break down his health than the change and the delight of seeing his own country again did to restore it. His first objective on the Coast was naturally Kumara, and there with pardonable pride he led the way to his old homestead, and pointed to the trees that he had planted, and the land that he had cleared with his own hands. Everywhere along his route he knew the settlers, and the formal business of the day was constantly delayed while he "yarned" with old miners and took tea and chatted at the door of wayside cottages with their wives. At Dillmanstown he stopped in the middle of his speech to shake hands with an old lady whom he recognised in the crowd. At Hokitika, where the popular enthusiasm had naturally concentrated itself in a very demonstrative form, he was presented with a silver service of plate as a memento of his twenty-five years of work for the district; and in the inevitable speech of the day he dwelt with truly excusable emphasis upon the fact that all that he had achieved he had won for himself without money or social influence, or any of the adventitious aids by which popularity and political power are so often secured. The record of the events of this long, busy week may not appear imposing in print, but no ordinary language can do justice to the enthusiasm and the affection displayed by the good people of the West Coast for the great man who was still to them as he had been twenty-five years before, plain "Dick Seddon."

THE NEW LIBERALS AND THE VOUCHER.

In 1905, the Premier was back at work again as hard as ever; and on the whole last year may be fairly classed as one of the most eventful in his long career. The sudden rise and the equally sudden collapse of the self-styled "New Liberals" was one of the sensational episodes of the year. As we have already indicated, the Premier, though the most progressive of Liberal statesmen in modern times, was no reckless revolutionary; and he was frequently compelled to exercise all his authority to restrain the ill-directed zeal of the political "cranks" who always form the "Extreme Left" of any party of reform. The "New Liberals" professed various irrational and dogmatic political beliefs, but they were united in one definite sentiment—strong antagonism toward Mr. Seddon. One of the most lamentable incidents in our political history was the famous Voucher case, in which the Premier's enemies struck at him through his son. Mr. F. M. B. Fisher, member for Wellington, during the debate on Imprest Supply, alleged that an unauthorised payment had been made to Captain Seddon, the eldest son of the Premier. He gave the number and amount of the supposed voucher; but an investigation by the Departmental officials revealed the interesting fact that while there was a voucher corresponding to the number and amount quoted, it was signed not by "R. J. S. Seddon," but by Richard Sneddon, agent for Anderson's, Limited, and that the payment had been made in the ordinary way of business for stores supplied to the Railway Department. Mr. Fisher admitted that he had obtained his information from certain officials in the Christchurch Post Office, who still maintained that they had seen a voucher bearing the signature of Captain Seddon. The Auditor-General, therefore, inquired into the matter, and reported that no such voucher existed or could have existed, that no such payment could have been made, and that Captain Seddon had never received a cheque on the Government for this amount or for any payment outside his regular salary. To remove all possible ground for apprehension as to the adequacy of control over the public funds, a Commission consisting of three Supreme Court Judges was appointed to make a further investigation, and they confirmed in every detail the decisions previously reached. No more complete exculpation could have been desired by the Premier and his best friends; and Mr. Seddon had the consolation of knowing that throughout this unfortunate affair he had the sympathy of the country entirely with him. The sensational visit of the "New Liberals" to Christchurch and Dunedin while the case was pending, and their desperate efforts to exploit it to the discredit of the Premier, roused just and widespread indignation; while Mr. Seddon, though placed in a very trying position, maintained perfect dignity and courtesy throughout this acrimonious controversy.

THE COMING ELECTIONS.

Apart from this regrettable incident, the session of 1904 presented many features of interest, and a large amount of legislation was got through. The increase the Old Age Pension, the necessary amendment of the Shops and Offices Act, the establishment of a Teachers' Superannuation Fund, the Harvester Trust Act, and a Workers' Dwellings Act, were alone sufficient to render the 1904 session remarkable. The Maori Land Settlement Act was a conscientious attempt to deal with a difficult but urgent question. The report of the Lands Commission was laid upon the table, but beyond supplying an immense amount of useful material as the groundwork of future legislation, it led to no practical results. With the object of discussing various matters of industrial interest, the Premier proposed to call a "Labour Parliament," to be held in Christchurch in 1906; but owing to opposition from various quarters the project was abandoned.

The session closed at the end of October, and Mr. Seddon, in spite of the exertions which he had put forth during the preceding six months, at once threw himself heart and soul into the work of a strenuous electioneering campaign. In spite of the comparative inefficiency of the Opposition leaders and the decay of the old-time Conservatism, the politicians and journalists who opposed Mr. Seddon constantly assured their audiences that the tide had turned and that the Liberals were at last to meet their Waterloo. Mr. Seddon was accused of "corrupt" administration, of bribing the electors by doles of public money, of favouring Westland at the expense of all other districts—he was denounced as an autocrat, a tyrant, a demagogue who had long deluded the people, but who was now at last unmasked; an opportunist, bent only on retaining office, whose wild "Socialistic" schemes had gone far to ruin the country, and might eventually succeed. But Mr. Seddon went on his way unheeding. He toured the colony from North to South, visiting all the chief political centres, and exasperating his opponents by the pertinacity with which he followed them inside the sacred limits of their own constituencies. In all, he delivered 37 speeches during this campaign, and employed every legitimate expedient to ensure the success of his party at the polls. In his speech at Auckland, where his indomitable persistency enabled him to triumph over a carefully-planned attempt at obstruction, he referred to two schemes which he had proposed to lay before Parliament next session—a national insurance system, whereby savings could be subsidised by the State, and a plan to secure the wife's interest in the family home by making it inalienable without her consent. These two proposals show how earnestly he was still bent on legislating on behalf of what he called "the humanities." One of the most effective methods he employed of putting his views before the electors was the manifesto which he issued during the campaign; and the interest that attaches to this document, as an exposition of progressive Liberalism by the Liberal leader, is so great, that we reproduce it here in full.

