

WOMEN'S SERVICE  
FILE COPY  
NOT TO BE TAKEN AWAY

THE

# Catholic Citizen

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

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

Vol. XXX. No. 9.

SEPTEMBER, 1944

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.

## Native Custom at the Bar

By P. C. CHALLONER.

This book,\* welcome as amongst the first productions of the series under the title "France Forever," is of great interest to all those concerned with native custom—especially of course the ethnologist and the colonial administrator. More profoundly should it interest the Christian, whether layman or religious, concerned with the spiritual welfare of the black races. We have, in other articles and on other occasions, maintained that native custom has the effect, too often, of keeping the women of the native races in a state of little less than slavery, and the writer of this book, in his precise and realistic presentment of the facts noted throughout the ten years of his apostolate amongst the people of Bandjoun in the Cameroons, gives incontrovertible proof of this contention. His conclusion is that "au Cameroun, comme d'ailleurs en beaucoup trop de contrées de l'Afrique, la condition de la femme est un asservissement dégradant," and "Telle est la situation: vente, achat, échange, héritage au même titre que tout bien domestique, esclavage." Each word is chosen, and abundantly supported by facts.

There are those, even amongst our Catholic missionaries, who speak of "lobola" or bride-price as an excellent custom which is "the mainstay of family life, whereby the women are given a status they could not otherwise possess," but we have come to the conclusion that it is the badge of slavery, and this Father Albert's judgment endorses.

A girl eight days old is promised to her future husband, who pays in presents while she grows up, and in cash or animals or both, when she is ready for him. The bridegroom expends, in customary presents, as much as 1,000 francs. The man who cannot afford this sum has an alternative—he can accept a woman lent to him on condition that the girl-children born to him are the property of the lender—the owner—known as the Ta-cap. Father Albert computes and maintains—"devant Dieu et devant les hommes"—that more than half the women in the district under his observation belong to some "Ta-cap."

It is true that, by a recent decree, the woman may refuse—but placed as she is, her refusal is unlikely to be heard; by another decree the natural parents may bring up their own children, but since the chief of the tribe is himself the main gainer by these customs, it is easy to imagine how much force such decrees will have while his power remains.

With these women, collected by such means and by inheritance, capture, fine and gift, the great chiefs and notables reward their followers and pay their servants.

Each chief has a Mkem—a following of bravoos—which consists of various orders, the entrance fees to which vary from 2,000 francs or two women to 200 francs or two goats! The chief says "ce sont des histoires qu'on vous a racontées"—but the missionaries know better. In 1938 a Christian widow's girl child of 9 years was taken from her by her father-in-law to indemnify himself for the unpaid portion of the bride-price, and given by him to the chief as entrance fee to the Mkem. This is only one of many recent "histories."

The root of the problem is of course polygamy which sustains the overweening power of the chief; degrades the women of the tribe; depopulates the country. This last fact Father Albert proves convincingly. To those who claim that polygamy is necessary where the women so far outnumber the men he presents his own baptismal registers, showing that in the ten years since the foundation of the mission, there were born to Christian parents 938 boys and 864 girls! Other registers give similar proportions. It is a governor, not a missionary, who speaks of the "scandalous phenomenon of young men who cannot find wives because they are a form of wealth which the old abuse."

The testimony of doctors is conclusive that "the men with most wives have in proportion fewer children"—in one case a chief with 850 "declared" wives, "sans compter les autres," had in all 150 children—and nearly all the wives were syphilitic—contaminated by the intermediary of the husband. In some regions 50 per cent., in others 75 per cent. of the wives of the great polygamists are sterile, one great cause being abortions, provoked by the women who "restent à contre-cœur" under the yoke of their owners. "L'esclave qui sent le jong refuse le fruit de son sein au maitre qui lui déplaît."

