THE TRUTH ABOUT WHITE SLAVERY

truth that the causes of this evil cannot be touched by
law, however perfectly conceived, however perfectly
administered. Those who are obsessed by a frenzy for
legislative measures achieve contentment—and futility.
The slow way is the only way of advance here: education,
a changed social outlook, a gradual reorganisation of
economic conditions, these may remove such causes as are
within our control. And not the wisest of us can prophesy
but that we shall find the primary cause will baffle us at
the end.

But for those of strong feeling these stories of trapping
temporarily altered the appearance of the problem. By
means of them it was made to appear as though neither
education in sex matters, nor a rational teaching of
morality, nor the exercise of circumspection, would avail
the ordinary girl for the ordinary circumstances of life.
She might be carried off against her will at any time.
Before this revelation the forces of reason and experience
were routed, and the cry went up for legislation, for a law
of some kind, of any kind, at once. It is in the light of
this fact that the statements as to such trapping must be
examined.

To one who, like myself, has learned the value of
evidence and the need for the verification of statements
made in emotional movements, there were several remark-
able features of this epidemic of terrible rumours. First
came the element of number. The stories were so
numerous and reported incidents which were said to have
happened within so short a period that a strain was put
upon the credulity of the most willing believer. In the
second place the stories were of an extraordinary nature.
Many of them were clearly incredible—unless the whole
general public were in the conspiracy. Many suggested
that the girls reported as trapped must be either limbless
cripples or mental deficient, and others took it for granted
that any man could control, govern, and dominate any
woman wherever they might be. Then what was
apparently the same story reappeared again and again in
various forms. The detestable final tag, “The door
opened. It was the girl’s father!” was varied by “Her
own brother came into the room!” or “A young man
friend stood before her flushed with shame. He got her

The Truth About White Slavery

By Teresa Billington-Greig

The Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1912 was carried
by stories of the trapping of girls. The sudden clamour
for legislation to which that Act was yielded was created
almost entirely by the statement that unwilling, innocent
girls were forcibly trapped; that by drugs, by false
messages, by feigned sickness, by offers of or requests for
help and assistance, girls were spirited away and never
heard of again; that these missing girls, often quite young
children, were carried off to flats and houses of ill-fame,
there outraged and beaten, and finally transported abroad
to foreign brothels under the control of large vice syndi-
cates.

There have been so many of these stories, and in nature
they have been so disturbing that thousands of simple souls
have been filled with alarm and dismay, a fierce wave of
anger has been evoked leading to a re-introduction of
flogging, and Parliament, the pulpit, and the press, the
three chief public agents of irrational emotion, have all
responded to the sense of horror called forth. Without
this campaign of terrible tales the public would not have
been moved, without it the House of Commons would not
have re-introduced the barbarity of flogging. For it served
to drive out of the national mind the proved commonplace
that the law is of very little value in the underworld of
sexual trading. The law and the policeman have been
shown by long experience to have no educative and little
preventive power. It has been established that the more
severe you make your deterrent punishment the more
cunning and subtilety you develop in those who have to
evade it.

Hence the ordinary citizen who detests exploited
prostitution has no unbalanced desire for legislation at any
price. He, or she, is prepared to face the inescapable
out." The hospital nurse of one tale became the Sister of Mercy or the Rescue Worker of its fellow. The fainting lady fainted in front of three separate West End establishments. The tales of drugged handkerchiefs, sweets, and flowers had so many variants as to create the impression that the homes of the country must be decimated of their daughters by drugging.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the stories was that they were all offered second or third hand, except in the cases in which an individual described what he or she regarded as a suspicious circumstance, which, being once reported, began to circulate as a certainty. There was never a first-hand statement signed, or sworn before a magistrate, or deposited with some responsible body. When a story was questioned it was repeated with emphasis; this was supposed to be proof enough. At most, the person challenged quoted the name of a more prominent person as a believer in the story, and clearly regarded this as fully satisfactory.

Generally, one would not think it necessary to point out how useless such personal guarantees are without evidence to support them. They prove nothing. When some lady or gentleman of position writes or states that such a tale of horror is true we must admit their honest conviction of its truth. But we cannot be expected to know the value of that conviction until we know by what methods the tale has been tested, and what are the characters and qualifications of those supplying the story or verifying it. All such requisite assurances as these have been utterly wanting, and instead of them we have had proof of flagrant carelessness in the use of figures and a persistent use of the most unjustified assumptions. The campaign has been conducted wholly upon such lines, in marked contrast with the course of action taken by the late W. T. Stead, whose revelations were supported by signed or sworn statements obtained from victims and their attendants and from fellow investigators.

