

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Delivered by Mrs. H. N. Toomer

Dominion Vice-President

The absence of our beloved President, Miss C. McLay, through illness, is a grief to us, for we know how deeply disappointed she is, not to be here in Convention, and our hearts go out in love and sympathy to her. We pray that God will restore her and while she is forced to lay down her charge of leadership, that she will rest in confidence in the knowledge that round about and underneath are God's everlasting Arms of Love.

We have come along another year of our journey since we last met in Convention and it is time again to take stock of our position. **What of the fight we have waged** against the forces of evil that are arrayed in deadly combat against the ideals for which we stand? Have we waged a good warfare or has there been any slackening on our part. Remember, our major enemy, the Liquor Trade, never slackens in its determination to spread its tentacles ever deeper into the very heart of its victims.

This year we have gained new members, our Cradle Roll has increased, many of our Unions are taking a keener interest in our Departments of work, but, alas, some are finding the way hard and difficult, and many of our Unions have had their ranks depleted by the Home-going of many older members. We rejoice that they have reached the Heavenly City and have met the Lord, in whose vineyard they toiled so devotedly, but we are saddened by the fact that in many Unions new members have not come to fill the places they have left.

As we look into the future, we are forced to acknowledge that dark clouds are rolling up on our horizon. Drinking is on the increase; we are shocked and ashamed at the size of our National Drink Bill; we are driven to acknowledge that men and women today are determined on a course that will bring a harvest of sorrow, for no nation can indulge in Strong Drink without a day of reckoning to follow.

We, as Christian women, are alarmed at the inroads of gambling, and now that the betting-shop is within our gates, we fear that many, especially the younger ones, will be caught in this maelstrom of "easy money."

Our Nation seems bent on losing its soul.

SABBATH OBSERVANCE

We are concerned also that so many today hold the Sabbath as a day of amusement. God's laws can never be broken without disaster to the law-breaker. The law still stands, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." Oh, that more Christian men and women would give a definite lead in this matter! The Prophet Jeremiah in his day found the life of his nation

very similar to ours and he sent forth a warning and an entreaty. "Stand ye in the ways and see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way and walk therein, that ye may find rest for your souls." (Jer. 6:16).

We too, in the W.C.T.U., must take up the same warning cry, for only as a nation and its people walk in the good way, which is God's way, will there be happiness, prosperity and peace.

We need make no apology for our Cause. **We stand fast to our principles of Total Abstinence.** We stand firmly in our convictions against **Gambling**, in any form; we deplore any school raising funds by means of raffles, **believing as we do that raffling is the first lessons in gambling.** Our schools should be no place in which a child learns this immoral lesson.

We deplore, too, our youth being used on the streets of our towns and cities, in selling race-cards. Surely the gambling fraternity could do better than that by our young New Zealanders.

Let us explore every avenue for service. Make use of Temperance films, and your Young People's Supplement and Beacon. Be friendly and promote practical Christianity; your neighbours will be far more likely to honour and respect your White Ribbon bow and that for which it stands—this is our work—to help the homes of our people.

By our great zeal and love, let us create a spirit of friendship. We hate sin, but we must ever show kindness and sympathy to those who have stumbled.

Let us stand firm to our motto: "For God, for Home, and for Humanity." We remember, too, our pledge to fight to the death the evils that lurk in our streets, waiting to catch the unwary and especially our Youth. As Jeremiah did, let us ring out the warning, that for safety we must turn again to a rightness of mind and soul.

May we be clear in our teaching. Alcohol is a poison and will deprive man of his finer instincts. As an ingredient in any form of drink it is a deadly enemy, and the only one who derives any benefit from it is the Drink Trade. Let us teach the young the truth about alcohol. Science has exploded the theory that any nutritive value is to be had in liquor. Let us do all in our power to stir up a public conscience on the matter.

"Alcohol is a fraud,
Alcohol is a cheat,
Alcohol is a liar"
in any drink. There is nothing in it but death to a man's conscience, to his morals and to his soul.

Work, my fellow members, in every department of our organisation; use every means in your power to root out forever from men's minds the thought

that they can play fast and loose with such evils as we have in our midst today.

Pray without ceasing, for prayer is the mightiest weapon we have. Let us use it.

When soldiers go into battle, they carry their rifle and ammunition. No soldier would dare to face the enemy without weapons. In fact, it is a criminal offence for a soldier in His Majesty's army to go on parade minus his rifle and ammunition. They carry, also, equipment; they are weighted down under a heavy pack; they march under the most trying conditions and often as they march, it is to the strains of music. They sing—brave men—sometimes marching into the jaws of death. When disaster overwhelms and an army is in retreat, thrown away is their armour, gone is their means of defence—that is a scene too terrible to envisage—an army on the run.

I asked at the beginning of my address, **what of our warfare?** Are we going into the battle, which is an even more deadly one than any fought between man and man? We fight against the unseen power of evil; we fight the deadly enemy of God Himself. Are we going into battle fully armed, or are we facing the forces of evil without weapons?

What equipment can we use? **The weapons of prayer and faith**—our rifle and our ammunition. What do we carry? Surely God's Word to fortify us, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

We can face the evils that are lined against us on our battle-front; the enemy, Strong Drink, Gambling in all its forms; immorality, with the host of evils brought in their train—**yes, we can face our common foe with prayer, faith and the Word of God.**

Are we fully equipped or are we attempting to conquer, unarmed, or perhaps only half-armed.

It has been my privilege to visit some of our Unions and I have often found discouragement there. Use your weapons and sing—there is no need to be discouraged. When the Israelites of old began to sing, and to praise, then the Lord of Hosts sets ambushments against the enemy. There is nothing more terrifying to Satan himself than a singing saint. **Be of good cheer; God's Temperance forces are on the move.** There are signs of life again and for which we thank God. Our Churches are coming into battle and Christian men and women are thinking—**we are on the move.**

Now, use with deadly intensity your weapons of prayer and faith. There is no need to weary because of age, for these weapons we can carry to the gates of eternity. Use them, my sisters. I pray God you will not grow weary; you will not slacken your hold in any Union; for to slacken is to lay a strain on our brave line of defenders. Oh, rather may we hear the brave ringing shout of our war-cry, "For God, For Home, and for Humanity."