

THE WORLD'S FIRST LADY MAYOR.

MRS YATES, MAYOR OF ONEHUNGA.

AN INTERVIEW.—See Illustration Front Page.

IN a one-storied, verandahed, and garden-girt villa in one of the quietest byways of quiet Onehunga lives the first lady Mayor of the British Empire—Mrs Yates, Mayor of Onehunga. Students of human nature who delight in forming theoretic ideas of character from the surroundings of the subject under their examination would be puzzled to find any distinguishing trait so far as the exterior of the house is concerned. It is the likeness of so many of our New Zealand homes—a small and compact cottage villa, its front garden fragrant with flowers, and its windows gladdened with a lovely view of blue waters and cloud-flecked skies. Yet assuredly

MRS YATES IS NO ORDINARY WOMAN.

Just as there are men whose heads and faces give one an immediate impression of strength and broad intellectuality far above the average, so there are women, and the lady Mayor of Onehunga is one of them.

It is needless to describe the personal appearance of Mrs Yates at any length. On the front page is reproduced the photograph specially taken by Mr Pegler, of Onehunga, an admirable and faithful likeness. It will be seen that Mrs Yates is not by any means the masculine-looking personage most people would picture to themselves. As a matter of fact, the set expression, inevitable in the very best photographs, makes Mrs Yates appear a trifle more stern looking than she is. Even in repose, her face is not of the hard, business type we have been accustomed to associate with the leaders of the woman movement, and when mobile, reflecting the play of interests and emotions, is

A KINDLY AND VERY WOMANLY FACE.

Neither may you catch any glimpse of masculinity about her attire. It is useful, and in the present mode. That the advanced school of dress reformers have yet to convert Mrs Yates is comfortably and agreeably evident.

Though naturally very busy attending to the deluge of correspondence which has fallen on her since her election, the Mayor very kindly afforded a GRAPHIC interviewer a long and most interesting conversation. The pretty drawing room in which the interview took place was an eminently feminine retreat, containing no indication that the home of a lady devoted to political and municipal matters was or need be one whit less homelike and pretty than that of the society child-wife whom Ibsen characterized in the 'Doll's House,' and Dickens in 'David Copperfield.'

'I have ALWAYS TAKEN AN INTEREST IN POLITICS AND BOROUGH AFFAIRS.'

said Mrs Yates, in answer to a ground-breaking query, 'and cannot say that any special event ever turned my attention that way. When Mr Yates entered the Borough Council at Onehunga that interest was, of course, increased, and when he was for four successive terms elected Mayor I was able to be of considerable assistance to him, and enjoyed helping him in the exceptionally hard work of that time. When Mr Yates retired, consequent on ill-health, I

THOUGHT OF STANDING FOR MAYOR SOME YEARS AGO, but my husband did not care that I should do so at that time. I should not have done so probably this time but that there seemed no chance of the right sort of man coming forward to contest the seat with the retiring mayor, with whose policy I, with many others, did not agree.

I WAS ASKED TO STAND FOR MAYOR, I DID, AND WAS ELECTED.'

Mrs Yates was not greatly concerned over the affair. She wished to get in, as she has a strong belief she can do good, providing the cordial co-operation of the councillors is extended to her, but she in no way attempted to influence the electors by canvass. Directly the result became known

SCORES OF CONGRATULATIONS POURED IN.

They came from all sorts and conditions of men, from members of Parliament, from women, from men, and a long CONGRATULATORY TELEGRAM FROM MR SEDDON.

'The New Zealand Parliament,' so ran the Premier's wire, 'led the van in granting the franchise to ladies. It was reserved for the burgesses of Onehunga to elect the first Lady Mayor in the British Empire. I heartily congratulate you in having attained that great distinction.'

'R. J. SEDDON.'

This telegram and the others were shown with honest and natural pride. But the most interesting letter is from a member of the Auckland Union Parliament, of which, it will be remembered, Mrs Yates was the first lady member. The letter congratulates her on being the first lady Mayor, but points out that there have been

LADIES ON THE BENCH IN THE OLDEN TIME.