Cannibalism has been forbidden and "it has not depopulated the country as has polygamy," says the French feminist, Manon Corbier. Respect for native custom which allows such misery to exist is false respect, and this eloquent book is a plea for collaboration between administrator and missionary to eradicate so great an evil, the one by making effective decrees that forbid forced marriage and all kinds of slavery, the other by teaching the principles of Christianity which alone can raise the downtrodden and curtail the power of the mighty. "How difficult is the task of civilisation when it limits itself to administrative measures without transforming the soul!" says Father Albert, and how difficult the task of the missionary when he is unable to rely on the support or even example of the administrator.

\* "Au Cameroun Français-Bandjoun. By R. P. A. Albert, S.C.J. (Collection "France Forever," 587 Fifth Avenue, New York).

## Notes and Comments

Very warmly we congratulate our French colleagues on the liberation of Paris. We echo General de Gaulle's fine words to the Parisian people: "There is no other practical and acceptable way for the people to make their voice heard than by the universal and free vote of all French men and women. . . . We want living conditions in France to be what men and women have a right to expect."

It is hardly necessary to remind our members in the Forces to make certain that they are on the New Service Register of Parliamentary Electors. A general election may be sprung upon us at any moment. Every one in the Forces or the Merchant Navy, who is over 21, is of British nationality, and lives, or but for her war service would be living, in the United Kingdom, can be a service voter. She should ask immediately for one of the declaration cards, which should be available, with full instructions for filling them in, for all units. Those who may be overseas at the time of an election may appoint a proxy and should do so without delay.

On 2nd August the Deputy Prime Minister announced the terms of reference of the proposed Royal Commission on Equal Pay, viz:

"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."

At the time of going to the composition of the commission has not been published.

Miss Irene Ward is to be congratulated on the success of her persistent efforts on behalf of the nationality of illegitimate children. Although in British law the mother is the guardian of her illegitimate child, the child is not entitled to any nationality should it be born abroad to a member of the Women's Services, even if the father is a British subject.

Miss Ward, in moving the adjournment of the House on July 27th, said that though "the number of such cases is extremely small," Parliament stands to protect the interests of the minority. If the child has to wait until the age of 16 for naturalisation, it may have to suffer many disabilities first. She asked if some means could not be found within the law to ensure that a child would not suffer before reaching the age of 16. The Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department said he was prepared

"where the mother of the child is a British subject and is serving overseas in H.M. Forces at the time when the child is born, to issue a certificate of naturalisation, under Section 5, sub-section (2) (of the 1914 Act). That certificate will not legally be effective to confer British nationality upon the child until the child can itself take the Oath of Allegiance, but the child will be able to take the Oath of Allegiance before an age at which any disability would result through the absence of British citizenship. . . . The swearing of the Oath could take place "round about the ages of 12 to 14 years. The certificate would serve to remind them that they have a right to become British subjects, but that it will be necessary for them to take the Oath of Allegiance upon which they will automatically become British subjects, and their names will be registered at the Home Office."

We offer our congratulations to Mrs. Hand on the ordination of her son, Father Charles Connal Hand, S.J.

On July 5th, in reply to a question in the House by Miss Irene Ward, the Secretary of State for the Colonies gave the following information regarding woman suffrage in the Colonial Empire:

In 1939 a new constitution was introduced in Malta, which provided for a legislature of which a proportion of the members are elected on the basis of male franchise. Beyond this there has been no change. It has been decided to introduce universal suffrage in Jamaica, an alteration which will not be brought into operation before the end of this year. In addition, women have recently been given the vote in Bermuda, on the same qualifications as men, while the franchise qualifications in Barbadoes were reduced in 1943. The changes were rather detailed, but the general result was to halve the property qualifications, while the income qualification was reduced from £50 a year to £20 a year. The question of the franchise is also under consideration in British Guiana and Trinidad, but I am not yet in a position to say what changes may be made."

As ever, our demand for the women of the Colonies must be "Votes for Women on the same terms as it is or may be given to men."

