

# THE CATHOLIC CITIZEN

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Daughter of the ancient Eve,  
We know the gifts ye gave and give;  
Who knows the gifts which *you* shall give,  
Daughter of the Newer Eve?

Francis Thompson

## Indian Women From The Reservations To Washington D.C.

By Dr. Magda de Spur

Gallup, described as the Indian Capital, is a small country town of about ten thousand inhabitants, far in the West, amidst the Rocky Mountains on the Navajo Reservations. All the year round, the modest city, crossed by one of the important U.S. highways, lives the average life of an unpretentious country town in New Mexico, about two thousand miles from New York. In normal times one of the most characteristic features of the pulsating life within Gallup is given in the drumlike rhythm of the Santa Fe Railroad, the principal line of communication dominating the West. Gallup has been for the last thirty-five years the seat of the Indian Ceremonials. Every Indian tribe, of course, wants to be represented at this event. At the yearly Ceremonials at Gallup, all those who live on the Reservations, in their own "Hogans" and tents, come to show their special way of living, their cults, their customs to the outer world, and at the same time to speak out openly of all their troubles, problems and wishes. The festivities take place about the middle of August, lasting for four days. Every road leading to the "capital" looks crowded with the roofed waggons, carrying the Indians from the different reservations. Old and young are clad in the picturesque coloured dresses, bearing the tribal insignia. They camp outside the city, housed in tents, lighting their fires just as they did many centuries ago.

The Gallup Ceremonial makes—on the one hand—a spontaneous tribute from the white man to the American Indian, creating an opportunity for the Indians to give public evidence of their specific Arts and Crafts, showing their mysterious hand-paintings of the Medicine Men and demonstrating their ancient ceremonial dance. On the other hand it is the unique public meeting of all the tribes and on one of their own reservations, in their own capital, where they may show off freely and proudly, just as in the olden times, with uninhibited unselfconsciousness. Besides dances and rodeos, demonstrating the bodily skill and the religious tradition of the Indian, it offers further a rich exhibit of genuine Indian Arts and Crafts with judges, rewards, etc. and, you may attend a Seminar and listen to the Report given by the Commissioner of the Indian Bureau (a Section of the Department of the Interior in Washington D.C.). And finally there is the Intertribal Meeting convened by the National Congress of American Indians, the most noteworthy institution for serving all the interests of the ancient residents of the United States.

During the whole time of the Ceremonials, Gallup was like a kaleidoscope. The photographers had full time work day and night. The white women visitors diligently competed for the most conspicuous Indian dresses—called the squaw—or for the carved bracelets and wrought silver necklaces inlaid with turquoise. Everybody looked thoroughly impressed by the overpowering atmosphere of a prehistoric world, and the reminders of genuine folklore

played out on the vast prairies of the Rocky Mountains. In the mornings there was the procession of the tribes and of the dance groups, in the afternoon the Rodeo, a show in the huge Stadium in the outskirts of the town; in the evenings the dramatic and striking reality of the dance performances, and the awe-inspiring, very suggestive Indian prayers. All these kept the mind under the constant spell of the prevailing atavistic tradition. High log fires illuminated the scene and there was a breathtaking silence, when the voice of the commentator, on behalf of the *first Americans*, heartily welcomed the *Americans of today*.

In this fairyland, behind the gleaming colours of the performances, chants and drums of the Medicine Men, you could not help feeling the excited pulsation of all Indian problems, issues and claims, the great questions of the present time concerning the ancient inhabitants of North America.

The Commissioner of the Indian Bureau (a representative of the Department of the Interior) gave an address on progress made for the solution of Indian problems, informing the white visitors of all the work of the said institution. At the same time the National Congress of American Indians (with headquarters in Washington D.C.) called an Arizona-New Mexico Intertribal Meeting, to which white people were also admitted as spectators and listeners. The Congress dealt with the problems: (i) How to work together? (ii) Why, where and how are Indians organized today? (iii) What is the most effective weapon we have?—and urged all Indians to make use of their right to vote which has been granted to them since 1948, stressing the importance of the franchise in the development of those economic resources which may greatly assist the Indians to much needed power and wealth.

