IN 1839, just before the first large group of settlers left England for New Zealand, the first edition of a book by Mrs Sarah Stickney Ellis appeared in London. It was called *The Women of England, their Social Duties and Domestic Habits* and was a tract on women’s role and mission in life.\(^1\) Mrs Ellis reminded the women of England of their deep responsibilities. By custom, tradition and the nature of their sex, women had the function of preserving the moral fibre of the nation. They were to carry out this function within the walls of two sanctified institutions, home and family. Women were ‘the guardians of the comfort’ of the home, the creators of havens of peace and order to which men, sullied by their contacts with the sordid outside world, could retreat for solace and consolation. Around this fortress women must erect a ‘wall of confidence’ which ‘no internal suspicion could undermine’ and ‘no external enemy break through’. Within it they must maintain a pure and gracious atmosphere, an unruffled serenity and a strong moral purpose. Their success rested on their always remembering that they were inferior to men: ‘In her intercourse with man,’ Mrs Ellis wrote, ‘it is impossible but that woman should feel her own inferiority; and it is right that it should be so. . . . She does not meet him upon equal terms. Her part is to make sacrifices, in order that his enjoyment may be enhanced.’ Thus it was for a daughter to serve her father, a sister her brothers, a mother her sons, and a wife her husband.\(^2\)

How many of the women who migrated to New Zealand read Mrs Ellis’s book I do not know. But it was only one of a number of books and articles defining the role of the ‘respectable lady’ in early Victorian England. Mrs Ellis illustrated a very influential set of attitudes towards women and a commonly-held view of their proper sphere.

\(^*\)This paper was read in May 1976 at the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science Congress held in Hobart, Tasmania.

2. ibid., pp. 13, 25, 26, 120, 223, 19.
I want to suggest that this widely-held concept of women’s place in society, combined with the special circumstances of colonial New Zealand, led to an intense emphasis in nineteenth-century New Zealand on women’s role within the home and family. New Zealand women were not inclined to challenge this emphasis. They accepted it and regarded it as proper. Furthermore I want to suggest that the early success of New Zealand women in gaining political rights was closely related to their achievements in this role. The right to participate in political democracy did not lead New Zealand women rapidly into new spheres of activity but consolidated and reconfirmed their vital interest and mission in life — their role as homemakers and guardians of moral health and welfare.

The advocates of immigration and colonization in the mid-nineteenth century had similar ideas on woman’s role to Mrs Ellis. Women were essential to the business of colonization as homemakers, the upholders of moral values and social purity and as the agents of civilization. Edward Gibbon Wakefield, the early architect of organized immigration to New Zealand, maintained that in colonization women had a part so important that all depended on their participation. He wrote, ‘A Colony that is not attractive to women, is an unattractive colony.’ In the new country woman’s function would be to create and care for house and home, thus freeing men for the work of production; it would be her duty to guard the virtue, morality and gentility of the settlers: ‘As respects morals and manners’, Wakefield said, ‘it is of little importance what colonial fathers are, in comparison, with what the mothers are.’ It was for these reasons that Wakefield laid a great stress on the migration of an equal number of each sex, and on the migration of young married couples. Marriage would ensure that every woman had a special protector, that no man had an excuse for ‘dissolute habits’ and that every couple would have ‘the strongest motives for industry, steadiness and thrift.’ Every man migrating to New Zealand was advised to take a wife.

In 1860, Charles Hursthouse, a bachelor settler, advised any fellow bachelor intending to migrate to ‘stop for a week, ride round the neighbourhood in search of a wife, and seek to add to his outfit something far prettier and more fruitful than patent plough, threshing-mill or thoroughbred.’ The lack of a wife was felt intensely by Thomas Arnold who tried life in New Zealand for a couple of years. ‘The fact is’, he wrote to England, ‘that housekeeping in the bush without a wife is next door to an impossibility.’ These writers saw women as essential in a colony; but they were not essential as individuals. Women were seen solely in the roles of wives, mothers, homemakers and housekeepers.

