

WOMEN'S SERVICE
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Price Twopence.

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.

Yet Easier Divorce

By HELEN DOUGLAS IRVINE

The Matrimonial Causes (War Marriages) Bill, which now awaits the royal assent, provides that if a man domiciled outside, and a woman domiciled within, the United Kingdom are married in the period between 3rd September 1939 and a day to be fixed by Order in Council, either of them may institute divorce proceedings in the courts of England or Scotland at any time after such marriage. It thus abrogates the provision of English and Scots law which lays down that divorce proceedings must be taken in the country of the husband's domicile, and the enactment in the Herbert Act of 1937 which forbids proceedings for divorce until three years after the marriage of the persons concerned.

Confessedly, the Bill is designed to facilitate divorce to British women who marry service and other men from overseas during the war. Members of both Houses adduced hard cases in its support—cases of deserted wives whose husbands had returned to their native countries, leaving them unable to untie the legal knot of their marriage.

Mrs. Tate, however, reminded the House, during the debate on the second reading, of an historic principle of English law: hard cases make bad law. Lawmakers should indeed never legislate for exceptions, or they might, for instance, legalise theft because some people are uncontrollable kleptomaniacs and others have excuses for stealing. Exceptional people are not allowed by law to steal, but the woman who wishes to divorce her husband from overseas almost as soon as she has married him—thank God, she is still an exception—is granted her wish by this Bill.

With one accord the Bill's supporters defended it on the ground of expediency. Is it however even expedient that the bond of marriage should be so easily dissoluble? The speakers who championed luckless wives inclined to sentimentality, but were, as is the way of the sentimental, prejudiced, for they overlooked an obvious aspect of their case. "The fact must be honestly faced," said our Australian section in their protest against similar proposed legislation in Australia, "that men away from home and engaged in warfare have never been noted for a sense of responsibility in sex relations, and there is abundant evidence that many of these marriages are undertaken by the men concerned . . . merely for the sake of overcoming the objections of the more scrupulous type of girl to temporary connections. The result of the proposed legislation would be an enormous increase in the number of such marriages, and in the toll of ruined lives, broken homes and fatherless children."

Mrs. Tate energetically, and Petty Officer A. P. Herbert

rather gently, criticised the Bill's excision of the section of the latter's own Act which imposes a three years' interval between marriage and divorce. "That was," said Mrs. Tate, ". . . the one reason why, in my opinion, it was possible to get the Herbert Act through Parliament and approved by a section of the Church, and with the measure of support it had."

Is it fair to disregard, in a measure of which the implications are obscured by its temporary character, this respectable body of public opinion revealed when the Herbert Act was passed seven years ago? It is unfair but it is possible because that opinion has remained astoundingly silent. Alone of the Catholic M.P.s, Sir Patrick Hannon opposed the measure, declaring himself "profoundly opposed to divorce in every shape and form, and against Bills on this matter being presented to the House." In the debate in the House of Lords, the only prelate who spoke was the Bishop of Wakefield, who supported the Bill because of the number of the hard cases and because he considered that marriage should not be safeguarded by making divorce extraordinarily difficult. Yet he averred that he "looks anxiously at any suggestions which might seem to facilitate further divorce"!

The widespread importance of the measure was shown by the Lord Chancellor in the same debate: "We must take the lead in this matter. . . . I am sure the result will be that . . . corresponding arrangements will be made elsewhere. . . . I may say that after consulting the Dominions we learn that no Dominion raises any objection. New Zealand has sent its positive approval, and I think in the case of South Africa they would like us to go even further."

An issue distinct from the indissolubility of marriage was raised by Mrs. Tate and Miss Rathbone, both of whom criticised the omission in English and Scots law which gives no married woman the right to her own domicile. This affects not only her right to sue for divorce, but also her right to inheritance. Miss Rathbone asked if the Bill enabled divorce courts to grant alimony, and if reciprocal arrangements to enforce the payment of alimony, and of maintenance for separated wives, had been made with the Dominions and other countries.

