

WOMEN'S Christian Temperance Union Of New Zealand.

Organised 1885.

"For God and Home and Humanity."

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The White Ribbon.

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PERSONAL.

Mrs Don desires to thank all Unions and friends for their kind letters and telegrams of sympathy. All will be glad to know that she is improving, but is far from well, and her doctor says she must "Go slow."

INCOMPETENT.

When the good old National Government is decently buried at next election, may we suggest that the very kindest epitaph this country can place upon its grave is the word "Incompetent." Stirring times have passed during its life, events have happened in rapid succession, times and events in which and by which great reputations can be made or marred. But this Government has

made no reputation, and has effectually marred the reputation that any of its members may have earned before. They have been repeatedly weighed in the balances and always found wanting. Take for instance our railways. For over two years a shortage of coal threatened them, and that in a land which holds a foremost rank as a coal-producing country. Despite the length of time the cloud was in gathering and despite the noisy mutterings of the rapidly approaching storm, it burst on a Minister utterly unprepared and incapable of coping with it. And the country now suffers from a terrible paralysis of business, and an utter stoppage of all its industrial activities. With our fine network of railways and on our splendid system of State-owned lines, only one dreary hearse, cleft in strange irony, "an express" wends its weary way about 100 miles in nine hours. Business practically at a standstill, letters posted in Wellington on Monday night are often not delivered in Dunedin till Friday morning. Slowly our industries are closing down, here a sawmill, there a cement works, dismissing all its employees and closing its doors, either because it cannot get its raw materials for manufacture or that it cannot get the article when manufactured railed away to a purchaser. People were urged to live in the suburbs to relieve the congestion in the centres of population, and now these suburbanites are harassed in every possible way. Children are forced to roam the city streets over an hour waiting for a train to get them home, and arrive at home after dark. If you want to take a train journey you are treated as a criminal and forced to disclose your private business to a railway official who judges whether it is important enough for you to be allowed to use our State railway. Of course, if you are one of the wealthy it does not affect you; all you have to do is to get a motor, and you can travel where you like. Had Mr Herries managed a private line he would have got his walking ticket long ago for absolute incompetence; but, alas, a long-suffering country cannot dismiss an incompetent servant until there is an election. The same muddle is observed in the Police Department. How often and how strenuously has the demand for police women been urged upon the Minister of the Crown. But the hide-bound conservatism, and the crass stupidity of the Minister in charge of the department blocks this much-needed reform. And this Dominion is left

lagging behind all other and more progressive countries. Police women have been pronounced a great success wherever tried, and the Minister has no argument against them. Mr Wilford, with all the unreasoning obstinacy of a small mind, told a deputation that they would never get this reform while he held the portfolio. "You shall not have them while I'm here, but I shall not be here all the time." So instead of regular police-women we have health patrols, good enough in their way, but not what was wanted. This Dominion must have policewomen in the best interests of its childhood and girlhood, even if we have to fire the obstinate Minister to get them.

So it is in every department; huge sums muddled away on "Defence," while our schools are starved and education lagging behind in every department. Our cool storage is taxed to the uttermost with perishable goods, and there is a butter famine. But prices must be kept up, and rather than release cheese to feed the people, it is kept till it becomes bad and then it can always be used as manure by the farmer.

It is no use attempting to lay the blame on the working man. Our Minister should remember that is is an axiom in Government that when there is trouble between a superior and an inferior, between employer and employee, for example, you must always look in the first instance to the superior for the fault. In other words, if you know how to lead you will be followed. The trouble is that we have not a leader of men in the National Government. The best thing this Dominion can do is at the election to relegate them to private life where they can take positions in which they must be capable of doing the work or else make way for men who can do it.

I have had occasion to examine the conflicting popular ideas concerning alcohol. I began to study quite willing to be convinced that alcoholic beverages have some virtues. I have ended in the conviction that they have none, and I have found that this conclusion is almost universally reached by those who have examined the facts. So far has the anti-liquor movement in the colleges proceeded that a man who frankly opposes its use is more respected than the man who condones it.—Professor Irving Fisher, of Yale University.