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"FACTS RESPECTING THE
CONTAGIOUS DISEASES ACTS."

ANSWER

TO A SPEECH BY

DUNCAN M^C LAREN, ESQ., M.P.,

PUBLISHED UNDER THE ABOVE TITLE

BY

JAMES R. LANE, F.R.C.S.,

*Surgeon to, and Lecturer on Surgery at, St. Mary's Hospital ;
Senior Surgeon to the London Lock Hospital.*

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THE CONTAGIOUS DISEASES ACTS.

A PAMPHLET purporting to be the substance of a speech delivered at Newcastle in September last, by Mr. Duncan McLaren, M.P., and published by the National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, has recently come under my notice, and I find it to contain a series of such extraordinary mis-statements, that I am tempted to say a few words in reply.

The subject of the Contagious Diseases Acts has for some time occupied the attention of the public, and is likely to do so still more now that a Royal Commission is about to commence an inquiry into the whole question. It is, therefore, all the more necessary that the erroneous impressions which this widely-circulated pamphlet is calculated to convey should, as far as possible, be counteracted.

Mr. McLaren attempts to show that the benefits stated to have resulted from the operation of the Acts in question are fallacious, especially as regards the alleged diminution in the number of prostitutes, and the diminished amount of disease, in the districts which have been placed under the Acts, and that instead of a diminution there has been actually a great increase in both these respects.

Mr. McLaren's attack is mainly directed against the Report of the Commissioner of Police to the Lords of the Admiralty on the operation of the Contagious Diseases Acts printed by order of the House of Commons of the 8th August, 1870. This report is characterised by Mr. McLaren as "the most unfair and untruthful public document which it has ever been his lot to meet with," p. 15. "The leading statements," he says, "in place of honestly giving the true results of the tables, contain gross misrepresentations and exaggerations, professing to prove the beneficial operation of the Acts, even in those cases where the very opposite results followed. . . . First, it is stated that 7,776 women were on the register, and that this number has been now reduced to 3,016," p. 7. Whereas, "In place of

“the alleged diminution in the proportion of 7,766 to 3,016, “there was an actual increase within the period referred “to,” p. 15. Further, after speaking of the Government statistics as an “arithmetical juggle,” he goes on to say that “the report gathers together all those women who ever “resided within the districts, at any time during the last “five years, and thrusts them backwards as it were to the “year when the Acts first came into operation within “them. . . . The report thus leads the public to believe “that there were 7,766 of these women to begin with, “who, by the benevolent working of the Act, had now “been reduced to 3,016,” p. 11.

This is strong language to apply to an important public document issued by responsible authority, and is quite unjustifiable unless the strongest evidence can be adduced in its support. Now it will hardly be believed that the portion of the Government Report criticised in such terms by Mr. McLaren does not refer in any way to the reduction in the number of prostitutes in the protected districts, and does not contain one word to imply, either directly or indirectly, that it has any such reference. There is ample evidence of the *real* reduction in a subsequent portion of the report, but it is made as clear as words can make it that the tables in which these figures occur are simply an enumeration of the aggregate number of women who have been under the operation of the Acts, since their first inauguration down to the date of the return, March 26th, 1870.

The table in question, viz., No. I, p. 3 of the Report, is in fact headed “Abstract return showing the number of common women in the undermentioned districts, coming under “the provisions of the Contagious Diseases Acts *since the “time they were put into operation until the 26th March, 1870,”* and the “leading statement,” p. 1, of which Mr. McLaren complains, simply states, amongst other things, and after repeating the above heading, that the returns show “that “7,766 women have been placed on the register, and that the “following numbers have been removed therefrom, and for “the causes stated:—

Left the districts	2,558
Married	385
Entered homes	451
Restored to friends	1,249
Died	107
	<hr/>
	4,750

“Leaving 3,016 still on the Register.”

