

WOMEN'S SERVICE
FILE COPY
DO NOT TAKE 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. XXXI. No. 6.

JUNE, 1945.

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.

Feminism—The Root Of All Evils ?

The following passage occurs in the introduction to Mr. Christopher Hollis's recent book, *Death of a Gentleman*:

"The simplest explanation of the world's troubles is clearly the decline in the birth-rate in the richest countries and those which pride themselves on being the most civilised. . . . For that decline there are the deepest psychological reasons, but they may all be summed up in the simple word 'feminism.' The nation has ceased to reproduce itself because its women have ceased to want to have children, and they have ceased to want to have children because in the name of feminism they have been taken from their sphere of the home and taught to share the interests of men. Miss Beale and Miss Buss are enemies of civilisation more desperate and more dangerous than Hitler and Mussolini. . . . It is not wholly easy to find an answer in justice to the exceptional woman, who demands the right to an education, to a political career and to serve upon committees . . . but there is no controverting the proposition in fact that, when women are educated, then the birth-rate falls and civilisations collapse. When women get into Parliament, civilisations collapse in an avalanche. The old ideas, which kept women in the home, may have had their exaggerations and their cruelties, yet they obeyed the conditions of survival. . . . The drawing of the country gentleman from the country to the town and business in Edwardian days . . . the consequent transfer of effective power in the village from the squire to the squire's wife, were but the first premonitory rumblings of a storm the ultimate consequences of which were to be Armageddon and Miss Ellen Wilkinson."

This diatribe has been commented upon as follows by Father Gerald Vann, O.P., who premises that he intends no criticism of Mr. Hollis's book as a whole.

"The secret of all our troubles, says Mr. Hollis, lies in 'the simple word feminism.' This baleful battle-cry lures women from 'their sphere of the home' and teaches them 'to share the interests of men'; and then we can expect Armageddon. God made for man a helpmeet; and we had supposed that to be a helpmeet she must share his interests; but no, educate women and 'at once the birth-rate falls and civilisations collapse.' As simple as that. We had thought the Church right in extolling Catherines of Siena, of Alexandria (patroness of philosophy), its Joans of Arc; but no, the pioneers of women's education are

worse 'enemies of civilisation than Hitler and Mussolini,' and when women get into politics, 'civilisations collapse.'

"Now beneath all this there is a precious truth. The minds of man and woman are different and complementary; and complementary because different. The harm that would be done to man and to society if this difference were to be obscured can hardly be exaggerated. And the majority of women find their proper fulfilment in the vocation of wife and mother. Nowadays there is real danger of these facts being denied in practice. But Mr. Hollis is not content to say this.

"(1) The vocation of marriage is not the only vocation. Mr. Hollis admits that there are 'exceptional women'; but they seem to him an insoluble problem. The Church is less pessimistic. It bids us honour alike the learned and the socially active women saints; it regards not as awkward oddities but as chosen souls those nuns, for instance, who give themselves to teaching—and how are they to teach unless they themselves are educated? Vocation is an individual affair; and the wisdom proper to woman can help the world in an endless variety of ways.

"(2) And why must a developed mind be a bar to marriage and motherhood? What are the alternatives? Either the squaw, or 'the ladies, goblessem'; and it is hard to say which is the more repugnant to reason and to Christianity alike. Man and society need the wisdom of women if they are to be saved from disaster and to be made whole; and how is woman to give that wisdom if she is denied a share in the interests of men and locked up in the kitchen? And where in the Church's teaching do we find that women are an inferior species, whose calling is limited to procreation and manual work? Did not Pius XI sufficiently stress the fact that marriage is meant to be a companionship of mind and soul? And who then is the better representative of the Church's ideal for women, Dante's Beatrice or Mr. Hollis's squaw?

"'Son, behold thy mother.' It is not only love and sympathy, it is wise guidance that a mother must give; and we must not expect miracles of her. Much is hers instinctively, and much more may be given by grace; but also she has the duty, and therefore the right, to *learn*—to learn from human beings as well as from God—how to resemble the Mother to whom even He who is wisdom was subject."

Notes and Comments

We quote the following sentences from the Holy Father's broadcast from the Vatican on May 8th:

"May the moulders and artificers of a new and better Europe, of a new and better world, founded on the filial fear of God, on fidelity to His commandments, on respect for human dignity, and on the sacred principle of equality of rights for all peoples and all states, large and small, weak and strong, spring from our bones and our graves and from the earth where we have been thrown like grains of wheat. . . . Dedicate yourself with ardour to the work of reconstruction, sustained by a strong faith in Divine Providence. Start working each one at his place, with determination and tenacity, your hearts inspired by a generous and indestructible love. The task that awaits you, the task of repairing the immediate and disastrous consequences of war, is a hard but a holy one."

