

Storyteller.

COMRADES EVER.

CHAPTER III.

As Mrs Lewis entered her own room her eye fell upon the letter containing the request that she would be a candidate for Parliament. How far away seemed that happy evening when she first read and considered this letter. The fierce tempest that had wrecked her life's hopes had swept away all memory of it. Now insistently it came before her demanding an answer which she was not yet prepared to give. Reclining upon a couch at the open window, like one of old, she voiced her thoughts in the cry, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Then through the long hours of the night she awaited the answer. She was essentially a lover of a quiet home life, a student by temperament and by training. Only the stern voice of duty had driven her into public service. At first she had joined the W.C.T.U. to fight the drink evil, then her husband's position as magistrate had opened her eyes to much that needed reform in our social system. An ardent child lover, the inadequate protection which the law afforded little girls against evil men had roused her ire, and when a sexual degenerate for his third offence against little girls had received a sentence of only twelve months imprisonment, her indignation had driven her into the ranks of those who were protesting against this iniquitous state of affairs. Her undoubted talents marked her out for a leader. Now she wondered if the Master was calling her out into this wider sphere. Like a flash the words of the Master came into her mind, "Launch out into the deep." And almost she seemed to hear the words of Frances Willard, "Enter every open door."

With the first grey streak of dawn her resolution was taken, she would accede to the request and allow herself to be nominated, and then leave the issue in higher hands. If elected she would loyally serve her God in Parliament, if defeated how she would rejoice to stay in her quiet home.

Shortly after this a deputation waited upon Mrs Lewis for her reply to the letter.

"Gentlemen," she said, with quiet dignity, "It is my great desire to be of use to my country. I firmly believe that good women in the House will be helpful. They can present the

woman's point of view, which too often in the past has been overlooked. If you think I would be a useful member of the House, I am willing to submit myself to the judgment of the electors."

Mr Grant, a leading business man in the city assured her that the deputation thought her most suitable. "We deeply sympathise with you in your great sorrow, and pledge ourselves to do our utmost to secure your return to Parliament."

"I want you to quite understand my position," she said "While I am in hearty accord with the programme put forth by the Liberal Party, I cannot pledge myself to blindly support the leader. You all know that on the liquor question I hold very strong views. Should Prohibition be carried I shall support the complete enforcement of the law. There are also several moral questions on which I must be free to follow my own conscience."

Finally it was agreed that Mrs Lewis would stand as an Independent Liberal, pledging herself to give a general support to the Liberal leader. She had arranged to return to Dunedin with her son after his vacation, but on her return to the Empire City she would address the electors and take her part in the campaign.

Only the evening before, Will had broken a long silence with the words, "Mother, what are we to do? I cannot leave you alone."

My boy, you must continue your course at Dunedin until you have your M.D. I know how hard it is, but believe me, dear, in doing your duty and fitting yourself for future service you will find your truest happiness."

"What will you do?"

"I have decided to stand for Parliament. Your father wished it, and I feel as if his spirit will be near me helping me in this work. I must have hard work," and her voice trembled.

Will came across, and sitting on the arm of her chair, drew her close to him, and kissing her softly, he murmured tenderly, "Poor old Mum," using the childish name which his sister, Bonnie Jean, had never discarded, and almost completely upsetting his mother's equilibrium.

When she could trust her voice, Mrs Lewis said:

"My son, we'll both try hard to bear our cross bravely, and to do our work faithfully. I pray that you may become a great healer and a blessing to many. I'll go back with you for a week or two, and then return here for

the electoral campaign. Uncle Jack and Cousin Zeta will help me, and our dear old Nana will take every care of me and the house."

This programme was carried out. Mrs Lewis spent a quiet fortnight with Will in Dunedin. The mother and son were mates, they shared their work, their hopes, and their sorrows. Their hearts were very sore, but bravely they spoke of their loved and lost. Coming from an organ recital, Will said: "How our Bonnie Jean would have revelled in that glorious music." And once again, as they wandered through the Winter Gardens, now a mass of glowing colours, he remarked, "How Dad loved these flowers."

(To be Continued.)

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS.

AUCKLAND HONOURS ITS FIRST PRESIDENT.

A very pleasant and largely attended social was tendered to Mrs Dewar and her two daughters at the headquarters of the W.C.T.U., Auckland, on Tuesday, October 14th. Many tributes were paid to these faithful workers for so many years in the noble cause of temperance. Mrs Dewar is well known as one of the pioneers of the W.C.T.U., and although now over 80 years of age, she is still able to attend meetings; indeed, she is ever an inspiration with her hearty approval and applause at every forward movement. A pleasant feature of the gathering was the presentation to Miss Dewar by the President, on behalf of the Union, of a token of appreciation of her long and valuable services as Treasurer of the Union, which position failing health has compelled her to resign. Mrs Dewar and Miss Nellie Dewar were presented with bouquets of sweet peas. Musical items were rendered by Miss Rimmer, and Mrs Russ recited with much feeling "The Bridegroom." A prayer of benediction and blessing by dear Mrs Dewar ended one of the most pleasant and happiest social functions held in our Union for many years.

The "White Ribbon" will be posted to any address on receipt of 2s 6d, payable to Mrs Peryman, Port Chalmers.