

WOMEN'S SERVICE
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THE

Catholic Citizen

Organ of St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance (formerly Catholic Women's Suffrage Society), 55 Berners Street, London, W. 1.

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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.

Margaret McMillan.*

By L. DE ALBERTI.

Margaret McMillan, the children's friend, died in the March of last year. She is dead, but her work and her inspiration are a living fire. She was a vivid example of that maternal love, which is unconnected with physical maternity, for she was mother to countless poor children. This does not mean that she discounted parental responsibility, on the contrary, she insisted on it, in spite of her enthusiasm for school training. "The condition and habits of a child depend mainly upon its mother."

At the same time she was well acquainted with the poorest homes, and knew the intolerable burden placed on the mothers of the poor—the impossible fight against poverty and dirt. She was horrified at the condition of the little ones attending schools and moved heaven and earth to obtain the establishment of school baths, medical attention, provision of meals for the destitute, for nursery and open-air schools. To save the children was her life's ideal.

These ideas were new in the political and social world, and Margaret McMillan met with the common fate of prophets and pioneers, her work was criticised and misunderstood, though she met with influential and enlightened friends. She lived to see her work firmly established.

"It is already quite evident that the life of Miss Margaret McMillan will leave a

permanent mark upon the health of the children of our land." These are the words of the President of the Board of Education (H. B. Lees-Smith) in the House of Commons, 16th July, 1931.

Mr. Mansbridge tells us that: "Her quality of persistence was marked. There was no cessation or rest until her goal was reached—the flesh was subordinated to the spirit and driven—no sooner was there a new President of the Board of Education, than she was there—persistent, implacable, immovable."

Even the death of her loved sister Rachel did but add to her desire for service—"Rachel's love must be added to mine—she shall work with me."

She believed in a sane mind in a sound body, and never forgot the spiritual side of man. Her last letter is to her students, when told they were building a chapel.

My Dear Students,

I hear you are building a chapel—God helping. How I sympathise. So in poor stables and humble places *all* great movements begin. The great temples and luxury belong to the material world. The poor stable is the *real* shrine. The angels came there, and the kings as well as the shepherds—and the poor dumb things knew it as their home.

*Margaret McMillan, *Prophet and Pioneer*, By Albert Mansbridge. Dent and Sons, 6s. net. (All profits on the sale of this work are being given to the Camp School at Deptford.)

Dears, I am separated from you by illness, but in spirit I am with you. I think of you as the brave new army of young soldiers, vowed to the Christ-life and the Christ work.

May He be with you in every effort you make to serve Him and His children—so precious to Him that He did not disdain to make them the centre of His Gospel. God bless you.

Margaret McMillan.

So died a great woman!

We are grateful to Mr. Mansfield for giving us this life of hers, which he skilfully traces through all its stages.

PETITION ON THE NATIONALITY OF MARRIED WOMEN.

Addressed to the Conference of the British and Dominion Governments of the British Commonwealth of Nations, Ottawa, Canada, July 1932.

Dated APRIL, MAY, JUNE and JULY 1932

The Petition of organisations within the British Commonwealth of Nations sheweth

1. That at the Assembly of the League of Nations held in Geneva in September 1931 in the face of the 48 States there represented the British Government through its delegate, Dame Edith Lyttelton, made the following declaration of policy on the nationality of married women:

"The British Government considers that it is right that all disabilities of married women in matters of nationality should be removed, and that in so far as nationality is concerned a married woman should be in the same position as a man—married or unmarried—or any single woman."

2. That the above declared policy is right and just.
3. That the present laws within the British Commonwealth of Nations are not in accordance with this policy of justice, inasmuch as under them a married woman is classed with minors and lunatics as under a disability: she is denied the right to her own independent nationality since in general her nationality is made to depend on that of her husband.

4. That it is desirable that the Laws of Nationality in the British Commonwealth of Nations should be brought into line with this policy of justice.

Your Petitioners therefore pray that the British and Dominion Governments shall come to an agreement to adopt this policy of justice and to recommend to these Governments to introduce into their respective legislatures and to pass into law measures to give effect to this policy of justice so that throughout the British Commonwealth of Nations a woman—married or unmarried—shall have the same right as a man to enjoy independent nationality in her own person and the same right as a man to retain or change her nationality.

St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance and many other societies signed the above Petition.

LOOK TO YOUR VOTES.

We would like to remind our readers of the importance of inspecting the lists of electors which were published on July 15th.

