

THE

Catholic Citizen

Organ of St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance (formerly Catholic Women's Suffrage Society),
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Signed Articles do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Society.

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Ethel Smyth

1858 — 1944

"Strange that you should be dead."

That line in the moving poem by V. Sackville-West published in *The Observer* on the Sunday after Ethel Smyth's death struck me as a perfect tribute to the abundance of life which was her supreme endowment. She had great gifts and qualities, but more remarkable than any of them was that torrential vitality which streamed from her and her work alike. So although she had reached the age of 86, when to die is more natural than to live, we were startled by the news of her death. It seemed but the other day, although actually it was six years ago, that she had spoken to us with her familiar forcefulness and vigour through the microphone. In that memorable broadcast on her 80th birthday she summed up her attitude to old age in the fine phrase, "creative resignation." It was not enough, she had discovered, to be passively resigned to being cut off by advancing years from many of your old activities and interests. "You have to create new ones to take their place, and so make good your losses." This was the task Ethel Smyth set herself in the last phase of her adventurous life. We should be thankful that she was released from it before it had got beyond her failing strength. Released from it by a most gentle and kindly death. Like Falstaff, "A" went away, and it had been any christom child.

I have been asked to write 500 words about her here, and as I think 500,000 would hardly suffice for anything like an adequate appreciation of one who lived so abundantly, I am baffled. In how many different aspects she ought to be shown. As a composer, as an author, as a feminist, as a friend, as a "character"—to mention but a few. If I give the composer precedence, it is because others have spoken scantily since her death of her music.

When she was a girl of 20, studying music in Leipzig, her friend, Elizabeth von Herzogenberg, expressed concern about her multifarious occupations and interests. "It seems to me you have a specific duty towards your gift for music, and should not let yourself be drawn away in other directions. . . . It is this insatiability that alarms me so." It is possible that if Ethel Smyth had been more single-minded, she would have been more musically productive—composed more works on the large scale than "The Wreckers," the Mass in D, and "The Prison." But it is my conviction that her music derives its intensely personal and individual quality from that immense savour of life which made her avid for every sort of human experience. The pursuit of it did not prevent her from

putting her back into the task of acquiring a firm and solid technique. The command of a variety of musical devices is noticeable in all her compositions. The question whether the lack of generous appreciation of them by the majority of English music critics is to be traced to sex prejudice, although of special interest to readers of this paper, must be passed over. It has been exhaustively, and at times, I confess, exhaustingly, discussed by Ethel Smyth herself, in the story of her long struggle for recognition, to which many chapters in her series of autobiographies are devoted.

That Ethel Smyth was a brilliant, witty and original writer is more commonly conceded than that she was, to put it soberly, a fine and original composer. She found to her surprise that "this quality of vitality, which one would imagine is necessary to creation of any kind," ignored in her music, was at once recognised in her books. It has been asserted since her death that it is through them, not through her music, that she will be remembered. But for all we know it may be the other way round. The reputation of the Mass in D and "The Wreckers" may be most lasting than that of "Impressions That Remained" and "As Time Went On." Posterity may not endorse the verdict that Ethel Smyth "had a greater mastery of words than of notes."

The problem of pouring the ocean into a cup is insoluble. I find it full before I have come to the bold and uncompromising feminist, who gallantly laid down her literary and musical work to fight in the militant suffragists' ranks, was imprisoned, and joined in a hunger-strike; to the friend who was so excessively candid that the course of friendship seldom ran smooth—"I am afraid I often pour vitriol instead of oil into the wounds of my friends," she once wrote to me; to the whole personality, in which the elements were so mixed up that it is impossible to label it.

"Wild welcomer of life, of love, of art,
Your hat askew, your soul on a dead level,
Rough, tough, uncomfortable, true,
Chained to the iron railings of your creed,
Strange that you should be dead."

CHRISTOPHER ST. JOHN.

Notes and Comments

We associate ourselves with the widespread thankfulness for the liberation of Rome, and for the relief it has brought to the Holy Father's anxiety for the safety of the city.

In accordance with our tradition, Mass was offered for the Alliance on May 30th, St. Joan's Day, this year by the kindness of Father Devas, S.J., and a laurel wreath tied with our colours was placed on St. Joan's shrine in Westminster Cathedral. Our good friend of many years' standing, Father Arthur Day, S.J., was unable to say Mass for us on that day. "But D.V.," he assured our honorary secretary, "you shall have a second intention on the 30th, and for a week thereabouts a special memento each day for . . . St. Joan's living and dead."

