

The White Ribbon

FOR GOD AND HOME AND HUMANITY

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A NOTABLE CENTENARY.

The Methodist Church celebrated at its 1922 Conference the close of its first century of work in this Dominion. It is a record that any church might be proud of. Its missionaries and their young wives came alone and unarmed among the fierce and warlike tribes of the North. To them, with infinite love and patience, they taught the Gospel of the Prince of Peace. Rev. Gittoes, who left us not so many years ago, was a fine specimen of those early missionaries, a strong man physically and mentally. Speaking of those early days, he remarked, "The old Maori chiefs were gentlemen," and we lamented the degeneracy of the descendants of these fine natives caused by the "wai-piro" introduced by the white man.

The writer well remembers sitting in the garden of the Methodist manse built upon the Northern Wairoa River, just below Dargaville, and listening to a thrilling story from the lips of Rev. Gittoes, of what had happened on that very spot. A northern tribe had come down to battle under the warlike chief Tettara, and had built a pah in what is now the quiet manse garden. A few miles further down the other tribe was also entrenched. Rev. Gittoes, with his native crew, was in his whaleboat on the river. Word was sent down that anyone attempting to ascend the river would be fired upon. The intrepid missionary came on up the river, having told his crew how to act if fired upon. As they came opposite the stockade and turned in to the bank, a volley was fired. Every man fell as

dead as the boat touched the shore. After a long silence, the Maoris came stealthily out of the stockade and crept down the hill to the water's edge. Convinced at last that the boat's crew were all dead, they carelessly got farther from their pah. Instantly the boat's crew, led by the missionary, sprang ashore, and rushed up the hill into the stockade. Rev. Gittoes got his interview with the chief, and won from him a promise that he would not fire the first shot. As a similar promise had been given by the chief down river, matters looked more hopeful for a settlement, and tribal war was averted. From grave to gay we passed as we laughed at the account of how Mr Gittoes had set the young natives firing matches at a target until their ammunition was exhausted, and so made assurance doubly sure.

That veteran White Ribboner, Petone's Life President, Mrs Rowse, came a young bride to one of these northern stations, and laboured for the betterment of the Maori women and children. And even now, though well on in the eighties, she is fighting the greatest enemy of the Maori, the licensed liquor trade. And now this Church, which has done so much in the past century for this Dominion, is aiming to raise a Thanksgiving Fund of £45,000 to be used in even more aggressive work in the century just entered upon. A big order, you say, in these times of financial depression. Yes, a big order! but not too big, for they only lack £4000 of the amount.

Through our columns they are making an appeal to women who love their sisters, both black and brown, as well

as white, for help. The fund is to be allocated for different purposes, and some of these must appeal to women of every creed or of no creed.

True to its old traditions, it is still a missionary church, and a large sum is to be used for foreign mission work in the Solomon Islands. Not only money, but missionaries, are going from here to this field, where the need is so great and the opportunity so grand. If we cannot go ourselves, by self-denial we can furnish the means to send others.

But the New Zealand Church is true to its first love, its own Maori people. £5000 is to be spent in a Home for training young Maori women to be home-makers and home-keepers. Domestic work, sewing, hygiene, etc., will be taught, and these young native women, trained in a Christian home, will be sent out fully equipped to found Christian homes over the land. Our white sisters are not forgotten; £3000 is set apart to train Deaconesses for their work. The splendid social service rendered by these devoted women is known to us all. They go wherever the need is great, and help the sick, the suffering, and the sinning.

To our Methodist readers this fund needs no commending, but to some, who perhaps are out of touch with all churches, and yet whose hearts are tender towards their less favoured sisters, we ask them to consider whether these objects are not deserving of their help. Have you a pound you can't spare? Send it along to the Treasurer of this fund, and God will bless your self-denial in giving up what you can't spare.