In accordance with our tradition, Mass was offered for the Alliance on St. Joan's Day, May 30th, this time at the Church of Our Lady and St. John in Sudbury, Suffolk, by Father Gerard Moir, who told us that he did us this great service "with great pleasure and greater fervency."

In this year of the silver jubilee of our patron's canonization, members attended Benediction in Westminster Cathedral on the evening of her feast. Miss Kathleen FitzGerald, our first chairman, placed a wreath tied with our colours on her shrine.

The *Catholic Herald* reports that during an audience granted her by the Holy Father, the leader of the Italian Catholic women asked him if it be the duty of women to use their votes. He answered that it is a duty of conscience for all women to vote, not excluding nuns, even cloistered nuns.

We note with satisfaction that two women are members of the "caretaker" government—Mrs. Cazalet Keir and Miss Florence Horsbrugh, who are Parliamentary Secretaries for Education and for Food, respectively. At the same time we shall sadly miss Mrs. Cazalet Keir's services as a back-bencher.

An animated and very well attended meeting was held by St. Joan's Alliance at the Interval Club on May 28th, Sir Wavell Wakefield, M.P., and Dr. Elizabeth Jacobs, respectively Conservative and Labour candidates for St. Marylebone, and Mrs. Gorsky, Liberal candidate for North Hackney, expounded the programmes of their parties and answered many questions. Miss Monica O'Connor was in the chair.

The inaugural lecture of the Alison Neilans Memorial Lectureship Trust was given at the Caxton Hall on May 10th by Miss Louisa Martindale, C.B.E., J.P. (M.D., B.S., F.R.C.O.G.), whose subject was Venereal Disease. She was most informative. Lord Balfour of Burleigh, introducing her, quoted the late Archbishop of Canterbury's saying about Miss Neilans: "There was in her a burning fire of righteousness. . . she was always filled with charity." Members of the Alliance were among the audience.

St. Joan's is giving a party at the Interval Club on Wednesday, June 20th, at 5 o'clock. Miss Mabel Strickland, member of the Maltese National Assembly and a distinguished member and a vice-president of our Alliance, will be the guest of honour. Speeches at 5.45. Tickets for tea (2s.) are in great demand. Apply at once to the office if you want one.

General Election

In accordance with our custom, Mass to beg divine guidance for the electors will be offered at Westminster Cathedral by request of the Alliance. It will be at 9.30 on July 5th in the Lady Chapel.

The Catholic Citizen Supplement reminds members of the Alliance of a part of their duty in the imminent General Election, which is probably the most important in our country's history. While they regard the international and national issues of supreme importance they should remember the particular aims of our Alliance, for these are a matter of justice. The programme of the Joint Parliamentary Committee summarizes these aims, and the questions which are suggested for putting to candidates, whether in letters addressed to them or at the meetings they hold, will elicit their views on these issues. If a candidate has already been an M.P. he should be judged by his record.

All legal and administrative discrimination against women must be swept away, and women and men as citizens share the same responsibilities and enjoy the same rights.

We, a non-party organisation, do not wish to influence you in favour of any one party. But we ask you to support, when you conscientiously can, candidates pledged to carry out our programme. We would remind you of the splendid work done by a handful of women M.P.s. We greatly hope that the number of women M.P.s. supporting our policy will be increased.

Make it a point of honour to attend the meetings of the candidates in your constituency, to ask questions at these meetings, to write to these candidates. When you have their answers, please send them to our headquarters office.

If you can help, please write to the office, stating for which candidate and party you wish to work.

We appeal for donations towards the expenses of our campaign.

Party Views

The resolution about the General Election passed at our annual meeting was sent to the political parties.

In reply the **Conservative and Unionist Party** stated:

"The equal status of women with men is a many-sided problem covering questions of pay, conditions of work, legal status and numerous other matters. This is well illustrated by the resolutions passed at your annual meeting. The Conservative Party desires to see no unfair handicaps imposed on either men or women on account of their sex. If it were to give a broad pledge to remove all existing legal and administrative inequalities between them, that might be an infringement of the main object, because (for instance) this might deprive women workers of protections which they at present enjoy under the Factory Acts and which it is doubtful if they could afford to lose. But the Party will give careful and sympathetic attention to any detailed proposals affecting the status of women. A Royal Commission is at work on the question of equal pay, and as the leader of the Conservative Party is also Prime Minister, it would be wrong for the Party to make any pronouncement on that subject which might prejudice the Commission's report before it were published. It considers that document likely to be one of great importance."

