

The purpose and provision of the "Contagious Diseases Acts" and the reasons for their total repeal / [H. Calderwood and Thomas Guthrie].

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You are respectfully requested to give a few minutes to the careful perusal of the subjoined Statement, bearing upon a subject which, in many quarters, is very little understood.

THE PURPOSE AND PROVISIONS OF “The Contagious Diseases Acts,”

AND REASONS

FOR THEIR TOTAL REPEAL.

PUBLISHED FOR THE EDINBURGH REPEAL COMMITTEE.

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As many persons have only a vague idea of the nature of these Acts, and of the objections so strongly felt to them; and as a wish has been expressed by some in this position, for a statement containing the requisite information, the Edinburgh Committee for the Total Repeal of these Acts have prepared the following *Statement*:—

I.—The Purpose of these Acts.

It is a most noticeable thing that this cannot be gathered from the Acts themselves. *They are without any preamble.* Hence their purpose must be gathered from the *Evidence* led before the Parliamentary Committees, and from the Arguments founded on it. From these, the purpose is abundantly clear, and the reason why it is not stated is equally obvious. That *Purpose* then, is *not* to check immorality; nor even to “stamp out” those diseases which are its natural results and the checks upon its indulgence. It is, by the speedy detection of such diseases in the persons of *females only* who are of immoral life, and by the cure of these females, from time to time, to check the dissemination of those diseases to their male associates.

II.—The Alleged Excuse for these Acts;

The necessities of Army Administration. The Argument is, our Soldiers cannot be allowed to marry; prostitution therefore is a necessity, and the Nation, this Christian Nation—must allow the indulgence of fornication, and do the best it can to check the disease which accompanies it. See Appendix A., page 132, of Report of Evidence before the House of Lords' Committee, where Lt.-Gen. Sir Henry Storks, the great advocate of these abominable Acts, says, "I am of opinion that very little benefit will result from the best devised means of prevention, until prostitution is recognised as a necessity."

III.—The Provisions of these Acts.

The Acts apply to women of immoral life; they decree provision at the expense of the Nation for the cure in their persons, of those Contagious Diseases which arise from systematic licentiousness. Their provisions are these:—fortnightly examinations of the persons of women who make a trade of fornication; Hall for this inspection; the appointment and payment of Medical Officers for conducting it; certification that the prostitutes are free from disease, or that they are diseased, with order for confinement in an Hospital; certification of cure, with order of release; Hospitals for treatment of the disease; Police Officers to keep their eye on such women as have left the Hospital, and force them to appear once a fortnight before the Medical Officer, to have their persons examined; a Police spy system for discovering women whom the Police may *suspect* of immorality, that they may be entered in the Police Books, as women who live by prostitution, and be obliged to appear before the Medical Officer once a fortnight.

IV.—Reasons for the Total Repeal of these Acts.

First. Their provisions cannot be enforced without encouraging vice, and thereby lowering the tone of public opinion, as to breaches of the law of chastity.

Second. The spy system, which forms an essential part of the provisions of these Acts, will demoralize the Officers, and drag down into open and habitual immorality many women who may have newly fallen, and who might, if saved from public infamy and exposure, be recalled to the paths of virtue.

Third. These Acts must drive many women to such expedients for concealing their manner of life, as will lead to an increase of social evils.

Fourth. By these Acts, such a tyrannical power is given to the Police Officers (the evidence of one of whom, unsupported by any other witness, is enough for the purposes of these Acts), as may expose innocent women, who are unable to defend themselves from suspicion, to the grossest injustice, and to treatment, at the hand of Medical Officers, which every pure minded woman will regard with utmost horror.

Fifth. These Acts assign to the Medical profession such revolting engagements, in the inspection of the person of prostitutes, that practitioners of standing, sufficient to warrant public confidence in their procedure, will shrink from acting under them.

Sixth. The acknowledgement that our Army, being at present so organised as to prevent the Soldiers marrying, it is the occasion of an immense amount of social immorality, supplies no reason for the country acquiescing in the provisions of these abominable Acts, but strong reasons on the contrary, why these Acts should be rejected with indignation, and the Army should be so organized as to encourage its morality, by making provision for the wives of Soldiers, instead of providing for the supervision of prostitutes.

Seventh. In every other country, where such Acts have been introduced, they have proved failures, and worse than failures they have not accomplished the end in view; but have acted as an encouragement to vice, and have lowered to a frightful extent the tone and standard of morality.

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