In answer to a question in Parliament by Mrs. Cazalet Keir, the Prime Minister announced that a Royal Commission would be set up to consider the question of equal pay for equal work. Asked by her if this Commission would "report more quickly than any other Royal Commission", he declared himself unable to prophesy, adding, "in a very serious matter like this, involving an immediate addition of £42,000,000 to current expenditure, some inquiry is necessary." We would point out that the Atkin Committee of 1918 and the Tomlin Commission of 1929-31 have already reported on this issue; that the principle of equal pay was accepted by the House of Commons in 1920; that the government's policy of disregarding it has been twice defeated in the House, and that Article 427 of the 1919 Peace Treaty lays down "the principle that men and women should receive equal remuneration for work of equal value."

We much regret that the peculiar Nationality Law of our country, which bears grievously on many British wives of foreigners and does not safeguard the state against a possible danger from some foreign women married to British subjects, received no attention at all from the recent Conference of Dominion Premiers. We and other feminist organizations will press for the inclusion of the reform of the law in the agenda of the next of these conferences. In a written reply to a parliamentary question by Lieut.-Colonel Marlowe, the Home Secretary stated that 3,270 applications from British-born wives of enemy aliens to resume their own nationality had been received since the outbreak of war, and that 2,700 of them had been granted.

In a debate in the House of Commons on the present problem of domestic work, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Labour said on 4th May that this Ministry "have set up a special department recently to consider this problem as a whole. This department has got outside help of the highest qualifications and at this moment is collecting and sifting all the suggestions which have been sent to us from all quarters." The Minister and he were anxious "that the end of the war should not find us without some future plans for domestic work in this country."

The Alliance has every sympathy with the Conference on Women in the Building Industry, arranged by the Women's Engineering Society and the Electrical Association for Women, which was held on April 20th and passed the following resolution:—"In view of the anticipated shortage of labour in the building industry, arising from housing schemes adequate to the needs of the nation, the government should consider the provision for women of training facilities in appropriate trades in the building industry, and the trade unions concerned should introduce any modifications necessary in their rules and practices to facilitate the employment of women trainees."

International Notes

Australia. We send greetings to the women of Australia who are celebrating the jubilee of the first grant of women's suffrage in that dominion, the women of South Australia having been enfranchised on 23rd June, 1894.

The Dawn of January 19th reproduces the published protest of our Australian section against the proposal to facilitate divorce for Australian women married to Allied servicemen. "The fact must be honestly faced 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. . . . British law, based on the ancient Canon law, defines marriage as 'the voluntary union for life of one man with one woman.' Those who enter into the relation with the intention that it shall be temporary are not contracting valid marriage at all. . . . In our view also the Commonwealth Government should endeavour to ensure," with the co-operation of the Allied Governments, "that Australian women, married to overseas servicemen, are adequately maintained, at least while the men are in the fighting forces and their whereabouts known. . . . The present demand is that men should be promptly set free to victimize another girl, while the women are left alone to bear the burden of a situation into which in many instances they have been innocently betrayed. The women citizens of Australia are entitled to the protection of its laws. . . ."

Belgium. "L'homme moderne aura-t-il peur des femmes?" was the title of a brilliant lecture given at the Belgian Institute on May 23rd by our member Madame Magdeleine Leroy. She gave a masterly survey of the history and the philosophic basis of the feminist movement and was heard with rapt attention.

Bermuda. *The Times* of May 4th reports that after forty years of effort the women of Bermuda were virtually assured of enfranchisement on the previous day, when the Legislative Council confirmed the Assembly's recent decision to extend the franchise to them. While we trust this is true, we restrain our congratulations to the persistently valiant women of Bermuda until the measure is actually on the Statute Book.

Ceylon. The new University of Ceylon, established in 1942, now includes, among more than 900 students in residence, over 100 women, who are almost equally divided among the three faculties of Arts, Science and Medicine.

Holland. In her recent broadcast to the Dutch people, Queen Wilhelmina, paying tribute to the great share Dutch women have had in this nation's struggle, said "among other things I am thinking, when I return, of appointing secretaries of both sexes so that a woman's mind can help me."

Hungary. Sister Margit Schlachta's paper *A Dolgozo* No is among those suppressed by the new government's press commissioner. Sister Schlachta, a founder of the Sisters of Social Service and Hungary's first woman M.P., is an old friend of St. Joan's Alliance. We last saw her during the Eucharistic Congress at Budapest, when she kindly invited our delegates to supper. Much of the work of her very modern order consists of efforts to rouse Catholic women to take their part in public life.—E.F.G.