A committee, on which our honorary secretary served, appointed in 1942 by a conference of women's organisations, was convened by the N.C.W. to prepare a memorandum for presentation to the Colonial Secretary on the greater participation of women in the Colonial Office and Colonial Administration. Their recommendations were to include the appointment of a body of trained and indigenous workers to carry out progressive schemes in their own countries. On July 6th, a deputation from this conference was received by Colonel the Rt. Hon. Oliver Stanley, and it was introduced by Mrs. Patrick Ness, President of the N.C.W., who expressed warm appreciation of the enlightened spirit in which the Colonial Office is planning to consider both the status and conditions of the Colonial peoples, and the recent increase in the number of appointments of women to the Colonial Service and to Advisory Committees. Specific subjects dealt with were: Administration (Miss Philippa Strachey), Medical and Allied Services (Dr. Margaret Balfour), Education and Social Welfare (Miss Margaret Wrong), and Industry (Miss E. M. Turner). Our chairman, Miss Challoner, spoke on the Legal and Customary Status of Women—a matter with which our readers are already familiar. She asked for legislation to fix the age of marriage, to make the consent of both spouses indispensable to the validity of marriage and to forbid the inheritance of widows against their will.

courtesy and consideration and said that he welcomed discussion on these matters and was in sympathy with the speakers on many points.

Once more we have to mourn the loss of a veteran of the Suffrage struggle in the death of Margaret Clayton, who was an early member of the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society and who went to prison for the Cause. With her husband, the late Mr. Joseph Clayton, she was an ardent worker for our Alliance.—R.I.P.

We offer our deep sympathy to Dr. Shattock on the death of her younger son, Tony, aged 20, "somewhere in Italy." Young as he was, he had given great proof of moral courage when publicly in class, three or four years ago, he controverted the idea that women were not meant by God to have quite the same human dignity as men, his innate sense of fairplay overcoming his naturally gentle and tolerant disposition. We know our members will remember him and his family in their prayers.—R.I.P.

## The Philadelphia Charter

The twenty-sixth session of the International Labour Conference, held in Philadelphia last April and May, has been hailed as a brilliant victory for women, and as far as solemn declarations can make it such, it was one indeed. At the very least, it made a gesture of acknowledgement to women for the work they have done during these war years; at most it did them justice for their accomplishment: history will show how much it exceeded the former and attained to the latter.

Paragraph II, section (a) of the Declaration Concerning the Aims and Purposes of the International Labour Organisation states that:

"all human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity."

In detail this declaration, as it affected women workers, was accepted by the Conference when it adopted **Recommendation No. 71, Employment (Transition from War to Peace) Recommendation 1944, Section IX. Employment of Women** included the following:

"36. The redistribution of women workers in the economy should be organised on the principle of complete equality of opportunity for men and women on the basis of their individual merit, skill and experience, without prejudice to the provisions of the International Labour Conventions and Recommendations concerning the employment of women.

"37. (1) In order to place women on a basis of equality with men in the employment market, and thus to prevent competition among the available workers, prejudicial to the interests of both men and women workers, steps should be taken to encourage the establishment of wage rates based on job content, without regard to sex.

"(2) Investigations should be conducted, in co-operation with employers' and workers' organisations, for the purpose of establishing precise and objective standards for determining job content, irrespective of the sex of the worker, as a basis for determining wage rates.

"38. The employment of women in industries and occupations in which large numbers of women have been traditionally employed should be facilitated by action to raise the relative status of these industries and occupations and to improve conditions of work and methods of placement therein."

Discussion had unfortunately produced certain modifications in the wording of these recommendations as they were drafted by the International Labour Office. Notably, the phrase safeguarding the International Labour Conventions and Recommendations had been added to paragraph 36, on the initiative of the Netherlands Government member. This phrase has left the door open for "protective" legislation.

St. Joan's Alliance was pleased by the Conference's adoption of **Recommendation 70 concerning Minimum Standards of Social Policy in Dependent Territories.**

With the general principles of the Recommendation in Part I that "all policies shall be primarily directed to the well-being and development of the peoples of dependent territories," we are in complete agreement, but we specially welcome the definite inclusion of "the status of women" amongst the fields enumerated in Article 3, "in which all possible steps shall be taken by appropriate international, regional, national and territorial measures to promote improvement."