A full twelve months ago I suggested to members of the Pass the Bill Committee the necessity for careful investigation as a preliminary to the campaign of urgency upon which they were just embarking. This suggestion was repeated and ignored, and later I learnt by an inadver-
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given by the two who supplied information include one case of suspicion of trapping and two of alleged attempted trapping by motor car. According to the first story, two girls were observed in charge of a woman dressed like a Rescue Worker on Sheffield station in October last, one of the girls appearing dazed, while the other was asleep. The lady responsible for the story spoke to the woman of the party and was answered curtly. This roused her suspicion, and she sought the stationmaster. Failing to find him, she pointed out the group to a ticket inspector from another platform. When she returned with this official the three were gone. Their luggage was marked both Pontefract and Liverpool. The story suggests to me some weary Irish travellers who had crossed the channel in disagreeable weather and were on their way to Pontefract. But all is too vague to prove or disprove anything. The girls were not spoken to, and the lady does not say whether any trains left that or an adjacent platform during her absence. Yet when I question her deductions, she asks me if it has never occurred to me “to investigate the truth of murder.” But surely in the latter case there is a corpse!

The other cases are supplied by a lady who is a member of the Pass the Bill Committee, and a speaker, and are given in support of her statement that the motor-car was being increasingly used for the trapping of girls. She claims to have investigated two cases in Richmond district and to have heard of others, but she gives no names or addresses for verification, although she supplies information and references upon another point. One of the gentlemen written to, a knight, told a story of the trapping of an innocent girl by a man and a woman, who seized her in the public street, and walked her off between them. The girl appealed to a shopkeeper and a policeman, but by representing the girl to be insane the couple got off with their victim. In his speech the knight said the story was vouched for by an eminent barrister; in his letter he refuses to disclose this name. Another gentleman says that it is within his own personal knowledge that attempts have been made to abduct girls and women by motor-car and other vehicles, but refuses to supply either instances or proof, saying that he “is engaged in the verification of certain facts for certain definite ends,” and “cannot give away information.” Proof tardily sought is evidently to be reserved for the elect! This correspondent admits the existence of many myths, but claims that “there is a substratum of truth, and the truth is bad.”

An application to a K.C., asking whether I could purchase or consult the report of a conjoint committee which he referred to in a speech as having “revealed and brought to light a condition of things that was very appalling and barely credible,” was thought to be sufficiently answered by a reference to the reply of the secretary of the association to which he adhered, although it contained no single word bearing on this report.

Among writers, those obviously dealing in fiction or sensationalism were ignored unless the obvious fiction was presented as a fact. A number of those approached because of written statements were correspondents of The Awakener (a journal dealing wholly with the social evil, which was started in November of last year from the office of The Men’s Society for Women’s Rights); others had written independently. A series of important questions upon unsigned statements contained in this paper were put to the editor, a Mr. Jamrach, and he was asked to forward letters to certain correspondents who could not otherwise be traced. Up to the present time he has not only refrained from acknowledgment or reply, but he has returned the letters sent for forwarding with the statement that he does “not know the addresses”! As each of these correspondents reports a case or cases of trapping or attempted trapping, or retails stories of well-known procurers, this editorial statement is illuminating.

The cases covered in these letters or unsigned paragraphs include the story of the Hampstead hairdresser’s daughter, also given in a letter to The Standard, two cases of the fainting lady device, a motor-car attempt at Shepherd’s Bush, several cases of drugging, and the story of the sham hospital nurse.

The Hampstead hairdresser’s daughter was alleged to have been carried off in a motor-car from her father's shop by a man who brought a false message purporting to be...
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Mrs. Bramwell Booth's cases are: one false advertisement case from France, one beautiful Italian beguiled to Australia by promises of employment and wealth, and one German girl "excited" over to London and taken to a bad house from which she could not escape, although she was able to dispatch a post-card asking for help. It will be observed that all the victims are foreigners. Is this accidental, or because native victims are not available? But the only case supplied which appears to fall within the scope of the inquiry is the remaining one, which I quote almost in full:

"A young man went to Holborn station to meet his sister, who was coming from Germany. He had had a fight with her. On several occasions he had been late at business, and had been told by his manager that if it had not been free time to say he would be late, as the train was due at the station at a much earlier time than he needed to be at business. . . . However, the train was very late - the young man saw that - he must go off and leave his sister to go alone. . . . A man on the station seemed to take the position, and asked the young fellow if he had come to meet someone. He had come to meet someone. He carried his case and found that all would be well. But his sister has never been heard of since!"