[Continued on page 23

Women Novelists

Miss MacCarthy discusses in her *Women Writers: their Contribution to the English Novel 1621-1744** why until comparatively modern times there were, save for the rarest exceptions, no women writers who counted, and concludes that it is because "creative imagination without education is not productive." Rightly she rejects the alternative explanation that until our day women's experience of life was limited. For the best female writers of fiction in English have exercised their imaginations on much restricted experience. Consider, for instance, Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, for which she found her material in a girls' boarding school. Detailed, accurate, sensitive observation of everyday life in narrow circumstances: on this the creative faculty of women novelists has fed most fruitfully. Emily Brontë is almost alone among those of yesterday and the day before yesterday in that she could be both romantic and great. Therefore Fielding's dictum, surprisingly quoted with approval by Miss MacCarthy, that "conversation" with all ranks of society is indispensable to a good novelist, is questionable.

For many centuries women wrote scarcely anything which mattered, not because they were conversant only with the class in which they were born but because they lacked opportunity to acquire the technique of writing. Fielding said—"bitterly" Miss MacCarthy tells us—that "to the composition of novels nothing is necessary but paper, pens and ink, with the manual capacity for using them." He left knowledge of calligraphy and spelling to be taken for granted, yet even these were lacking to some women until modern times. As for the understanding of language which study of Greek and Latin brought to men, as for critical and selective faculty: Fielding in bitter mood overlooked these other indispensables to the production of a book worth printing. What chance had the average woman of acquiring them before the nineteenth century, she who read haphazard and little or not at

* By G. B. MacCarthy, M.A., Ph.D. (Cork University Press, 10s. 6d.).

Party Views—continued

The **Labour Party** answered as follows:

"In general terms the Party is pledged to the principle of sex equality. One doesn't know, however, what the St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance reads into such phrases as 'existing legal and administrative inequalities.' If it means the removal of protective legislation for women workers, this is not the Party policy."

The **Liberal Party** sent a copy of the resolutions passed at their Assembly last February, among which the following was carried unanimously:

"That this Assembly . . . demands equality of opportunity and treatment by the State, and before the Law, for every individual regardless of race, colour, creed or sex. It demands the acceptance of the principle of payment at the rate for the job and calls on the Government to take the initiative in introducing this reform in the Government service and in all Government undertakings. It further calls for improvement in the status and conditions of those whose service to the community is given in the home; and due recognition of the services of the single women of the country, whose steady contribution to taxation and insurance revenue entitle them to compensatory allowances."

The policy of St. Joan's Alliance regarding legislation "protecting" women workers is stated in our election programme. "In industry, regulations and restric-

all? What encouragement had she to use the sense of form which sometimes lurked in her brain? Unless she had an exceptional character, original and daring, she might get her to her needle, her loom, hardly to her pen.

Innumerable good books have, however, been written by men throughout the ages, and if all women could do were to write like men, the long idleness of their pens would be unimportant. But the women novelists who have written since the beginning of last century have shown that women's literary work is essentially different from that of men. The best and the worst of it is essentially feminine. The contribution a feminine quality has made steadily to our literature for only a century and a half is at its best first-rate, and by it we measure the loss we have suffered. It is the difference in essence between women's writing and men's which justifies studies like Miss MacCarthy's.

In this volume she deals with work which heralded the full flowering of women's literary activity, not only with fiction but also with forms, mainly biography and letter writing, which led up to it. Fiction written by women strayed, humbly and intermittently, into English prose literature from 1621 when Lady Mary Wroath followed the fashion of her day by writing pastoral romances, but it was not until the Restoration period that professional female novelists occurred in English society—Aphra Behn and her followers, battered, loose thinking if not loose living, avid for gain because their alternative to earning was starvation, writing therefore to suit the depraved taste of their time. After their day the tide turned, and as Steele's plays contrasted with Wycherley's, so do the didactic, most feminine tales of Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe, Mrs. Jane Barker, Mrs. Penelope Aubin with the novels of their predecessors.

We look forward to the further study, concerned with the later eighteenth and early nineteenth century, which Miss MacCarthy promises us.

HELEN DOUGLAS IRVINE.

tions should apply equally to men and women. The only real protection for wage-earning women is equal status and equal pay."

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO

Leonora de Alberti in "The Catholic Citizen,"
June 15th, 1920.

To those of us who have worked in the suffrage movement some ten years, a little more, a little less, and who feel, maybe, that it is time we had a rest, there can be no more invigorating occupation than to reflect on the pioneers, who have been bound up with the movement since its birth over fifty years ago. Whatever work may have come our way, we late arrivals are reaping the fruit of the labours of those great pioneers. Many have passed away, others thank God, still remain with us.—*The Women's Victory and After.*

Owing to the heavy expenses in connection with the General Election work, we appeal to members to help us to pull our weight in the campaign by sending us quickly as generous a donation as possible.

J. M. ORGAN,
Hon. Treasurer.

PARLIAMENT MONTH BY MONTH.