The annual register of electors will be published on October 15th next and will remain in force for a year. The preliminary lists may now be seen at the various post offices and other public buildings and at the office of the registration officer in each district. It is important that these lists should be inspected to ensure that names are not omitted.

Should the name of any person entitled to a vote be omitted from the list, a claim should be sent in at once to the registration officer at the local town hall. *The last day for sending in claims is August 7th in England and Wales, and August 22nd in Scotland.

It is not perhaps generally known that persons other than naval and military voters who are registered, or claiming to be registered, may claim to be placed on the Absent Voters List for the purpose of voting by post at Parliamentary elections if their occupation, service or employment may debar them from voting at the poll. Such claims must be lodged not later than the 18th of August in England and Wales, and September 1st in Scotland.

* As this falls on a Sunday, claims received not later than the first post on Monday, August 8th, will be accepted.

Notes and Comments.

We were glad to read of the spirited defence of married women workers (who, as we reported in detail last month, are to be ground down under the National Health and Contributory Pensions Bill) made by Miss Pickford, Lady Astor, Miss Rathbone and others. We regret that the Minister of Health would not accept even the small concession proposed by Mr. E. Williams (Lab. Ogmore) to substitute 11/- a week for 10/- as the sickness benefit for married women.

Miss Horsburgh and Mrs. H. B. Tate took up the cudgels against a new clause moved by Mr. Herbert Williams (U. South Croydon) providing that if an insured woman married she should be treated as an insured woman for two years after marriage with special enactments regarding sickness and maternity benefit, but if at the end of that time she re-entered employment or became a voluntary contributor she should be treated as though she had become insured for the first time so far as benefits were concerned. His object was to prevent malingering. Mrs. Tate pointed out that this clause would treat all married women workers as malingeringers and cheats until they proved themselves innocent. This was contrary to one of the most deeply rooted maxims of English law. Miss Horsburgh pointed out that the clause took no account of the woman worker who for the whole of her working life had paid contributions prior to marriage. Mrs. Tate classified this as highway robbery. The clause, we are glad to say, was rejected.

Before the clause came up for discussion a letter signed by eighteen societies of women, including St. Joan's S.P.A., was circulated among Members of Parliament asking them to vote against the clause.

As sometimes happens, the House of Lords has recently proved itself more progressive than the House of Commons. The opportunity was provided by the Children and Young Persons Bill. Many feminist societies, including St. Joan's S. & P. A. have protested against Clause 55, which made a differentiation between the age of boys and girls taking part in public performances of a dangerous nature—the boys were permitted to do so at sixteen, the girls at eighteen.

It may be a matter of opinion whether such performances are an asset to civilization, but in the age bar for girls there can be no sense.

No member was to be found to take up this question in the House of Commons, but in the Lords, Lord Balfour of Burleigh moved an amendment to delete the words prohibiting girls under eighteen from taking part in public performances in which life or limbs are endangered. He pointed out that the training of acrobats begins at a very early age, and that if a girl had to wait till the age of eighteen before she could be fully trained it would be a great handicap, especially as there was no such restriction abroad. The amendment was accepted by the Government.

* * * * *

We congratulate our member, Dr. Mary O'Brien Beadon, M.B., B.S., L.S.A., Principal of the Lady Hardinge Medical College of Delhi, upon receiving the Kaiser-I-Hind Medal (first class) in the recent Birthday Honours. Dr. Beadon, who has worked for twenty-three years in India, was placed in charge of the Medical School for Women in Agra in 1918. After two years' work there, she was sent to Madras to start the Lady Willingdon Medical School for Women. In June, 1930, she was transferred to the Lady Hardinge College as Principal. Our members will recollect that Dr. Beadon was the only European and one of the only two women to serve on the Age of Consent Committee under the Chairmanship of Sir Moropant Joshi.

* * * * *

We remind our readers of the Garden Party which is to be held at 57 Carlton Hill, St. John's Wood, on Saturday, July 16th, by kind permission of Mr. and Mrs. Mathews.

OBITUARY.

We greatly regret to announce the death of Madame de Baudicour, Hon. President of the French Section, l'Alliance Ste. Jeanne d'Arc. Though living in retirement, Madame de Baudicour took a lively and sincere interest in the feminist movement.—R.I.P. We offer our deep sympathy to our French colleagues in their great loss.

ST. JOAN'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ALLIANCE,

AND

Editorial Office of "Catholic Citizen":

55 BERNERS STREET, LONDON, W.1. Tel. Museum 4181

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Society.