This is obviously a simple statement of the whole number of women on whom the Acts have operated, with an explanation of what has become of them, without any addition or deduction whatever. The table demonstrates the eminently satisfactory result that 2,085 or 26·8 per cent. of the whole number have either married, entered homes, or been restored to their friends; but there is nothing to lead even the most careless reader to suppose that it implies any reduction in the number of common women in the districts under the Acts, to which fact, from its very nature, it cannot possibly have any reference.

Mr. McLaren, however, having thus unaccountably misapprehended or misrepresented the purport of this table, proceeds to combat it through several pages of his pamphlet, and adduces a number of figures in support of his own views, which form an arithmetical jumble (not to say "juggle"), into the details of which, as I have shown it to be based upon an entirely erroneous assumption, it is unnecessary to follow him. The way in which he has manipulated the figures, however, is such as almost certainly to mislead a reader unacquainted with the subject, and therefore it is very important that the error should be clearly pointed out.

The next point in the Government Report of which Mr. McLaren complains, is a paragraph *really* intended to refer to the reduction in the number of prostitutes, and in which the effects produced at Plymouth are instanced in order to show the beneficial operation of the Act in this particular.

The Report says: "There has been, *from year to year*, at "this station, a steady and increasing diminution in the "number of brothels, *as likewise of prostitutes frequenting the* "same: the brothels have decreased from 356 to 131, and "the number of prostitutes from 1,770 to 645," p. 1.

With reference to this statement, Mr. McLaren says: "I "am prepared to prove, from the tables themselves, that since "the commencement of the Act, no diminution whatever "has taken place in the number of these women resident "within the district; and that, on the contrary, the number "resident therein has considerably increased," p. 7. And he gives in the following tabular form, what he calls the "real "facts respecting the nine towns and districts first brought "under the operation of the Acts."

	At begin- ning of the year.	Year ending 31st December.					March.
		1865.	1866.	1867.	1868.	1869.	1870.
Portsmouth	361	361	453	506	645	722	695
Devonport and Plymouth	203	62	216	390	829	661	645
Sheerness	73	55	67	54	50	54	52
Chatham.....	216	204	279	265	238	287	325
Totals of 4 oldest dis- tricts till 1870 .. }	853	682	1,015	1,215	1,762	1,724	1,717
Woolwich	113	0	113	213	233	208	191
Aldershot	278	0	0	227	292	315	328
Windsor	91	0	0	0	68	60	52
Shorncliffe	119	0	0	0	72	129	122
Colchester	158	0	0	0	0	90	81
Totals of 9 oldest dis- tricts till 1870 .. }		682	1,128	1,655	2,427	2,526	2,491

“It will be observed,” says Mr. McLaren, “that the first column contains the number on the register at the commencement of the first year in which the Act was brought into operation within each district; the second and other columns show the numbers on the register on the last day of December in each year, excepting the last column, which shows the numbers on the 26th March of the present year, being the latest date to which the Government tables are brought down.”

In further commenting on the statement in the Government Report which alleges a reduction in the number of women at Plymouth from 1,770 to 645, Mr. McLaren says: “The facts are these: In place of 1,770, there were only 203 of these women in Devonport when the Act came into operation in 1865; and in place of the ‘steady and increasing diminution’ alleged to have taken place, the number has largely increased, in the proportion shown in my tables.”

This result is arrived at by Mr. McLaren in a rather remarkable manner. It is done by ignoring altogether the series of tables marked No. 2, pp. 8 and 9 of the Report, which give a return of the number of common women, brothels, &c., known to the police at the several stations for each of the years in question. These tables show in the clearest manner that there were 1,770 women in Devonport at the end of 1865, which number gradually diminished to 662 at the end of 1869, at which date these tables terminate; the further diminution to 645 at the 26th March, 1870, being

shown by the No. 1 series of returns at p. 4 of the Report. Similarly, as regards Portsmouth, the tables show that 1,335 women were known to the police in 1865, and that the numbers had fallen to 730 at the end of 1869, and to 695 on the 26th March, 1870. Mr. McLaren takes no notice whatever of these tables, which were framed for the purpose of showing the gradual diminution in the number of prostitutes in the subjected districts, and which in fact annihilate his argument completely. He relies exclusively on the tables which give the number of women brought under the operation of the Acts in each successive year, which, for reasons to be presently explained, undoubtedly show a gradual increase, and he makes the astounding assertion (the intrinsic improbability of which ought to have warned him of its inaccuracy) that there were only 203 prostitutes in Plymouth, Devonport, and Stonehouse in 1865, these districts having a population of 137,000 souls, including a garrison, military and naval, of about 10,000 men.

