

The White Ribbon

FOR GOD AND HOME AND HUMANITY

VOL. 5.—No. 58.

CHRISTCHURCH, APRIL, 1900.

2s 6d Per Annum
Post Free.

New Zealand's First Lady Doctor.

In the quiet little town of Waimate, prettily surrounded by clustering hills, Dr. Margaret Cruickshank, the first lady medical practitioner in this Colony, carries on her work of healing. I say the first lady medical practitioner because, although I believe that she and Dr. Emily Siedeberg, of Dunedin, took their medical degree at the same time, Dr. Cruickshank was the first lady who took up a practitioner's work. If, as we were taught to believe when young, it is woman's task to soothe and cheer, then there can be scarcely any work more truly womanly than ministering to and helping those overtaken by pain and sickness.

And yet truly womanly as the avocation of healing is, the brave women who were the pioneers of their sex in the medical profession were the victims of insult and obloquy, and were hampered and hindered in every possible way when they sought to obtain a scientific training in the practice of medicine. Their courage and perseverance, aided by the common-sense and chivalry of some of the broadest-minded and cleverest of the medical men of the day, ultimately triumphed over all difficulties, and for many years duly qualified lady practitioners have had a recognised place in England

and America. In all educational matters the girls of this colony have been in the enjoyment of the advantages won by the heroic struggles of the women of an earlier generation, and in the Medical School in Dunedin, as in the colleges in other parts of the colony,



DR. MARGARET CRUICKSHANK.

the girl graduate has had fair play. Prejudice against anything uncommon is, however, hydra-headed, and when Dr. Cruickshank began to practise, first as assistant, and later as partner, of Dr. Barclay in Waimate, there were many, even among her own sex, who prophesied

dire failure. But our pioneer practitioner went quietly on her way, helping those who would accept her help, "and now," said her partner, with chivalrous pride, to the writer, "they all want Dr. Cruickshank, and I am nowhere." While this gallant remark is probably an overstatement, there can be no doubt that the skill and kindness of Dr. Cruickshank have quite won the hearts of the people in her district. "I don't know what we should do without her," said a delicate woman to our Business Manager, who was paying a visit to Waimate a few weeks ago. "The people all worship Dr. Cruickshank," said one of the residents when I made enquiry of her. To my written request for a personal interview to be published in the *WHITE RIBBON*, the Doctor gave a point blank refusal. "Perhaps it may be better," she wrote, "to outline my objections, so that you may understand that it is not mere churlishness on my part. 1st. Hatred of publicity. I have quite enough in my daily life which is unavoidable without seeking after the avoidable. 2nd. The essentially egotistical character of an interview. I always feel that though I may have had a little measure of what the world calls success, I am on a very lowly rung of the ladder yet, and from such have a very circumscribed outlook, so that I feel myself hardly fitted to speak very dogmatically about questions affecting women practitioners. 3rd. The necessarily limited scope of