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The Purdah System and its Effects on Motherhood.*

Dr. Vaughan's work in Kashmir has given her every opportunity to observe at first hand the serious deterioration in health observed in the women practising the purdah system. These women are confined to the house from the age of eight or ten years and do not as a rule resume a normal out-of-door life until after they have given birth to several children. This unnatural way of living would probably lead to constant ill-health and to stunting of physical and mental development under all climatic conditions; in Kashmir, where daylight is already very limited for the inhabitants of the deep valleys, the confinement of the women to their dark houses is one of the main causes of osteomalacia, a serious disease which causes much suffering and frequently leads to the death of the mother and of the child at childbirth. The disease is due to a softening of the skeletal bones; it frequently begins during a pregnancy and increases in severity during subsequent pregnancies. The hideous deformities to which it gives rise condemn the women to a sedentary life or to painful walking with the aid of sticks. The deformities of the pelvis are a cause of serious trouble during childbirth and they necessitate frequently operative intervention to safeguard the lives of the mother and child. Dr. Vaughan states that the canal boat women who lead normal and very strenuous lives have excellent physiques, very different from that of the confined well-to-do women. These hard-working women experience no difficulty at childbirth and osteomalacia is unknown among them.

Although the days are very short in the mountainous districts of Kashmir, there is sufficient daylight for the needs of all those who

* By Kathleen Olga Vaughan, M.B. Heffer and Sons. 2s. 6d. net.

lead normal lives and who take part in the out-door pursuits, work and recreation of the community. Rickets, a disease to which children are liable when they are deprived of light, is almost unknown in Kashmir. It is only the confined women who suffer. They live for years shut up in their houses and often inhabit the darkest rooms which are cooler in summer and less exposed to the cold in winter. Their food is frequently of the poorest and deficient in some of the factors which would enable them to live under these abnormal conditions with some hope of escaping a crippling and painful disease.

The recognition of the main causes of osteomalacia is a notable achievement. The disease is not quite unknown in Europe and it may be recalled that in the terrible after-war period hunger-osteomalacia was frequently encountered in the most stricken countries. Dr. Chick and her co-workers described the condition in Vienna, where it was noted that some of the worst cases were found among nuns, presumably because they were the poorest and least well-nourished, and possibly also because under some conditions they were more confined to their houses than the average citizen.

In India the case of the stricken purdah-woman will allow of some alleviation now that the cause of the disease is recognized. Adequate food and adequate light should be obtainable even under the conditions of confinement. But it is probably true that only the training of Indian medical women in sufficient numbers will finally serve to bring relief to their stricken sisters, as they alone will be able to combine knowledge with an understanding of the social and racial conditions which have conspired to impose these special hardships on the purdah-women. F. M. SHATTOCK, M.B., B.S.

International Notes.

We have read with much interest the plea for women's franchise put forward by Miss Mabel Strickland, in her evidence given before the Royal Commission on Maltese Affairs. She spoke of the position of women in India and Ceylon as regards the franchise; of the women in Malta managing their own property; of women in the Civil Service, school teachers, of those who were V.A.D.'s in the War, of the women who serve on the district committees of the Labour Party. In reply to the Chairman, Miss Strickland stated that her view at the moment was to allow a gradual expansion of the female electorate as was done in Great Britain. A Petition signed by 428 persons, in favour of Woman Suffrage, was presented to the Commission, but the Commissioners did not feel justified in recommending it.

St. Joan's Alliance hopes soon to congratulate the women of Malta on their enfranchisement, and ventures to hope that the vote will be given on equal terms with men.

We offer our sincere congratulations to Mrs. Saravanamuttu, who by a majority of 8,681 was returned to the State Council of Colombo North at a recent by-election. Mrs. Molamure was elected to the State Council of Ceylon last autumn. Two women elected to State Councils in so short a time is a notable achievement.

The *World's Children* (June) gives an interview which the Archdeacon of Cyprus accorded to the Editor of that paper. The Archdeacon's impressions are of great interest. From them we learn that there exists in Cyprus a somewhat similar system as the mui tsai in Hong Kong: "The worst abuse in regard to children is the employment of small girls, sometimes as young as six, in the well-to-do Greek families. This is a direct result of the crushing poverty, from which the mass of the people suffer." Parents with five or six children are apt to send one of the girls to the nearest town as a domestic servant. These children are not paid wages, though they may sometimes receive a little pocket-money; the only obligation on the employer is to feed and clothe the girl for some ten years, and at the end of that time the mistress is expected to find her a husband and to give her a dowry.