Now, the reason why only 203 women were placed under the Act in 1865, out of the 1,770 then known to the police, was, that the Act of 1864, which remained in force till October 1, 1866, gave no power to the police to interfere with any woman from the mere fact of her being a prostitute; she could only be compelled to submit to examination by a magistrate's order made in consequence of a written information laid by the superintendent of police, or by a medical practitioner, to the effect that he had good cause to believe her to be suffering from a contagious disease within the meaning of the Act. This was perfectly well known to Mr. McLaren, for at p. 4 of his pamphlet he quotes and comments upon this very clause of the Act.

It ought, therefore, to have been as clear to him as it is to me, that 203 could not possibly have been the total number of women in Devonport, but only the number *suspected by the police to be diseased*; and, in fact, on examination, all but one were found to be diseased, and were sent to hospital. This number could not even have included all the *diseased* prostitutes, for it is obvious there must have been a considerable number in that condition who would escape the suspicions of the police; and even if a larger number had been *suspected*, it would have been useless to lay informations against them, on account of the limited number of hospital beds then provided.

It was only when the Act of 1866 came into operation that power was given to enforce the Act against all women known to be practising prostitution, whether suspected of being diseased or not, and even then the hospital accommo-

dation was quite inadequate, so that still for some time only those suspected of being diseased were brought up, it being obviously useless, when the hospital beds were full, to make further examinations, and to place more women on the register. For instance, at the Royal Albert Hospital, Devonport, the number of beds first provided for the purposes of the Acts in April, 1865, was only 38; the number was increased in February, 1866, to 50; in April to 62; in January, 1868, to 86, in February to 96, in March to 112, in April to 128, in May to 154, and in July to 162. Accordingly, as more beds were provided, more women were brought under the Act, until in 1868 all those known to the police were registered and periodically examined. The annually increasing number of women, therefore, shown in the table given by Mr. McLaren, merely indicates the annually increasing efficiency with which it became possible to carry out the Acts, and is in no way incompatible with a gradual diminution of the prostitute population of the towns in question. One fact, however, which it really does show, is the immense amount of contagious disease prevailing when prostitution is uncontrolled by efficient sanitary enactments.

In the appendix to the second edition of his pamphlet Mr. McLaren says, "if I am asked to account for the extraordinary difference between 203 women actually registered in Devonport in 1865, and the alleged number of 1770 said to have been resident there, I must confess my ignorance." Mr. McLaren's ignorance is sufficiently apparent throughout, but it is to be lamented that, finding himself unable to comprehend the discrepancy between the two sets of figures, he did not recognize the necessity of inquiring into their real meaning before he undertook to enlighten the public on the subject. Instead of this, he founds his assertions exclusively on the figures which happen to tell in favour of his own views, and accepts them unreservedly, while he sets aside as erroneous, or intentionally deceptive, those which relate to the other side of the question. This appears to me to be a rather singular mode of "combating falsehood with truth," as respects the alleged facts contained in this document," viz., the Government Report. (See pamphlet, p. 14.)