From among the leaders of the Indian tribes two women gave most remarkable addresses. Mrs. Walter Marmon, a representative of the Laguna Pueblo and a member of the New Mexico Commission on Indian Affairs, discussed "The role of women in Indian Affairs." That modest speaker, a teacher for fifteen years at the school of her reservation, underlined the important part Indian women have always had in the tribal life. The real head of the family has been the mother far back in their history. In the ancestral family only the mother's brother is holder of the blood-relationship which often gives him an authority greater than that of the father. The girl babies are always welcome in the Indian family. But girls do not think of a career. They want to remain in their own tribes, helping to shape the affairs of their people. The Indian women of the present time are confronted by many problems, from education and good housekeeping down to land and water problems. Mrs. Marmon emphasized that they should stand firmly together, holding to their ancestral lands, the soil which by tradition is entirely woman's property, their heritage, and warding off the powers that threaten them on all sides.



The second woman of the Conference, Mrs. Helen Peterson, an Ogalala-Sioux, is now one of the most powerful factors in Indian affairs. A brown-haired, lively young lady, she is at present the executive director of the National Congress of American Indians. She was the moderator of one part of the Conference and seemed to hold in her hand all the threads of the Indian problems.

After the meeting there was an official tea offered in honour of the Indian chiefs and of some of the white spectators. There I had a good opportunity for an intimate and informal talk with Mrs. Peterson.

My ramblings on the Indian Reservations, interviews with Indian artists, my studies in the Indian Library, Museum and Anthropological Institute of Santa Fe, the oldest city of the whole U.S., capital of New Mexico, that fairy town which represents in all its buildings, architecture and decorations the finest and genuine Spanish-Indian style—my visiting also of the Cherokee Indian Reservation in the South in the Smoky Mountains of North Carolina, all this took about three weeks. Soon after my Indian trip I called on Mrs. Peterson in her Washington office at the headquarters of National Congress of American Indians, to continue our talk. I learned that she was born on her mother's allotted land, on a reservation in South Dakota and has been living according to the pure Indian traditions, in the midst of her family since her childhood. Even now in Washington D.C. she has living round her three generations. Old age is no problem with Indians, as her secretary put it. They help each other. Her grandmother's name was "Six Fingers," by her own tribesmen she was designated "Wa-Cin-Ye-Win-Pi-Mi" (one to trust and depend on). Mrs. Peterson received her education at Nebraska State Teachers' College, at Colorado State College and at the University of Denver. There she received an award for her outstanding contribution during the year 1948 in the field of human relations. In 1948 she worked as an adviser to the Delegation to the Second American Conference in Cuzco, Peru. At Denver, Mrs. Peterson acted for six years as Director of the Latin American Centre, and for another six years she was on the committee of Human Relations, assisting the Indian people to better housing, better jobs and better health. Since 1953 she has been executive director of the National Congress of American Indians in Washington D.C. Organizations in which Mrs. Peterson has displayed remarkable activity are—The League of Women Voters, the American Association of University Women, the Business and Professional Women's Club. Her extraordinary knowledge and experience has been appreciated by quite a number of Federations for which she is working as Consultant on Indian Affairs.

In the few hours of our talk in Mrs. Peterson's office she gave me an accurate and objective insight into Indian problems. I learned that their Congress was founded in 1944 with only a hundred Indian individual members and—as she stressed with understandable pride—now it represents one hundred and fifty thousand Indians. The officers of the said institution are all Indians. This remarkable Indian lady put at my disposal a lot of available material, gave me the addresses of the pro-Indian Congressmen who speak of the great poverty, bad education and miserable economic stagnation of the Indian natives and urge Congress repeatedly for immediate help; she remembered with gratitude the famous article by Clarence Wesley, a San Carlos Apache, President of the Arizona Intertribal Council and First Vice-President of the National Congress of American Indians whom I luckily met at Gallup. The said article was read out recently in the Senate and, according to Wesley, the real Indian issues are for the Indians themselves to solve, not by the many times quoted "assimilation into the white culture," nor through the poor opportunities for education. The undeniable fact was that Indian lands had been usurped in the past and with the intention of breaking up the tribal lands of the

Indians under individual ownership, gradually all their resources will pass over to white hands. If ever their properties get lost without first developing the skills and interest of the Indian owner to survive in a new kind of life, the white man's conquest will be complete. The only solution could be—claimed Wesley in his article—to leave the Indians to solve their own problems themselves and to allow them to develop their own much-needed leadership within the tribes.