I sought further enlightenment by asking at which Holborn station the girl from Germany was expected to arrive, whether she was coming willingly to keep house for her brother, what was his name and address, what evidence the Salvation Army had that his story was true, what was the date of the disappearance, and when the Army was last in touch with the young man?

I am now told that:

"The young man . . . is not willing for his sister's case to be made public or details given further."

As the latest reports of the National Vigilance Association supplied me by Mr. Coote, the secretary, did not contain any cases of forcible trapping, I wrote asking if any could be supplied to me. The reply was:

"The reason why no reference is made to cases of that kind is that we have not had any such to deal with. . . . During the last twelve months many stalky stories have been in circulation respecting the depopulation of English girls who have fared off to Buenos Ayres in November last. She informed me that this case had been "dealt with" from Scotland Yard, but the Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis states that it was investigated and found to be "without foundation.""

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I beg and dragging of young women. In each such case reported to this office endeavours have been made to get at the correct facts, but I was not successful in tracing any one of those rumours to its source."

Anxious, it may be, to save the credit of his colleagues and co-workers, he adds:

"It does not follow that the particular cases referred to did not happen. . . . I have little doubt that the stories told were based on actual facts."

Similar crushing testimony against the alarmists is supplied by Mrs. Hunter, secretary of the National Vigilance Association of Scotland, who states:

"We have not come across any cases of forcible trapping of unwilling girls for the White Slave Traffic. . . . We were not acquainted with White Slave Traders working on this line, nor, so far as we know, are there any working from Glasgow. On the contrary, all the cases of attempted trapping which have inwards been impossibly have been of the sort that the man who have been knowledge of them is able to find the information does not want to be brought into. Comment is unnecessary.

It thus appears that official vigilance societies do not countenance these terrible tales with which the country has been inundated. Their acting officers have no knowledge of this class of case. Yet outside of the police and the brothels themselves, no persons can claim to have more opportunity. If they have no proved cases to offer, what must be thought of the individuals who glibly quote stories which they cannot prove upon the authority of the associations that do not profess to have any to prove? The honour of the associations may come unscathed from this inquiry, but what of the honour of these individuals? But this is not all. To the foregoing weighty pronouncements we must add the equally weighty opinion of Assistant Commissioner F. S. Bullock, the Central Authority in England for the Repression of the White Slave Traffic. I was referred to him by Mr. Arthur Lee, M.P., when I asked for authentication of statements made in the Commons. I am afraid that there is little support for Mr. Lee's views in Mr. Bullock's reply to my questions. He says:

"I cannot call to mind a single case of the forcible trapping of a girl or a woman by drugs, false promises, or physical force during the last ten years that has been authenticated or proved. I should say such cases were very rare indeed. . . . The average number of cases of prostitution in London is about three per annum, and none of these are really cases of trapping."
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In reply to a definite question embodying a phrase used in the House of Commons by Mr. Lee, he replies:

"I do not agree that White Slave Traffic swarmed in London, before the passing of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill."

And with scrupulous fairness he adds:

"A considerable number of men, chiefly foreigners, who live on the prostitution of women and are suspected of being procurers have certainly left their usual haunts in London since the passing of the Act." But this surely may be due to their desire to escape the rigour of the new Act against those who live upon the immoral earnings of women. The offence is entered against them; the other is only suspected. Most of us would prefer a change of residence to the risk of hogging. Having answered my question categorically, Mr. Bullock continues:

"I should like to say that, of course, I have heard of stories, especially since the agitation about the Act of seven began, about girls being trapped or decoyed away. I have made searching inquiries into every case in which any really tangible facts, capable of being tested, has been given, and I have never yet been satisfied of the truth of a single one of these stories. Every story has melted away at the application of any serious test. Most of the stories are the result of hysteria or nerves."

He concludes:

"There is no doubt great exaggeration upon the subject of the White Slave Traffic, though, of course, there are some such cases. . . ." After these repudiations from the inside, those who desire the public to accept their stories will have to produce very conclusive evidence indeed.

To this evidence from specialists must be added the utter lack of personal acquaintance with the trade or any of its manifestations which is revealed by the returns from social and public workers. Sixty forms containing four questions were sent out, and thirty-nine returns received, of which three were blank for such reasons as the addressees being abroad. Of the rest there is only one, a magistrate, who does not give either a categorical negative or a reply of general negative significance to the two questions:

1. Have you in your public work or private life met with an instance of trapping of a young girl for the White Slave traffic?
2. Have you met with any fully proved case of attempted trapping?