Another point in the Government Report to which Mr. McLaren takes exception, is a statement referring to Plymouth and Devonport, made for the purpose of showing the deterrent effect of the measure, viz., that "when the Act of 1864 was first put into operation, over 300 of the youngest prostitutes left the neighbourhood." This must have been early in 1865. The Report subsequently points out, that in the period from 1865 to March, 1870, in

the same district, 203 women entered homes, 693 were restored to friends, 161 married, and 658 left the district; thus accounting for 1,715 out of a total of 2,394 on whom the Act had been brought to bear; and it states further, that "in addition to the above, more than 500 young girls, found in houses of ill fame, have left the district, and returned to their friends on being spoken to by the police, before being brought under the provisions of the Acts." In the Appendix to his second edition, Mr. McLaren with unaccountable perversity, and as a mere "*conjecture*," mixes up this latter 500, which obviously belong to the period from 1865 to 1870, with the 300 first mentioned, which belong as obviously to the period of the first introduction of the Act of 1864, and having thus manipulated them, says that, "by deducting these 800, the original 1,770 would have been reduced to 970, who, if not imaginary persons, *ought all to have been registered in the first year*. But only 203 were registered, leaving 767 to be accounted for. Why did not the police do their duty, and then register them if existing in the flesh." p. 17.

In his eagerness to find fault, Mr. McLaren appears again to have forgotten what he himself specially points out in p. 4 of his pamphlet, viz., that under the Act of 1864, the police had no power to interfere with any one of these women (whether they numbered 1,770 or 767) except by laying information before a magistrate that they believed her to be suffering from contagious disease. And if instead of "*conjecturing*," he had taken the trouble to inquire, he would have found that the numbers given in Table No. 2, which show the diminution in the number of prostitutes, instead of being "mere vague general statements," were founded on exact information in the possession of the police, who have a record of the name and address of every known prostitute resident in each district at the periods referred to. The diminution has indeed been very remarkable. At the end of 1865, 3,418 prostitutes were known to the police to reside in the four districts of Portsmouth, Devonport, Sheerness, and Chatham; but at the end of 1869 the total number was only 2,420, and that not for the above four districts only, but for these with the addition of five new ones, viz., Woolwich, Aldershot, Windsor, Shorncliffe, and Colchester.

I now come to the very essential point as to how far the Acts have been successful in diminishing disease among the women. On this part of the question it is most important that the statements made by Mr. McLaren should not be allowed to pass without contradiction, for his deductions from the figures given in the Government Return are not less erroneous than those to which I have already referred.

Mr. McLaren states, "That these Acts have not been generally effective in checking disease is further proved from the results shown by the Government tables,—that the total number of women sent to the Lock Hospitals was, in 1867, only 1,977; in 1868, it had increased to 4,363; and, in 1869, it was 4,767. It should be particularly noticed that in nearly every town or district there is an increase in 1869 over 1868; and no new district, except Colchester, was included in the table in 1869, and it sent only 142 patients in 1869."

The following table, which I have compiled from the quarterly abstract returns made by the police, will show the real facts of the case, and the fallacy of Mr. McLaren's assertions. Commencing from the first quarter of 1868, and it is unnecessary to go further back than this, it gives the number of hospital beds provided, the proportion of women found diseased to the number on the register, and also the proportion of cases of disease to the number of examinations made.

Number of hospital beds provided.	Period.	Proportion per cent. of women diseased to the number of women on the register, calculated upon the number remaining at the end of the previous quarter, together with the new cases added during the current quarter.			Proportion per cent. of cases of disease to the number of examinations made.			Average number of examinations per quarter of each woman on the register.
		Number of Women.	Number Diseased.	Ratio per cent.	Number of Examinations.	Cases of Disease.	Ratio per cent.	
	1868.							
348	1st quarter	1955	811*	46.5	1274	811	63.6	0.6
484	2nd "	2583	1094	42.3	2212	1094	49.4	0.8
517	3rd "	2966	1296	43.6	3307	1296	39.1	1.1
517	4th "	2899	1220	42.	4668	1220	26.1	1.6
	1869.							2.3
542	1st quarter	3020	1254	41.5	6974	1254	17.9	
582	2nd "	3006	1226	40.7	8037	1226	15.2	2.6
582	3rd "	2958	1133	38.3	9745	1133	11.6	3.2
582	4th "	2883	1092	37.8	9922	1092	11.	3.4
	1870.							
672	1st quarter	3467	1249	36.	12342	1249	9.1	3.5
672	2nd "	3775	1027	27.2	13638	1227	7.5	3.6
672	3rd "	3672	993	24.3	13139	993	7.5	3.5