Indeed this was for many years the future of the vast majority of women in New Zealand. The opportunities for marriage were very good. The sex ratio, especially in the marriageable age groups was, throughout the

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4 Charles Hursthouse, *New Zealand, the Britain of the South*, London, 1861, p. 397.
nineteenth century, in favour of women. The 1851 census showed nearly 9,000 males between the ages of fifteen and sixty, and well under 6,000 females. By 1871 there were over twice as many men between the ages of twenty-one and sixty-five as there were women. Although this proportion had ceased to be as advantageous by 1891 there were still 105 bachelors to every 100 spinsters. This was at a time when in England there was a surplus of some half a million women over men.

The excess of males over females, a typical enough situation in a pioneering country, put a premium on women as wives. The colonial newspapers carried frequent lonely-heart advertisements such as the following in the Southern Cross in 1848: 'Wanted a lady, young, healthy and of a warm constitution, but not too sprightly; fortune is not so much an object as youth, health; good temper, and a good connexion.' There were repeated attempts to entice young single girls from England to New Zealand. The possibility of a sound colonial marriage was supposed to be the secret desire of many a young girl toiling away at the carding machine or sewing table in the factories of Great Britain. In Alton Locke, the writer Charles Kingsley had one of his young seamstresses exclaim: 'Oh! if that fine lady, as we're making that riding-habit for, would just spare only half the money that goes to dressing her up to ride in the park, to send us out to the colonies, wouldn't I be an honest girl there? maybe an honest man's wife! Oh, my God, wouldn't I slave my fingers to the bone to work for him! Wouldn't I mend my life then! I couldn't help it — it would be like getting into heaven out of hell.' Contemporary emigration literature contains many descriptions of New Zealand as an 'extensive field for crinoline, red petticoat, balmoral boot, enterprise and conquest.' And in the 1870s an extensive campaign was mounted to get girls to come to New Zealand, in the first place as domestic servants, but with the prospect of rapidly marrying one of 'the respectable colonists of New Zealand.'

Not only were the opportunities for marriage great but most women did marry. The 1874 census showed that only fifteen per cent of women over twenty were single and only five per cent over the age of thirty. Although by 1891 the proportion of single women over thirty had reached eight per cent, the occupation of most women was clearly that of wife. Even the occupation that absorbed by far the largest number of women who worked in the nineteenth century — domestic service — was looked upon as a preparation for marriage. William Swainson, an early Auckland settler, regarded the training of small girls as domestic servants as a good qualification for them 'to become true "help-meets" to the "rising generation".' In 1871 the

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8 Hursthouse, p. 257.
9 J. Adam, Twenty-Five Years of Emigrant Life in the South of New Zealand, Edinburgh, 2nd ed., 1876, p. 58.
Superintendent of Taranaki claimed that 'industrious and respectable girls who have undergone a sort of preparation for household duties as domestic servants are much sought after as wives by our outsettlers...'. And at an enquiry into conditions of work in 1890 it was stated by several witnesses that the domestic servant was a far more 'suitable helpmate' and 'useful wife' than the girl who worked in a factory or shop.

Marriage in New Zealand was the main occupation of women. In the words of Thomas Bracken, the composer of 'God Defend New Zealand', women's legitimate role was 'as the light of the home and the genius of the fireside'. As the colony became more settled, as its economy diversified and the population structure became more even, this role became less dominant. It had its restrictions and produced its reactions in New Zealand as it did elsewhere. But life within the bounds of home and family and respectability was not as frustrating for women in New Zealand as it had become for women of Great Britain. The letters and diaries of women in New Zealand show that in the colonial context this role provided demands and challenges that held a high degree of personal reward and satisfaction. The colonial environment opened new doors. It gave, within the context of an accepted role, a sense of purpose, a feeling of usefulness and a greater degree of independence than the women migrants had experienced before. To reach the same end in England they would have had to break out of the shell of home and family and emerge into the world a rebel against position and role. Such escapes were often preceded by nervous breakdowns and illness and were accompanied by personal traumas. For colonial women the break-through was accomplished in the migration process — an escape carried through in the bosom of the family, and which, although accompanied by discomfort, hardship and often personal misery, held in the end significant material and emotional rewards within an accepted framework.