In Committee, Mrs. Tate moved as an amendment that the imposition of a three years' interval between divorce and marriage should be retained in the Bill. She pointed out that, as it stood, it unjustly erected a limited number of women into a special class: a woman who married a foreigner or a citizen of the Dominions who returned to his own country would enjoy certain rights;

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Notes and Comments

The members of the Royal Commission on Equal Pay are: Mr. Justice Asquith (Chairman); Mr. John Brown; Dr. Janet Vaughan; the Countess of Limerick, Dame Anne Loughlin; Miss Lucy E. Nettlefold (whom we knew in the days of the Votes for Women Campaign); Mr. J. N. Ridley; Professor D. H. Robertson, and Mr. C. F. Robinson.

Their terms of reference are: To examine the existing relationship between the remuneration of men and women in the public services, in industry and in other fields of employment; to consider the social, economic and financial implications of the claim of equal pay for equal work; and to report.

On October 18th the T.U.C. Congress at Blackpool unanimously passed a resolution supporting the demand for equal pay for equal work.

The increases in unemployment benefits, intended to provide for possible gaps between war-time and peace-time employment, discriminate as follows:

Benefits to men are increased by 4s. a week to 24s.; those to single women and widows, to wives supporting their husbands and to separated wives unsupported by their husbands, by 4s. to 22s.; those to other married women by 2s. to 20s. Young men receive 19s. a week instead of their previous 13s., young women 17s. instead of 14s.; boys of seventeen 12s. instead of 9s., girls 10s. 6d. instead of 7s. 6d.; boys of sixteen 7s. a week instead of 6s., girls 6s. instead of 5s. The benefits for agricultural workers are raised by 4s. a week for men, by 3s. a week for women and young persons.

The Home Secretary has announced that "a suitable woman" will be appointed to the staff of the Home Office "to assist His Majesty's inspectors of constabulary in dealing with matters relating to women police." He has also said that policewomen's uniform will in future be less ugly.

A deputation from the Family Endowment Society, received on 12th October by Sir William Jowitt, supported the payment of family allowances to the mother of a family, and qualified as "ambiguous" both the recommendation in the White Paper on social security that payment should "in the absence of special circumstances (such as divorce or separation)" be to the father, and this document's curious rider that "it is regarded as natural and right that the mother should cash the order" for payment, which would be so drawn as to "entitle" her to receive the money. The deputation asked pertinently what would happen to this entitlement if the father disputed it. Surely the straightforward course would be to make out the order to the mother.

The Advisory Council for the Treatment of Offenders (Scotland) is to be congratulated on the government appointment, as one of their three women members, of Sister Marie Hilda, of the Convent of Notre Dame, Downhill, Glasgow. She is an eminent psychiatrist, responsible for a child guidance clinic in Glasgow which deals with difficult children, and generally recognised as an authority in this department of life.

The Cardinal Hinsley Memorial Fund is raising a fund to establish a centre for Catholic activities and home for Catholic Societies to be called Hinsley House. Will those who would like their donations to go through St. Joan's Alliance please send them to the Hon. Secretary?

International Notes

At an important meeting, called on October 10th by the International Abolitionist Federation, the I.C.W. and the International Bureau, a resolution was adopted urging that an International Commission of experts of allied and neutral governments be convened by the British government in London to prepare (1) practical plans to aid the victims of the traffic in women and children; (2) preventive measures to follow immediately on the cessation of hostilities and directed against this traffic; (3) practical measures for the world-wide enforcement of existing international conventions, including the last draft convention for the "Suppression of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others." Lady Nunburnholme presided and telling speeches were made by Lord Balfour of Burleigh, Mrs. Forster and Madame Grabinska.

British Guiana. On October 4th the Colonial Secretary announced that he had accepted the recommendations of the Franchise Commission that membership of the Legislative Council should be open to women on the same terms as to men, and that the present disqualification for such membership of ministers of religion should be removed. There is a property qualification for the franchise but adult suffrage at a later date is an acknowledged aim.

