

**WOMEN'S
CHRISTIAN TEMPERANCE
UNION OF NEW ZEALAND.**

ORGANISED 1885.

"For God and Home and Humanity."

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The White Ribbon.

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THURSDAY, JAN. 18, 1912

THE CARE OF THE FEEBLE-MINDED.

THIS serious question is being forced upon our notice by many of our scientists, who are so greatly concerned at the large increase in mental defectives. As is well known the degenerates increase in numbers far more rapidly than the strong and sane. According to Dr Forbes Winslow "this is the most serious and most pressing problem of the present day. There are in Great Britain 1,333,157 lunatics in asylums, and 149,000 feeble-minded degenerates in the community free to become parents. The majority of these are the offspring of drunken or feeble-minded parents. In less than 300 years, unless drastic measures are adopted, there will be

more lunatics and degenerates than sane people among the Western nations." The Duke of Portland stated in a public meeting held in Nottingham recently, "that very little could be done to improve the lot of the very poor, until the Government took action—and he hoped it would do so soon—for the segregation of men and women, who were obviously incapable of taking care of themselves and of earning a living. It could not be doubted that so long as an increasing stream of mentally defective children are growing up, so long will the condition of the people become gradually worse and worse." The Bishop of Southwell at the same meeting said "The present state of things was partly the result of Christianity, in other races such degenerates would be allowed to die. We with Christian knowledge preserved life wherever found, because life is held sacred. It seemed to him the bright side of so much suffering is, that it calls forth Christian love and compassion. That compassion and love, would lead them to prevent those so afflicted from being married or producing children, which could only perpetuate further suffering. Scientific knowledge would help to guide those who have it in their power to provide a remedy." When these questions are considered in the light of common sense, without undue sentimentalism, there must be a true solving of what is admittedly a difficult question. It is feasible and right that these suffering ones, suffering innocently in most cases for the sins of others,—even to the third and fourth generation,—should be cared for, and their lives surrounded with wholesome comfort and pleasure. In country homes, they could find a measure of employment that would enable many to earn at least part of their livelihood. The pleasing pursuits of gardening, farming, fruit growing, poultry raising, and beekeeping could be followed, under competent supervision, by many of both sexes who are mentally deficient. Farm Colonies and other Homes should be provided by the State, graded to suit various cases,

those of similar effect to be gathered together. Women could be trained in laundry work and other indoor occupations, preserving and bottling of fruit grown on the same colony. Wise heads, could not be better employed than by considering a scheme, in all its details, that might prove to be successful. Good women, seeing the need for work of this kind, have not waited for the slow movements of the State but have already established Farm Colonies. Miss Dendy, whose letters and articles in the newspapers have awakened a great deal of the interest now taken in this question, has had a Farm Colony "for those in Lancashire and Cheshire for the past twelve years. In the solving of the difficulty Farm Colonies and Homes must take chief place. Our readers will remember that some time ago an article was inserted in our paper containing particulars of the State Home at Richmond. If prompt and preventive measures are taken at the present moment, in two or three generations the whole evil might be a thing of the past. Permanent refuges for all who need them, the homeless and for those who are children all their lives, must be provided, and the appeal comes very strongly to the women of our Unions to do their duty in the matter. The ears and hearts of the members of the W.C.T.U. are always open to the cry of suffering humanity, and in the name of the Redeemer we can take up the cause of our weaker brothers and sisters. The care of the degenerates already born, and the preventing of others being brought into the world is surely true love and compassion for the afflicted. The Eugenic Society is seeking to disseminate purer and healthier views of parenthood and to elevate and ennoble, what in the past, has only too often been derided and defiled. Parenthood on the part of the diseased, the insane, or the alcoholic must be prevented for the sake of the race. The Society also stands for active legislation and for the formation and educating of public opinion, which only can make legislation effective.