The role of wife and mother in New Zealand, while incorporating Mrs Ellis's model, involved a wider range of functions and duties than it did in England. Much as a middle-class wife was necessary in England as ornament, status symbol and angel in the house, she was infinitely more necessary in the colony because she was useful. The colonial woman's role was most frequently described as that of a true 'helpmeet'. The words of Genesis 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him', took on a new lease of life in the colonial situation.

Colonial life called upon women to perform many different functions. The supply of domestic servants never equalled the demand. This meant that

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11 Thomas Carrington/Colonial Secretary, 1 August 1871, National Archives, Immigration 4/1/1.
12 e.g. Dr Robert Martin, Dr William Lamb, Dr William Stenhouse, Report of Royal Commission on Sweating, 1890, Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives, (AJHR), 1890, H-5, 890-908, 920, 954.
13 New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, (NZPD), LVII (1887), 233.
14 In view of the work by Patricia Branca, Silent Sisterhood: Middle Class Women in the Victorian Home, London, 1975, this view of middle class women, especially the lower middle class, in England and Wales, would have to be modified.
almost everyone was engaged, to a greater or lesser degree, in household work. The female immigrant, whatever her status, had to be prepared to clean and cook and wash clothes in conditions very much more arduous than those of today. The ubiquitous camp oven was a heavy iron box placed over an open fire; an alternative method of cooking was to heat the clay floors with hot irons or fire, and place the dough for bread on the hot earth. Cleaning in settlements where mud and dust was the rule was a repetitive occupation; water for washing had to be carried and boiled on open fires. Even in the emerging towns of the late nineteenth century household conveniences were limited. But, as Charles Hursthouse reminded the women of New Zealand, 'there is a vast difference between making a loaf or a bed for brothers or husbands, for love, and in making them for masters and mistresses for money.'

The rewards of such endeavours were supposed to be self-evident.

Not only was it necessary for these women to run their household. Many of the wives of men who settled on the land made very significant contributions to the family economy. The wives of farmers in Britain in the eighteenth century had performed similar functions in a family context, but as Ivy Pinchbeck has shown, they had now ceased to be involved in farm management; and there was only occasional paid employment outside of the family for wives of agricultural labourers.

It would be interesting to know more details about the contribution women in New Zealand made to family budgets. Clearly the wives and daughters of both the middle and working class who assisted husbands and fathers in an unpaid capacity on farms and also in shops must have made a considerable difference to the profitability of these enterprises. The wives of farmers had certain accepted functions. Making butter for household consumption and for sale was one of their duties. Even Mrs Petre, the wife of one of Wellington’s aristocrats, was reported to do this work. In the 1840s Jessie Campbell, the wife of a Wanganui farmer, made a good deal from her dairy — in fact the proceeds from her sales of fresh and salt butter and milk were for some years the sole cash income from their land. In not a few cases, on absence or death of husbands, women took over the responsibility of farm management. The census of 1874 showed 245 women running farms and sheep stations on their own account.

Other married women embarked on business enterprises which helped their families start off in the new country. Grace Hirst, wife of a New Plymouth settler, made a handsome fifty per cent profit on furniture, jewellery and clothing she brought with her from England. Within a short time she was lending out money on short-term loans at the interest rate of fifteen per cent.

\[15\] Hursthouse, p. 406.
\[18\] Grace Hirst / Martha Bracken, 24 August 1852, Hirst Family Letters, Alexander Turnbull Library.
Women also played an extremely important part in bringing up and educating their children. The nursery maid was rare; the nanny unknown. In the first twenty or so years of settlement there were few schools and the quality of education was very patchy. The frequent absence of colonial husbands placed these tasks squarely in the hands of women. To this must be added the work of nursing which was undertaken largely by members of the family and neighbours. Even outside of this circle women gave a great deal of voluntary help. Lady Martin, wife of the Chief Justice, helped run a hospital for Maori patients for fourteen years. Sarah Higgins, who came to Nelson at the age of twelve, as the oldest female in her family, almost immediately began helping other women with baby-care. She eventually became a skilled midwife.

