

THE WHITE SLAVE TRAFFIC.

A meeting was held at Chelsea Infirmary on the evening of February 26th, on the subject of the White Slave Traffic.

Miss Stansfeld, Superintendent Lady Inspector L.G.B., was in the chair. There was present a large audience, principally composed of members of the Poor Law Infirmary Matrons' Association and of the Chelsea Infirmary Nurses' League.

Mrs. Florence Willey, M.D., gave a most interesting lecture. She said in speaking of the White Slave Traffic we must call a spade a spade—it is an organized commercial arrangement for procuring a sufficient number of young women for the purposes of prostitution. Until the recent Bill was passed in England, this country was a happy hunting-ground for procurers, as they could not be arrested on suspicion. In describing the ways in which procurers work, she described how they generally approach girls in positions where they find life very drab and dull, such as in factories and shops. They promise to lighten their lives and gain their confidence, and entrap them by these means. After giving several instances of the way of procuring, the lecturer insisted that the chief cause is the lack of knowledge, and no false modesty or prudery should prevent young girls being informed of the dangers of great cities nowadays. Girls go out much more without chaperons, and they should be told of this existing evil. Ignorance is not innocence. The passing of the White Slave Traffic Bill is the first step to stamp the thing out. Girls should be warned never to go into houses with strangers on any plausible story.

Another step would be to have women employed instead of men as overseers in factories and workshops where girls are employed. Also women should not be paid lower wages than men. The starvation wages given to many girls is the source of the trouble. They lead dull lives, and vice is offered to them in the form of a pleasant evening, dinner at a good restaurant, &c. To get away from the monotony and distress, the girl takes the first step.

The need of wise women on the Boards of Guardians was also spoken of.

When women have the vote in this country a great deal more can be done to rid Britain of the vice.

Miss Amy Hughes, in moving a vote of thanks to Mrs. Willey, spoke of the need there is that nurses should be specially instructed in this matter, so that they may be able to help and instruct others.

Miss Barton moved a vote of thanks to Miss Stansfeld for so kindly presiding, and for her interesting suggestions, and invited the audience to the nurses' sitting-room for light refreshments.

“UNWISE, INJUDICIOUS, AND HARSH.”

We are pleased to note that this month's *St. Bartholomew's Hospital Journal* contains the following expression of opinion on the recent action of the committee in prohibiting discussion by the nursing staff of their own Registration Bill—for which the Premier has now promised consideration!

“Every subject has its pros and cons, and so the question of State Registration of Nurses can no doubt be designated as controversial.

“But controversy on this subject is not subversive of nursing discipline, and the recent action at this Hospital resulting in the placing of this subject on the black list, as far as concerns its free discussion within the Hospital by members of the nursing staff, appears to us to be unwise, injudicious and harsh. Like all unwise, repressive measures it will, however, probably lead to a far wider and more detailed investigation of the question.”

With very few exceptions, Bart's certificated nurses still feel that had the medical staff loyally supported their interests when the appointment of Matron was made, their status in the nursing world would not have been depreciated, nor would it have been possible for the anti-registration policy of the London Hospital to have been enforced, and inscribed on the Minutes of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and thus its honourable treatment of its nurses reversed. It is not yet too late for the medical staff to urge the committee to reconsider its ill-advised decision, and to rescind a resolution which is so bitterly resented by its best nurses—a resolution, moreover, which insults the intelligence of every woman in the hospital and out of it.

The Harrow police are making inquiries into a serious raid on the orchid house and grounds of Mr. G. Acton Davis, of Julian Hill, Harrow, the acting treasurer of St. Bartholomew's Hospital. Several conservatories were entered, and serious damage done to valuable orchids and the buildings. The police incline to the belief that it is the work of suffragettes, who are very strong in the district.

There may be no connection between this attack and the “muzzling” resolution, but *The Vote* gave very wide publicity to the “harsh” treatment of the nurses at Bart's, and great indignation was aroused in women's societies on the subject.

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