The Countess of Richmond, mother of Henry VIII., sat on the bench as a Justice of the Peace. Lady Anne of Pembroke, Dorset, and Montgomery sat on the bench as Hereditary Sheriff in the reign of Henry VIII. At the Appleby Assize she took her seat on the bench with the Judge and forwarded the course of justice. In the same century the Harleian MSS relates that Morris Berkeley, Nicholas Points and a riotous company of their servants entered the park of Lady Berkeley and killed some deer and set a hay rick on fire. The Lady Berkeley repaired to Court and made her complaint, when the King granted her a special commission under the great seal to enquire into these riots and misdemeanours. Lady Berkeley herself was made one of the Commissioners. She returned to Gloucester, opened the commission, and sat on the bench at the public sessions. But these are the illustrious dead, and Mrs Yates is the only lady Justice in the British Dominions with the single exception of the Queen herself.

A COINCIDENCE: DECEMBER HER LUCKY MONTH.

By a curious coincidence December has been connected with the three most important events in the life of Mrs Yates. In December, 1853, she arrived in New Zealand from Home. In December, 1875, she married Mr Yates. In December, 1893, she is installed Mayor of Onehunga. It may be here mentioned that besides being first Lady Mayor of Onehunga, Mrs Yates was the first lady in that electorate to record her vote under the new Franchise Act.

It was inevitable that the conversation should turn on the affairs of the Borough. At present, owing to what Mrs Yates considers a reign of extravagance, the outlook is rather gloomy, but the new Mayor has set her mind on putting the Borough to rights, and is determined to do it.

A MUNICIPAL REFORMER—MORE WORK AND LESS WORDS.

Mrs Yates is ardent for certain reforms, more especially a more systematic and less talkative manner of doing business. 'I am most anxious,' she says, 'to make a change in the way business is carried on. There is both in borough councils, and in Parliament, too, a great deal too much talk. I would do what has been found necessary in England lately. Men often get up and talk at these meetings just to waste time as they do in Parliament.' She

MEANS TO TRY AND STOP SPOUTING.

'In my opinion,' says the lady, 'no one should be allowed to waste time, as, for instance, Mr Buckland wasted time in the last Parliament. I am determined they shall not in the Council if I can help it. There will be a

TIME LIMIT FOR SPEAKERS.

if I can manage it. No more than fifteen minutes for any speaker on a motion, and five minutes for reply.

'At borough meetings, too, I would have all notices of motion and propositions formally received at one meeting and held over to the next fortnight. Then the Councillors would have thought out what to do, and avoid vapouring; as they did over a certain question lately.'

PENALTIES FOR RESIGNATION.

There should, Mrs Yates thinks, be a penalty for an elected councillor resigning before his term is up, save on some really adequate excuse. This led to a question as to the resignations which have taken place since she was made Mayor. Mrs Yates says that she does not believe these resignations are caused by a lady having been created mayor, but that they are simply a following of the retiring mayor, who prefer to retire with him. Another reform she would like to see, she will tell you, would be.

LADY JURORS AND LADY POLICE WARDERS

The lady jurors might with great advantage be employed in cases where women bring certain charges against men. These cases would be better sifted, and the results would generally, she thinks, be found to favour the men, as fraudulent cases would stand a far better chance of exposure.

WOMEN WARDERS AT THE POLICE COURT

are, she thinks, a real necessity. No woman, however degraded, but should have women to look after them, if only to avoid such cases as that now on in Auckland, where the girls accused the police of insulting them. Such accusations should be impossible.

MRS YATES, M.H.R.,

a not unlikely probability. 'Will you go into Parliament if women are eventually allowed to enter the house?' asked the interviewer.

'Shall I get people to send me there?' answered the lady smartly. 'If I do I shall certainly go. I think women are

quite as well able to legislate as men—at least the educated women who have learned to take an interest in matters politic. Of course, there are empty-headed women as there are empty-headed men, and on the whole I must admit foolish women are more foolish than foolish men. If women go into Parliament,' she continues, 'it will surely be a mixed Parliament.'

'How about Sir George Grey's Legislative Council of women?'