From this table it will be seen that the increased number of patients sent into Lock Hospitals was simultaneous with the increased number of beds provided for their reception, the increase in the beds having been gradually made as the necessity for it became apparent. This increase was required partly on account of the addition of new districts, partly on account of the necessity of providing additional accommodation in the old districts. The increased number of

* The numbers for the annual and quarterly periods do not exactly correspond, one set of tables having been made up to the last *Saturday*, the other to the last *day* of the respective periods. The discrepancy, however, in no way affects the general results.

patients is in no way inconsistent with a diminishing ratio of disease, which was in fact, as the table shows, steadily taking place. It merely indicates increased efficiency in the administration of the Acts. Thus it was not till the middle of 1868 that enough beds were provided to receive all the women who were diseased, and it was only then that periodical examination of *all* those known to the police began to be regularly practised. It was not in fact till the beginning of 1869 that the system can be said to have been brought into anything like good working order.

It is quite true that the number of Lock Hospital admissions increased, but it was solely for the reasons which I have just stated, while reference to the table will show the significant fact that from the time when the Acts began to be properly enforced, there was a constant diminution in the number of patients, excepting when an increase was caused by the inclusion of new districts. Thus the increase at the beginning of 1869, was caused by the inclusion of Colchester; and the larger increase at the commencement of 1870, by the addition of Greenwich, Winchester, Dover, Deal, Canterbury, Maidstone, Gravesend, and Southampton.

But a better indication of the diminution of disease which has been effected by the Acts, will be found by referring to the percentage of women found diseased to the number of women on the register. It will be seen that this ratio was diminishing, even under the imperfect administration of 1868, during which year it fell from 46·5 to 42 per cent., but since that time the decrease has been much more marked, the rate having gradually fallen to 24·3 in the third quarter of 1870, in spite of the unfavourable influence exerted by the addition of so many new districts. There is, in fact, every reason to believe that the minimum obtainable has not yet been nearly reached.

The table also gives the ratio of cases of disease to the number of examinations made, a point of considerable interest, and which likewise shows a constant and large diminution. This mode of calculation does not, however, in my opinion, afford so reliable a criterion of the diminution of disease as the other, unless the examinations are conducted with equal frequency in the several periods compared; otherwise, frequent examinations will unduly diminish the ratio of disease, and exaggerate the apparent benefit; but, according to the first mode of calculation, frequent examinations would have rather the opposite effect, by ensuring its more early and certain detection.

In the Government Report, Chatham is mentioned as an instance of the remarkable decrease of disease amongst the

women. The report says that at this station in 1868, the disease was 70 per cent.; in 1869, 18 per cent.; in 1870, 6 per cent. In commenting on this statement, Mr. McLaren says, "I am prepared to prove from the tables themselves that the very opposite of this is the truth; that in Chatham the disease had enormously increased," p. 8. The only proof which he offers, however, is the fact shown in the tables, that during those years the number of cases admitted to hospital has increased from 277 to 697, a fact which, as I have already explained, affords no criterion of an increased rate of disease, but merely indicates that the increased number of beds at length allowed *all* those who were diseased to be sent into hospital.

There can be no doubt that the diminution of disease at this station has been very considerable, and that Mr. McLaren is entirely in error in asserting the contrary; but at the same time it appears to me that some error must have occurred on this point in the calculation in the Government Report, which has caused the rate of decrease to be over-estimated. The correct reckoning, if made on the number of examinations, and for the whole of each year, would be 41 per cent. for 1868; 15·7 per cent. for 1869; and 6·1 per cent. for 1870. Or if, instead of the whole year, the comparison were made between the first quarters of each year, the figures would be 58·1 for the first quarter of 1868; 23 for that of 1869; and 6·1 for that of 1870. The other mode of calculation, viz., that based upon the proportion found diseased to the number on the register, which is, I think, the better method, gives a percentage of 66·7 for the first quarter of 1868; of 63·7 for the first quarter of 1869; and of 25·7 for the first quarter of 1870. Either way the fact of a large diminution is unmistakably demonstrated.

