

IN THE FIELD.

Wednesday, February 8th, was spent at Bluff, in visiting as many White Ribboners as could be reached, arrangements being made for a special meeting of a social character later on.

On 12th I had the pleasure of re-visiting the South Invercargill Branch, which I organised just about three years ago. Then the membership stood at about a dozen; to-day it totals 65, about 50 of whom are regular attendants and workers. Wasn't it refreshing to see such a splendid gathering! and one fine feature was that almost all the absent members sent apologies, showing their interest. Another item which pleased me was that last year £2 10s had been expended upon a Purity Library.

Thursday, 14th, found me at Tuatapere, having crawled up on a funereal train on a bitterly cold morning, arriving just about frozen, and being met by Miss Harrison and driven out to their home in the bush. Tuatapere Branch has, like most others, suffered by removals and conscription, but the few faithful souls, under Mrs Harrison's leadership, are bravely holding the fort. We had an evening meeting, and discussed things, and I found they were keeping up their Band of Hope and doing all they can. And their work is telling upon the community. One boy at the Front mentioned the W.C.T.U. in a recent letter, while another sent a message to the effect that he is still keeping his pledge.

Next morning Mr Harrison—one of our noble band of White Ribbon brothers—appeared at the door with the trap at 5.45, as I had to be back for the meeting at Bluff the same afternoon. This took place in their own building (Willard Hall), and there was a fine attendance of members. The Band of Hope is, as ever, an immense success, the hall usually being well filled with children and their parents. Of course, an educational address is given at each meeting. They arranged to spend 10s on a purity library, and then a discussion took place upon the possibility of establishing in one of the front (smaller) rooms a reading room, where men could go and read the papers and meet each other, the Patriotic Society being allowed the use of the other room free. On all hands, as I travel around, I hear testimonies to the improved conditions since 6 o'clock

closing came into force, but in the Bluff, at least, some meeting place for the men is now needed.

Gore is now holding regular meetings, at the first of which for the year I was present. The Union has been handicapped in various ways, but is now starting off for the work of 1918 in good heart.

Upon arrival from Dunedin I found the Invercargill friends were considering organising at Ryal Bush, where we already had three members. Accordingly I travelled there on 20th, and the next day my host, Mr Buxton, motored Mrs Buxton and me around for ten hours straight off. We paid twenty-four calls, announced our meeting, engaged the hall, and arrived back at dusk, tired, but very well satisfied with our day's work, twelve women having signed the membership pledge and donned the magic white bow, and four subscribed for the paper. It was intensely hot, and we had not gone far before we began to peel, and before long there were five coats in the bottom of the motor. But how should we get on without the White Ribbon husbands? Next day we held a meeting in the Public Hall, Mrs Bonthron being elected President, and Mrs Buxton undertaking the duties of Secretary in the meantime. As the notice was very short, several of the members were prevented by other engagements from attending, so it was not possible to fill all the offices. By the same evening I returned to Invercargill and the home of our veteran worker, Mrs G. W. Brown. Mrs Bonthron is the daughter-in-law of the lady who, with her husband, organised the first Band of Hope in Invercargill, in the days when temperance sentiment was so low no church would open its doors to them. The old lady—now well over ninety—resides at Orepuki, and still takes a keen interest in all questions affecting the morals of the community.

I am now organising for the Dunedin Union as far as is consistent with taking almost daily treatment for the fracture of my wrist, sustained last April, and which, having never been set, has lately threatened to become useless. However, I hope to attend Convention for at least a part of the time.

M. S. POWELL.

The "pub" is ashamed of its best customers.

FLOWER OF YOUTH.

The following beautiful poem, by Katharine Tynan, has been a solace to many burdened and bereaved hearts:

Lest heaven be thronged with grey-beards hoary,
God, who made boys for His delight,
Stoops, in a day of grief and glory,
And calls them in, in from the night.
When they come trooping from the war
Our skies have many a new gold star.

Heaven's thronged with gay and careless faces,
New-waked from dreams of dreadful things.
They walk the crystal and pleasant places,
And by the crystal water-springs
Who dreamt of dying and the slain
And the fierce thirst and the strong pain.

Dear boys! They shall be young forever;
The Son of God was once a boy.
They run and leap by a clear river,
And of their youth they have great joy.
God, who made boys so clean and good,
Smiles with the eyes of fatherhood.

Now Heaven is by the young invaded;
Their laughter's in the House of God,
Stainless and simple as He made it
God keeps the heart o' the boy unflawed.
The old wise saints look on and smile,
They are so young and without guile.

Oh, if the sonless mothers weeping,
And widowed girls, could see inside
The glory that hath them in keeping
Who went to the Great War and died,
They would rise and put their mourning off,
And say: "Thank God, he has enough!"

TRAINING CAMP COMMISSIONER SPEAKS OUT.

"Our first function is aimed, of course, to do away with the evils that have been too often associated with Army life, not only in America, but in Europe. Our boys are to be drafted into service. We cannot afford to draft them into demoralising environment. The responsibility of the Government is doubly obvious in view of the measure of conscription. A man might volunteer for service and run his chance with vicious surroundings. When conscription comes into play, however, the Government itself must assume the responsibility for eliminating these evils."