'Well, I think he was joking,' she answers. 'There are no questions which cannot be discussed in a proper manner by a mixed assemblage. Nothing which could not be said before woman (no false shame) should be said in the Legislature. That is my view,' said Mrs Yates, emphatically.

In the course of a chat on general politics it became evident to the interviewer that

MRS YATES IS STRONGLY CONSERVATIVE IN MANY POINTS. She is not greatly enamoured of voting by ballot, confessing a weakness for open voting. 'Of course,' she said, 'it is objected that this means that employed vote for their masters. I do not see that it is absolutely necessary, but in many cases I think a man should, unless he has very strong opinions, vote for the man who supplies him with work, that is, bread and butter. A feeling of gratitude would make him wish to.' The interviewer took a different view, and Mrs Yates carefully explained that she did not think a man should sacrifice his political opinions, but that if he was to be influenced, and most of the many-headed are, she contends that the best man to influence them is their employer. The first lady Mayor is

NO BELIEVER IN ONE MAN ONE VOTE,

and in municipal elections she thinks that only property-owners should have a vote. 'You see,' she says, 'the mere rent-payer doesn't care what expense the town is run into. If he is a tradesman he calculates it the more money spent the more trade, and if the rates get excessive he can always move on, leaving the unfortunate property owners to bear the burden of extravagance which he and others like him have encouraged.'

'MOST EMPHATICALLY I AM NOT A PROHIBITIONIST,' said Mrs Yates, when the conversational stream was carefully turned in this direction. 'I regard Prohibition as an attempt to infringe the liberty of the subject. It is unquestionable that there is a vast amount of harm done by over indulgence in liquor, but you might as well stop football by law because some people occasionally get killed at it. I consider,' she went on, 'it would be a

BURNING SHAME TO ROB THE WORKING MAN OF HIS BEER. Prohibition would not injure the rich; they would import liquor; but it would fall on the poor man, who has every right to choose for himself. Let the new Bill be given a trial, at any rate. The real way to reform lies in better looking after the quality of the drink sold, seeing it is not adulterated. But,' she continues, with a certain air of weariness,

'THIS COLONY SUFFERS FROM OVER-LEGISLATION.

We want a breathing time—a time in which the laws, already made, can be tried and tested. What is the use of making a law and repealing it before you have even tried it? Why don't they let the Liquor Bill have a trial? But there's that Robert Stout stamping the colony with his Direct Veto Bill already' (this with great contempt). 'Indeed,' says Mrs Yates, 'it would be

A BLESSING FOR THE COLONY TO HAVE A TEN YEARS' REST FROM LAW MAKING.'

So many of us think. And now this imperfect account of a most interesting interview must come to an end. It will, at least, have shown that Onehunga's new Mayor is a hard thinker, and far from an ordinary woman.

KALIZOIC is the peculiar and somewhat bizarre title given by two Auckland ladies to their studio, one of the prettiest in the northern capital. In connection with art teaching the Kalizic has become a sort of rendezvous for those who like beautiful things, as the rooms are stocked with a profusion of exquisite works of art—*articles de vertu*, painted tables, draped mirrors, and a host of other beautiful things. Considerable interest is being displayed over the Art Union by which these are to be distributed, and tickets are being widely bought. It is not at all a bad idea to send one of these tickets as a Christmas card to a friend. If it turns up a lucky number, you can amount of gratitude altogether disproportionate to the humble outlay of a shilling, which is after all only the price of a decent card.

The Blenheim bachelors—Messrs Rowe, S. Hudson, Pasley, Smith, S. Griffiths, Richmond, and E. Conolly—had quite a little surprise for their visitors, having unearthed a musician of wonderful talent to play the dance music. No one knew his name beyond the fact that he was called 'Arthur,' but his playing was certainly divine, and the music he discoursed most eloquent. The girls had a splendid time; nor were the chaperones forgotten. The hosts were most attentive, and nothing could exceed the enjoyment of everybody. At 2.30 a.m. 'Auld Lang Syne' was sung by everybody standing in a ring on the floor of the hall. Then the girls gave three hearty cheers for Blenheim, which was as heartily returned for Pictou by the Blenheim hosts, who drove back to their homes in the morning early.