"Yes," observed Mrs. Peterson, not without some resignation in her voice—"Indians are slow . . . and it is somewhat late . . . but not too late!" And she completed the statement forthwith. "America has been helping underdeveloped countries in other parts of the world . . . why not the Indians? . . . they are waiting so patiently for America to get around to a similar programme for them . . . !"

It must be noted that all Indians of the United States became American citizens by the Act of 1924. Despite their citizenship, however, the right to vote was denied them until 1948. Now the National Congress of Indians is working hard to persuade all Indians to use their right to vote at the elections.

"The political power won through the right to vote is the only real weapon we possess," said Mrs. Peterson, repeating the main theme of the Gallup Meeting. "We Indian women, we have never fought—we have always been protecting our soil and the life of new generations, but now we want to step into the firing line . . . for a better Indian future."

We are indebted for the above article on the Navajo Indians to our Hungarian member, Dr. Magda de Spur, who was commissioned to undertake this piece of research. She is now on the staff of Duquesne University and represents St. Joan's International Alliance on the Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations in New York. The Alliance remembers with gratitude the hospitality she gave to its delegates to the Eucharistic Congress in Buda-Pesth in 1938, in her beautiful flat overlooking the Danube.

When the Communists overran Hungary in 1945, Dr. Magda de Spur was arrested and put into six different prisons. Subsequently, though seriously ill, she fled to Rome and then to Switzerland.

#### BOOKS FOR MALTA

We have received an appeal from the Hon. Agatha Barbara, Minister of Education, Malta, for books suitable for children.

Miss Barbara has undertaken a drive for a higher standard of education, and one of her ardent wishes is to make Maltese school children more book-conscious. She has equipped several school libraries but is hampered by lack of funds. She is appealing to Maltese in other lands and to the friends of Malta, for aid. Books, new or secondhand, or donations, may be sent to "Books for Maltese Children, c/o Commissioner-General for Malta, Malta House, Haymarket, London."

## Notes and Comments

We offer our respectful congratulations to the Most Reverend William Godfrey, Archbishop of Liverpool, on his appointment by Pope Pius XII to be the seventh Archbishop of Westminster. We assure him of our loyalty and prayers.

We are grateful to Lord Pethick Lawrence for raising the question of the admission of women to the House of Lords, during the debate on the Reform of the Second Chamber. He said he could not believe that "if there was to be reform in the House of Lords it would not include women." We take note of Lord Salisbury's statement in reply: "I should expect that to form part of the scheme. I cannot go further."

The National Association of Women Civil Servants draws attention in its current Newsletter to an injustice in the implementation of equal pay by instalments in the Civil Service.

It appears that when hours of work in the Civil Service were reduced as a result of the recommendations of the recent Royal Commission, men and women were allowed to retain their existing pay (which included overtime) in order that their so-called "take-home pay" should not be reduced. The concession was however granted on a mark-time basis, which meant that annual increments which were normally due would only be paid on paper until the officer's basic pay caught up with his take-home pay. The Association contended that the annual instalment of equal pay which was due every 1st of January until 1961 should not be counted as an ordinary increment but that it should be paid on top of take-home pay. The Chancellor's refusal to do this is in effect a breach of the implied promise to lessen the gap between men's and women's pay by means of seven annual instalments.

It is as well that this evasion of "full implementation" should be known and that Dame Irene Ward should be supported in her vigorous fight against this niggardly form of injustice.

In a case regarding a will, heard in the Chancery Division, High Court of Justice, reported in *The Times* of November 21st, it was held that a woman who expressed the intention of making her domicile in Guernsey, while her husband, whose domicile was England, was alive, should be reckoned to have acquired this domicile after his death, though she was herself unconscious at the time. His Lordship, Mr. Justice Danckwerts, had come to the conclusion that the testatrix had an intention to acquire a domicile of choice in

Guernsey and that that intention was effective in law, and her property, therefore, should devolve according to the law of Guernsey.

At the Annual Conference of Trade Unions with women members which are affiliated to the Scottish T.U.C., a resolution reaffirming that women performing similar jobs to men should receive the same rate of pay, was unanimously adopted. Mrs. Penman of the Transport and General Workers' Union said that it was "hard lines" that a semi-skilled man whom she had trained should receive a higher rate of pay than she did.

Miss Rose Heilbron, Q.C., has become Britain's first woman Recorder. The Lord Chancellor's office recently announced her appointment as Recorder of Burnley.