The Archdeacon paid a tribute to the work of the Governor, Sir Ronald Storrs, and Lady Storrs. They at once saw the seriousness

of the problem presented by these child domestics and realised that they must have expert advice as to how to deal with it. They secured the appointment of an experienced and qualified lady, Miss Lyall, to advise them. Legislation was introduced, as a result of which all these children have now to be registered with the police, who also have authority to make an inspection of any premises where they have reason to suspect that children are being ill-treated.

"This is good as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. A large number of officials would be necessary to carry out adequate supervision; all this would cost money. But the main trouble is that there is as yet little public opinion to support reform (because the leading people of the island themselves employ these children), and there can be no real reform until public conscience is awakened."

Is this another case of slavery under the British flag?

The Bulletin of the International Council of Women (May) contains an illuminating article by Mme. Avril de Sainte-Croix on the Eleventh Session of the Committee on Traffic in Women and Children, held at Geneva last April. Mme. de Sainte-Croix, who represents International Women's Organisations on the Committee, is not afraid to say, that in spite of so much goodwill on all sides, little headway is made. Mme. de Sainte-Croix is in touch with St. Joan's S.P.A. and other feminist societies, and states her opinion that the reforms claimed by these and others "are the very condition of all progress in the moral domain."

Since the Session has ended Mme. de Sainte-Croix has sent us a preliminary copy of a Protocol, which it is suggested should be added to the Convention of 1921 for the suppression of the traffic in women and children. The protocol is concerned with the punishment of souteneurs (of both sexes) who live on the prostitution of women. While St. Joan's S.P.A. approves of the Protocol, we are bound to say that it is of little use in countries where State Regulation of Vice exists. Is it reasonable for a Government to punish one set of persons engaged in this nefarious trade, while it gives licence to others to engage in the same trade. So long as State brothels exist, so long will the Advisory Committee make little headway. Mme. de Sainte-Croix also holds this view.

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The Working Woman at Home and The Educated Woman as Estates Manager.

In 1864 that great Christian woman Octavia Hill conceived the idea of herself managing houses for the Poor. She did so because she believed a Christian Society to rest upon the Home and Family, and everything to do with the Home to be essentially a woman's job.

Terrible as were the conditions she had to deal with three-quarters of a century ago, great as is the progress that has been made throughout our land, the question of housing remains for the poor working woman a bitter one to-day.

Here in the East End there are acres and acres of mean streets which deny to all the common rights of adequate light and air; where houses, foul with the emanations of many generations, stand side by side, crowded and vermin-ridden; where yards ten feet square containing water closets, abutting on one another, are the drying grounds for the clothes, the playground for the children.

Babies are born into one-room "homes"; here boys and girls grow to maturity; here young couples set up housekeeping; here old men die, having never known anything better.

Catholics take their stand on the continuance of the Christian Family; they preach that material things are given by God to aid the soul in its ascent to Him. Can they stop there, and allow housing conditions to continue as they are now?

The Bethnal Green & East London Housing Association Ltd. is a Public Utility Society for building, re-condition, and managing houses at reasonable rents for these people.

Capital is raised by the issue of £1 shares, by Loan Stock at 3½ per cent. and by donations. A small dividend is paid on shares.

The Association has built forty-nine flats, and owns three old houses which accommodate nine families. The properties are managed by a trained woman, working on the methods of Miss Octavia Hill. Every effort is made to bear in mind the needs of the working woman and her family in planning and equipping the flats. The Manager will be pleased to take interested enquirers round with her on Monday mornings when she collects the rents, and supervises the properties.

There is no religious test for tenants. Several Catholic families have been received, one of whom consists of eight persons, who were

living in one room for eight years. The Rector of the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption, Bethnal Green, is on the Advisory Panel of the Association, and heartily commends the work, as does also Fr. O'Hea, S.J., of the Catholic Social Guild. Those who care how East End mothers live are invited to enquire about the Association's work from the Secretary, The Bethnal Green & East London Housing Association Ltd., St. Margaret's House, 21 Old Ford Road, London, E.2.

MARGARET WYNNE NEVINSON.

All who knew Mrs. Nevinson loved her; she was wise, sympathetic and just.

Her life was an interesting one, as those who read "Life's Fitful Fever" know; she was clever herself besides being the daughter of a scholarly man, the wife of a distinguished writer and the mother of a brilliant painter. In the days when higher education for women was restricted she was an accomplished classical scholar.

Mrs. Nevinson's life in the East End made her sympathetic to the poor, and her sojourn in an old-fashioned Hampstead home made her considerate to housewives who were victims of bad housing; her books and articles were thoughtful and cultured.

