

It is frequently said that the interests of women and children are safe in the hands of men—in hands, that is, which have not even tried in any effective way so far to defend innocence and childhood and youth from the bitterest shame and degradation and disease, but have allowed them to be sold for the enrichment of men. And it is not only the men directly at the back of this gigantic crime who profit from these broken lives. Ordinary men and women drawing their incomes from unknown sources, which their brokers assure them to be “reliable” and “sound concerns,” are often helping to finance, and are ignorantly living on, this iniquitous system. And in indirect ways, all those who profit by the labor of sweated workers, who in a natural desire to be economical buy “cheap” ready-made goods, are encouraging the under-payment of women workers, and so leaving them more exposed to the dangers of poverty and the wiles of the White Slave Agents. It is true that men have tried now and then to put down the widespread evil, but they have never tried in the right way. They have attempted punishment of the women, especially of those who, having been degraded beyond their own power to rise again, are put in charge of infamous houses; but they have not attempted to punish the men who frequent those houses and by their criminal “demand” encourage the tragic “supply.” All the legislation they have attempted has been **penal legislation**, and as Mrs. Pethnick Lawrence says, “because they were dealing not merely with a trade that could be killed by penal laws, but with much bigger things, because they were dealing with human hearts and human passions, they failed. You do not help people to be good by putting them in prison, by branding them, or by flogging them.”

“But the traffic in Black Slaves was killed when it was attacked financially, first by legislation and then by the administration of the law. That is to say, laws were passed making it illegal to capture black men, to ship them away from their native land and to sell

them for purposes of industry. Then the high seas were policed. Great vigilance was exercised. A suspected ship, when sighted, was pursued. If slaves were discovered as part of the cargo, the whole ship was confiscated. In this way the risks of the trade became so great and the profits so small that it was not worth while to continue it. And so this traffic died.”

The trade in White Slaves is even more profitable than the other. Its promoters grow fabulously rich by the capture and sale of girls, not for purposes of industry, but for purposes of vice. And the moment women have the Vote they will have sufficient power over legislation to insist on having this trade killed.

No woman who is content to sit still, trusting to a vague “some day,” or declaring that the time is not yet ripe for her enfranchisement, while this ghastly traffic grows and grows, and lives are ruined every day, is worthy of her womanhood and its high calling.

DEFEAT

Discouraged? Nay, never a whit!
 We stand in the storm and the night,
 But the torch of the truth being lit,
 What wind shall extinguish it quite?
 East, west, north and south may combine
 'Gainst the flame that we kindled
 with care;
 Serenely, no less, it shall shine —
 Who said that defeat was despair?

Shall we swerve for the thorns in the track?
 On, on, though they pierce us and rend!
 Seek our wounds on the breast, not the back,
 In the field where we fight to the end!
 We fail not and faint not, nor fly;
 Who wars for the Right, for the True,
 Has the future for friend and ally;
 Has Time and Eternity, too.