

THE  
**Catholic Citizen**

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Daughter of the ancient Eve,  
 We know the gifts ye gave and give;  
 Who knows the gifts which *you* shall give,  
 Daughter of the Newer Eve?

—Francis Thompson.

## The Two Americas Confer

BY HELEN DOUGLAS IRVINE

The Pan-American conferences are an interesting variant among the international assemblies which have in the last two decades become frequent events. The civilisations represented at them fall into two groups, sharply divided, the North American and English-speaking group and the South and Central American whose language is Spanish or Portuguese. As, in the former, Canada is differentiated from the United States, so in the latter is Peru from Venezuela and even more from Cuba or Mexico, but these differences within the groups are less than those which distinguish one of them from the other. The two great divisions are in contrast economically as well as culturally. Industry, with which the November Labour Conference was concerned, is in North America overwhelmingly financed by North American capital; in South and Central America it is generally capitalised by Europe or the United States. It is one thing to legislate for labour in the factories of Pittsburg or the wheat farms of Canada where ultimately the cheapness or expensiveness, the efficiency or inefficiency, of the labour supply falls on United States or Canadian shareholders. It is another and a more delicate business to regulate labour effectively in a tin mine in Bolivia or a cattle estancia in Argentina where the company's balance-sheet affects the pockets of investors in New York and London and Paris. A third difference between the two groups is political: south of the Mexican frontier there is not the political stability which exists in North America. Did all the English-speaking delegates at the November conference realise that of their Spanish-speaking brothers who subscribed to the resolutions some represented Governments precariously situated, liable to be overthrown as soon as a regiment or two of the national army had been squared by their

opponents, who would repeal every enactment of their predecessors inconvenient to themselves? This fact is a definite weakness of every Pan-American conference. The actual relations of delegates to each other and to their own countries, beneath the camouflage of similarity, develop two dispositions in those who represent Latin-American states. Overwhelmed by the wealth and fluency of the North Americans, astonished by their naïveté, they are tempted to face-saving activity, the more because they share a ruling ambition of nearly every American, the longing to be modern. Modernismo or modernity: to most Americans it is an end in itself. All this brings the South and Central Americans into line with their brothers beyond the Mexican frontier, but at the same time they are suspicious of them for a reason which is a frequent one of distrust—they do not understand them.

In view of these grave difficulties, the Second Inter-American Labour Conference is to be congratulated on the resolutions, on the whole admirable, with which it has sought to lay down fundamental conditions for the work of women and of young people and children. May they, nearly all of them, become effective law in a bankrupt world exhausted by war!

The work of women and of minors was allotted to the consideration of one committee which decided to deal with them separately. Even to-day the committee which decided to deal with them separately. Even to-day the committee must be specially commended for acknowledging that women are children for no more years than men. It has passed resolutions which seek to protect maternity: pregnancy is not to be a cause of dismissal; women are to have leave of absence, with full pay, for six weeks before and six weeks after their confinement and for any further period of incapacity

for work; nursing mothers are to have, for suckling their infants, two breaks of half an hour each in their working day; mothers are to receive prenatal care and are to be attended by a doctor and a midwife during their confinement; crèches and day-nurseries are to be provided. Another set of resolutions deals with minimum rates of wages, to be fixed always on the same basis as wages for men. Particular stress is laid on the principle of equal pay for equal work. The action of states which have passed laws forbidding women to be dismissed from their work when they marry is commended, and other states are urged to follow this example. Finally, a resolution reaffirms the provision in the I.L.O. constitution that when questions specially affecting women are considered by the Conference, at least one of the advisers shall be a woman; and also the resolution of the Santiago Conference that inspectorates of labour shall include, as well as men, women who shall have the same powers, duties and opportunities as the men, if they have the same qualifications. It is added that women appointed to be inspectors must be well qualified for their duties.