In Part II the Minimum Standards are defined. Section I, Article 5 states that "Slavery in all its forms

shall be prohibited," but nothing is said of those many forms of slavery that have become embedded in native custom regarding women. We note, therefore, with great satisfaction Section 8, Article 30 (Employment of Women) which states that: "all practicable steps shall be taken to improve the social and economic status of women in any dependent territory where, whether by law or custom, arrangements survive which in effect, maintain women in, or reduce women to, a condition of servitude."

We welcome Article 29, which says that "it shall be an aim of policy for all competent authorities to take measures" . . . to secure for women "adequate opportunities of general education, vocational training and employment . . . protection against any special form of exploitation; fair and equal treatment between men and women as regards remuneration and other conditions of employment." We view with misgiving, however, the phrases "having due regard to local conditions," and "such measures as are appropriate and practicable."

We also renew our protest against Articles 32 and 33, a repetition of the I.L.O. Convention forbidding women's work at night and in mines, which, rightly applied to young persons, should not be applied to adult women, who should be free to choose their own type of work. That night work is not in itself injurious to women is proved in nursing establishments and Civil Defence; in some countries night work is less trying than day work; in some, husbands and wives work together in the mines. Restrictions of this nature always militate against women's opportunity to work, and their status.

We welcome the more warmly the recommendation in Article 34 that "use shall be made of women advisers where questions especially affecting women are to be considered," though we would suggest that, not only "whenever possible," but "in every case" these advisers (or some of them) shall be drawn "from the local population."

We regret the omission of the word "sex" in Article 41, which prohibits discriminations against workers, as regards their admission to public or private employment, on various grounds—race, colour, confessional or tribal association.

We commend Section 5, Article 15, which lays it down that workers should be given full opportunity for living a natural family life.

We are glad to note that in the discussion on the Report of the Committee on Dependent Territories, before it was adopted, the Government delegate British Empire, Mr. Tomlinson, stated that H.M. Government intends to "invite" the Colonial Governments to "give effect to the principles and minimum standards embodied in the Recommendation, and where the existing law or practice falls short, to re-examine the position." We hope that H.M. Government will go further and will give a lead to other countries in the matter of the equal treatment of men and women, taking note of Recommendation 4 in the preamble, which says that the standards set forth in Part II are "minimum standards," "which do not qualify or impair any obligation to apply higher standards . . . and should in no case be so interpreted."

Among the Resolutions adopted by the Conference, we note with special interest Resolution XVII, requesting the governing body of the I.L.O. "to set up a Committee to advise the I.L.O. on Standards of Social Policy in Dependent Territories," and stating that the **Status of Women in Dependent Territories** is "among the questions which the governing body may consider should appropriately be laid before this Committee."

In the debate on supply in the House of Commons on 26th July, Mrs. Adamson made a spirited appeal for the implementation in this country of the Declaration and Recommendations of the International Labour Conference.

### MEDICAL WOMEN.

The Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Medical Schools, under the chairmanship of Sir William Goodenough, has been published. The Committee was appointed in March 1942 by the Minister of Health and Secretary of State for Scotland, to enquire into the organisation of medical schools, particularly in regard to facilities for clinical training and research, and to make recommendations. The Report is forthright in its recommendations regarding women in the medical profession. It states:—

"In the interests of the public and of the medical profession, we believe that co-education should become the normal practice in every medical school. In this belief, and regarding the question as an important matter of public policy, we recommend for Government decision that the payment to any medical school of Exchequer grant in aid of medical education should be conditional upon the school being co-educational and admitting a reasonable proportion of women students. The proportion of women may well vary from school to school, and from time to time, according to the quality of the students of both sexes applying for admission, and to the public need for doctors. Further, the schools at present admitting either men or women only may have to be allowed an interim period of varying length to adjust their arrangements on a co-educational basis. . . .

"It is important that the number of women students in any school should be a reasonable proportion of the whole, say about one-fifth; otherwise the women will not form a sufficiently numerous body to ensure proper status and position. The grudging admission of a few women is unsatisfactory. The group must be large enough to feel itself to be an important but integral section of the whole, whose members are trained on a basis of complete equality with their male colleagues and given access to all the usual facilities, including staff appointments. There must be no sense of inferiority or of privilege."