In 1949, Miss Heilbron became one of the first two women to be made K.C.s, she was also the first woman to lead in a murder trial—the Liverpool Cameo Cinema murder case—and the first again to plead a case in the House of Lords.

But, although Miss Heilbron is the first woman Recorder, she will not be the first woman judge in English legal history with the power to try indictable offences. That honour fell to Miss Dorothy Dix, who was appointed Deputy Recorder of Deal Quarter Sessions in 1946.

The Fawcett Society recently gave a series of delightful house-warming parties at its new home at 27, Wilfred Street, Westminster, when friends were made welcome and shown over the beautiful new premises. These include a spacious room where the Women's Service Library is housed. The Librarian, Miss Douie, had prepared a "Learned Ladies" Exhibition with an accompanying pamphlet which ranged from the scholarly nuns of Barking Abbey in the seventh century, of whom St. Eldhelm wrote: "Like bees they collect everywhere material for study," to the notable women of the nineteenth century—Margaret Bryan, who lectured on scientific subjects, Caroline Herschel, who discovered eight comets, Mary Somerville, learned in the Physical Sciences, and Anne Pratt, who specialised in botany. Some of their writings were on view among the treasures of the Library.

We ask the prayers of our members for Miss Seabourne, a faithful member of the Alliance for many years, who died recently. R.I.P.



## ST. JOAN'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ALLIANCE

AND

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Signed articles do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Society

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## The Case Of Cornelia Connelly

I have always thought of the women of the Victorian era as a race of giantesses, unconvincingly camouflaged by the prejudices and conventions of their time. Whether this was so in fact, and the atmosphere of subjection acted as a forcing-house for character, or whether it is just that the general level of the land is now higher so that the peaks no longer stand out, I do not know. I do know, however, that the lives of such women make fascinating reading.

Cornelia Connelly is a prime example of the breed and I am glad to see that her life has been written, and well written, in a way that will appeal to the general reader.\* To those who know the Order she founded, Cornelia Connelly is, of course, no stranger, but the scandals and controversy brought upon her and her nuns by the extraordinary behaviour of her husband caused a certain reticence on the part of her successors which has, until fairly recently, made her less well known to the general public.

Cornelia Connelly should, for instance, stand high in the list of pioneers of female education in this country. Her "Book of Studies" although compiled over a hundred years ago, when rote learning and genteel accomplishments were all that girls were deemed worthy of in the way of education, is amazingly close to modern educational methods, while as early as 1852 she was already determined to add a training school for nuns to the many schools she was starting.

Miss Buss and Miss Beale, and other pioneer contemporaries of Cornelia, fought the fierce and worthwhile battle to give girls "as good an education as boys." None of us will question the necessity for this battle, but it is interesting to see that Cornelia, who was not a conscious feminist, and who was, in any case, cut off from the British movement by nationality, calling and preoccupa-

\*The Case of Cornelia Connelly. By Juliana Wadham. (Collins, 16s.)

tion, yet found her way to a similar end by different means. Indeed, teachers both of boys and girls, nowadays, are in many ways more in sympathy with her imaginative ideals of education—formed for girls alone—than with those current in the boys' schools of the day.

The "Case" of Cornelia Connelly is not yet proved, one way or the other. This book does not attempt to prejudge it, but leaves the reader free to draw his own conclusions. Whatever these may be, there is an enormous amount for us to learn and wonder at in this unusual and strenuous life. "He is not worthy of me, that loves son or daughter more . . ." is here acted out in terms which still shock, as the original injunction shocked. Here Juliana Wadham allows herself, for once to criticise. She says:—". . . Her understanding of other people's children was bought at a tremendous cost—as the life of her eldest son shows—the failure to understand her own."

I should myself prefer to have seen no comment at this point. The modern emphasis on "understanding" one's children, as distinct from loving them, may well be as partial an aspect of the good as the harsh discipline or unhealthy pampering of other ages and social systems. No one can deny that Cornelia loved her children and sought to do her best for them. The rest we, like her, must leave to God.

Catholic women today, and particularly married women who work outside the home, should read this life with particular interest. Here, on the one hand, was a woman utterly content as a wife and mother "forced" against her own will to leave all this and become an organiser, a business woman, a leader—for God's sake. And here was a woman (to look at the other side of the medal) strong-minded, competent, logical and independent, whose entire life is an object

lesson in obedience at any cost. There is no simple solution to all this. Cornelia Connelly's life was full of violent paradoxes and she was certainly no plaster saint—but then what saint was?