The Rate For The Job

Our May Discussion Meeting, held on the 25th at the Interval Club under the chairmanship of Miss Challoner, was fortunate in being addressed by Miss Dorothy Crook, of the Office of War Information of the United States, in which country, to use her own phrase, "in general equal work receives equal pay." She emphasized, indeed, that while women's right to work and earn as men do has been formally conceded in the United States, tradition and prejudice still modify it a little, so that the average pay of men remains higher than that of women and better jobs have a way of falling to men. In other words, the women's organizations still have "mopping up" to do.

But the principle of equality has been definitely acknowledged and is increasingly put in practice by the Federal Government. In the Civil Service equal pay has been required by federal statute since 1883. In the army, the navy and the marine corps men and women are paid at the same rates. It is not otherwise in war industries. The War Manpower Commission and the War Labour Board have frequently stated and applied the principle of equal pay. While this equality between the sexes was less general before the war, it was then already the rule rather than the exception. Federal laws, notably the Federal Wages and Hours Law (1938) and the Social Security Act (1935), affect men and women equally. More recently several states—New York, Michigan, Montana, Illinois and Washington—have passed laws regulating small industries and trades which make it a legal offence not to pay the rate for the job.

Not only the women's but also the men's labour groups have come out in favour of the rate for the job. In fact, the United States was one of the leaders at the recent I.L.O. Conference, which urged that this just principle should be accepted universally.

Three particularly interesting points were brought out by the speaker. First, that the United States provides to some extent for dependents of earners, not by modifying salary or wages or by family allowances, but by appropriate modifications of the income tax. For example, the tax paid by a married man with two children earning £375 would be £11, while a single man or woman earning the same amount would pay £67 10s. Secondly, many women support dependents: according to a recent survey by the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor, approximately 60 per cent. of women earners are wholly or partly responsible for one or more dependents. Thirdly, the feeling against admitting married women to the labour market is noticeably weakening in that country, partly because of an appreciation of the benefits accruing to producers when the purchasing power of these women's families is increased.

The number and the pertinence of the questions Miss Crook had to answer after her address showed how much she had interested her hearers. A vote of thanks was moved by Miss Nancy Parnell and seconded by Miss Margaret Whittles.

That this issue is now a living one was indicated on 2nd June when the B.B.C. allotted to its debate the half-hour after 6-30 on the Home Service programme. Two speakers flatly opposed equality: Mr. E. Rushworth, of the National Association of Schoolmasters, and Mrs. G. Patterson, an ex-ferry pilot, both of whom opined that if equality were introduced it would be at the expense of men's present rates of pay, with the result that men would be deterred or prevented from becoming teachers, while in industry men would cease to be the sufficient breadwinners of their families, and their wives would have no choice but to work for wages outside their homes. Mr. Rushworth said equality would benefit only the "single woman careerist", and Mrs. Patterson advanced a familiar argument—only a minority of women do not marry and a still smaller minority have dependents. Mr. Godfrey Bostock, a shoe manufacturer, had a divided mind. He favoured the rate for the job in principle, as plainly just, but in practice feared such equality might draw woman from the home, and he fell back on suggestions for increased domestic conveniences and amenities and for family allowances.

At the Demonstration in Trafalgar Square on 4th June, over which the General Secretary of the Civil Service Clerical Association presided, a resolution was passed by representatives of the following 13 national trades unions: Association of Supervisory Staffs and Engineering Technicians, Mineworkers' Federation of Great Britain, Post Office Engineering Union, Association of Scientific Workers, Guild of Insurance Officials, South Wales Miners' Federation, Fire Brigades' Union, Mineworkers' Federation of Great Britain, Tailors' and Garment Workers'

The wholehearted champions of equality were Mr. S. V. Pollock and Mr. Jack Tanner. "Is an assistant master with six children paid more than a headmaster with none?" the former asked pertinently; and he laid down that we should budget for the possibility that women earners will not marry and will have to save for their old age. Mr. Tanner (of the Amalgamated Engineering Union) said that to reject equality was to accept the Nazi conception that woman's function is merely biological. His union has since last January applied the policy of the rate for the job. Since production must expand after the war, the need for women's work will continue; to pay women less than men is to risk undercutting.

Summing up the discussion, Mrs. Tate declared that because equal pay is just it would benefit the whole community. It would allow women to be employed on the work which suited them best. It would help to solve the problem of war widows and deserted wives. It would raise woman's status and therefore the position of the housewife and the importance of the home. It would allow women to make, in partnership with men, their full contribution to the post-war world.

Union, National Union of Public Employees, Amalgamated Engineering Union, Civil Service Clerical Association, Women Public Health Officers' Association.

It called on the government immediately to implement in its own establishments the principle of the rate for the job in accordance with the expressed wish of Parliament and without recourse to a Royal Commission, and affirmed the belief that such action would ensure the adoption of the principle by private employers and in industry generally.