It must also be noted that these duties were performed in a country which by the mid 1860s had one of the highest standards of living in the world. Both working-class and middle-class women could expect a high degree of material rewards to accompany their duties. In performing these duties many colonial women found a self-respect and satisfaction they had failed to discover in their earlier lives. Sarah Greenwood, a Nelson settler, after some time in New Zealand, pronounced herself ‘now quite expert in household work, which I like well enough, and in cooking which I really enjoy. . . . In truth (tho I am half ashamed of the fact) I never was happier in my life.’ The letters of Jane Maria Richmond are equally revealing. Jane Maria was twenty-nine when she came to New Zealand in 1853, one of the fretting middle-class spinsters England nurtured in large numbers. She had none of the proper ladylike accomplishments. She could not play the piano in a style worth listening to, she could not paint or sing, nor do anything ‘elegant’ ‘in a satisfactory manner’. She took to colonial life with tremendous enthusiasm and vigour. She cooked, dusted, and washed and ironed with relish, writing home

I am afraid I have the soul of a maid of all work, and whether I shall ever be anything better seems doubtful . . . but I consider myself a much more respectable character than I was when I was a fine lady, did nothing for anyone but made a gt. many people do things for me. The worst part of the life for me is that it makes me fearfully conceited, I am so proud at finding how easy it is to be independent. Lely [her mother] talks about not being able to bear my being a slave, but I really feel myself less a slave now that I see I can do everything for myself, than I ever did before. When my pantry shelves are scrubbed, and it contains . . . a round of boiled beef, a roast leg of pork, a rhubarb pie, 15 large loaves and 8 pounds of fresh butter . . . I feel as self-satisfied and proud as mortal can. . . . I am much more in my element here than I ever was before.

19 Lady Martin, Our Maoris, London, 1884, passim.
22 cited Drummond, p. 75.
In short Jane Maria in New Zealand was useful. And she found an ever widening role. She got married and had children. Her letters are full of an intelligent and lively interest in everything going on around her — politics, economic development, literature and art. Later in her life she became a firm advocate of secondary schooling for girls and of the woman’s vote, addressing large suffrage meetings in the 1890s when she was near seventy. At the same time Jane Maria remained deeply and firmly rooted in her family. She believed that women had their ‘own special functions’ in the world and that these were the functions of wife and mother. Her advocacy of education for women and wider vocational training, such as in nursing, was not aimed at enabling women to compete with men in the world, but at making women more worthwhile people, better able to fulfil their own role and mission.

The emphasis on home and family was reinforced by the work patterns of New Zealand women. Relatively few worked outside the home — only twenty per cent of women over fifteen in 1874; only twenty-four per cent in 1891. (This can be compared with Great Britain where in 1871 approximately forty-five per cent of women over fifteen worked.) There were several reasons for this low proportion of working women. The relatively high level of wages and high standard of living made it less necessary for women to seek jobs outside of the home. The range of jobs for women was small. More important perhaps, most women were able to fulfil their socially designated role and make a career of marriage. Once married they left the work force and remained within the home.

Even within the female work force the emphasis was on domestic work. By far the largest single category of female employment was domestic service. Such work did not undermine the view of women’s role. Nor did school teaching, which was another fairly large area of female employment. However in the 1880s one new field of employment for women emerged. This was work in industry which expanded during the depression of the 1880s. The experience reinforced in the minds of many the idea that women’s proper sphere was in the home. Industrial abuses emerged in New Zealand for the first time. Long hours, low wages, poor working conditions were rife. One doctor giving evidence to a commission of enquiry in 1890 spoke for many when he stated that society could not improve until ‘it is acknowledged that female labour in any shape or form for commercial purposes is a misfortune. . . females were never intended for commercial labour.’ Although this was no longer a viable proposition it appealed to a deep vein of emotional thinking. Women’s destiny had been, and still was, within the reach of all New Zealand women. The kitchen and the nursery not the factory floor or shop counter were the proper sphere of women’s activity.

