as its nature permits. I have tried to show dispassionately that these Acts, viewed as sanitary measures, have been successful and are becoming progressively still more effective. I have endeavoured to prove that they are not unjust, inasmuch as they deal only with traders in a vicious traffic, and so viewed are consistent with our usual habits of legislation. So far from degrading the unfortunates subject to them, they have largely ameliorated both the physical and moral condition of the women who have been brought under their operation, alike out of mercy to our forces and out of mercy to themselves. For three and a half centuries these diseases have been the scandal of civilization, and neither philanthropy nor religion have stopped their growth. It is long since that Parliament has known the serious character of the disease. In the year 1529, it arraigned Cardinal Wolsey for daring to go into the presence of the King while he was afflicted with it, when he ought to have isolated himself from one in whom the state was interested. This enforced isolation of diseased persons we now extend to the forces which are kept up for the protection of the state. For three years and a half this active policy of prevention, has substituted the do-nothing policy of three and a half centuries, and the result has been largely to mitigate disease and to lessen immorality. I trust therefore, that the House will not repeal Acts when their past history has answered our expectations and while their future is full of promise.

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Letter from the REV. H. EVERETT, M.A., Incumbent of St. John's, Devonport :

“ Stoko, Devonport, April, 1870.

“ DEAR ———,

“ You ask my opinion respecting the operation of the Contagious Diseases' Acts at Devonport, and I am very pleased at having any opportunity of expressing that opinion. I attended a meeting held at Plymouth the other day to discuss the subject, hoping that I might have been able to say a few words of reason, but the meeting would hear no reason or argument. Dr. Rule had so excited his audience with a false and sensational speech, they would only listen to his side of the question.

“ My opinion has been formed by six years' work as a clergyman in Devonport, and by four years' experience as one of the Managing Committee of the Royal Albert Hospital.

“ I am convinced that the passing of the Contagious Diseases Acts was as wise, humane, and requisite a piece of legislation as any we have seen in England for years.

“ Since the operation of these Acts, I am certain that the number of prostitutes has greatly decreased in Devonport ; that open assaulting solicitation, once the disgrace of our streets, has in a great measure disappeared ; that disease and suffering are much less rife among the women ; and I am also quite certain that very many of them have been entirely reclaimed, and have altogether abandoned their vicious life, in consequence of the teaching and advice they have received during their stay in the Lock Wards. Our chaplain, Mr. Hawker, says, ‘ The religious services which the women attend have the effect of raising the minds of some of them above the degradation of the life they are wont to lead, and producing in them a desire for respectability.’

“ It has been publicly declared here that ‘ women are not reclaimed through the operation of the Acts.’ This, from my own experience in many cases, I *know* to be false. I have seen women living in service—I have myself married women to respectable men—who have declared to me that the turning point in their lives was the time of their residence in the Royal Albert Hospital.

“ I know very well that statistics relating to reclaimed women are not always to be relied on ; for many women profess reformation, and for a time do reform, but again fall back into their

former life, therefore I am not led away by any published returns, but speak from what I have heard from our matron here, from the matron at the Devon House of Mercy, and from cases I myself have traced and watched. I am convinced that we have done and are still doing a great and good work within the walls of our hospital.

"A great deal has been said here about virtuous women being arrested and examined. This, if true, would be a horrible thing, and to be avoided at any price. Here, again, I have taken a good deal of pains in a quiet way to gather reliable information; and I am satisfied that on this point there has been gross and deliberate exaggeration. I cannot find, nor can I hear of any one else who can find, nor can our most frantic opponents substantiate a single case where a modest woman has been arrested and examined. It seems to me that so many precautions have been taken, and so many safeguards given as to render it hardly possible that any respectable woman can ever be molested.

"Our opponents say that 'the Acts have failed to produce any diminution of the disease.' How is it then, I ask, that the returns from the Plymouth and Devonport Workhouses, and the Naval and Military Hospitals, show such a striking diminution in the number of cases of venereal disease admitted to their wards during the past three years? Yet another thing: all the doctors here tell me that it is an undoubted fact that the nature of the disease has very much altered in the past three years, that it is much less virulent, and more easily and rapidly cured than it was.

"In short I am heart and soul in favour of the Acts, and am perfectly ready to do anything in my power to aid and extend them, for I believe the result will be to diminish vice, and to protect the innocent, the children, and the yet unborn generations from fearful misery and suffering. The firm opposition you are meeting with astounds me, though I console myself with the saying of Talleyrand, 'the thoughts of the greatest number of intelligent persons in any time or country are sure, with a few fluctuations, more or less, to become in the end the public opinion of their age or community.'

"I am,

"Sincerely yours,

"H. EVERETT,

"Incumbent of St. John's, Devonport."