The most important question, from our point of view, which has been discussed in the House of Commons during the last few weeks has been the **Family Allowances Bill**. The debate was lively and interesting and for the most part extraordinarily united on basic principles, the only controversial points being duplication of payments and the question of Income Tax, which aroused, and will continue to arouse, considerable feeling.

The amendment providing for the payment of the allowance to the mother and not to the father was passed not only without a division but with scarcely a dissentient voice. The only alternative suggested at all was that each family should settle the point for itself, and this was considered unnecessarily cumbersome. Altogether the whole debate was both reasonable and affable and members agreed not only that it was more convenient to pay the mother, but also that to do so might constitute some small recognition of the status and value of the housewife and mother.

In sad contrast to this amiable atmosphere were the unsatisfactory answers to protests about the treatment of the **Women's Land Army**. Questions were asked on April 10th, when the Prime Minister himself answered fully but far from generously, and again on April 19th and May 3rd. Finally, on May 16th, Mr. Hudson was provoked into the tame statement that the government, while in no way abandoning their position that the W.L.A. was on a par with industry rather than the Services in the matter of post-war benefits, was anxious to help the W.L.A. as far as possible. Arrangements were therefore to be made for "specialised training in agricultural work suitable for women, to be provided at Government expense. . . . For those who do not wish to make agriculture their career, free Government training under the same conditions as the Women's Auxiliary Services will be available." In addition, some financial assistance in returning to their peacetime jobs is offered to the Land Army, and they are to be allowed to retain one or two items of their uniform. The House considered this statement very disappointing but the Minister of Agriculture hinted at the end of his speech that there might be further improvements. Let us hope so too.

One sinister question has again come to the fore. On May 8th Mrs. Cazalet Keir asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the conversations with the staff side in connection with the policy of the **abolition of the marriage bar** in the Civil Service have commenced; and how soon they are likely to be completed. Sir John Anderson replied: "If my hon. friend is suggesting that there has been some decision by the Government in favour of abolishing the marriage bar, I would remind her that all I have undertaken was to review the position in the light of war experience. As regards consultation with the staff representatives, the official and staff sides of the National Whitley Council have now agreed to appoint a special committee to consider this question. It is expected that the discussions will begin in the very near future but I am unable to say how soon they will be completed." Again, on May 17th, Mrs. Cazalet Keir asked the Minister of Health whether he would reconsider the case of a woman, aged 53, whose name has been supplied to him, who has been refused permission to marry and continue in the Civil Service. Mr. Willink replied: "The lady in question was not regarded as possessing the special qualifications or experience which would have justified me in recommending that an exception should be made in her case." This in spite, as Mrs. Cazalet Keir pointed out, of the fact that the woman had recently been promoted over the heads of many of her senior colleagues.

This point must clearly be watched.

Mrs. Tate has, so far without success, attacked the Government on several occasions on behalf of **Downside School**, whose preparatory school has been empty for nearly a year but is not yet derequisitioned. Mr. Stokes, the Catholic member for Ipswich and an old Downside boy, joined her in this, but they got no more than a general announcement that schools came second to dwelling-houses in order of priority for derequisitioning. It was this point which was being debated at the historic moment when the Speaker switched on the lantern above Big Ben for the first time since the beginning of the war.

B. H.

NATIONALITY

On May 3rd the Home Secretary, answering Commander Locker-Lampson, said that "No statement has yet been made as to the method of implementing the offer of British nationality to members of the Polish forces who fought with us. It is possible that legislation may be required to give effect to the offer but any forecast . . . would be premature at this stage." In reply to a question by Sir Arthur Evans about the eligibility for British nationality of foreigners who had served with the armed forces of the Crown, he said that the Prime Minister's statement about the offer "arose specifically in relation to Polish forces and resulted from the proceedings at the Crimea Conference." Answering Mr. Silverman's question whether there would be "no kind of racial or religious discrimination" when the offer was implemented, he said, "My honourable friend may be sure of that."

When on May 17th Mr. Seaborne Davies asked the Secretary for Foreign Affairs whether replies had been received from the Dominions governments in regard to the proposed grant of nationality, Mr. Eden requested him to "put that question down."

This matter is relevant to the feminist programme in that the Government can no longer excuse itself for withholding British nationality from British women married to foreigners on the ground that it is not now practical to contemplate an enlargement of British citizenship. In particular, since Dominion governments have been consulted about according British nationality to Poles, why should they not be consulted about according it to these women?

Moreover, the new offer of British nationality specifically eschews discrimination on the ground of sex: answering on May 17th Miss Ward's question whether the offer of British nationality applied to women as well as to men in the Polish forces, Mr. Eden said: "If the conditions are similar, sex will not be a bar."

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 158 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, 84 Circus Road, N.W.8.

Telephone: Primrose 2788.

THE HOSPITAL OF ST. JOHN & ST. ELIZABETH

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