Another mode of showing very conclusively the diminution of disease is afforded by the fact that a large number of the Lock Hospital beds have been for some time unoccupied. At Devonport, where there are 162 beds, the daily average number occupied from September 30, 1868, to September 30, 1869, was 126·08, but from that date to the 30th September, 1870, the daily average was only 76·03, and on the 22nd November, 1870, only 46 beds were occupied. At the London Lock Hospital, with 150 beds, there has for some months past not been an average of more than 50 beds occupied. At Aldershot, with 100 beds, 40 beds were vacant in the middle of the present month. At Portsmouth, with 120 beds, only 84 are occupied. At Chatham, with 88 beds, only 63 are occupied. Now, as the whole number of beds

provided was not more than sufficient to enable the provisions of the Act to be properly carried out at the end of 1868, the number of beds now vacant is excellent evidence of the good results which have been obtained.

The good effect of legislative supervision in gradually lessening the *severity* of the disease, does not admit of numerical expression; the alteration in its quality, however, is quite as strongly marked as the diminution in quantity, and is of equal, if not greater, importance. The severe and shocking cases which are so frequently seen in the wards of voluntary Lock Hospitals, are almost unknown in the hospitals receiving patients under these Acts. The more important form of disease, viz., syphilis, soon becomes singularly mild in character, and quickly amenable to treatment, both in its primary and secondary manifestations; while a considerable majority of the patients now admitted are suffering solely from the milder form of disease, or gonorrhœa. I can testify to this from personal observation at the London Lock Hospital, where women have been received under the Contagious Diseases Acts since the passing of the first Act in 1864. When patients are first admitted from a new district the cases are quite equal in severity to those which I am accustomed to see in the voluntary wards of the same Hospital, and nothing can be more striking than the alteration which takes place in this respect after a district has been for six months subjected to compulsory inspection. This is a fact of great interest, and tells strongly in favour of the system; it is one of which even those who have interested themselves in the results of these Acts are not yet, I think, sufficiently aware.

In Mr. McLaren's opinion, "The most disgusting and disgraceful part of these statistics is, that women were 'Medically Examined' 49,389 times during the operation of these Acts, and 'found free from disease;' and 14,260 examinations took place in which a different result was found. In these 49,389 cases the poor women have, therefore, been put to the torture on suspicion, and acquitted by the executioners of the law of the crime laid to their charge."

There is another side to this question. These women have elected to gain their living by an immoral and degrading traffic in their persons, the result of which is that they will, if left alone, contract venereal disease at the rate of about 300 per cent. per annum, or in other words each woman will become diseased on an average three times in each year. If left to themselves they will, when diseased, spread contagion to all with whom they associate, until they are compelled, by the physical suffering consequent upon the

natural aggravation of their disease, to desist from their occupation. Under the Contagious Diseases Acts they have the advantage that the disease which they are certain to contract sooner or later is discovered at the earliest possible period, when it is most readily amenable to treatment. They have also a comfortable home provided for them, in which they are detained and kindly cared for until they are cured. Thus while they are prevented doing mischief to others, they are at the same time prevented doing even greater mischief to themselves.

No "*crime* is laid to their charge," and they are *not* put to any "*torture*" whatever. They obtain the inestimable advantages I have enumerated at the price of attending for a periodical examination conducted with decency and privacy by an experienced examining surgeon in the presence of a nurse. It is contrary to common sense to pretend that women who practice promiscuous prostitution for their livelihood are further degraded, or that their feelings are outraged, by such a proceeding as this. I know, indeed, from constant inquiry, that it is not the examination to which they object; but when they do complain, which is comparatively seldom, it is of the irksomeness of compulsory detention in hospital until the surgeon can certify to their cure.