A resolution deals with the home-work of women. "Industrial home work on behalf of an outside employer" should, it states, "be abolished in the American countries" as being "against the interests of workers and of the national economic system"; and this assertion is grounded on the fact that home workers are difficult to protect, and on the allegation that home work tends to "slowing down the development of technical progress in industry." I protest against this glib condemnation to death of what is in most South and Central American countries an ancient and valuable popular institution. Are the Indian women, for instance, to be deprived of their looms because sometimes their textiles are bought by agents of big firms? Why should they lose the occupation which is their pride and joy as well as their means of livelihood, and why should we be obliged for ever and ever to use machine-woven, aniline-dyed rugs instead of the pleasant, patterned Indian ponchos and mantas and blankets? Basket-making, pottery, leather plaiting: these as well as weaving are home industries much practised by women in Latin America. No technical progress in mechanised industry would compensate either the producer or the consumer for their disappearance. It is a very poor policy to kill whatever is difficult to protect. Moreover, the constant ideal should be to enable the adult worker to protect herself.

The resolutions for the protection of young workers are unexceptionable. In particular, the committee deserves praise for its courageous attempt to deal with the difficult problem of the child street traders, a pitiable feature of some South American towns. A section of the resolutions devoted to the maintenance, education, placing and supervision of "young persons who are destitute or inadequately supported" is very interesting to Catholics because such care and training as are now received by orphans and abandoned children are generally given to them by the nuns, whose goodwill is unbounded but whose efforts are restricted often by lack of funds, now and then by ignorance of the world. The nuns are, as a rule, no less eager for good advice than for money, and many of them would be interested in the findings of the committee and anxious to put them in practice.

### Women's Freedom League

Our colleagues of the "Women's Freedom League" held their 33rd Annual Conference on May 25th. Their President, Lady Pares, gave an inspiring address, and many feminist resolutions were passed. We take the opportunity of quoting two of these:

#### II. RETENTION OF WOMEN'S LIBERTIES.

This Conference of the Women's Freedom League, proud of the League's motto—DARE TO BE FREE—calls upon women everywhere to work, even during war-time, to retain those liberties we now enjoy. It furthermore urges them to do their utmost to ensure that peace may not be merely the cessation of hostilities, but the building of a new world where men and women alike enjoy equal political and economic freedom.

#### IV. THE WEST INDIA ROYAL COMMISSION.

This Conference supports the following recommendations made by the Commission as amended:

*Education:* The literary curriculum should remain the same for girls as for boys. In secondary education provision should be made to enable girls to compete for Scholarships on equal terms with boys. Facilities should generally be provided for post-primary vocational training for girls on the lines of the Carnegie Trade School in Georgetown, British Guiana.

*Social Needs and Services:* The women should be eligible for appointment to all Boards and local authorities and that, where the representation of women's interests has not been secured through election, the desirability of nominating a woman or women for membership should be borne carefully in mind; that women should be equally eligible with men for appointment as magistrates and for service as jurors; that the same procedure should be allowed in appointments to the Civil Service for women as for men; and that more hostels should be provided for workers.

*Franchise.* Any recommendations on this subject should assure equality between the sexes.

## Notes and Comments

The following dispensation has been announced by His Eminence Cardinal Hinsley: "During the war a dispensation to take non-alcoholic liquid refreshment before Holy Communion is hereby granted to all the faithful of the diocese when they have to take refuge at night in time of air raids.

Those in the diocese who have care of the sick during the night and who are unable to keep the Eucharistic fast are also hereby granted permission to take non-alcoholic liquid refreshment before Holy Communion for the duration of the war."

\* \* \* \* \*

A Committee of women M.P.s, under the chairmanship of Miss Irene Ward, has been formed to assist Mr. Bevin, Minister of Labour, in mobilising women power. Mr. Bevin has recently submitted to industry a plan under which more women might be employed on war work one or two days a week and thus provide a break for regular workers.

We wish our Prime Minister, who has shown such boldness of policy in his direction of the war, would sweep away all niggling restrictions and differentiations between the treatment of the sexes, so that women might, as complete human beings, play their full part in the national life of the country.

\* \* \* \* \*

The new Unemployment Insurance Bill was presented to the House of Commons on June 19th. The benefit is to be raised by 3/- for both men and women, and 2/- for younger workers, the contribution rate being likewise raised equally for both sexes. This is a matter of congratulation for the present Government in spite of the fact that initial differences have not yet been removed. Black-coated workers (men and women) earning up to £420 have been included in the scheme. It will be noted that there is no unequal income limit as in the Contributory (Voluntary) Pensions Bill.