Reviews

Life Together, by Wingfield Hope. (Sheed & Ward. 6s.).

"Life Together" receives unstinted praise in the introduction to it by Fr. Henry Davis, S.J., and has been well reviewed. In full agreement with its aim to present a sane and creative treatment of Christian marriage, we think some points call for comment. Father Sertillanges' treatment of the structure of the Christian family, of the position of wife and husband in its government, is slightly different and perhaps more likely to appeal in its expression to those readers whom "Life Together" hopes to attract—modern youth. Father Sertillanges, O.P., reminds us (page 257, *Féminisme et Christianisme* that the Church has no "ne varietur" theory of family organisation, and (page 256) that St. Paul said both "wives, obey your husbands" and also "slaves, obey your masters." It should be also pointed out in any chapter dealing with the hardships which sterility imposes, that sterility is not solely and invariably due to failure of the woman's reproductive powers: in approximately fifty per cent. of the cases the failure is that of the male partner, although this has been realised only gradually and only recently proved. Both wife and husband may therefore feel aggrieved and both may have to practise forbearance. We think briefer and terser exposition, based on Christian principles, is perhaps still needed.

F. Mackenzie Shattock, M.B., B.S.

Dark Symphony, by Elizabeth Laura Adams. (Sheed and Ward. 6s.).

This is the autobiography of a negro girl and the story of her gradual unfolding towards the Faith. This young woman has character; her parents had character too: she makes us see them vividly. The description of negro childhood is full of charm and will probably take its place among the classics of childhood.

We all of us are prejudice-ridden in one way or another, but a reading of "Dark Symphony" should make us put down the book wondering when we have hurt one or another of our fellow human beings by our lack of sympathy. When we have been guilty of lumping together "Jews", "blacks"—people of one race or one group—and justifying our prejudice against them so that we are hardly aware when we hurt an individual of the despised category? That race prejudice should reach even to the altar steps is a hideous contradiction. Yet Miss Adams writes: "Always at the altar I pray, 'And, if, dear Lord, anyone pass me by . . . help me to have faith in your Presence in the Blessed Sacrament just the same.'"

Without bitterness this girl has watched those who profess Christianity betray their calling. She has paid tribute to those who have helped her, and she shows us vividly, though quite unconsciously, how much the negro race has to contribute to our troubled civilisation. C.S.

We have received the first number of *The Shield Supplement* (2d.), a monthly sheet which will be issued by the Association of Moral and Social Hygiene while the regular issue of *The Shield* continues impossible. This first number deals with compulsory methods in the treatment of venereal disease in this and other countries, reviews the League of Nations Report on the Prevention of Prostitution, and contains other valuable information.

WANTED in convent or family near church, in or near London accommodation on ground floor with full board. 2 guineas weekly; willing to help with clerical work of which much experience.

Personalia

The Alliance offers very warm congratulations to three of its members:

to Mrs. Acres (née Jessie O'Connor) on the birth of her second child, Richard John;

to Miss Barbara Barry on her marriage to Mr. Wilfred Murphy;

to Mrs. Hallaway on her appointment as the first woman alderman of the city of Carlisle.

* * *

We are very grateful for a legacy of £25 from Miss M. E. O'Sullivan, an early member of the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society. R.I.P.

* * *

We ask for prayers for our member Leslie Toke, K.C.S.G., a founder of the Catholic Social Guild, who died recently. We tender our deep sympathy to our member, Miss T. C. Dowling, of the United States, for the death of her brother John, for whom we ask for our members' prayers. R.I.P.

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The Alliance was represented at the memorial service for Dame Ethel Smyth at St. Martin's-in-the-Fields on 5th June by the Editor and Miss Graham.

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Watchers at the church of the Sacred Heart, Horseferry Road (which was bombed), are informed that the watch will in the immediate future be kept before the Tabernacle in the church of St. Anne, Abbey Orchard Street, Victoria Street, S.W. 1.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO.

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

"The Government is pledged to the principle of the equality of the sexes, and will respond to popular pressure. It was the work done by the young women of the nation during the war which converted numberless anti-suffragists and changed opponents into supporters."—*Leonora de Alberti* in "Notes and Comments."

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Come to our Midsummer Party at 5, Holly Place (Tube station Hampstead 3 minutes), 2.30 to 6.30, Saturday, 24th June. Bring your friends, have tea (1s.), stroll on the Heath, listen at 5.30 to Mrs. Gertrud Meyer on Women Parish Assistants in Germany, and use an unrivalled opportunity to Bring and Buy at the Sale.