

## President's Message



### Our Union—Its Strength, Beauty and Usefulness

In this time of almost innumerable women's organisations, even in this small country, it behoves us as W.C.T.U. members to be interested in all such as strive for the glory of God and the betterment of mankind, always remembering that our Union is the only organisation which fully realises that the liquor trade is the foundation cause of much of the disease, degradation, dishonour, unhappiness and death, so frequently brought before us, and our Union is the only women's organisation which is pledged to fight this gigantic evil. This would appear to be a suitable time to consider our worth to the community in which we live. In assessing the worth of our Union we should, I think, first consider its strength, its beauty, and its usefulness—the last one will doubtless be the longest. First our strength, which surely lies in the fact that our Union was formed as the result of, first, individual prayer, followed by group prayer, when the desire of our brave pioneer women to abolish the evil of beverage alcohol was laid in deep humility and earnestness at the feet of Christ. Only, and I wish to stress that only, only after much prayer and meditation and hard study was our Union formed. Then, as now to a large extent, the churches as a whole, to whom these women looked confidently for assistance, stood aloof, and they went forward, a little band with no backing from any section of the Christian Church as a church, although in many churches there were ardent sympathisers and supporters, just as we have them to-day.

These women laid the foundation of our Union on the Rock, Christ Jesus—the only foundation that CAN stand the test of time, the stress of hardship and ridicule and death. Because some

of our own women, over sixty years ago, realised the evil results of the liquor trade and had the same faith in that sure foundation they were able to form the New Zealand Union. That the foundation is good there can be no better proof than this gathering of women, met for the purpose of carrying on the good fight begun so long ago. Our strength lies, obviously, in building on the one firm foundation, the will of God.

The beauty—this surely is composed of the flowers that can only grow on that strong foundation—self-sacrifice, willingness to serve, to serve with love. This is expressed in our Motto—For God, Home and Humanity. Think of the awe-inspiring beauty and honour of the first two words, "For God." When so short a time ago we prepared our Christmas greetings and parcels what a happiness we felt in writing "for so-and-so, with my love." Was not that a great part of our Christmas pleasure? If the gift of our Union work is "For God, with our love," then the welfare of Home and Humanity cannot help following. What is pleasing to God can only be that which helps humanity. The beauty must, of necessity, go hand in hand with strength, and the little, but powerful, group be completed with its no less important sister—Usefulness.

There is no need for me to tell you what our Union has done in the years that lie behind. You know that, or you should, and if you have not already educated yourself in this history, consult the Literature Superintendent and she will advise you as to obtainable books and leaflets, etc.

And so to the future, the usefulness to come; much of it can be best expressed in the work of our Departments of which there are 22 being worked by various Unions. Very few Unions can work them all. May I suggest that it might be more profitable for a Union, especially a small Union, to select two or three departments and for all members to work hard at those chosen. This in no way prevents our taking an interest in any other department, but only makes our efforts a solid block instead of a thinly-spread, apt-to-crumble, interest. If you read down the list you will see how well worth while the work of all departments is; it will be a matter of selecting those you CAN work. Sabbath Observance will, naturally make a strong appeal to all members. Perhaps a good introduction to this work would be to take a little time at an early meeting to consider what is the proper use of the Sabbath, with a little reference to the increasing misuse of that great day. We see the crying need, but what do we do about it. When the Saturday holiday came, some of us were hopeful enough to think that we should see less washing on the lines on Sunday, but do we? Have we not frequently been told, especially in recent years when trams and trains were fewer and petrol scarce, "Oh, well you see there is nothing to do; few trains and no petrol. If I get the washing done and out of the way

on Sunday I have Monday clear for shopping or pictures or whatever I want to do." That may be true, but has that woman, has her family, gained what will really compensate for the loss of mental and physical rest which might have been theirs, or, much more important, for the spiritual refreshment and restoration which no Christian can do without? Do you wonder that we so often hear people being "snappy" and hard when they have taken no rest of any sort for week after week? Can we expect World Peace when we deliberately behave in such a way that we face each new day with frayed or jangled nerves? If we as a Union can help the community in which we live to come nearer to a right use of Sunday, accepting rightly this great gift of an opportunity for soul strengthening, we shall have done much toward expressing both the strength and beauty of our foundation. Just recently, in looking over some very old papers, I found these lines which surely express the position. They were given, over 80 years ago to my eldest sister, then a very small girl. I am glad to say that her early training in respect and reverence for the Sabbath stood her in good stead all her long life.

"A Sabbath well spent,  
Brings a week of content  
And health for the toil of to-morrow,  
But a Sabbath profaned,  
Whate'er may be gained,  
Is a certain forerunner of sorrow."

Can your Union help, with Bible teaching for children? If you cannot visit the schools is it possible for you to gather a few children to hear a Bible story? You might be able to form them into an L.T.L. or Band of Hope, which would give greater opportunity for teaching God's will toward evil, especially in relation to the evil of alcohol. And so on down the list. Even if you can only do what seems to you a little, do it. The lad had only five loaves and two fishes, but just look!—with God's love that seemingly negligible supply saved thousands from utter exhaustion. When you read that account say this truth to yourself—just so, any small service I may be able to give may go on helping others for many years to come. In this year of grace, 1947, can we individually make this vow to God, "I promise for this year, at any rate, I will, with God's help, endeavour to use every opportunity to make known to all with whom I come in contact, the evils of the liquor trade and the dire necessity for its complete and speedy abolition." That is really contained in our pledge, but sometimes some of us forget that united effort can only come by decided individual effort.

Concentrated effort outside the Union will help to make our meetings more interesting, if we are enthusiastic about our work outside we are bound to be more earnest inside, and if we are happy our meeting cannot but be happy. What does the Union mean to you? Is it just