

The White Ribbon

FOR GOD AND HOME AND HUMANITY

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HOME WOMEN GAIN THEIR FREEDOM.

(By Mrs Kineton Parkes.)

It is months ago since newspaper women who read the "White Ribbon" have rejoiced to know that the women of the British Isles have gained at last the political emancipation for which they have laboured so long and so strenuously. Thousands have lived and worked for this great reform; some have sacrificed even their lives, and now the struggle is over.

I find there is universal satisfaction amongst both men and women who think in New Zealand, because they have always felt a sense of indignation and dissatisfaction with the continued denial on the part of Home politicians to recognise and extend to women the rights of citizenship. I find also, which I can easily understand, that there is very little knowledge out here as to how it came about in the end that the old prejudices were overcome, and how the women achieved, with such apparent ease and swiftness, the response to a demand which had been made steadily for over sixty years. There is an inclination to assume that it was on account of the fine war work we accomplished so well and so swiftly; but this we are very anxious to contradict. We claimed the vote as a right, and not as a reward for service, and we threw ourselves heart and soul into every department of war work because we knew we were wanted. We trust that it may serve as an object lesson to prove the truth of what we always claimed, that "we needed the vote in order to serve." We trust also that the work which we are so anxious to do for women and children in the great problems of reconstruction

on which are facing us may justify even more our persistent demand.

The reason why "Votes for Women" became an accomplished fact early last year was purely a political one, and largely the result of our own work, and the knowledge we acquired in doing it. We had gradually worked with combined effort to a point where Mr Asquith, owing to the pressure brought to bear, had made a definite pronouncement, viz., "There shall be no further extension of the franchise unless it includes women." This doubtless appeared to the then Prime Minister to be a perfectly safe thing to say, because there was no clamour for manhood suffrage. But how wonderfully everything changed within a year! Who could have foreseen the war, with its subsequent just demand for the enfranchisement of the soldier and the sailor?

And so it came about, **because** we could not go to the country on a 1913 register, and **because** we could not compile a new one without soldiers and sailors being on it, and **because** of the existing pledge to women they must be in it also. The Representation of the People's Bill was framed and women were included.

This Bill was passed into law, and so swift has been the current once it turned in our favour that to the surprise of the public and of other nations, we have almost immediately become not only voters, but eligible for Parliament. Most people have been greatly astonished at the huge majority for this latter Bill in the House of Commons, but we women were not so surprised, for the members were naturally anxious to capture votes in the new electorate.

We trust that because our power and influence were so speedily demonstrated

ed we may realise to the full our great privilege and sacred responsibility to humanity during the coming years, and endeavour to be worthy so great a trust and opportunity.

A CALL FOR SPECIAL PRAYER.

Will every Union throughout the Dominion arrange special meetings for prayer wherever possible between this and polling day? I would suggest that whether the meetings be large or small, the spirit of the gathering be devotional, and that much time be spent in earnest, united supplication. We plead with all good women everywhere to join with us heart and soul in the holy endeavour to protect and sanctify the home by outlawing the traffic in alcoholic liquors. Let us in the love of God and Humanity band ourselves together with the solemn conviction that our united faith and works will, with God's blessing, banish alcohol from New Zealand. We plead with our members and all women like-minded with us in this sacred cause to lift up their hearts to God at the noontide hour of prayer, giving thanks for the wonderful progress of the temperance reform in this and other lands, and earnestly praying that prohibition may be carried in April next. Remember how the Master said: "If ye shall ask anything in My Name I will do it." Think of the greatness of the promise, and let us individually and collectively see to it that we **ask**. Assuredly God will do. Fellow Christians let us avail ourselves of the power of prayer.—Yours to serve,

R. DON,

Dominion Pres.