Women in the colony were also charged with maintaining the moral tone of society. It was their job to restrain and refine the base instincts of men. The ‘moral evils’ of a society in which there was a large excess of males over

24 ibid., II, 301, 328.
25 Dr William Stenhouse, Report of Royal Commission on Sweating, 1890, AJHR, 1890, II-5, 953.
females were clear. Without woman’s presence, man would fall rapidly into the slough of sin and wickedness — alcohol, smoking, bad language, gambling and sexual vice. The editor of one of the Auckland papers in 1845 wrote that ‘female influence and female attraction’ was the ‘great cement’ of society; a male historian of the 1890s remarked that Nelson in its pioneering stages had been unrestrained by ‘the sex whose presence civilizes ours.’ John Whyte, M.P. for Waikato, said in Parliament in 1887 that he considered women’s mission upon earth was ‘to drag the men up to heaven’. Women’s purity, piety and virtues were essential to harness man’s animal nature. The women certainly took their role as the agents of civilization seriously. Lady Barker, wife of a Canterbury run owner, noted that ‘a lady’s influence’ in the colony was ‘very great’. ‘She represents refinement and culture . . . and her footsteps on a new soil such as this should be marked by a trail of light.’ Her practical efforts in this direction included setting up a book club and a night-school for hands on the station and a homily delivered to the assembled men in her kitchen on the necessity of standing up and removing their hats when a lady entered the room. Frances Shayle-George, an Auckland teacher, considered a woman’s sphere was to purify the world, ‘to be the leading principle of good order, peace and refinement in man’s sole remaining paradise — his own Home.’

Early New Zealand novels abound with stories contrasting the rough, boorish colonial man and the refined gentlewoman and relating her success — or failure — in achieving a conversion. Even when the man was essentially a gentleman, lack of contact with women led to neglect and backsliding. This was the case with David Bruce in Jane Mander’s novel, The Story of a New Zealand River. When first seen by Alice Roland, he bore only too noticeably the marks of a recent encounter with the whisky bottle: ‘His fine brown eyes were strained and bloodshot, his hands red and dirty, his dark hair uncombed, his hat guilty of indescribable disreputableness, his battered dungarees smelling of river mud, tar and stale tobacco’ — indeed ‘all that she had been taught to connect with the name of pariah.’ It was the vigilant care and loving attention of a woman that effected the change. In Edith Searle Grossman’s novel, The Heart of the Bush, the English-educated Adelaide, succeeded, after marriage, in getting her Dennis to stop swearing in her presence, to smoke only cigars and to drink wine rather than whisky. It did not even require the actual presence of a lady to work an influence. Charlotte Godley begged two young bachelors on a Canterbury back-blocks station to set up a dummy of a lady in their sitting room and ‘always to behave before it

27 A. Saunders, History of New Zealand, Christchurch, 1896, p. 165.
28 NZPD, LVII (1887), 253.
29 Lady Barker, Station Life in New Zealand, London, 1883, pp. 72-3, 105, 112-3;
30 New Zealand Herald, 2 March 1872.
32 London, 1910, passim.
as if it were their mother, or some other dignified lady.'

The worst of all the male abuses was alcohol. The consumption of liquor in the colony was supposedly high. In 1861 New Zealanders drank over three gallons of beer, over two of spirits and nearly one of wine per head of population. In 1879, the first survey of licences showed, there was one licence to sell alcohol to every 287 people. To the women of New Zealand liquor was the greatest of sins — it was 'the serpent' in the new Eden; the destroyer of 'the peace and purity' of the new country. It coarsened men and caused women and children to suffer. The words 'No drunkard shall inherit the Kingdom of Heaven' were added to religious texts. Many men joined with women in this view.

The conception of women's role as wife, mother, homemaker and guardian of society's morals, was, I would argue, very closely associated with the agitation for suffrage and with the early extension of the vote to New Zealand women. The early New Zealand feminists, female activists and pro-suffrage males argued from a position solidly based on the family. They did not attack the family unit. They did not try to take the women out of the home. They saw marriage, home and family as the main and natural vocation of women. Political rights were a recognition of the worth of that vocation and a complement to it. It is not surprising that the most active feminist groups in New Zealand were associated with the cause of temperance. Temperance and the vote were seen as the means of safeguarding the morality of the colony and the sanctity of the family.

