

## 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.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 1915.

### FRANCHISE DAY.

For a generation women of this Dominion have exercised the Franchise. Last year every girl born before September 19th, 1893, had attained full voting age, and now this year the second generation are beginning to place their names upon the roll.

Though thankful for much that has been won during the 22 years we have had the suffrage, we look hopefully to the future, and prayerfully prepare ourselves for the struggle for that which yet remains to be won. The law does not yet recognise complete equality of sexes, and until it does we must never cease to educate public opinion, to organise women voters, and to agitate for more advanced legislation. Many of our statutes are

based upon the presumption that the wife belongs to her husband, and that she and her children are his property. Co-guardianship of children should be recognised by law. Certainly, when parents legally separate the Court says which parent shall have the custody of the children, but when parents are living together they should be co-guardians. Now we meet cases like this: A mother was compelled, by his bad conduct, to separate from her husband. For over a dozen years she educated and maintained her little family, not only without any assistance from her husband, but even gave him a small allowance to leave them in peace. One of the boys, grown to young manhood, was his mother's helper. Death claimed him, and because he left no will our law allows the father to step in and claim the whole of his personal effects and little property he had. Is this fair? Certainly an unmarried son's estate should be equally divided between his parents, and not the father the sole inheritor. Again, the law allows a father by will to appoint a guardian of his children, who has legal right to interfere, and in some cases override the mother's wishes. Why are not women allowed by will to appoint some woman to act with the father as guardian of her children.

The home also should be held in partnership, and neither party be allowed to mortgage or sell without the consent of the other.

We should bring pressure to bear upon the Government that girls may enter the Civil Service, and not be barred from sitting for the entrance examinations.

One thing that women should specially press for is that better protection should be given to our girls, particularly those of tender years. Criminal offences against girls have increased so much that juries of men have asked that the attention of the Minister for Justice should be called to this increase, and asked to provide adequate punishment. We believe men guilty of such offences are unfit to be at large.

Woman police should be appointed to patrol our parks and streets, specially to guard our children. Women lawyers, juries, justices, and judges should be appointed to deal with offences against children. Many times these scoundrels escape punishment because the mother objects to take

her girl to tell the story of the wrong inflicted upon her before a Court consisting wholly of men. We remember the righteous indignation we felt once when a poor mother took a scoundrel of this type to Court, because she wanted to protect other women's daughters. The little girl told her story to the men, and then, with a callousness beyond belief, the prisoner's male lawyer turned to the mother, and said sneeringly, "Oh! yes, you've coached her well in this story." Roused to passionate indignation, the mother replied, "No! I've never spoken to her about it; my one prayer to God is that my baby girl may forget it."

The best way to remedy much of this is to allow women to become candidates for seats in Parliament. When we have women in the Legislature of the land, they cannot be kept out of the jury, the Police Force, the Magistracy, and the Bench.

Women in Australia have the right to be nominated for Parliament, and though no woman has yet been elected, we find no fault with that. We only want women to have the right to come before the electors. If rejected by the electors, we will not grumble; we'll only set to work to educate the electors.

Women voters of this Dominion, will you realise that your vote is a responsibility; that you may not lightly exercise it, but thoughtfully, carefully, prayerfully. When our girls need protection from outrage, our children from the Liquor Trade, the woman who does not use her vote for their protection is indirectly responsible for the evil. Let us join together and petition Government, and urge our member to support these reforms. Let your member know that if he does not support the reforms asked for he loses your vote. If women in thousands band together and demand justice, they will get it. They have a vote, and politicians want that vote. The most conservative of members admit that woman is "par excellence" the home-maker. Yet when they send "our boys" to Trentham no matronly women are sent to see that cooking, sleeping, and home arrangements are as they ought to be. What is the result? An outbreak of sickness, and valuable young lives sacrificed. Women are sent to nurse the sick. Why not sent before to prevent them becoming sick? A