

NEW ZEALAND WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN TEMPERANCE UNION

(Incorporated)

Organised 1885

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"For God, and Home, and Humanity"

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The White Ribbon.

"For God, and Home, and Humanity"

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"THE CHILD ENTHRONED"

In the picture a magnificent golden throne inlaid with jewels was occupied by a lovely child. Gorgeous, flower- and foliage-embroidered draperies, splendid wall decorations, and a radiant crown served as the glorious setting for one who was all the children of the world. Her thoughtful, mystical expression; innocent, wondering eyes; the calm trustfulness shown in her unperturbed, restful attitude; and the pure beauty of the little face, drew the eye and held it long before the marvellous art which had gone into the painting of the exquisite fabrics, the carved ivory and jade, and the whole build-up of the picture were perceived. They were almost lost sight of. The Child—was all one could at first realise.

As I gazed, other pictures came before my inward eye. A dear old one of a long-past fashion was among them. This was of "His Majesty the Baby" being solemnly guarded in his passage across a crowded thoroughfare by a burly policeman while cabbies and bus-drivers grinned their entire approval at being "held up" for the chubby infant. Another flickered through the mists of memory, and I felt the old catch of the breath as I saw the heart-breaking face of the child appearing in court for "His First Offence." More pictures came and went as I mused. Long-quiet memories stirred to life again.

"Enthroned"

In a half-dream I saw children. Some were lovely in health and happiness. Some were weary with toil, and thin and haggard for want of food. Some bore evidence of shock and terrors borne through long months of fear and overwhelming tumult. Poor, little, suffering ones of the world! And yet, how much love and care was given for them? In hearts and homes, they

occupied the throne, and even in communities, their rule was the guiding factor. Heirs of the royal throne, of the splendid regalia of sovereignty, they were. Only, the robes were worn and crushed, and the gold had tarnished. They were still, in the person of the beautiful child on the throne, royal.

The Royal Bodyguard

In my waking dream I saw a uniformed woman holding converse with one about to become a mother. Serious faces and anxious voices told of keen desire for all to be well for the coming of the child. And then, I saw the young mother with her lovely babe in her arms; and another uniformed woman smilingly instructing her and guarding the well-being of the child. Later, yet another uniformed woman was examining his teeth. He was now grown from babyhood and able to walk to the "dental clinic." Then, he was going to school, and a whole army of people co-operated in the task of fitting him for his own work in the world. His physical condition was a cause of almost hysterical concern. Games, physical culture, hygiene, medical attention, apples and milk, were all employed to provide a perfect health and equipment for his permanent possession. His safety in the street was provided for by lectures given by highly qualified people who made a fascinating game of the precautions he must learn to take in his perilous passings to and fro among the speeding traffic. Swimming was made a matter of immense importance, and life-saving was taught him so that he could help in preserving the safety of his fellows. Every possible help was at his call in his studies. Opportunities were given for his higher education. In a trailing cloud of glory he triumphed his way to the university.

The Vulnerable Point

My dream became more involved. I seemed to see women whose heads were bowed and whose eyes were dim with tears. They were weeping for their sons who had once been lovely babes in their arms—their sons whose faces were marred by disease, and hardened with vice, whose lives, so full of promise, had turned into the wrong channels, and decency with honour had fled. Some were in prison; some were lost to all sense of shame and had abandoned themselves to their ghastly

fate. And the mothers wept. The fathers groaned to see the sons in whom they had so rejoiced, degraded and brought to ruin. Someone cried out: "We were guarded at all points but one. No one told us what could happen there if we were not armed and prepared." Another voice cried: "O how could we be left to find out for ourselves that all the things our education, our training, our development, had brought to us could become as nothing if that one place were not guarded?" "We did not know"; "We only thought we were being manly"; "No warning was given us." The sad, bitter voice echoed through my dream and I awoke with tears falling down.

Only a Dream?

It had only been a dream, but I thought of that vulnerable place left in the armour of the youth of our land. For every other danger and contingency, he is equipped and prepared, but for the greatest and most powerful foe, he is unprotected, except where home upbringing and Christian influences have been brought to bear upon his developing character. "Enthroned"—oh, yes! Yet betrayed by a culpable refusal to teach him in his school life while yet his mind is plastic and his ideals high with that wondrous illumined glory that never returns when once it is dimmed; that in strong drink a most terrible force will be encountered which can overturn and ruin the whole structure of beautiful life so carefully erected through the years of childhood. What words can express the crass stupidity that allows the feeble statement to be made that "Temperance education is really compulsory, but that it is left to the individual teacher to carry it out if he wishes." With what indignation such a statement with regard to physical education, or arithmetic, or anything else, would be received. Yet it has been made for many years.

Our Task

Can it be that we have not shouldered our responsibility either? Have we grasped our opportunities? Does every union feel that whatever else is or is not undertaken, this should be faced?

We are looking to the future. What it will be depends on the present. In this year of the poll, let us take up

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