

**OUTLINES OF THE
WOMEN'S
FRANCHISE MOVEMENT
IN NEW ZEALAND**

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Outlines of the Women's Franchise Movement in New Zealand by W. Sidney Smith

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BY
W. SIDNEY SMITH.



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INTRODUCTION.

THE OUTLINES OF THE WOMEN'S FRANCHISE MOVEMENT IN NEW ZEALAND were not intended for publication in a permanent form. They were written for and published in the New Zealand *White Ribbon* during the years 1901-2. Repeated requests to allow them to be republished in book form have been hitherto ignored because it seemed to be unnecessary.

Recently my attention has been called to a number of erroneous statements concerning the Suffrage Movement in this Colony which have been given publicity in various magazines and books.

Some of these statements have been made by writers whose information has obviously been obtained second-hand and from unreliable sources. But others have been made by men who should have known better. Notable among these is Mr W. P. Reeves, the present High Commissioner for New Zealand in London.

During the years of the most strenuous agitation in favour of the franchise, he was engaged in the public life of the Colony, and at the time when the long fight was brought to a close he held office as a member of the Cabinet. It seems incredible that he could be ignorant of the incessant and long continued efforts made by women in almost

every part of the Colony to gain public sympathy for this great reform, and to bring pressure to bear on members of Parliament.

Yet in his book, "State Experiments in Australia and New Zealand," Mr. Reeves says :

"So one fine morning of September, 1893, the women of New Zealand woke up and found themselves enfranchised. The privilege was theirs, given freely and spontaneously in the easiest and most unexpected manner in the world by male politicians. . . . No franchise leagues had fought the fight year after year. . . ."

How utterly at variance with the real facts these statements are the readers of this book will be able to judge.

iv. *Introduction.*

I may say that when I consented to republish these "Outlines," I wrote Sir John Hall and Mr Alfred Saunders, forwarding to each a set of proofs, and asking them to be good enough to read them and point out any errors that came under their notice. Mr Saunders was then confined to his bed as the result of a severe operation, but at his invitation I visited him and he expressed his satisfaction at the general accuracy of the account.

Sir John Hall, with his characteristic courtesy, wrote me, placing at my service several volumes of records of the Franchise Movement in the Colony which he had collected, and had bound in a compact form. On

returning the set of proofs he wrote me the following letter which I take the liberty of publishing:—

“ MY DEAR SIR,

“ The perusal of the proofs
“ of the *OUTLINES OF THE WOMEN'S*
“ *FRANCHISE MOVEMENT IN NEW ZEA-*
“ *LAND* has been a very pleasant task
“ for me. The manner in which the
“ Parliamentary franchise was obtained
“ for women in New Zealand deserved
“ to be put on record, and I bear
“ willing testimony to the accuracy and
“ the fairness with which this has been
“ done by you.

“ I am especially glad to find that
“ your narrative does justice to the
“ first pioneer in the movement, Dr.
“ Wallis; also to Mr Alfred Saunders,
“ its steadfast advocate; and especially
“ to Mrs Sheppard, Superintendent of
“ the Franchise Department of the Wo-
“ men's Christian Temperance Union.
“ To no one was the success which