With respect to the alleged "*torture*," I can positively affirm, from an experience of more than 20 years, that the instrumental examination of a *healthy* woman when conducted by a competent person, is unattended with any suffering whatever. In cases of disease, such an examination is occasionally painful, but in that event it will, I presume, be admitted that the pain is a necessary adjunct to the medical treatment, and has its countervailing advantages. But in the great majority of cases in which it would be painful, it may be dispensed with as unnecessary; the disease being sufficiently apparent on external inspection alone. It will be, indeed, a public misfortune if the important sanitary experiment now being made by means of the Contagious Diseases Acts, and progressing so successfully, should be interrupted by such artificial and pseudo-philanthropic considerations as these. The injury done to the public health by the spread of venereal disease by uncontrolled prostitution, is incomparably greater than the injury caused, for example, by the sale of diseased meat, yet those who declaim so vehemently against the Contagious Diseases Acts as interfering with the liberty of the subject and the rights of a Briton, have no word of sympathy for the injured salesman or butcher when condemned to fine or imprisonment. And

yet the butcher cannot, like the prostitute, console himself with the reflection that the interference with his liberty to injure others, is associated with the greatest possible personal advantage to himself.

The moral benefits afforded to women under the Contagious Diseases Acts are not less conspicuous than the physical ones. It is surely no small gain that all those passing through the hospitals should have the instruction of the Chaplains, and in many instances of charitable ladies who devote themselves to the work, not to mention the salutary influence exerted over them by matrons and nurses, and I venture to add, medical officers. It is no small gain that they should all have the opportunity of entering homes and reformatories, or of being restored to their friends and to an honest life, through the agency, and often through the intercession of the hospital authorities. The figures given in the Government Report prove that these influences have not been exerted in vain. They show that 385 are known to have married; 451 have entered homes; and 1,249 have been restored to their friends, since the Acts have been in operation. In Plymouth and Devonport, where the most accurate records have been kept, 203 have entered homes, 161 have married, and 693 have returned to their friends. The restoration to friends is not founded on the mere assertion of the girls themselves, but has been in each instance verified by the police. Some few of these might have been reclaimed by private efforts had there been no Contagious Diseases Acts in existence, but the great majority would undoubtedly have been left to fall unaided into the lowest depths of moral depravity and physical disease. And yet the outcry against these Acts is founded mainly on their alleged oppressiveness and injustice, and the degrading influence which they are said to exercise over these women.

The Government Report concludes with the following statement, the truth of which will, I am sure, be vouched for by all who have had practical experience in the matter :—

“The improvement that 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 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." p. 2.

The alternative proposed by many of those who object to the Contagious Diseases Acts is an increased number of Lock Hospitals to which patients should be admitted on the voluntary system. I have myself assisted in carrying out the voluntary system at the London Lock Hospital for more than twenty years, and for the last six years I have seen the voluntary and compulsory systems at work side by side in the same institution. From the exceptional opportunity which I have thus had of witnessing them both, I am daily more and more convinced that nothing but the compulsory periodical examination of prostitutes, and their compulsory detention in hospital till cured, will have any material influence in diminishing the lamentable prevalence of venereal disease amongst the population. Voluntary Lock Hospitals may afford charitable relief to the individual sufferers, but from a sanitary point of view, I believe them to be absolutely useless. From long experience of these women I know them to be, with rare exceptions, far too reckless of consequences to apply for admission, and to seclude themselves for treatment, until their disease has reached a stage which renders it impossible for them to pursue their calling any longer, and until they have done all the mischief of which they are capable. To treat them as *out-patients*, which is now done on so large a scale at the various hospitals and dispensaries, is a positive injury to the public health, by enabling them to practise prostitution with less pain to themselves, and for a longer period, than they would otherwise be enabled to do.