These arguments can be seen throughout the feminist literature produced in New Zealand. One example is the writing of Mrs Mary Anne Muller. Mrs Muller published her ideas in the columns of the Nelson Examiner in the late 1860s. She argued that New Zealand should lead the world in enfranchising women and thus righting the 'monstrous injustice' that existed. She appealed to the men of New Zealand to

Note the delicately-nurtured woman, see her wondrous power and energy, her patient, unflagging cheerfulness during the years of banishment to some back station in New Zealand, where she toils until the waste smiles around her; where she rears her poultry, grows her fruit and flowers — aye and not infrequently digs her potatoes and chops her wood, while she yet cheers her husband and teaches her children with anxious care lest they drop from the social sphere to which her heart clings. . . .

These women, women who 'guided families' and ran households, were capable of voting. ‘Were it a question of general knowledge and intelligence as compared with men, women might submit un murmuringly’ Mrs Muller admitted. But the point was ‘Is she as capable as our bullock-drivers, labourers and mechanics’? The enfranchisement of women would infuse into politics a ‘fresher purer spirit’ and a ‘higher tone’; it would unleash a ‘hidden wealth of mental devotion and sympathy and quiet strength’. In other words


See Susie MacTier, Miranda Stanhope, Auckland, 1911, pp. 61, 181-2.
those great virtues that women had until that time exercised within home and family should be allowed to purify politics. It was the right of women to exercise their intelligence and talents by voting, a right not only owing to them as human beings but won by their contribution to the founding of the colony.\textsuperscript{36}

Another early feminist and supporter of the vote, Mrs Mary Colclough, who wrote and lectured under the name of Polly Plum in the late 1860s and early 1870s, had a similar view. She wrote in 1870

We are emphatically ‘the weaker vessel’, and we shall never, as a body, equal men as a body. We have our special blessings, our own particular virtues, our own especial gifts, and indeed, our own privileges. For my part, I should be sorry to see the day in which women occupied the position of men. I should be sorry to see the day in which men ceased to show us the chivalrous devotion, the protecting courtesy, that real manly men feel bound to accord to woman as the weaker vessel. I shouldn’t feel at all compensated for such a change by being allowed to be myself a lawyer, a doctor, or even a member of Parliament. I don’t want to be any one of these things, and I don’t believe any true woman does.

What Polly Plum did ask for was that if a woman did have to work, through widowhood, desertion or some other calamity, she should be given ‘fair play... So far, and no farther do I go with the champions of woman’s rights. I can’t go the whole length; common sense forbids it, for I am met on the very outset by the unanswerable questions: Who’s to mind the babies and cook the dinner?’\textsuperscript{37}

The supporters of the suffrage in Parliament based their arguments on similar premises. They did speak about natural rights and the equality of women with men; they argued against the old proposition that private life was women’s sole sphere and that public life belonged to men. But their claims for women’s franchise rose out of the achievements New Zealand women had made within the sphere of the home and the virtues that were supposed to be especially connected with it. In 1887 Richard Monk, M.P. for Waitemata, supported the vote for women and asked ‘Is not the mother of a family just as much interested in the affairs of the colony as any man? Her interest in the future welfare of the colony is as great as can exist in the breast of any man.’\textsuperscript{38} Vincent Pyke, a one time opponent of the measure, claimed that Parliament could do nothing more beneficial to the country than ‘give women that voice in the conduct of public affairs to which, as the mothers of our children, they are entitled.’\textsuperscript{39} Alexander Hogg maintained that woman’s position was more responsible than man’s.

She has to bring up, to educate, to train, to cultivate the physical moral and religious instincts of the young. If, by conferring the franchise on women, we can make that position of the race less dependent on the man than it has been

\textsuperscript{36}‘Femmina’, An Appeal to the Men of New Zealand, Nelson, 1869, passim.
\textsuperscript{37}Weekly News, 26 February 1870.
\textsuperscript{38}NZPD, LVII (1887), 241.
\textsuperscript{39}ibid., pp. 249-50.
in the past, then I say we shall be making woman more womanly, and we shall also be conferring a great benefit on the race in future. We shall... have better homes and happier wives.... We shall have purer legislation, and we shall have, in my opinion, a much better state of society.\textsuperscript{40}

In arguing that the right to vote complemented women’s accepted role in society, the suffrage supporters met head-on the main argument of their opponents — that the women’s vote would destroy domestic happiness and, by removing woman from her proper sphere, degrade and coarsen her. The latter arguments were unconvincing. Few politicians could believe that the mere vote would, as Sir William Fitzherbert said, prevent women from being ‘thoughtful and kind towards their husbands and families.’\textsuperscript{41} The prospect of women abandoning their domestic duties and neglecting their homes was untenable. The main band of active suffragists came from the Women’s Christian Temperance Union — a society dedicated to removing the greatest evil threatening the sanctity of home and family. How could the argument be sustained that their demands constituted an even greater threat to that sanctity?