Egypt. We note with interest that Madame Hoda Charaoui has called a Pan-Arab Feminist Congress, to be held in Cairo in December, at which the political status of women in Islam countries will be discussed.

U.S.A. From Baltimore, Maryland, we have received news of "St. Joan's Society," whose aim is to obtain "the acceptance of the obligations and responsibilities as well as the privileges of equality under the law." We shall watch its development with interest. Our own (international) alliance has for many years had members in the United States and a Vice-President in New York.

Mrs. Roosevelt presided at a National Conference of American Women's Organisations at the White House in June, to discuss "How Women May Share in Post-War Policy Making." A list of 500 women qualified in specialised fields, fitted to be delegates at international conferences, was compiled. The Conference was addressed by the Assistant Secretary of State, who recalled that it was twenty-five years that month since the Nineteenth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States (giving votes to women) had received the approval of Congress. Of persons engaged in administrative and professional work in his Department, over one third are women. There are now seven women in the regular Foreign Service; two women formerly served as Chiefs of Missions, Mrs. Ruth Bryan Owen Rhode as Minister to Denmark and Mrs. Florence Jaffray Harriman as Minister to Norway. E.F.G.

The death of Archbishop Temple is a loss to the cause once championed by Josephine Butler. He was an ardent supporter of the A.M.S.H. We recall his presence at Miss Neilans' silver jubilee dinner, his address at her memorial service, and his courageous speech at the Conference on Health, Education and Venereal Diseases to more than 1,000 representatives of local authorities and voluntary societies, in which he uncompromisingly opposed Regulation 33B. A fine tribute was paid to him by Archbishop Griffin.

Retrospect and Prospect

One of the hopeful signs heralding the end of the war is the frequent tendency to stop and look backwards and forwards. This retrospect and prospect show that while women have an immense need for further legislation and far-reaching social and economic changes, what they chiefly require is some flowering from within, a deepening of thought and a strengthening of responsible action.

There are now fourteen women M.P.s and the good which they have done is out of all proportion to their number, but how many women know or care anything about parliamentary procedure and effort? There are many women doctors and women scientists but have we yet tackled the basic problem of woman's work in the home? There are women members of local government bodies, but the housing question and other kindred problems still await solution.

Take those spheres in which the work of women has come to be accepted as necessary and normal, the nursing and the teaching professions. Are we satisfied by the standard set, one will not say in carrying out the doctor's orders or putting pupils through examinations, but in the tone and general cultural attainments of the profession? Now and again it may be well to ask ourselves if the personality of the nurse or teacher may not be cramped, not only by a too narrow training, but also by the poverty of the standard set.

This question of standard brings us up against one of the biggest needs of the modern woman, and especially of the British woman who, more perhaps than the British man, has been severed from the Christian tradition. Winifred Holtby could ask at the end of the last war, "Why is there a woman question and not a man question?" The answer may be that while in the course

of history man-made institutions have, again and again, furnished widely accepted standards of manhood, the philosophical basis of true womanhood has never been so examined. Christian womanhood, in spite of the ideal set by the greatest of human creatures, in spite of very definite and progressive feminine traditions, such as that in France in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, is interpreted very differently by men and women, by each different type of civilisation and by each period of history.

So far, the position of women in this country has been too precarious, too fluctuating, to produce any settled philosophy, or even an accepted standard common to all professional work. But there are signs of progress even now. For instance, the report on the work of the women's services, published in the third year of the war, encourages us to hope for the emergence of a philosophy of womanhood which will tell not only upon work, but also upon speech, manners, outlook and type of thought.