On the other hand the standard wages of whole time A.F.S. and civil defence personnel have been increased on an unequal basis of 5/- for men and 3/6 for women, so that men now get £3/5/0 a week and women £2/3/6.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Secretary of State for War was recently asked a question in the House concerning the application of military law to the Women's Auxiliary Services, "in order to dispose of existing anomalies and to ensure that there may be one standard of discipline and control . . .

and so as to safeguard the armed Forces against occasional lapses of duty. . . ."

Sir Edward Grigg, replying to Sir Ian Fraser, pointed out that the Auxiliary Services were already subject to Military and Air Force Law, but that their position did not render them liable to be punished for purely military offences. Sir Ian Fraser drew attention to the fact that since the personnel of the Women's Auxiliary Services were enrolled and not enlisted there was no ultimate sanction for carrying out any minor punishment in the rare cases where lapses occur, and would it not be in the interests of the Service to have a proper and rational system of law—would not the women themselves be proud to be under it?

Sir Edward Grigg made it clear that the question of a special code, applicable to all three Women's Corps, was being examined in the light of the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mr. Cocks recently asked in the House whether women who could use a rifle would be permitted to join the Local Defence Volunteers. The answer from the Financial Secretary to the War Office was a blunt "No, Sir."

Colonel Wedgwood has declared in the House: "In this country there are a great many women who shoot extraordinarily well; many of them are match rifle specialists. I do not know why they should be ruled out (of the L.D.V.S.) on account of sex."

\* \* \* \* \*

A letter recently published in the *Daily Telegraph* and signed by representatives of various women's employment associations, draws attention to the fact that in spite of appeals for women's service to the country there are "literally hundreds of capable women who have tramped from the Labour Exchanges to the Ministry of Labour registers, and thence to all and every voluntary organisation in their district, in a fruitless endeavour to find a way of serving in paid or unpaid work."

"The crying need," continues the letter, "is for intelligent direction and sifting to regulate the supply and demand, and a recognition of the contribution which the well qualified older woman can make and longs to make to the national effort."

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We offer our best wishes and congratulations to our very good friend Dom Gilbert Higgins, C.R.L., on his 91st birthday (July 7th).

(Continued on page 69)

## ST. JOAN'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ALLIANCE,

AND

Editorial Office of "Catholic Citizen":

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

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

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## Women in War Industry

The change from peace-time to war-time conditions in industry was effected much more slowly in Great Britain than in France, where women and girls, working incredibly long hours, were for many months the mainstay of industry in almost all its branches.

In this country, where the under-valuation of women is much more pronounced than on the continent, acceptance of the situation caused by the war came very late; and this lateness gave point to the French contention that we were not taking the war seriously. Only after many months' delay was there any call "en masse" for the services of women, though of course some infiltration into unaccustomed occupations had been taking place, and it was later still that discussions began between employers' organisations and the Unions regarding the pay and conditions of work of the woman "dilutees," a matter which surely should have been fully discussed and upon which agreement should have been made early in the autumn.

However, at long last, the extremely important decision of the Industrial Court that women conductors in municipal transport undertakings should receive the "rate for the job" was announced. This decision establishes a principle and its influence will extend far beyond its actual scope, not only to other transport undertakings, but also to industry in general and, it is hoped, to administration. Once "equal pay" is granted to a section of the employees of municipal authorities it is not to be expected that other women employees of these authorities will be content with differential treatment; such a demand will make itself felt, if not during, at all events immediately after, the war.

This influence may perhaps already be seen in the agreement between the Engineering Employers' Federation and the Unions, whereby women replacing men are, after certain pro-

bationary periods, to receive men's rates of pay. Equality of pay was included in the demands of the Unions as a protection to their men members and it is to be hoped that these members will now realise that the principle is really fundamental to the welfare of all workers, and not just a point to be demanded as a protection to men in times of crisis.

While the acceptance of the principle of "equal pay," the "rate for the job" is greatly to be welcomed, there remains the necessity for watchfulness lest the intention of the agreement and decision above mentioned should be frustrated by the practice—not uncommon in the last war—of making slight modifications in the machines or the work whereby it could be argued that the work was not "equal" to that of the displaced men.

