

## The Page Bill in New York.

The women, including the trained nurses in America, are conducting their campaign against the obnoxious Clause 79 of the Page Bill in New York, by taking the unassailable position that it is not only monstrous but unscientific to compulsorily detain and treat the persons of one sex who have contracted a contagious and communicable disease, and to hope by this means to eradicate the disease, while no control is exercised over the members of the opposite sex, by whom it is originally communicated to the women compulsorily incarcerated.

At a great public meeting held in New York, under the auspices of the societies allied to secure the repeal of Section 79 of the Inferior Courts Law, the following resolutions were adopted:—

### RESOLUTIONS.

#### I.

Whereas, the germs causing the venereal diseases are no longer matters of uncertainty, but have been perfectly and conclusively demonstrated by medical science; and

Whereas, the favourable breeding conditions and modes of transmission of these germs are also thoroughly understood by the medical profession; and

Whereas, the method of attempting to check the spread of venereal diseases by systematically hunting down certain classes of women only has survived from a period when the specific germs were yet undiscovered and their mode of transmission therefore not certainly demonstrable; and

Whereas, a legislative mandate to continue so crude and barbarous a method of attacking any infectious or contagious disease is an offence against scientific truth and an indignity to the medical profession, an insult to women, and a slur upon the intelligence of the public; therefore be it

Resolved: That the Board of Health is hereby requested to take steps looking toward placing the venereal diseases upon the same status as all other contagious, infectious, or communicable diseases, to be made reportable and dealt with accordingly, irrespective of age, class, or sex; and that it shall at once institute the same policy of instruction of the public as to the preventability of these diseases as is now pursued in regard to others; and be it further

Resolved: That public authorities are hereby requested to make ample provision for the full and sufficient free, voluntary treatment of patients suffering from venereal diseases.

#### II.

Resolved: That this meeting assembled protests against the enforcement of any law which provides for the compulsory examination and treatment of women convicted of prostitution and demands of the Legislature the repeal of Section 79 of the Inferior Courts Law.

### THE ALLIED SOCIETIES.

The societies allied to obtain the repeal of the law are as follows:—

Women's Prison Association, Women's Medical Association of the City of New York, Women's Society for the Prevention of Crime, Women's

Henry George League, Women's Political Union, Philanthropic Committee Friends' Monthly Meeting, Women's Christian Temperance Union, State of New York, Women's Trade Union League, Equality Suffrage League of New York, American Federation of Nurses (including the American Society of Superintendents of Training Schools for Nurses, and the Nurses' National Associated Alumnae), Assembly District 22, Women's Suffrage Party, National Young Women's Christian Association, National Women's Suffrage Party, Council of Jewish Women, Brooklyn Auxiliary of the Consumers' League, Brooklyn Heights Branch Women's Municipal League, Hygiene Committee of the Women's Medical Association, American Purity Alliance, National Vigilance League.

In the forefront of the ranks of gallant fighters is Miss L. L. Dock, the Secretary of the International Council of Nurses, who gives an account of the campaign in a recent issue of *The Call*, from which we quote freely:—

The experience of those women who attacked Clause 79 of the Page Bill has been an enlightening one. Familiar with the abundant history of evidence as to regulated vice in other countries, in the vain attempt to make sanitary and safe what is by nature decreed as fatal to health—they recognised instantly in Clause 79 the hateful features of State regulation of vice, called also the sanitary supervision of prostitution, and, knowing well its character as a social blight based upon superstition, cowardice, and lust, they answered instantly the call for organisation to oppose it.

The clause itself, and its passage through the Legislature, had come with stealth and suddenness. The Page Commission had almost finished its work when this clause was inserted into its place. It has been characterised as a "foundling," a term used to describe legislative provisions that have been surreptitiously brought in, having had their birth no one quite knows where.

The women, rallying, gathered their forces, cast about for weapons, and reckoned their possible allies among men. The Governor was a high-minded citizen and austere moralist; he might be induced to veto, and call for a revised version of the Bill. A mistake. The Governor, reflecting, decided that the whole Bill was too good to risk for one clause (which only marked the decline of American men's respect for womanhood and the degradation of the latter), and "left it to the women of the State" (whose right to the ballot he does not concede) "to change this provision, if they did not like it."

Disappointed there the women turned to the leading philanthropists among men. Here they would surely find help. Instead, another cold rebuff. "You are not public-spirited," they were now told. "This is not regulation; it is a humane precaution and care of the public health. It does not really aim at singling out the woman, but they are the worst offenders, and, besides, there is no way of reaching men who may equally need this beneficent care. But we shall go on to get compulsory treatment for all prisoners." (Note this:

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