On the bench the first woman justice of the peace, her judgments were sound, for she had a burning sense of justice.

Her speeches were sincere, racy and witty; I have heard them described as being like "old sherry and walnuts"; she could always tell you where a quotation came from and cap an allusion.

When I visited the house of death a copy of the CATHOLIC CITIZEN with the Rouen article was on her desk; she was very sympathetic to Catholicism and had subscribed to the St. Joan Quincentenary Appeal. As is well known, she was a fine feminist.

A great and noble woman who had led a full life.

After "Life's Fitful Fever" may she rest in peace!

M. F.

Miss Fedden represented our society at the funeral service, June 11th.

A Unique Function.

Mrs. Mary S. Kettle, T.C., was the recipient at the Gresham Hotel, Dublin, on Saturday, May 21st, of a municipal robe and hat to be worn as member of Dublin City Council on ceremonial occasions and in connection with the Eucharistic Congress functions. The robe is of Irish cloth, cherry coloured and fur-trimmed, lined with white poplin. The City Arms are inserted on the Tricorne. Both robe and hat are Dublin-made. On the inside of the robe is embroidered by the Dun Emer Guild an inscription stating that the robe was presented to Mrs. Kettle as a tribute for her unfailing loyalty and devotion to women. A group of feminists, numbering over 100, took part in the presentation, including representative women of all shades of political opinion, women workers, artists, doctors, nurses, a woman senator, teachers, librarians, writers, journalists, social welfare workers, civil servants, women on various public boards and in the Universities.

Professor Mary Hayden, who presided, stated that it gave her great pleasure to be associated with this presentation by women to a woman. Progress in feminism had been made everywhere, even in Ireland where, at one time, the field for women's development was practically non-existent. In her youth she recalled a prize given in a girls' school with set forth for the ideal woman two paths, that of a Religious Life or a Family Life, both ending with a Holy Death. There were no other careers then. Now things are better, though much yet remains to be achieved, especially in Ireland, where it has been the practice to exclude women from various spheres of activity. The gift of this robe is a symbol and a gesture to honour a woman who has upheld the dignity of her sex in public affairs and who has ever been a consistent feminist.

Formerly it used to be said by medieval male cynics, *Femina feminae Lupus* (Woman is a wolf to woman). This is entirely untrue of women as a body, and this assembly demonstrates the falsehood of such a saying and its sex prejudice.

In Ireland we have a saying for a wearer of new garments: "Long may you wear it!" We wish that to Mrs. Kettle. May she long wear with dignity and to the benefit of women these robes of office. We feminists have no antagonism to men, we believe in true com-

radeship of the sexes working together. Woman's cause is man's as Tennyson truly says. In her native city may Mrs. Kettle long continue her work among her own people for civic betterment.

Mrs. Cahalan Burns felt it a privilege and honour to be associated with this tribute to a fellow-woman. In honouring her they were honouring womanhood. Mrs. Kettle is one of the few feminists in our public life to-day, where though there are so many women of talent and ability there are but few in public life. A woman's centre, a club and gathering place is sorely needed in Dublin. She hoped that this meeting might be the nucleus of such. For Mrs. Kettle she wished that when next they met it would be to greet her as Lord Mayor of Dublin. (Applause.)

Miss Barrett paid warm tribute to Mrs. Kettle's work as member of the Vocational Council for Women Teachers and for education generally. For her work in the Union she does not spare her time nor her energy; no trouble is too great for her to take and she is specially devoted to the claims of the poorest of the poor.

Miss R. Jacob said it gave her keen delight to see for once recognition given to the work of a woman. How often work of this kind, work for civilisation in the true sense is slurred over for the showy, the superficial. She regretted that men who so often passed over so slightly the claims and merits of women were not there to see how women appreciated these; she hoped something higher than the Lord Mayoralty would be Mrs. Kettle's; some post of power where her gifts would have even greater scope, and how needed these were in a State where there is, as at present, *not a single woman in the Government, only two women deputies (and these party women solely), where on public boards there are but a few, where the right to serve on juries has been taken away, where women do not possess equality of opportunity in spite of having attained the right to vote.*

Mrs. Kettle, speaking with emotion, said she was overwhelmed at the tribute paid to her and bereft of words to reply adequately. Those who trust us educate us, it has been truly said, and this expression of trust by women in me will educate me in the way I should go. I hope you will look to my aspirations rather than

to my achievements. My aim has been as I have stated when entering public life "to give children a square meal and women a square deal." The latter has been much harder than the former! The way of the transgressor is hard, doubly so where women are concerned. For if a woman in public or private affairs fails, if she is unpunctual, incompetent we are told by our cities, "Oh, women are like that! What did I tell you," and so forth. If, on the other hand, a woman makes good and wins distinction in any sphere by her own unaided efforts what is the average male comment? "Oh, she is an *exceptional* woman!"

