

WOMEN'S Christian Temperance Union

OF NEW ZEALAND.

Organised 1885.

"For God, and Home, and Humanity."

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The White Ribbon.

"For God and Home and Humanity."

WELLINGTON, MARCH 18, 1933.

LESSONS FROM THE DEPRESSION.

Mrs Trevor peeped through the gap in the thick, leafy hedge which divided her back yard from that of her neighbour and friend, Shirley Hansen.

"Shirley," she called, and her friend paused in her task of gathering in snowy linen from her crowded clothes-line. She came across to the hedge, one arm full of clothes, the hand of the other clasping the pegs she had just taken out.

"What! Ngairé, have you gathered your washing in already?" she asked.

"Yes! Hurry up and finish, my dear. I have a cup of tea ready, but it will wait until you are."

A few minutes later the two friends sat down to afternoon tea in Mrs Trevor's cheerful kitchen.

When they had finished, Mrs Trevor leaned back in her chair and looked seriously across at her friend.

"Shirley, I've found it at last," she said.

"What?" asked Shirley, smiling. "That last crossword clue?"

"Now, don't be sarcastic!" Ngairé begged. "No! I've found the silver-lining to this depression."

"Nonsense, my dear." Shirley was not sure that her friend was not indulging in one of her frequent jokes. "The beastly thing hasn't got a lining at all, let alone a silver one!"

"Well, I thought so too, and I used to wonder what good could possibly come out of Jack being so long on relief work, and the kiddies and myself so short of even necessities." Her grave manner had at last convinced Shirley that she was very much in earnest.

"At last," she continued, "as I looked about me and began to think a little more clearly, it dawned on me just how much good these hard times are doing us."

"'Elucidate!' as old Miss Maths used to say."

"It's this way, Shirley. I hardly know how to express myself, but I'll do my best. First of all, I, for one, have learned the difference between want and need. When Jack was in a good position, I used to buy things which were necessary neither to our health nor our happiness, but which were just a passing craze. Probably, a few hours afterwards, I would wish I had not been so extravagant. You and I, Shirley, were brought up in the wasteful years—the years of plenty and peace, after famine and fighting. Why! I can hardly believe, now, that I used to pay about £3 for a hat, and never turn a hair. It was not as if I couldn't have got one just as durable, fashionable, and becoming for far less money. The trouble was, we did not know the value of money. Everyone was spending, and we went with the crowd."

"You are quite right, Ngairé. I once bought a very smart suit which cost me about £10. The first time I wore it, someone passed a disparaging remark about it, and next day I gave it away to a cousin who did not need it, just because I was dissatisfied with it. No! we certainly did not know how to spend our money to the best advantage."

"I came across an expression in one of George McDonald's books, which, I think, sums up our way of living. It occurs in a story about a young Scots lassie who goes from her country home town to service in Edinburgh. Her first letter to her mother says, 'The wyste cowes a'. Elspeth McFadyen wud get her livin' frae amang their feet.' Many Elspeths would have fared well on our waste in pre-depression days."

"That reminds me. You remember how careless Lou Patterson used to be over her household budget. I was there the other afternoon, and in the middle of tea she excused herself to turn out the gas under a second kettle heated in case of second cups. 'I'm not mean,' she said. 'Some people are so mean with their gas, it hurts them; but I have found that care is necessary as well as wise.'"

"I think we all have, Shirley. But I must tell you another lesson I have been taught lately. Before the deluge, I used to buy nearly every new novel that came out. Bought quite indiscriminately, too! Now when even shilling shockers are beyond our means, even if we wanted them, I have been thrown back on a rather decent library of classics I gathered together in College and 'Varsity days. Ninety per cent. of the modern stuff I bought is not worth a second reading. Indeed, I

have sent most of them to the auction rooms, and I tell you, when I can afford to buy books again, they will be books such as I would like to fall back on in times of stress like the present, not just any twaddle with a flashy title and a flamboyant cover. My little collection of Dickens, Eliot, and a few other good old trustees have been a priceless boon to me."

"I used to be just as mad on reading everything new, whether I could afford to buy it or not. My stationer's bill was staggering sometimes. That's the worst of the credit system. It is the devil in disguise, tempting us to live beyond our means. You can count it as another particularly shiny piece of lining that business people have, to a large extent, ceased to give credit, especially to relief workers. It seems hard, especially in cases of sickness, but taking it all round, I hope the credit system is out to stay out. It is the only hope we have of teaching our children how much a pound sterling will—or rather won't—buy."

"Talking about sickness or any emergency brings me to what I think is the brightest thing brought about by the depression. You know how thoughtlessly we used to sing 'God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform.' Well, I have been amazed lately to find how strangely and aptly our needs have been ministered to, and that from, oftentimes, the most unlikely quarters. Just when I am at my wits' end, along come some eggs, a nice rabbit, or a parcel of clothing. People really are awfully decent, and I feel no false shame in taking from those who are a little better off than us, because I know it is God's way of providing for us. Shirley, I believe this depression is going to give us back our faith. Who knows," she added thoughtfully, "but what it will bring the solution to all the unrest and misery of these post-war days. I remember my music master, during the war, when speaking of some people who had a fine, simple faith in God and His eternal goodness. He said to me, 'But what a wonderful thing to have a faith like that. How safe one would feel. I wish I had it.' A living faith! It would be worth a dozen depressions if one could come through with that!"

"Oh! Ngairé, I am so glad you feel like that. I have been rather shy of speaking about it, but, for a good while now, I have had that feeling of God's nearness to me and mine, and I am learning to 'cast my burden on the Lord,' and confidently expect Him to 'sustain and comfort me.' We had got so far away from Him in our mad chase after wealth and pleasure."

Mrs Trevor's eyes were shining as she said eagerly, "It's wonderful, isn't it, Shirley? It reminds me of one of our returned soldiers. He was a clergyman in our church when he enlisted. He was terribly wounded early in one of the great pushes, but managed to roll into a shell-hole, where he lay on No Man's Land for many hours until assistance came. But he brought out of that hell of suffering a heaven of memory, for