This is a very readable and well-written book. I found the arrangement a little confusing here and there; the same events seemed to keep re-appearing in different connections; but the story itself is not straightforward and some repetition is probably unavoidable. It is full of characters, such as the Duchess of Leeds, who are as convincing as they are eccentric and the author is both delicate, and, I should judge, fair when discussing Cornelia's many battles, legal and otherwise. One charming and entertaining fact which emerges from the book is that while the Hierarchy sometimes regarded Cornelia as a trial, the many lawyers whom she learnt to know in her frequent bouts of litigation all acquired a deep respect and affection for her, and immediately sent their daughters to her schools.

On the whole, in fact, I recommend the book warmly, both on its own merits and for the strange and moving story it has to tell.

B. M. Halpern

### THE DEAR ANGEL

We have received further details of the death of Maria Herminia Lisboa, and a cutting from the *Jornal do Comercio* by one of Brazil's well-known writers, Dinah Silveira de Queiroz. She calls Miss Lisboa "the dear angel."

The nurse who attended Miss Lisboa during her last illness said: "In my long professional career I have never nursed such a patient. Her will to live was something quite unusual at her age . . . but in this heroic struggle against death there was no shadow of personal attachment to this world. She wanted to live for *l'Aliança Santa Joanna d'Arc*, to live a little longer in order to see it firmly established.

At her funeral the President of the Alliance, Dra. Nilza Perez de Rezende made an impressive speech, which deeply moved all present. The banner of the Alliance adorned the coffin, placed there as a last act of homage to her who had made the advancement of *l'Aliança* the aim of her life.

The newspaper article speaks of her efforts to save women from a life of vice. She showed "a really superhuman fidelity towards the souls she looked after. Not even ingratitude, repeated falls, or ridicule . . . checked her love of purity.

"What is there to show for all this life of sacrifice?" the article continues. "Perhaps a few changed lives . . . very few . . . but even in these few the seed of further influence was set . . . for, in very truth, the angels do not die."

### THE WOLFENDEN COMMITTEE

The Report of the Roman Catholic Advisory Committee on Prostitution and Homosexual Offences and the Existing Law, submitted to the Departmental Committee of Enquiry, makes a clear distinction between sin and crime, and lays down the principle that it is not the business of the State to intervene in the purely private sphere, but to act solely as the defender of the common good. Penal sanctions should, therefore, be restricted to prevent the corruption of youth; offences against public decency; the exploitation of vice for the purposes of gain.

On Prostitution, the Report says "there is a clear duty on the part of the State to protect women from exploitation or to preserve public order.

"We do, however, suggest that the existing practice of what may be called automatic prosecution for solicitation and importuning followed by trivial fines serves no useful purpose and is indefensible on any grounds and should be discontinued.

"Prosecutions should not be initiated except in cases where satisfactory evidence is available to establish the charge and in such cases the Courts should be empowered to inflict suitable penalties including the power to make probation orders where it is desirable, with or without a condition of residence."

The Report was signed by—

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 Psychiatrist.  
 RICHARD ELWES, Q.C.,  
 Recorder of Northampton,  
 Chairman of Derbyshire Quarter Sessions.

### HON. TREASURER'S NOTE

Will anyone who had anything to do with the Christmas Sale please accept the grateful thanks of the Alliance. It was indeed a happy day and the result—just £100. By Christmas this should be about £110. There are quite a number of goods and cards on sale at the office, so do come along if you need any last minute presents. St. Joan's office is very conveniently placed, in Oxford Street, in a small courtyard, just across the road from Bourne and Hollingsworth, and the Hon. Secretary would welcome a visit, or perhaps you would like to send a little monetary gift!

Noreen K. Carr



## THE MONTH IN PARLIAMENT

The great problems of Suez and Hungary, of course, occupied by far the greater part of the energies of the House during the last month. Discussion and recrimination spread far outside the bounds of specific debates on foreign affairs and cropped up even in such strictly domestic topics as Homicide (November 15th) and Rent Control (November 21st). The six-day debate on the Address, following the Queen's Speech on November 6th, came back and back to the Middle East between every other subject raised, and on November 1st the Speaker was obliged to suspend the sitting for half an hour in an effort to prevent the generation of excessive heat among Hon. Members. For our part, however, we must merely note that the normal Parliamentary business of question and answer continued as usual, and draw attention to one or two points of special interest to ourselves.