No public board, no committee should be without its quota of women. Women bring special gifts, a special viewpoint of their own, to public affairs. They have a more human appeal. Alluding to Ibsen's play "Peer Gynt," where a soul finds justification for having helped and inspired another, she would likewise find salvation in the memory of her friends and solace in the thought that she meant something to them. She would think of that night in the Gresham when her deeds were being weighed in the balance and hope that her friends' belief in her would dip the scale in her favour! For she was deeply touched to see all her friends gathered there from different quarters joined to give her this gift from women to a woman. As the old Scots poet has it:

*It's no ay jest the road ye go
It's the friends ye travel wi'
That gars a road look bonny
To the e'en of memory.*

That seemed to her the chief thing in life's way—to quote another favourite, Belloc, who has put the same idea:

*For quiet homes and first beginnings
Out to the undiscovered ends*

*There's nothing worth the wear of winning
Save laughter and the love of friends.*

Miss Hayden then put the Municipal robe on Mrs. Kettle and the party adjourned for tea.

Many distinguished women were present to do honour to Mrs. Kettle.

We are glad to say that Mrs. Kettle was present, in her robes of office, with her colleagues of the Dublin Corporation at the formal opening of the Eucharistic Congress, at the Pro-Cathedral, by H. E. the Cardinal Legate.

REVIEW.

What are Saints? 15 Chapters in Sanctity from the first century to the present day. By C. C. Martindale, S.J. (Sheed & Ward, 2/6 cl., 1/- paper, net.)

Those who listened either to all or to some of the broadcast talks on Saints given by Fr. Martindale will be glad to have them in their printed form. Though, in one sense they lose in literary value through being so evidently intended for the ear, in another sense, for this very reason, they gain immeasurably in vividness and in the capacity to inspire. With admirable compression Fr. Martindale has given us the chief features of each Saint's life set in its historical background. He has assessed the value of each life not only to the age in which it was lived, but to posterity. Sanctity is an elusive quality, difficult to define, but in these fifteen talks Fr. Martindale has given us its essence. He has shown us (though never forgetting his mixed audience) that the Church—one of whose four distinguishing marks is her holiness—contains the "well of water springing up to eternal life," which can produce Saints throughout the ages, down to our own lives and for all eternity.

A foreword and introductory notes have been added to the talks, and the whole produced at a very cheap price.

We are glad to hear from the B.B.C. that they intend to broadcast a series of talks on women Saints, "in due course."

C. S.

OTTAWA.

St. Joan's S.P.A. has sent the following letter to the Prime Minister and to the Minister for Dominions.

July 8th, 1932.

NATIONALITY OF MARRIED WOMEN.

Dear Sir,

May we beg that at the forthcoming Imperial Conference at Ottawa the question of the Nationality of Married Women will be considered.

We trust that agreement may be reached between the members of the British Commonwealth of Nations on the question of equal nationality laws between men and women, so that a British woman, whether married or unmarried, should have the same right as a

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The British Commonwealth League.

THE VICIOUS CIRCLE.

"It is reported that at the Conference of the Post Office Controlling Officers' Association, held last month, a resolution was moved approving the recommendation of the Royal Commission on the Civil Service that women should be eligible for posts from which they had hitherto been excluded. The resolution (which was lost) was opposed on the grounds that until equal pay was in force there would be no 'fair field' for women; the primary reason of the Department to give them posts formerly reserved for men would be cheapness. . . . And so it goes on! Women may not have equality of opportunity until pay is equal, and meanwhile every effort is being made in some quarters to defer the granting of equal pay. However, it is a move in the right direction to find men alive to the danger of under-cutting, especially in a service where aggregation (*i.e.*, employment of both men and women.—Ed.) is in force."—*Opportunity*.

OTTAWA—(Continued from previous page.)

British man to retain or change her nationality.

In view of the declaration made on behalf of the British Government by Dame Edith Lyttelton at the Assembly of the League of Nations in September, 1931, *i.e.*:

"The British Government considers that it is right that all disabilities of married women in matters of nationality should be removed, and that in so far as nationality is concerned a married woman should be in the same position as a man—married or unmarried—or any single woman."

