

Mrs. K. W. Sheppard (Mrs. Lobell-Smith).



THERE is a story told of the great hurricane in Samoa, when ship after ship was piled in ruins on the shores of Apia harbour. The "Calliope" steamed out in the teeth of the gale, with every ounce of steam that could be given her she barely had steering way. As she sailed past the "Teuton," a U.S.A. ship, fast drifting helplessly to the rocks, its doomed sailors raised a cheer as the "Calliope" fought her way past them. Doomed as they were to destruction, yet with courage and true sportsmanship, they saluted their comrades who were escaping.

And there are times when we of the present day should stand at the salute to the noble women of the past who, through showers of sneers, storms of obloquy, gales of passion, and gusts of derision, fought and won for us the battle of freedom.

And such a time is the present when not only White Ribboners but social workers of the Dominion are mourning the loss of one on the "old brigade." Nay, one who led that brigade in their fight for women's franchise. It is an old story now, but time cannot dim the lustre of the crown they won by service and by sacrifice. By their victory in 1893 they cleared from our statute book the slur cast on the noble womanhood of the colony of New Zealand. The women pioneers of this fair land had fought side by side with their fathers, brothers and husbands, had borne the hardships of pioneer

life and had planted homes in the wilderness. But they were classed with "lunatics, minors and criminals" when it came to voting.

The Electoral Bill extending the Franchise to women took away this slur, though it was not for a long period that full justice was done by allowing women not only to vote for Members of Parliament, but also to be voted for as M.P's.

As Franchise Superintendent for the W.C.T.U., Mrs. Sheppard led the women to victory, and on September 19th Mr. Seddon forwarded to her the following telegram: "The Electoral Bill assented to by His Excellency the Governor at a quarter to twelve this day." The pen with which the Bill was signed was presented to Mrs. Sheppard, and by her request is to be placed at the W.C.T.U. Headquarters, 46 Brougham Street, Wellington. There it will remain as a relic of a fight in which the Union bore so brave a part.

Mrs. Sheppard was the first Editor of the "White Ribbon" and occupied the editorial chair until her departure for a trip to England.

Shortly after the winning of the Franchise, the Petone No-License League held a public meeting in the Oddfellows Hall to hear from Sir Robert Stout and Sir John Hall some particulars of the fight in the House. The Hall was packed, and the Secretary of the No-License League, who was first mistress in the Petone Central School, was deputed to move a resolution thanking the two Parliamentarians for their efforts to secure the vote for women of N.Z. It was her first bit of work in the cause of feminism, and she listened eagerly while Sir Robert spoke of Mrs. Sheppard's fine work and able leadership in the campaign. But still more was she impressed in the quiet supper room (where as hostess she entertained the speakers and friends) listening to Sir John Hall tell of visits to Mrs. Sheppard's home, and speak of its beauty and orderliness, and how public work had never interfered with private duty. Little did that young teacher imagine that she would ever occupy the editorial chair of the "White Ribbon" and stand in noble succession to those who founded our official organ.

During the difficult years of the Great War when problems in our departments of Peace and Purity almost daily pressed upon the Editor, and it was difficult to speak truth and not offend against the War Regulations, then the advice of Mrs. Sheppard was invaluable. Always wise and tactful, with an intimate knowledge of these subjects, her counsel was often sought and her words of encouragement helped us to "carry on" when all was dark and difficult.

To the last her interest in the "White Ribbon" was keen, and in the office is the feeling of sadness with the severing of another link with the past, and the loss of a wise counsellor and friend. But whenever the story of the Woman's Franchise Movement is told the name of Kate W. Sheppard will be honoured.

"She being dead yet speaketh"