

**WOMEN'S  
CHRISTIAN TEMPERANCE  
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ORGANISED 1885.

*"For God and Home and Humanity."*

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**The White Ribbon.**

*For God and Home and Humanity.*

TUESDAY, JUNE 18, 1912.

**THE OTHER SIDE OF  
COMPULSORY MILITARY SERVICE.**

(Contributed.)

The introduction of compulsory military training into the Dominion of New Zealand forms so distinct a departure from the traditions of the British people that, at least in regard to some aspects and to certain possible consequences, it would seem to merit careful consideration by all thinking men and women as individuals, and by those organisations whose object is ostensibly the maintenance of high ethical and religious standards. Whatever differences of opinion we may have on the best methods of defence, whether naval or military, voluntary or compulsory, there may still be agreement on important issues connected with the military situation as it now stands. With the aim of reaching such agreement, I

propose to review certain aspects of this matter, and to comment upon them :

1. The extension of military training to the period from 11 to 18 years of age, together with compulsory registration at 14, constitutes a deliberate invasion of the schools which as time goes on is certain increasingly to interfere with the curriculum, to cause friction with school authorities, and to alter, perhaps injuriously, the character of elementary and secondary education. Already rumours have reached us that instruction of school cadets will be taken out of the hands of the school teachers. The taking over of this instruction by officers of the Defence Department may easily have the consequences just mentioned—consequences at present unforeseen by headmasters, school committees, and governing bodies. Already officers of the Department are empowered by the Act to suspend at any time the time-table of any school. (See Clause 46.)

2. Objection on conscientious grounds to compulsory military training, and especially to training so early as 11 to 18, with compulsory registration at 14, actually exists, and fines and imprisonment are already being inflicted throughout the Dominion. Although the Defence Act clearly states (Clause 92) that no one is to be compelled to undergo military training contrary to his religious tenets, yet magistrates seem to have unanimously decided to ignore this ground of objection. Even admitting that not all objections have a genuine conscientious foundation, the fact that some have raises a very important issue. Are the professed guardians of morality and religious liberty going to fold their arms and look on while any conscientious objector is fined and imprisoned? The party in power may yet have to be reminded that in this matter it has revived the methods of the dark ages.

3. That encroachment on the schools will take place is evident from the fact that the Defence Amendment Act requires (Clause 8) sixty-four hours' training per year from cadets of 14 to 18 years of age. This means that the one hour per week hitherto devoted to drill must be extended to something like two. Already in one high school the time allotted to games has been reduced in consequence. Compulsory military training below the age of 18 may easily

become a vexatious interference with the authority of the school master, who, if he is master of his art, knows better than any military official what is best for boys of school age. Such training is also quite unnecessary, because provided service is enforced at a later age, it is time enough then to claim the services of citizens, when they can be of actual use in the defence of the country, which of course school boys cannot be. Competent authorities are agreed that physical training in games and gymnastics is vastly superior from the standpoint of natural development below the age of 18 to constrained military exercises.

4. Military training which encroaches on out-of-school hours and evenings is an unnecessary interference with the authority of the parent and in the domain of the home. It is especially in this direction that its requirements demand the immediate attention of the women of New Zealand. It may not be for us to decide whether compulsory military service is to be continued or not, but we should one and all demand that our sons shall have arrived at an age of discretion before they come under the influence of men whose standards of character and conduct are often far from what we should approve.

5. All that is necessary or desirable to boys of school age is the physical training of games and gymnastics, though a special course of such training leading up to later military exercises might be admitted.

6. Under the present regulations for fourteen years from 11 to 25, military training is to be a prominent object before the mind of every boy, youth, and young man in the Dominion. Have the people considered the far-reaching nature of this requirement? I think not. They do not fully realise the fact that during some of the best years of a man's life, when character is being formed and consolidated when the foundations of success in life are being laid by whole-hearted application to acquiring the knowledge and skill needed for a vocation, or in mastering the details of a profession, a young man's interests are to be diverted from the most serious objects in life.

7. May not even an effective military organisation be too high a price to pay for a lowered standard of ambition in those who ought to be the leaders of thought