On November 21st a Bill was presented (to have its Second Reading on March 1st) to provide for the attachment of sums payable to a person by way of wages, salary or other earnings or by way of pension for the purpose of enforcing certain court orders requiring payments by that person to some other person. The Bill was presented by Miss Vickers, and supported, among others, by Mrs. Evelyn Emmet, Dr. King, Mrs. Lena Jeger, and Mrs. Corbet.

The question of equal pay arose on October 31st in a new sphere. Mrs. White, asking the Colonial Secretary about recent grants to the University of Hongkong said: "Is the Minister aware that this is the only University in the British Commonwealth in which there is discrimination against the women members of the staff, and that this discrimination has been only very recently enforced? Before entertaining applications for further grants will the right Hon. Gentleman see that this matter is put right?" Mr. Maclay gave the following somewhat disingenuous reply: "I have no information regarding the extent to which the decisions about relative salaries are influenced by financial conditions. I am not quite certain if that was the purpose of the Hon. Lady's question, but I have noted what she said." Another matter concerning equal pay (at least in part) was raised by Mr. Fenner Brockway the same day, when he asked the Colonial Secretary about labourers' pay on the sugar estates of Mauritius. Mr. Lennox-Boyd disclosed that "the wages of daily field labourers—including a cost of living allowance of 46 per cent.—range from 2s. 10d. to 5s. 5d. for men and 2s. 2d. to 2s. 9d. for women." The women's maximum, in fact, is lower than the minimum for the men.

Dame Irene Ward pursued her defence of the

Small Fixed Income group, both with a general question on October 23rd and the following day by raising a Bill under the Ten-minute Rule to protect pensioners and others from excessive charges under fixed gas tariffs. In opposing her, Sir Ian Fraser was extremely blunt and accused Dame Irene of misusing the Ten-minute Rule machinery, which, as he said, "should be the cherished privilege of private members and not a method of getting behind the Chair and the Clerks at the Table." Other members protested at that point.

On October 29th, during the committee stage of the Scottish Education Bill, Mr. Woodburn put up a plea for the teaching of manners in schools and said: "I have a strong feeling that cleanliness, good manners, knowledge of diet and, for girls when they marry, knowledge of how to cook, even art in the home, are just as fundamental to life as a knowledge of Latin and Greek." Mrs. Mann, in reply, said: "It will be noted that this Clause stands in the name of the male fraternity. No woman Member has put her name to it, although we may not object to it. Although I am supporting it, I believe that it has objectionable features. It is Victorian. It asks that 'the importance of balanced diet and good cooking and the arts of housewifery' shall be taught, and it will be noticed that my right Hon. Friend . . . said 'taught to girls.' Why not to the boys?" In his final speech, the Solicitor General (Mr. William Grant) agreed with Mrs. Mann, saying: "I have read this new clause, even the part about cookery and housewifery, as applying to the boys as well as the girls. . . . 'At the moment boys do not receive instruction in the art of housewifery, but I think that a number of them learn a considerable amount about it after they are married.'"

On October 25th, in answer to a question by Mr. K. Robinson, the Home Secretary said: "The Committee (the Wolfenden Committee on homosexuality and prostitution) is at present engaged in drafting its Report. It is aware of my anxiety that this should be presented as soon as possible and while I cannot give any firm date, I am hoping that the Committee will find it possible to complete its work early in the New Year."

B. M. Halpern

## BOOKS RECEIVED

**Holy Childhood.** By the Venerable Archdeacon MacMahon, P.P., V.F. (Eason & Son, Dublin, 5s.)

**A Book of Family Prayers.** By Hubert McEvoy, S.J. (Oliver & Boyd, 5s.)

## CORRESPONDENCE

To The Editor, "The Catholic Citizen"

Dear Madam,

I have just read the article entitled "Grey Slaves" in the November *Catholic Citizen*. It reminded me of a flaw in the National Insurance Scheme which I have often meditated upon. Could your publication help to bring this to the notice of the Authorities?

A woman who remains at home or in the home of a relative in order to care for that relative can contract out of *National Insurance*. She may need a pension even more than most of us in her old age for she may be left penniless and with no means of earning a living and with no savings. The relative may have nothing to leave even when he or she has held out promises and encouraged the dependant to have "expectations." A relative who keeps another at home for her own convenience should be compelled to pay the money for an insurance stamp. If this proves too much for the purse then the dependant should not be deprived of the opportunity to become "gainfully employed."

