

WOMEN'S
Christian Temperance Union
OF NEW ZEALAND.

Organised 1885.

"For God and Home and Humanity."

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WOMEN'S DUTY AS CITIZENS.

We are glad to see that at the W.C.T.U. Convention in Melbourne, the duties of women as citizens was discussed. We commend to the careful attention of our readers the following article from the Melbourne Argus:

(By Vesta.)

One of the most interesting speeches made at the Women's Christian Temperance Union Convention held in Melbourne last week was that of Mrs Jamieson Williams, a New South Wales delegate, on the subject of the duties of women as citizens. Mrs Williams takes

a wide and comprehensive view of the public duties of women, and the applause which greeted her speech and those of others on the same subject left no doubt at all as to the sympathy of this large and representative body of women with the views expressed. The women, who are leaders of the W.C.T.U. in all countries are for the most part women of considerable experience. Few of them are very young. Most of them are married women with families, and so far as my own knowledge of them and acquaintance with them enables me to speak, none of them are women of the type who seek the limelight, or are fond of the sound of their own voices. They are all of the home-making type, thoughtful, earnest women, more often than not inclined to be shy and diffident. And when they speak of the necessity for women to take a more active and energetic part in public affairs they speak with all the force of deep conviction. They are women of the sort who fill the part which Dr. Argyle, M.L.A., allotted to women in his speech at the meeting of the Malvern Branch of the Women's National League on Friday afternoon. His speech had a special interest in view of the fact that at the time it was made the Convention was considering the very questions he raised. The special sphere of influence for women, in Dr. Argyle's opinion, is "the home, on which the foundations of civilisation rest," and the great task of women as members of the State is in relation to children. He indicated, however, that his definition of the scope of that task would be wider to-day than it was a year ago, and no doubt he would find the proceedings of the W.C.T.U. Convention very illuminating in regard to this matter.

There is no body of women whose views are better worth regarding. Plenty of people who have never troubled to make themselves familiar with the work and aims of the Union regard it as a body of faddists united solely by the common bond of a hatred of intoxicating liquor. But they are entirely mistaken. The Union's crusade against intemperance is not an end in itself; it is merely the chief means to its end. The aim and purpose of the members is to do exactly what Dr. Argyle says they should do, to ensure a safe and healthy infancy, childhood, and adolescence for the

young of the race. Of all the existing organisations of women this is the oldest, and the most closely knit. For many years the members have been working quietly and assiduously everywhere. All the time there has been a constant interchange of views between the different branches in each country, and between the organisations in different countries. And, the world over, the purposes and even the methods followed by members are the same. It is not too much, therefore, for the Union to claim that the reforms and measures that it advocates are those that time and experience have taught women all the world over to regard as necessary if they are to play the part in life assigned to them by Dr. Argyle, and by the majority of men in this and all other communities. And one of the chief lessons that time and experience have taught all of us is that the voice of one legislator carries farther than that of thousands of electors; that the opinion of one member of a public body has more weight in public affairs than the views held in common by innumerable private persons; and for this reason the Union is strongly in favour of the presence of women on all public boards and bodies.

If women are too diffident to take up the public work that the Union believes to be desirable, then they must be content to leave the work to men or to women who seek it because they want the limelight. No woman who refrains from this work when she herself has the ability and the opportunity to do it has any right to complain because women have no place in it. There is, I am convinced, a strong body of opinion amongst women in Victoria in favour of women playing a more active part in politics and local government. The only thing that prevents it finding practical expression is the unwillingness of suitable women to face the hustings. What they have to realise is that until they have "the courage of their convictions" they will not be taken as seriously as they wish to be taken, and as they deserve to be taken. Masculine opinion in Victoria is very conservative where women are concerned. Once women "take the plunge," I think that men will be surprised at the breadth and strength and unorthodoxy of the views of women of every class and status.—Melbourne "Argus."