We beg that the delegates from this country be instructed to press for an agreement between the members of the British Commonwealth of Nations on the removal of all disabilities of married women in matters of nationality, and to recommend the respective Governments to pass the necessary legislation to give effect to this measure of justice to women.

We further beg that they be instructed not to agree to ratify the Hague Nationality Convention (1930).

In the event of one or more Dominions not agreeing to this measure of justice to women we urge that the rest of the British Commonwealth should give this right to its British-born citizens."

The Annual Conference of the B.C.L. was held in London on the 7th, 8th and 9th of June. Mrs. Corbett Ashby and Mrs. Pethick Lawrence presided.

Among the subjects discussed were: Disarmament, and Woman Suffrage, in such parts of the Empire in which women are still unenfranchised—Bermuda, Malta, Quebec. The Conference urged the respective governments to come into line with the rest of the Empire.

On behalf of St. Joan's Alliance, Mrs. Laughton Mathews moved a resolution regretting that the Maltese Royal Commission had failed to recommend the extension of the Franchise to women in spite of the Petition presented to them by Maltese women. The Conference, in congratulating the women of Malta on their action, hoped that they will continue the struggle with vigour until the full franchise is achieved.

NATIONALITY OF MARRIED WOMEN.

The Conference welcomed the declaration in favour of equal nationality rights of married women, made officially on behalf of the British Government at the Assembly of the League of Nations, September 1931: "In so far as nationality is concerned a married woman should be in the same position as a man, married or unmarried, or any single woman." That is the British Government's view.

The Conference further called upon the British Government and each of the Dominion governments to introduce into their respective legislatures and to pass into law measures to give effect to this policy, so that throughout the British Commonwealth of Nations a woman, married or unmarried, shall have the same right as a man to enjoy independent nationality, and urges that each government should take such action without waiting till such time as all are prepared so to act.

The last day of the Conference was India Day, and the following resolution, moved by the Women's Indian Association and seconded by Miss Barry, was passed by the Conference.

"This Conference of the British Commonwealth League supports the organised women of India in their demand for adult suffrage and equal political rights with men.

It calls upon the Government of India to embody these principles in the new constitution of India."

MRS. DESPARD'S BIRTHDAY.

As in former years the Women's Freedom League held a birthday party at the Caxton Hall, when a gift of money was presented to their first President, Mrs. Despard. Representatives of many societies had come to do honour to a great leader, who at the age of eighty-eight is still young, and still takes an active interest in the woman's movement. Indeed, her birthday gift she gives into the hands of Dr. Knight, to promote the work of the Women's Freedom League. Mrs. Pethick Lawrence from the chair reminded her audience that Mrs. Despard was working for the cause when some of us were in our cradles, and others not yet born.

Mrs. Tate, M.P., expressed the gratitude of the younger women for the work of Mrs. Despard and all pioneers who had given the opportunity, and opened the way.

Mrs. Despard delivered an eloquent address, without a single note, and concluded with a poem of her own.

St. Joan's S.P.A. was represented by Miss Barry, Miss Jeffery, Miss de Alberti, and Miss Madden, who, as representing the younger generation, presented flowers to Mrs. Despard, and expressed our gratitude for all her services.

France and Woman Suffrage.

We much regret that the French Senate has once again rejected a Women Suffrage Bill. After interminable debates, in which the old foolish arguments were once more trotted out, the Bill was rejected by 253 votes to 400. The Chamber of Deputies have passed many Bills enfranchising women, the Senate has thrown them out. The Senators do not mind if France lags behind other civilized nations in this respect; a Frenchwoman, it seems, is different to women of other races, her place is in the home with her children, and she can use her influence over her husband's vote.

We seem to remember hearing similar irrelevant arguments on this side of the Channel, indeed are they not used in every country till women break down these artificial barriers and become citizens.

M. Louis Martin's Bill provided that women over twenty should be given the Parliamentary and municipal votes, and be eligible for election to legislative bodies.

The Senators slumber; some day they will waken and open their eyes on a new word,

and they will find that Frenchwomen, good housewives as they are, yet follow many professions and practise the domestic arts, in other persons' homes, and do they not abound as shop girls?

INTERNATIONAL NOTES—(Contd. from p. 59).

"Le Féminisme Chrétien," April, reports that in answer to a suggestion from the Fédération Belge pour le Suffrage des Femmes, that women should be consulted before the Government took action with regard to the nationality of women and the Hague Convention, the Fédération was asked to collect the opinion of women's societies.