I am

Yours faithfully,

(Miss) D. M. WHITE

Birch Cottage,  
Waenfawr,  
Near Caernarvon,  
North Wales.

## REVIEWS

**Letters from the Closed Houses.** By Lina Merlin and Carla Barberis. (Edizioni Avanti! Milano, 1955.)

It seems incredible that so many difficulties are raised when legislation for the repeal of regulated prostitution in Italy is contemplated. The obstacles are due to vested interests . . . so says Lina Merlin, Italian Senator and champion of abolition in her country.

As the promoter of a Bill to abolish regulation, first introduced by her in 1948, she has received many letters from the women of the Closed Houses. She now publishes this pathetic correspondence in the hope that it may inform the public conscience and thus favour the passage of her Bill through both Houses of Parliament.

Her correspondents ask for help in the most stirring terms: conditions under which they live are intolerable and they feel utterly helpless to alter them. They do not even know what could bring them relief. Some only ask for the fare to the village, or farm, where "I used to be happy," and yet they are aware that any "honest employment" is barred by the obligation to produce their "papers" before a prospective employer. Is that just? they ask. In the "Houses" their gains are whittled down by extortion, but outside these

they face hunger. "And who would look after my child?" This concern for a presumably unwanted child is astonishing and very touching. "He was difficult enough to place in someone's care, being what I am." Their earnings, their rare outings, are often devoted to the child who is in someone's care. They are more concerned about his upkeep than their own social ostracism. And many of them, after ventilating their anxieties, conclude in utter defeatism: we are young, under twenty, or under thirty, but one ages quickly here and many of us are ill, so we end up by accepting our fate.

This pathetic acceptance of what seems the lesser, or at any rate a known evil, is no novelty to social reformers. Was it not the same with slavery, with disfranchisement, child marriage, bride-price, or female circumcision? "The women do not ask for its abolition—at least not all of them."

Lina Merlin is too experienced to ignore this last and perhaps greatest obstacle. A considerable part of her proposed legislation is therefore devoted to projects for rehabilitation, education, and the means required for these ends. Of much interest, too, is her demand for an experienced corps of trained women who would be put in charge, and would substitute for the police, in matters relating to public morality, juvenile delinquency, and prostitution. To her comments on the published correspondence she adds an able summary of abolitionist measures in other countries. Only Spain and Italy, she says, are now lagging behind, but since she wrote, Spain also has abolished this social evil, and we may ardently hope that the senator's work will be crowned with success, so that her Bill, which has now been passed by the Senate, will pass both Houses of the Italian Parliament. She has our sincerest good wishes that success may be in sight and Italy may rid herself of this reproach.

F.M.S.

The Quarterly *Review* (October) of the *Conseil National des Femmes Françaises*, publishes an article by Madame Lefauchaux describing her journey through French Africa and the impressions she gained, particularly of the conditions of the life of the African women. The most general impression is that in the towns the women are awake to the necessity of working towards the evolution that is upon them. Everywhere she found groups of women—whether they be veritable corporations, as among the commercial women of the Gulf of Benin, or the "friendly societies" of the Sudan, where the members help each other at time of birth, marriage and death. Some have given courses in house management or in the teaching of French to their less educated sisters.



There are groups of white and black women, too, which meet to discuss their common problems—such as the need for payment of family allowances to the mother. The African women begin to demand more and more certainly the right to freedom of choice in marriage, and they learn to make their ideas known.

They largely eschew politics but Madame Lefauchaux reminds them that they have power through their vote to make their ideas effective. The women of the towns are more and more concerned to help the women of the bush, who are still enmeshed in the net of customs which assume their dependence, and there are signs of increasing contacts and friendship between the white French women living in the overseas territories, and the African women around them. In this lies the hope of the future.

#### African Women

will help teachers, social workers and others overseas, and especially in Africa, by bringing original articles on various problems concerning women's education, professional training, community life, health and home problems. The journal also collates material which shows the general progress of African women and girls. It contains a section on books and articles of interest to women. From time to time it will include reading lists on special subjects: local government, baby care, visual aids, etc.

The periodical is published twice a year in June and December. Copies (single copy: one shilling; four issues: three shillings and sixpence) can be obtained from:

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