As regards women in the professions, the position has been deplorable—highly trained and capable women being unable to obtain posts and being supplanted by in many cases, e.g., the services, by untrained women at low salaries, no doubt much to the detriment of the efficiency of the administration of those services. It is to be feared that many of these highly qualified women have been thrust into low-paid routine work in order to gain a living of some kind, and the value of their trained services are being lost to the nation. With complete lack of foresight, as Mrs. Bompas has written, the Government and the private employer failed to see that during the years of recurring crises they had an opportunity of minimising war dislocation by a judicious mixture of the sexes throughout their undertakings. The effect of neglecting this opportunity is evident on every side.

It is interesting, though depressing, to watch the attitude toward the married woman; *First*, determination never to employ her; *secondly*, grudging acceptance of the necessity so to do (sometimes combined with praise of her capa-

city); *thirdly*, declaration that she must have no hope of being employed after the war, and *fourthly*, an appeal to married women to come forward in their hundreds to help to save the country by re-entering the factories.

Reliable estimates of the number of women employed as a result of the war, even if obtainable, would be out of date as soon as made. Besides women in the Services, who number many thousands, one may mention the following main industries. Engineering, including munitions; textiles, greatly expanded by the demand for cloth for uniforms, etc.; clothing, also greatly expanded for the making of uniforms; agriculture, here the entrance of women was very slow owing partly to prejudice on the part of the farmers; transport, which, being in the "front line," attracts most attention in the Press; boot and shoemaking. There are, of course, many other trades and processes which women are entering for the first time, or in greatly increased numbers; it would be impossible to mention them all.

A new development has been the appointment by the Minister of Labour of a Factory and Welfare Board for the care of workers inside and outside the factory. Care inside the factory will devolve chiefly on the inspectorate, now transferred from the Home Office to the Ministry of Labour; watchfulness will here be necessary to ensure that such care shall be applied to both men and women and shall not degenerate into so-called "protection" for women only. Care outside the factory will include billeting, provision for social activities, etc., and here voluntary organisations have been invited to co-operate with the Ministry.

EVA HARTREE.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS—(Continued from p. 67)

In a speech in the House, on July 2nd, the Rt. Hon. Lord Lloyd, now Secretary of State for the Colonies, declared that although our energies and resources must obviously be devoted to the prosecution of the war, this did not mean that there was to be any going back on the present standard of administration in our colonies.

As reported in the *Universe*, Lord Lloyd, addressing a Conference of Missionary Societies at Friend's House, Euston Road, emphasised the fact that the Government is committed to making all possible use of missions in their educational work. Referring to the West Indies, he said that "inevitably we give these peoples much that is bad in our civilisation. Surely we should give them that which is best in it—our Christianity."

"Religion, in our view," he continued, "should not be taught as an extra, but should be the foundation of all education in the West Indies. . . . If a healthy society is to be built up in these islands then it must be built up on the foundation of the Christian religion and Christian ethics."

In regard to Africa, he stated that Governments "must rely even more than at present upon the whole-hearted co-operation of the missions in the field."

\* \* \* \*

The *Women Engineer* reports that two women have been elected to serve in the capacity of "visitors" of the Royal Institution. Miss Dorothy Jordan-Lloyd, Director of the British Leather Manufacturer's Research Association and Miss Caroline Haslett, C.B.E., Comp.I.E.E., President of the Women's Engineering Society, will, with their men colleagues, audit the accounts, present an Annual Report, "inspect and examine the Institution" and generally look after the interests of members. It is the first time within the history of the Royal Institution that women have served in this capacity—"visitors" being the 18th century designation for the Committee of Management appointed when the Institution was formed in 1799.

\* \* \* \*

Now that the principle of "equal pay for equal work" has gained ground in the Engineering trades, it may be apropos to forestall the well-worn objection that a man must have more pay than a woman, on account of family obligations, by a timely quotation from the "Woman Teacher."