The politicians and suffragists agreed. They argued that women’s vote would lead to the purifying of politics and increased attention to social problems, especially those affecting women and children. Women in the election booths would eliminate the coarse and corrupt behaviour associated with voting; women would see that the wrong sort of man was no longer returned to Parliament; the influence of the women’s vote would ensure that legislation ‘promoting the true welfare’ of the colony would be passed; the interests and rights of women and children would no longer be neglected.

This close relation between women’s accepted role and the claim for women’s rights ensured that the cause of the franchise would be conceded early in New Zealand. In 1878 Parliament agreed to give the vote to women ratepayers. This failed to become law when the Bill containing the franchise was dropped because of an entirely different matter.\textsuperscript{42} In 1887 the principle of the women’s vote was again agreed to by a majority of Parliament. It was then overturned by a political sleight of hand at 1 o’clock in the morning, after a large number of members, thinking the matter concluded, had left the House.\textsuperscript{43} In the 1890s only the doughty opponents of the measure, mainly men connected with the liquor trade who feared the introduction of prohibition if women had the vote, thought it worthwhile continuing to argue the principle. Others realized that the case had been won. That New Zealand women did not get the vote earlier than 1893 was the result of the power of the brewers and publicans and of the fears of the Liberal leaders who considered the women’s vote would be a vote for conservatism.

The results of the franchise in New Zealand confirmed that women had not viewed it as a means of breaking out of their traditional role. In 1910

\textsuperscript{40} NZPD, LXXX (1893), 596.
\textsuperscript{41} NZPD, LVII (1887), 256.
\textsuperscript{42} P. Grimshaw, \textit{Women’s Suffrage in New Zealand}, Auckland, 1972, pp. 16-17.
\textsuperscript{43} ibid., pp. 42-3.
Lady Stout, a staunch feminist in the 1890s, wrote a series of articles for the *English Woman* on ‘What the Franchise has done for the Women and Children of New Zealand.’ She cited a list of social legislation that had been put on the statute books since 1893 with the help of the women’s vote. Women were still unable to stand for Parliament but this did not matter. ‘We seem to be able to get any measures we want through our vote’, she wrote. ‘We are all so busy in our domestic life that we cannot find time for public duties that can be performed by men who are elected by our votes.’ ‘Instead of becoming addicted to masculine habits, as a result of suffrage, New Zealand women have developed a much higher standard of womanhood and the duties and obligations of motherhood.’ The franchise had not led women out of their homes into the world of men; instead it had developed in women a new sense of responsibility and made possible ‘true comradeship’ with men.44

This was what the New Zealand feminists of the nineteenth century wanted. The role of wife and mother was for them a noble and fulfilling role. The vote was seen as an extension of this role, not as the herald of a new one; it was seen as the recognition of ability and intelligence which found its true outlet and its real fulfilment in the home rather than the market place. Such a view had a strangling effect on the expansion of women’s role in New Zealand society. The nineteenth-century emphasis on marriage and home took even firmer root and continued to dominate the thinking of both sexes on the position of women well into the twentieth century. This was at a time when the home no longer needed to absorb the energies of women; when exciting and challenging new avenues could have been open to them. Instead, New Zealand women continued to find enormous value in the virtue of household tasks; to look introspectively at their lives and engage with ambivalent and reluctant feelings and only too briefly in widening spheres of activity. They clung to the functions associated with the hearth and home. This attitude made necessary the launching of a second movement for women’s rights a century after the first got under way.

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44 Anna P. Stout, ‘What the Franchise has done for the Women and Children of New Zealand’, *English Woman*, VI, (16), May 1910, 7.