

The White Ribbon

FOR GOD AND HOME AND HUMANITY

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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE Women of New Zealand. PRESIDENTIAL REPORT.

The late Mrs. Sievwright, President of the National Council, had prepared, a few weeks before her death, her presidential report which she intended to read at a meeting of the Executive, then arranged to be held early in the year. The report was read at the meeting of the Executive held in Christchurch last month, and the passing of the writer to higher spheres of activity added to the interest with which it was received.

The report stated that the prevailing problem of countries older than New Zealand seemed to be how to cope with the heaping up of well-nigh unmanageable wealth side by side with and to a large extent, dependent on degrading and hopeless poverty. New Zealand had as yet no millionaires. They were, however, doing something towards the exclusion of such useless excrescences on the body politic, and much towards the prevention of slums. The worship of the golden calf was popular in the colony as elsewhere, but thanks to a mixed system of national education (mixed both as regarded the sex and the position in life of teachers and taught), to more equitable arrangements between employer and employed, to a growing respect for independence, and also to a growing

Contempt for Parasites and Idlers,

class distinctions were becoming relatively less marked, privileges more discredited, and justice more attainable. Under such general conditions, in such less antagonistic environment, women had their share of advantage, and it was hoped that in the breaking up of social barriers they were slowly but surely

preparing the way for the saner, more ideal conditions which many women and some men dreamed of for New Zealand. She would try to trace briefly what living movement had taken place in New Zealand since the date of her last report to the Women's Institute in August, 1902. First she would speak of the cause of temperance. On November 25 of



Mrs. F. Cole,

President of Christchurch W.C.T.U.

that year the triennial Parliamentary election resulted in a victory to Mr. Seddon's Government, but also in victory at the local option polls to one great section of reformers not much loved by such Government, namely, the so-called Prohibitionists. In 1896 five electorates had a bare majority of votes for "no-license"; in 1899, fourteen electorates; in 1902, thirty-four. It was carried at the last election by the legally-required three-fifths majority in six; and "reduction" of licenses

in eight districts. She quoted the "Prohibitionist" as saying that at three polls, 1896, 1899, and 1902, the publicans had not gained 6000 votes. In the same time the Prohibitionists had gained 50,000, and with 55,000 young people to be enrolled in 1905 they might confidently look for a further increase in that year of, at least, another 30,000. She might add that the "Trade" was unanimous in ascribing

The Victory to the Woman's Vote.

During the session of 1903, Mr. Seddon tried to introduce liquor legislation interfering with the rights of the people, but he was compelled to withdraw his Bill. Last year it was reintroduced and passed. It was, however, a very different Act from the Bill originally framed, and victory was again with the temperance party. The Local Elections Act was also amended to avoid a recurrence of the scandalous miscarriage of justice known as the "Newtown case." All along the line, then, they might think the temperance cause might be described as a "living movement." While the Council was in Christchurch, in 1904, Mr. Seddon addressed it, by special manifesto, on the subject of Infant Life Preservation. A special meeting was called for the purpose of considering the proposals of the Premier, and its only fruit, so far as Mr. Seddon was concerned, was the Midwives Act, of last session, a welcome, if somewhat crude attempt to remedy a long-standing wrong. The senior member for Christchurch naively wrote to her that never before had he felt so strongly

The Need of Woman's Help

in the House of Representatives; and certainly the united efforts of bachelor and benedict in that debate made funny reading for the pages of "Hansard."