If the presumption is that payment must be made on account of an actual or a possible family, then:

- (1) The unmarried man must be paid at a lower rate than the married man.
- (2) The childless married man must be paid less than the one with children.
- (3) The amount paid must vary with the number of children.
- (4) The man whose children are grown up and self-supporting must have his salary reduced.
- (5) The woman who has to support dependants—aged or invalid parents, brothers, or sisters—and it must be remembered that in the working-classes, including "black-coated" workers, it is usually the woman of the family on whom the care of such dependants falls—must have the same salary as a man.
- (6) The widow with children must be paid the same as the man with children.

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The Office will be closed during the month of August, but correspondence will be promptly attended to. We notify our members that ordinarily the Office will be closed Saturday mornings, unless by special appointment.

### Pensions

The new Royal Warrant for Pensions payable in consequence of the present war has now been issued (Cmd. No. 6205). There is a general increase in pensions for disabled men, and widows, and allowances for wives and children. In future there will be no limit whatever to the number of children to whom allowances can be made whereas under the old warrant payments to a disabled man were limited to allowances in respect of only three children in one family. The pensioned widow of a private will receive an allowance of 8/6 for her first child, 6/3 for the second, and 5/- for others instead of 5/- for each of them. A further change concerns allowances for childless wives, under 40 years of age, of disabled men. An allowance may now be claimed in respect of an able-bodied wife, whatever her age.

A broad principle governs the case of the "unmarried wife." If there were two women dependent on the soldier at the time of his death, they cannot together get more than a widow's pension of 22/6. The general rule is that the married wife comes first.

The rates for women provide awards for 35/- a week for a member of the Voluntary Aid Detachment serving as an uncertificated nurse; and 24/2 a week for a woman with the equivalent rank of private.

\* \* \* \*

Sir Walter Womersley, it may be remembered, promised to give sympathetic consideration to various points put forward by a deputation of Women's Organisations, in connection with certain provisions detrimental to women contained in the Personal Injuries (Emergency Provisions) Act, 1939. Writing to the Women's Freedom League, who organised the deputation, the Minister of Pensions put forward no really valid argument for the differentiation of scales of compensation between men and women from the age of 18 onwards. He disclosed that allowances would be given to all dependent children under 15, under the amended scheme, and that a further cause of complaint where children's allowances were concerned would be amended. He did not "feel able to accede to the suggestion" that in respect of an injury sustained by a wife payment should be made to the wife and not to the husband. "The substitute service which the payment is designed to provide is, technically, service to the man as head of the household."

Miss Annie Somers, our representative on the deputation, in replying to the Minister's letter, expressed appreciation for the amendments

of children's allowances. She went on to point out that we objected "to the arbitrary assumption that a woman's services are worth two-thirds that of a man" and to this assumption being made the basis of compensation. With regard to the incapacitated wife and mother, Miss Somers declared that it is almost incredible that "the Ministry of Pensions should take refuge in a position which is about sixty years out of date and is in the last degree insulting to the woman whose family responsibilities preclude her from 'gainful labour.'"

### Nationality

Under Clause 10 (6) of the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act, 1933, which allows a British-born woman married to an enemy alien to apply to resume British nationality, hundreds of applications for re-naturalisation have been received, and many British-born wives of enemy aliens have regained their British nationality.

The status of women married to friendly aliens has not however been considered. When it is realised that aliens of all descriptions suffer many disabilities at the present time and are deprived of taking part in many forms of national service, it will be seen how humiliating this must be to British-born women compelled to retain their husband's nationality. Moreover in the case of those women married to Italians, their position was changed overnight to that of enemy aliens. If they had been allowed to resume British nationality this position would not have added to their distress.

The uncertainties of the present war must have brought home to thousands of women the importance of the right to retain one's own nationality on marriage.

We appeal once more for the passing of an Emergency Bill giving all British women the right to retain their British nationality on marriage with an alien, and providing that British nationality shall *not* be automatically conferred on an alien woman who marries a British subject.

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### Policewomen

At the end of June a deputation of women M.P.s approached Sir John Anderson, the Home Secretary, demanding the provision of more women police.

An emergency ad hoc Committee of organisations interested in the increase of women police has recently been formed, arising out of a consultative meeting convened on the subject by the National Council of Women. St. Joan's Alliance is represented on the Committee.

Present conditions show the extreme urgency of the matter and the committee has decided that the moment has come to press for the direct intervention of the Home Secretary to summon a Police Council and amend the Regulation on Strength, making it obligatory for policewomen to perform certain duties.