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The exception, a Glasgow Bailie, supplies full details of a case of seduction under promise of marriage, in which the girl was afterwards constrained by the man to earn money on the streets. This Bailie says:

"The Agitation of the last few years has done much to discourage this traffic. There are very few cases coming to my notice now, and I have never heard of one being successfully carried out."

So that the solitary exception is really not an exception.

"I have no case of trapping to quote, and his evidence tends strongly against its frequency.

The remaining respondents include eight Wardens of the Women's Settlements, London and provincial, of whom six have occasionally gone to the rescue of some girl who I felt sure was in danger of being trapped, but the danger has been too indefinite. . . . She adds, "The danger to our girls is from much more to a low standard of morality than from any attempts to entrap or kidnap them."

The officials of girls' clubs are similarly unanimous.

One states: "We have only recently come into contact with unqualified negatives from the Chairman of the National Organisation of Girls' Clubs, and also from the Convener of the Detective and Rescue Committee of the N.U.W.W., as well as from officials of the Women's Co-operative Guild, women's trade unions, employment bureaux, and emigration societies, and of course, three others, and three magistrates, a man and woman city councillors, and two women Poor Law Guardians reply in the same terms, as do a miscellaneous group of others.

The two police court workers approached are entirely without knowledge of this phase of evil. Mr. Thomas Holmes, of the Howard Association, and twenty-three years a Police Court Missionary, replies with "Never" twice repeated. He writes:

"You will notice that I say that I have never known of a girl being trapped, I have never even heard of one, excepting through common report.

Mr. Holmes, when I had nearly thirty years' connection with the police courts, the prisons, and the swept women of London, and my own conviction is that the matter is greatly exaggerated.

Mrs. Eleanor Carey, sixteen years Police Court Missionary and Probation Officer at Thames Police Court, is equally emphatic. She says:
## CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT INQUIRY.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Edinburgh</th>
<th>Glasgow</th>
<th>Southampton</th>
<th>Portsmouth</th>
<th>Stoke-on-Trent</th>
<th>Leeds</th>
<th>Bath</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How many girls and women were reported missing during 1912?</td>
<td>23 &amp; 88</td>
<td>90 &amp; 182</td>
<td>13 &amp; 22</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>(Roughly) 1 traced</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How many were traced?</td>
<td>50 &amp; 31</td>
<td>69 &amp; 40</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How many were proved to have fallen into the hands of procurers?</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>2 abducted</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Generally</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Did responsible persons always inform police when relatives reported missing?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Generally</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Generally</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
<td>to do as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How many boys and men were reported missing during the first three months of 1912?</td>
<td>11 &amp; 46</td>
<td>26 &amp; 53</td>
<td>6 &amp; 3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How many were traced?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>(No resident, but suspected procurer passed through)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. How many girls and women were reported missing during the first three months of 1912?</td>
<td>129 &amp; 69</td>
<td>256 &amp; 379</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>All except abandoned babies</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SECTION A.</strong> Before the passing of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1912, were the police authorities acquainted with any known or suspected procurers with whom they could not interfere because they did not then possess the power of arrest on suspicion? If so, how many?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SECTION B.</strong> Were these procurers known to carry on an organised traffic in trapped and deceived girls?</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SECTION C.</strong> What methods of trapping girls have been employed by procurers within the experience of the police?</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
tion which reduces the matter from bestiality to the worst possible devillishness.

We have achieved nothing for the victims of exploited prostitution by this panic and punitive Act. Those responsible for it may have obtained ease of mind, the selfish satisfaction of having accomplished something. But that is merely the measure of their folly. For the rest they have given emphatic justification to those who question the responsibility of women in public affairs: they have provided arms and ammunition for the enemy of women's emancipation. The Fathers of the old Church made a mess of the world by teaching the Adam story and classing women as unclean; the Mothers of the new Church are threatening the future by the whitewashing of women and the doctrine of the uncleanness of men.
THE ENGLISH REVIEW
Edited by AUSTIN HARRISON
JUNE 1913

Poetry:
Geoffrey Cookson
Wifrid Tharley

Writing Novels (ii)
Arnold Bennett

Our "Melancholy" Hymnal
Prof. W. H. D. Rouse

The Man With Two Mouths
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Spontaneous Generation
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The Correspondence of Nietzsche with Brandes

The Truth about the White Slave Traffic
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