MR. SEDDON'S MANIFESTO.

At the last moment, before the people went to the polls in December, Mr. Seddon issued an appeal to their confidence and loyalty, covering the whole scope of the work and policy of his Administration. We need no apology for reproducing this important document in full, as a fitting record of the hopes, the efforts, and ambitions of the great Liberal statesman:—

In a democratic country, a Government must justify its existence by its usefulness or quit, and on Wednesday next this test will be applied to my party, and myself for the fifth time.

I became a colleague of my late chief, John Ballance, in 1890, and I am now the only member of the present Ministry who has been continuously in office since that date. I must share the responsibility, as I am entitled to share the credit, for the acts and policy of the present Administration since its commencement. To the inquiry as to who was his best general, Napoleon said, "He who made the fewest mistakes;" and a political leader who has been eleven years in office, and has tried many reforms for the first time in the world's history, may fairly ask to be judged, not by his success alone and not by his failures only, but by the balance of public gain due to his leadership.

For fifteen years I have devoted my life as a Minister to my country; and now, as a final word before the verdict of the people is again taken in respect of my colleagues and myself, I desire to briefly remind my fellow-colonists of our claims to a continuance of their confidence, and to put on record the aims which have guided us in the past, and which, if we are permitted, will guide us in the future.

I believe that the cardinal aim of Government is to provide the conditions which will reduce want, and permit the very largest possible number of its people to be healthy, happy human beings. The life, the health, the intelligence, and the morals of a nation count for more than riches, and I would rather have this country free from want and squalor and unemployed than the home of multi-millionaires. The extremes of poverty and wealth crush the self-respect of the poor, and produce the arrogance of the idle rich. This engenders class bitterness. I have tried to provide such social and economic conditions in this colony as will prevent that helpless subjection of one class to another, so widespread in the older lands. A spirit of self-respecting independence already marks our people, and I would have the title "New Zealander" imply, the world over, a type of manhood; strenuous, independent, and humane. The practical reformer must often be content with small profits and slow returns; he must proceed piecemeal, and by short and steady stages, removing obstructions to, and providing facilities for, a higher development of the people as a whole. I understand this to be modern humanitarian legislation, and I claim that this spirit pervades all the progressive laws and State experiments that my Administration has tried during the last fifteen years. Let me recall our humanities (as I prefer to style our measures), and classify them in the following order:—

(1) Humanity for the mother and the infant.
(2) Humanity for the young.
(3) Humanity for the worker.
(4) Humanity for the old and feeble.

I am not afraid of ridicule by beginning my review with the Midwives Act. The child is father of the man, and certainly the earlier the welfare of the infant is considered the better for itself and for the community.

The Midwives Act, passed last year, is an attempt to give this truth practical expression. How much infantile mortality and debility, and how much unnecessary maternal suffering is due to unskilful midwifery is known only fully by the medical profession, and this Act provides for a system of registration which will prevent this waste of life and health. State action should still further protect the child by ensuring purer food, purer air, and better nursing. Man begins his life, as he ends it, in helpless dependence upon a nurse, and the better equipped that nurse is, the better for us all. I will endeavour to express this practically by a system of paid Government nurses, whose skill and kindness may save life and lessen the load of sorrow and suffering. Could we not afford to train and keep a number of nurses in each large centre to perform these duties, and, in smaller centres, some such smaller number as the needs of the poor require? The silent martyrs of life are the low-waged workers' wives, who keep the cradle full and bear the double burden of poverty and maternity. Can we not profitably lighten their cross by this simple humanity? One great, large-hearted man in England declared that most of the children of the poor there were not so much born into life as damned into it, and this reproach should have no truth in this prosperous land. The wages of the working classes seldom permit of comfort and skilled attendance, and, feeling this, we have taken steps to establish maternity homes at Wellington and Dunedin, and are proceeding to extend them to other centres of this colony. My desire is that these homes will be available to all whose means will not permit of private comfort and skilled attendance. My earnest hope is that this humanity may give the child a better chance of life and the mother a lighter burden to bear.

The school succeeds the cradle, and the education of the young is in importance second only to their physical well-being. During the term the present Government have been in office, our educational system has been extended and reorganised. Our system is now free, from the primary schools to the University, to every child of promise, and a toll of fees is no longer levied on his high road of learning. Teachers' salaries have been increased £100,000 a year, and their incomes no longer unfairly follow a falling-off or rise in our school attendance. The last Conservative Government increased the school age, reduced capitation allowance, abolished training schools, instituted the strict as against the general average, and then boasted they had saved £36,000 a year. To save this coin they sacrificed our children; and economy at that price is dearly bought. I must admit that during my term of office the cost of education in New Zealand has increased nearly a quarter of a million, but I glory in an expenditure which has given, and is giving, our children an educational equipment as good as can be found in any part of the world. Our technical schools are flourishing and increasing, and the harvest is rich, while the number of students matriculating at our universities places us, in proportion to our population, first among countries loving higher education. I believe in the American maxim that every man in a democracy should be equipped to pull his own weight, and education is the surest aid to this. Equality of opportunity involves equality of educational advantages, and where you have this equality the privileged and social castes give place to personal worth and merit. I would extend our school system still, and teach even in the schools of our agricultural districts the technical, scientific knowledge which will enable our farmers to win the very best results from nature.