The demand for policewomen is practically universal among societies working amongst women and young people. The Home Office is alive to the desirability of more women police, but instructions to local authorities are permissive and not obligatory. The decision to appoint women police lies with the chief constables, who are in many cases opposed to their appointment. In October, 1931, Statutory Regulations were issued, stabilising conditions of service all over Great Britain and giving security of tenure to policewomen, defining their duties and bringing them within the purview of the Police Council. For several years it has been apparent that only by making certain duties compulsory of performance by women police (e.g., statements from women and children in sexual cases, escort of women prisoners) could there be any hope of getting policewomen appointed in all Forces. There is general agreement that these duties must be performed by women and they are police duties; neither matrons nor social workers can properly undertake them.

In this connection we recall the resolution passed at our successive Annual Meetings since 1926:

St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance calls upon the Government to make it compulsory for all Watch Committees and Standing Joint Committees to appoint attested policewomen under the same conditions as policemen.

will not be taken from her utterly, and will return at the moment of her greatest need so that the concluding tragedy comes as a happy ending.

It is a beautiful book.

B. B. C.

### Reviews

**Africanæ Fraternalis Ephemerides Romanae**  
(March-June number of the Organ of the Roman Conference of African Missions).

This valuable quarterly contains a most interesting article on "Catholic Missionaries and Native Custom" which discusses in a wise and tolerant spirit the problem confronting all missionaries as to how far native custom should be eradicated, changed or modified. The problem ultimately resolves itself into four questions. Which are those customs that are inadmissible; which, that if retained may be dangerous to faith or morality; which are those that can be adapted; and which customs are innocuous.

There is a comprehensive reference index of current mission literature, and we are happy to see included in this, titles of various articles on African women which have appeared in the CATHOLIC CITIZEN.

C. S.

**Mirror of a Dead Lady**, by Helen Douglas Irvine. (Longmans, 8s. 6d.)

Here is an exquisitely wrought triptych, in which the background of Sylvia Dundas's brief, iridescent life changes from the half-tones of Versailles in the 'nineties, haunt of impoverished gentility, to the contrasts of social life in South America, and again to a delicately pictured London. Miss Douglas Irvine's craftsmanship is a delight; every detail, every word is significant, and what is left unsaid is as vocal to the understanding as what is told. Her surety of touch in description, giving to familiar or unfamiliar the same nostalgic reality, is matched by a like surety in her characters, who, by a sentence, a mannerism, a detail of dress, reveal themselves for what they are, real, alive, convincing, whether old or young, reaching to holiness or soiled with vice. Rarely, moreover, have I read a book with a more tender understanding of youth.

As in *Fray Mario* and *Magdalena*, here too the heart of the book is the life of the spirit—a central theme, touched on explicitly thrice only, yet constant throughout. The high-light of the whole is the moment where to Sylvia at eighteen a realisation of the love of God comes unbidden, exalting her to a divine communion which makes her feel at one with "the secret heart of the world." Too soon the vicissitudes of life, an unhappy marriage, loneliness, frustration, sweep over her, overwhelming her gay, eager little soul, but what she laid hold on then

(Continued in previous column)

## International Notes

We know that the prayers and thoughts of our readers will be with our French Section, l'Alliance Ste. Jeanne d'Arc. Many of us have met Mlle. Lenoël, Founder and Hon. Secretary, Madame Pesson Depret, President, and Mlle. Delaval, Hon. Treasurer, while all must have heard of their names. Our prayers and thoughts are with our members and friends in France, Holland and other countries occupied by Germany.

If this copy of the CATHOLIC CITIZEN should reach any members who have been obliged to leave their country, we should like them to know that a warm welcome awaits them at the Office.

Just before the fall of Paris we received what is presumably the last copy of our brave contemporary *La Française*. That is to say, the last copy for the time being—we feel that the resurrection of France, which must surely come, will also see the resurrection of this gallant fighter for woman's suffrage and their rights as citizens. *La Française* went down fighting. It contains an article by Marcelle Kraemer-Bach on the legal rights of women married to soldiers, urging French women to demand of the French Government a law for "the total and complete suppression of the legal incapacity of married women." A further two columns give all particulars of the rules governing French women drafted into Auxiliary Military Service.

