

WOMEN'S
Christian Temperance Union
Of New Zealand.

Organised 1885.

"For God and Home and Humanity."

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DEATH.

BROWN.—On June 12th, at Methodist
 Parsonage, Te Kuiti, Ellen M., the
 dearly loved wife of Rev. C. W.
 Brown. Interred at Morrinsville.
 "Faithful."

The White Ribbon.

For God and Home and Humanity.

WELLINGTON. JULY 18, 1918.

Who has not heard of the Scottish divine who began a prayer with the words, "Paradoxical as it may appear unto Thee, O Lord"? Adapting this admirable exordium to our present purpose, we may say that, paradoxical as it may seem, the cause of education languishes because it has so many friends. There is much truth in the saying, "Save me from my friends." History shows that it is quite possible for a cause that is at first held in almost universal detestation to become popular and victorious. In fact, the measure of the original odium is the measure of the ultimate triumph. Let Truth be bitterly hated, and it has an excellent

chance of being ardently loved. Let the cause of righteousness be violently assailed; it will soon be as warmly loved. So it has been with anti-slavery crusades, franchise agitations, religious reforms.

But it is different with the cause that is mildly approved by all from the beginning. There being no resistance on the one side, there is no provocation for enthusiasm on the other. Having the goodwill of all, the cause never enlists the services of zealous missionaries, without which great momentum is not acquired. This last state is far worse than the first. This is the state of education.

The difficulty in the way of educational reform is that the general public has not strong views about it one way or another. Start a conversation on it with the man sitting next you in the car and he will endorse what you have to say about it. Removing his pipe from his mouth, he will charm you with some such original remark as this: "Yes, a most important thing, education. A fellow can't have too much of it. Wish I'd had more when I was a youngster." And then he will go on to some subject more congenial, the war, or perhaps the latest police case, horse race or picture show. This is the attitude of the general public—an attitude not of hostility but of something worse, namely, indifference. And it is the well-to-do, comfortable public that is to blame, if blame is anywhere attachable, just as much as the poorer sections of the community. Indeed, the latter often do much harder thinking about education, its meaning and its purpose, than their more affluent brethren. Even the professional element in the State is not free from the prevailing apathy. No wonder then that the cause languishes in spite of the earnestness of its true advocates. The few do, indeed, urge the paramount importance of education and the need of constant reform in its methods as the times change. The many agree in a facile and unreflecting way and there the matter ends, so far as they are concerned.

One of the weaknesses of democracy is that its rulers give the public only what the public, or the noisiest section of it, most loudly demands. Under the party system, a Government legislates as its partisans dictate. Now, the partisans of education are few, very few. They control no legislature and command no block

vote. No Government ever goes out because its educational policy (unless complicated by some religious element) was too conservative or too radical. Educational reform is not the stuff out of which election platforms are wrought. It may, perhaps, be a small plank in a platform, being inserted on the off-chance that it may come in handy, on the "any plank in a storm" principle. It isn't the politicians who are to blame. It is the public, whom they serve, and try to please.

Herein we see the reason why the educational grant is so meagre and pitiful. Though much requires to be done, and can be done only by money, the necessary means is withheld because the public do not demand it. The public is tepidly well disposed towards education; but it regards other things, such as the freehold or the leasehold, alterations in the mode of settling industrial disputes, changes in the tariff or taxation, as being of more moment. The public wants Barabbas and it gets Barabbas.

Now the thing to be done is to get the public to place first things first, and to realise that the claims of education should constitute the first charge on the revenue of the state. It is no use blaming the Minister of Education for the time being because the grant is insufficient. The honest man no doubt does his best but can't get any more out of the Government. It is no use blaming the Government, because it must please the people or it won't last. No Government will immolate itself for a cause which, like the rest of the public from which it is drawn, it approves, but without passion. Indeed it is no use blaming anybody except ourselves for not making education a more live issue in the community. The only practicable cause for true friends of education to follow is to cease to be rather apologetic and to become confidently insistent. The time has arrived for us all to commence a campaign in the press, on the platform, in the restaurant, in the home, everywhere—a campaign on behalf of education, to rouse the public from its state of rather somnolent and good-natured indifference. The public must be got to see that its own interests and those of its children require that our system of education be made as efficient as possible.

When Woodrow Wilson wrote about "making the world safe for democracy" he penned the classical defini-