As regards hospital appointments, the Committee says: "Without adequate opportunities for obtaining hospital appointments after qualification, medical women cannot qualify themselves properly for general practice, much less can they train for advanced medical work or specialist practice. Such opportunities are slowly extending and women have already shown that they are capable of filling senior medical posts successfully. Although it is very difficult to obtain conclusive evidence, since the ability to fill a position is often a matter of opinion, it seems clear that women doctors are not yet receiving a fair share of post-graduate appointments owing to discrimination against them on the grounds of sex. Such discrimination is unjust to women and, in so far as it may result in the best qualified applicant not securing the appointment, is contrary to the public interest. Every possible step should be taken to secure that all hospital appointments are filled by open competition, and that the sex of the applicant is not a bar to appointment."

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

In spite of appalling weather, the meeting held on September 2nd at Birkenhead, by kind invitation of the Misses Barry, was very well attended. Several veterans of the Branch were present as well as seven "grand-children," who were entertained separately while their elders listened to a review by Miss F. Barry of the fine work done at headquarters. Mrs. McCann presided and Miss Hickey reported that at the Women's Organisations Committee, she had spoken on juvenile delinquency and that Miss Challoner had spoken too on after care committee work. Mrs. Brady, the indefatigable Hon. Treasurer, recorded that side-shows had made £3 17s. 0d., of which half was donated to headquarters.

### CHARTER FOR COLOURED PEOPLE.

A most interesting conference under the chairmanship of Dr. Harold Moody was held at the Alliance Hall on July 21st, 22nd and 23rd, under the auspices of the League of Coloured Peoples. A Charter for Coloured People was drawn up, the first Article of which reads: "The same economic, legal and political rights shall be enjoyed by all persons, male and female, whatever their colour. All discriminations in employment, in places of public entertainment and refreshment, or other public places shall be illegal and shall be punished."

The words "male and female" were inserted on the motion of our chairman, Miss Challoner, who pointed out that in this country women had been debarred of the franchise on the ground that the word "person" did not include women where "privileges granted by the State" were concerned. (v. Chorlton v. Ling, 1868).

The speakers, three of whom were the West African members of the Elliott Commission on Higher Education, were without exception eloquent and convincing. The Conference accepted with acclaim the proposal that the Report should include the recommendation of equal opportunities for girls and women throughout the educational service.

The Charter also demanded "that educational plans shall be so framed and carried out that the peoples of such territories shall be able in the shortest possible time to play their full part in all spheres and at all levels of activity in their own country."

Most of the speakers were from the Colonies, but a young man from the Union of South Africa made it clear that under the government of that Dominion the indigenous peoples have been deprived of many human rights—witness the iniquitous Pass Laws.

### TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO.

From the "Catholic Citizen," September 15th, 1919.

"One cannot doubt that these women who, many of them for the first time, have left home and tasted independence and responsibility, have gained in themselves far more than they can have given up by joining. It is true that with demobilization comes an unsettled feeling, a spirit of restlessness, but it is not a selfish discontent or a mere longing for excitement—it is a good restlessness, an inability to return to a life bounded only by personal aims; it is a feeling out of which something fine may grow, something taught by unselfish service, love of country and earnest endeavour."—Vera S. Laughton in "The Women in Blue."

The largest

## CATHOLIC HOSPITAL in the South of England

The Hospital was founded in 1856 by four Sisters of Mercy on their return with Florence Nightingale from the Crimean War.

The Hospital contains 156 beds, including 31 beds for Paying Patients. Private rooms are available from 8 gns. per week. Eight beds are set aside for Priests and Nuns from the Diocese of Westminster.

Trained Nurses sent to patients' own homes. Apply to the Superintendent in charge of the Trained Nurses' Institute, 32 Circus Road, N.W.8.

## THE HOSPITAL OF ST. JOHN & ST. ELIZABETH

60 Grove End Road, St. John's Wood, N.W.8