

The White Ribbon

For God, and Home, and Humanity.

Thought for the Month.

"The Churches doing missionary work among the Maoris have all recognised strong drink as their most deadly enemy."

—J. M. Murray.

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MAORI DAY

At this time, with election day almost upon us, Maori Day has a peculiar significance. Though, to most of us, the story of the position of the Maori in regard to the drink question is an old one, it is good that we should refresh our memories, and once again face the responsibility devolving upon us in the matter.

The Maori has no vote on the liquor question. The reason for this is that he is not considered to have enough political experience to be a fit and proper person to deal with so vitally important an issue. The implication is, of course, that the pakeha IS. How great the weight of condemnation for the misuse of the power denied to the Native race, and allowed to be wielded in such a way as to bring the evil thing into their midst even against their own desires.

The famous telegram sent by the great chief Rewi, to Governor Glasgow, on his arrival in New Zealand deserves to be kept in memory by those of both races who value the keeping up of the standards of living in Maori districts and in European communities also. On his death-bed, Rewi sent these words:

"To the Governor of New Zealand, -

"Oh Governor, welcome to New Zealand. Long may you live. My first request is that you prevent strong drink being allowed to come within the Rohe Potae. This, my first request, will be my last." Rewi died shortly afterwards.

How greatly the life of the Maori has been affected by strong drink is evident in many ways. Although statistics show that the threatened decline of the race has been arrested, and that numerically it is rapidly increasing, signs are not wanting that disease is rife among members who should be at their physical best. Tuberculosis, of which alcohol is the bosom friend, is doing deadly work. The cough of the little child, of the youth, of the middle-aged man or woman in our streets, is a terribly familiar sound. In another department, the power of strong drink is more terribly evident—that of the police court. Crime of every kind tells the tale of demoralisation and disregard of the law inseparable from its use. How awful is the knowledge that it was the white man who taught the Maori to drink; that his demoralisation lies at the door of our civilisation.

Let us think on these things; and in so doing, face the fact that if we fail to keep the trust still reposed in us, that of protecting the Maori from the evil thing; we are unworthy still of the custody of one of the finest Native races in the whole world. Also, in hurting him, we are hurting ourselves immeasurably, as the future will tell.

He still speaks to us in the words of the petition presented to the House of Representatives on August 18th, 1874, by Haimona Te Aoterangi and 167 others, the concluding words of which are:—"If you have any regard for us, the Maori people, send away this evil leviathan which you brought to this island to destroy us, our lands, and our children. . . . Sir, do this for us. Long may you be spared on account of your energy in raising your voice against this snake, liquor, during the years that have passed.

"Sufficient. From your friends who are living in sadness on account of this evil."

Whatever of influence we may possess should be exerted on behalf of those who still look to us for release from bonds stronger than steel. God grant an awakening of conscience to all the voting public.

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Seen During the Past Month . . .

"In a certain well-known town during the past month, a car with several young people in boisterous mood passed my door. The driver held the wheel with one hand, while the other held a beer bottle to his lips. Singing and drinking, they passed. Later on in the

same day I saw a car waiting at a service station. Two mothers with children were in the car drinking from bottles. I saw them give the children drinks from their own bottles—children about eight and ten years of age."—
(Told at a Union meeting.)