At the conference convened by the Fédération— at which a variety of societies were represented, including La Fédération des Femmes Catholiques, and La Fédération des Ligues Ouvrières Féminines Chrétiennes—the matter was fully discussed. Some wished to go further than others, but with the good will of all, unanimous resolutions were obtained. Amongst others the Conference asked the Government not to ratify the Hague Convention on Nationality because of its incompleteness; and to declare that the Hague Convention must be replaced by a new and wider one, based on the principle of equality between man and woman as regards nationality, harmonising with the unity of the family and the interests of the children.

The Conference further asked that a woman's nationality should not be affected by marriage without her consent and that to safeguard family unity a woman should be given her choice at the time of marriage, and during marriage in case of the loss or change of her husband's nationality. That it should be made clear to her that she has this right, and that no charges should be made in respect of it.

The Conference asked the Government to embody these views in their reply when giving their opinion on the Hague Convention and the Nationality of Married Women at the coming Assembly of the League of Nations.

* * * * *

Notices in the Press informed us recently that in a part of the Transvaal a severe slump in the price of wives had taken place. Based on market cattle prices, their price has fallen about 60 per cent.

Whereas wives have been regarded by the natives as an economic asset, they have become a liability. The price of wives, we are told, ranges from £5 to about £16. Would the League of Nations call this slavery, or just a pretty native habit?

"Le Mouvement Féministe" reports that a Bill for Woman Suffrage will shortly be discussed in the *Grand Council*, of the Canton of Geneva. We hope, as do our Swiss colleagues, that the Bill introduced by M. Albaret will succeed. The Editor, Mlle. Gourd, records some of the arguments which are still current in Geneva, but, however foolish, they are no more ridiculous than those to which we were subjected in bygone years.

* * * * *

We have received from Barcelona a circular issued by a new Spanish feminist society—*La Cívica Feminina*—a civic organisation whose aim is to defend the political and social rights of Catholic women. It is the outcome of the speech of Sr. Gil Robles last December, to which we called attention some months ago. The new society is non-party, and aims at uniting Catholic women of all parties. It fills a gap, since the *Acción Católica* is non-political; but the two societies, though separate entities, are on friendly terms.

* * * * *

La Femme Polonaise reports the Annual Congress of University Women held in April last.

Mme. Charewicz pointed out that the position of women was not secure either in Poland or elsewhere. Resolutions carried with acclamation declared that unemployment affected men and women and was equally harmful to them; that to deprive married women of employment destroyed the family, often prevented a home being established, and so considered was anti-social; that work and professions should depend on the ability and experience of the workers and not on sex or social position.

A. A. B.

(Contd. from next column.)

We offer her our sincere congratulations on her success.

Our garden party on July 2nd was a great success. Our grateful thanks are due to Mr. and Mrs. Mason, who kindly allowed us to hold it in their beautiful garden and who went to so much trouble to make it pleasant for us; to their children and to Miss Hudson who contributed so much to our entertainment, and to our young speaker, Miss Gatley, Hon. Secretary of the Blackpool Branch of the N.U.W.T., who very charmingly and wittily explained Feminism.

TREASURER'S NOTE

As the holiday season is here, we should like to remind our readers, who are going abroad, that it would be a great help if they would bring back with them, an article for our sale in the autumn, or make something for the stall while they are away.

We shall also be having another jumble sale, and Mrs. Hand is quite ready to house any old clothes, etc., at 10, St. James' Terrace, N.W.8, from now onwards.

We should also like to add that the Birthday Fund is still open to those who may have wished to contribute but have not yet done so.

P. M. BRANDT.

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| Brandt, Miss | 5 | 0 | 0 |
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May 31st, 1932.

The monthly meeting of the Branch was held on May 6th, at Bluecoat Chambers. The speaker was Miss Nancy Bell, Hon. Secretary of the Waterloo and Crosby Branch of the League of Nations Union, who kindly came to us at very short notice. Her address on "The Disarmament Conference" was a particularly interesting one, as it was largely based upon personal experiences in Geneva.

The Branch celebrated the feast day of the Alliance on May 26th, instead of May 30th, in order to avoid clashing with the London celebrations. The festivities took the form of an informal dinner at Reece's, followed by a visit to the Playhouse. The Hon. Secretary was able to convey to Headquarters the good wishes of the Branch in person, as she attended the Coming-of-Age Dinner.

June.—During the past month several of our younger members have been busied with important examinations at the University of Liverpool. Among the results already published, we note with especial pleasure that our assistant secretary, Miss Mary Fox Taylor, has gained her certificate in social science.

(Contd. on previous column.)

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