

## Women At Home

# Christchurch's First Lady Loves The Simple Things Of Life

**I**N the picturesque suburb of Opawa is the home of the Mayor of Christchurch, Mr. D. G. Sullivan, M.P., and his wife. But it was not at her home that I talked with Mrs. Sullivan, but in her room in the City Council Chambers—and I was immediately struck with the Mayoress's business ability. The room in which we talked was a charming one, furnished in warm tones. It looked very businesslike, too, with its centre table piled high with books and accounts. It is here that the Mayoress and her assistants work every day, one of the days of the week being set aside for interviewing mothers, for one of Mrs. Sullivan's good works has been the instituting of the Mayoress's Baby Fund.

Mrs. Sullivan was born in Christchurch, her parents migrating from Devonshire, and she is pre-eminently a "home" woman, and has never had any ambition to engage in public life. It is therefore all the more to her credit that when the highest honour that the city can bestow—that of the Mayoralty—came to her husband, she sacrificed her own wishes and very bravely faced her new and heavy responsibilities as the First Lady of Christchurch. She had not been very long in that position before it was recognised that she was by nature well fitted for the task that had been imposed upon her. Gifted with considerable natural ability, a very strong character, a kindly heart, tact and, above all, an entire absence of pretence or humbug, she very quickly won the hearts and respect of all with whom she came in contact. She is small of stature—not five feet—but full of energy. She is the mother of two grown-ups—her son is married but Kathleen is still at home.

Her activities are principally concerned with kindergarten, Plunket work and her own Baby Fund. The Mayoress's Baby Fund provides maternity parcels for less fortunate citizens. "Of course, I could not carry on if it were not for Mr. Sullivan's help in the background, and now that I have got the fund well organised, with the help of my assistants and the sewing of the unemployed girls, I feel it must go on. On an average twenty expectant mothers a month benefit, and the girls are being taught to sew

as well as given work to do, and all my spare time is taken up, if it is only making up parcels." These maternity parcels contain Plunket barriers, babies' flannel nighties and squares, little vests, even to a nightgown for the mothers, and some beautiful work is put into these well-fitting garments under the capable teaching of Mrs. Tonge. Mrs. Sullivan is regarded by those associated with her in the various relief activities arising out of the unhappy economic conditions with love and respect, and the work she has organised with such great ability and success has been helped by the confidence reposed in her by the women of the community.

"Mr. Sullivan is just leaving for a few days at Hamner, and I am looking forward to a quiet week-end at home, pottering about in my garden. My greatest hobby is fishing, and I often have days at some of the good fishing spots, when I really enjoy life," said Mrs. Sullivan. "You know, I didn't mind my husband being in politics, but I did oppose his entering into municipal affairs, and the last four years have been strenuous ones, but now I would miss this great work which is so near my heart. I'm not fond of publicity, my idea of enjoyment is to be left alone, preferring my own home and getting my husband's meals—but such is the penalty of being a public man's wife."

At this point Mr. Sullivan came in and I had a chance of a little "off duty" conversation with Christchurch's Mayor. Mr. Sullivan has earned a living in many ways during his lifetime—he has known what it means to be up against it—and for this reason he has an understanding of men in all walks of life. I have watched Mr. Sullivan among university-bred men at big receptions; I have seen him among people waiting in dull grey despair at a relief depot; I have watched him talking to school children, to wharf labourers, to the members of an exclusive women's club—and I have marvelled at the way he mixes with all types. And in this "easy mixing," I feel certain, lies the seeds of his success.

Mr. Sullivan has spent most of his life in Christchurch.