For ultimately the challenge is to thought and to thought-directed action. We are challenged to dig down to first principles so as to build up our lives on the essential basis of womanhood, the basis which underlies the Scriptural portrait of the Strong Woman. It is by the strength of our thinking, which must be realist, that we can break down whatever of foolishness impedes the advance of woman's work, in the home and outside it. At the end of the last war the cause of women advanced immensely, largely from without, by means of legislation obtained by the efforts of a minority of women. At the end of this war the call seems to be for an advance from within, a re-orientation of thought among the majority of women, the forging of a generally accepted standard.

M. O'LEARY.

Salute to Lady Astor!

The women's organisations will present an address to Lady Astor and hold a reception for her at Grosvenor House from four to six o'clock on December 1st, to mark the silver jubilee of the entry of the first woman M.P. into the House of Commons. On the same day, present women M.P.s are giving her a luncheon to which all former women M.P.s are invited. Even our youngest members, who do not remember that historic 1st of December on which she first took her seat in the House, must be aware of the personality of this pioneer—dauntless, gay, uncompromising, never self-seeking, never petty, always concentrated on the spiritual rather than the material aspect of public affairs. From the outset of her political career, when, singlehanded, she defeated a determined attempt to freeze women out of parliamentary life, she has been a bonny fighter, and as such she has valiantly served some of the causes we have most at heart, for instance, those associated with the great name of Josephine Butler and that of the policewomen. She has never sacrificed principles to party politics. She has shown her wisdom and humility by going to the women's organisations as often as she has needed information on the subjects on which they are experts, and her loyalty by invariably acknowledging the help they have given her. We are proud of tributes she has paid to St. Joan's Alliance. When in peace-time she sometimes attended our dinners, we were charmed by her delightful simplicity and by her humour. As well as a politician she is the mother of six children.

We congratulate our member, Madame Leroy, on the birth of her third son on November 5th.

White Paper on Social Security

St. Joan's Alliance believes that any scheme of Social Security should be based on:

1. Equal contributions and equal benefits for men and women.
2. The same retiring age for men and women.
3. The same treatment for women, married or unmarried.

Therefore, we recommend the abolition of Class III—Housewives. If married women are earners they should be treated as are other employees in Class I. If "non-gainfully occupied," we suggest that, as direct contributors with direct benefits, they be included in Class II for, though not under contract of service, they are earning their living.

We also believe that other women, "non-gainfully employed" in the homes of their relatives or others, should be compulsorily insured in Class II, even if their income is below £75 per year. (Their need would seem to be even greater than that of others, and we suggest that those who benefit by their services might well pay their contributions).

A letter embodying these points was sent to every M.P. by the Joint Standing Parliamentary Committee of women's organisations, of which our Alliance is a constituent society.

Our Christmas Sale takes place at St. Patrick's club-room, Soho Square, on Saturday, 9th December, from 12.30 to blackout. Will country members please send their gifts (priced) to the office as soon as possible? London members will, we are sure, come laden with priced gifts and full purses. There will be lunch and tea. Make a day of it. All profits to clear the debt on the *Catholic Citizen*.

Nationality of Married Women

In the House of Commons on October 6th, Lieut.-Colonel Marlowe questioned the power of the Home Secretary to decide applications for the recovery of their original nationality by the British-born wives of aliens, and suggested that such applications should come before a specially appointed advisory committee.

In reply, Mr. Peake quoted the following statement made by the Home Secretary in November, 1939:

"I fully recognise the importance of this matter to many women whose loyalty to their country of birth is strong. Whereas in the last war naturalisation was granted only to women separated from their husbands, I do not propose to adopt the same restriction now, but will limit my discretion only to the extent that is necessary to avoid impairing measures of control which must be maintained in time of war over persons of enemy nationality. If a British-born woman is living with a German or Austrian husband whom it is necessary on security grounds to subject to the special restrictions applicable to enemy aliens, it would not as a rule be right to naturalise the wife and therefore relax the restrictions which are applicable to such a household; but many of the Germans and Austrians now here are in sympathy with this country in the struggle in which we are engaged, and arrangements have been made to exempt such persons from the special restrictions. . . . I have accordingly decided that any such women may, as soon as her husband has been exempted from the special restrictions, apply for naturalisation and that arrangements shall be made to deal with applications expeditiously."

At the time it was pointed out that "any such woman" has, by law, the right to apply for naturalisation.

Mr. Peake further stated that during this war some 3,000 applications from British-born wives of aliens had been granted, while "I think something less than 300" had been rejected. The rule adopted by the Home Office was, he said, "where we are convinced that the sympathies of the husband are with the Allied cause, we are prepared to renaturalise the wife, assuming, of course, that there is nothing personal against her." He refused to adopt Colonel Marlowe's suggestion for a "new advisory tribunal" because it would not help the Home Office to decide the difficult cases, namely, those in which it was dissatisfied with the feelings of a husband and therefore not prepared to act in the interests of his wife.

* * *

On September 28th, the Home Secretary announced the classes of persons to whom exemption from restrictions on foreigners had been granted, among them British women who became aliens by marriage.

When Peace Comes (Conservative Women's Reform Group), Staples and Staples Ltd., 6d. We strongly recommend our members to read, in view of the impending election, this pamphlet which sets out "A National Programme from the Standpoint of Women." They should write to the other political parties also for their programmes.

We ask for prayers for the repose of the souls of Anthony Bernard Ellingworth, who has been killed in action, and of Mr. Hey Groves, the distinguished surgeon, who has lately died. We offer our deep sympathy to our members, Bernard's mother, Mrs. Ellingworth, and Mrs. Hey Groves.—R.I.P.

Continued from front page

not the woman whose husband from overseas settled in Great Britain, or she who married a British citizen. Mrs. Tate complained that the Bill was being hurried through Parliament without consultation with the heads of the Churches or due consideration. She was supported by Petty Officer A. P. Herbert, who considered that the three years' interval discouraged reckless divorce and reckless marriage. The amendment was pressed to a division and defeated by 174 votes to 83. Of the women members, Mrs. Hardie and Miss Horsburgh, and of the Catholic members, Squadron Leader E. L. Fleming, Captain McEwen, Major the Hon. J. J. Stourton and Mr. J. T. Tinker, voted against the amendment. It was supported by Mrs. Adamson, Lady Apsley, Lady Davidson, Miss Rathbone, Dr. Summerskill, Mrs. Tate and Miss Irene Ward among women members, and by Sir Patrick Hannon and Mr. P. C. Loftus among Catholic members. W.Cdr. Grant Ferris and Mr. Richard Stokes were abroad.

St. Joan's Alliance wrote to the Catholic M.P.s drawing their attention to the Bill and "while expressing strong opposition to divorce" begged their support for the amendment "so that the limitation inserted in the Herbert Act of 1937—that there should be no proceedings taken for divorce for three years after the marriage" should still apply."

Liverpool and District Branch. *Hon. Secretary, Miss Mary Hickey 81 Park Road East, Birkenhead.*

A well attended meeting was held at 9 Greenheys Road on October 10th, the chief attraction being an interesting talk on the Gold Standard by Miss Hickey, which certainly encouraged her hearers to study monetary matters.

Miss Hickey has promised a further lecture for the next meeting on "The need for Monetary Reform."

Oxford Branch. *Hon. Secretary, Miss Scott, c/o Women's Service Library, 56 Woodstock Road.*

On October 28th a meeting to consider remedies for the decline of the population was addressed by Father Pridgeon, S.J. A lively discussion ensued, and various recommendations were adopted.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO.

(From the "Catholic Citizen," November 15th, 1919)

Anyone with a fair mind must surely realise that a system of regulation not only entails the irretrievable degradation of the women involved, but the degradation of all concerned in it—the police who administer it, the men for whose convenience it is supposed to be run, the doctors who lend themselves to the working of the foul system, the nations who tolerate it in their midst.—*Leonora de Alberti* in "The New Abolitionist Campaign."

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