We take the opportunity of a double number to quote Mrs. Corbett Ashby's inspiring New Year's message to the International Woman's Suffrage Alliance, published in the January *International Women's News*. As our readers know, Mrs. Corbett Ashby is the well-loved President of the International Woman's Suffrage Alliance.

"I think it is our woman's duty in 1940 to try to rise above fear; to protect the weak; to use and exercise—yes and continue to claim—the rights we have or need because we may not by any means evade responsibility and we have a sacred duty to attain that measure of power and influence necessary to allow us to shoulder it in reality—we dare not let our share go by default; to preserve our belief in the value and sanctity of human life in the midst of incredible destruction; to keep alive the faith, love and warmth of family life as the cradle of citizenship in a world where hundreds and thousands are driven from their homes like cattle; to remind mankind in the midst of wanton destruction of wealth and the perversion of human effort towards war, of the magnificent possibilities of comfort and security that waits its sincere and world-wide co-operation;

to protest against all propaganda of hate, even if our own lives are wrecked by that hate; to look beyond our frontiers and keep alive the tiny lamp still burning so feebly that proclaims the brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God."

**Egypt.** Thanks to the praiseworthy efforts of the Moudhir of Galioubieh the "maisons tolérées" of Benha have just been closed. *L'Egyptienne* comments: "We wish that the same measures could be adopted by all the Moudhirs, so that gradually throughout the country this shameful and deadly social scourge would finally disappear."

*L'Egyptienne* draws attention to the injustice suffered by women teachers on marriage. In a trenchant article Ceza Nabaraqui points out the contradiction, in a country such as Egypt, where the spirit of the Koran surrounds mother and child with so great respect, between the State's avowed aim of morally raising the nation and its policy of penalising marriage of potential mothers of good citizens. The writer stresses the objectionable "class distinction" between teachers. Women holding higher diplomas may, under conditions, continue to teach after marriage, while elementary teachers are forbidden to do so.

**India.** We offer our congratulations and best wishes for the success of her work to Sister Bridget Sequeira, Superior of the Congregation of the Franciscan Missionaries of Christ King in Karachi, who has been elected a Councillor of the local municipality, nearly half the votes in the constituency being polled in her favour. Sister Bridget was an inspector of the Karachi Mission Schools and took a keen interest in the depressed classes, starting many schemes for their welfare. The people of the Lyari Quarters decided this year to ask her to represent the depressed classes on the municipal council.

Our readers may remember in this connection that Sister Slachta, Superior of the Sisters of Social Service, was the first woman to be elected to the Hungarian Parliament, where she served for some time.

**Japanese Women,** now in its third year, bears witness to the continuance of the suffrage movement in Japan in spite of difficult wartime conditions. The President of the Women's Suffrage League comments in an editorial that

many women's federations have been organised by the Government for various national purposes, "not from the free will of the women themselves, but from the instruction and command of the Government authorities and the virtual leadership is in the hands of men." She considers that the organisation of such efforts should be in the hands of the women themselves, and that moreover the question of woman suffrage and the advancement and protection of women's interests should not be forced into the background.

**Spain.** A recent Order restricts the right of women to register with employment exchanges in Spain. According to the Preamble, this measure has been taken "because of the unusual increase in the volume of female unemployment brought about by the desire of women to engage in work in order to be economically independent although they do not really require to earn their living."

According to this order the following are now entitled to register: women who are the heads of necessitous families in which the children of either sex, owing to their age, physical inability, or some other cause, are unable to bring in earnings equal to the average earned by a skilled worker in the district; a married woman who has been divorced or deserted, or whose husband is in prison, or a woman who is in necessitous circumstances because her husband is unable to work, irrespective of whether they have children or not; unmarried women in necessitous circumstances, or those having a degree or having completed a certain course of study; or possessing other qualifications for the exercise of an occupation; women who, in the opinion of the placing authorities, are in similar circumstances to those enumerated.

When conditions and qualifications are equal, preference should be given to women who are heads of families, the breadwinners of which (husband, children, father or brothers) fell fighting for the Nationalist Party in the Civil War, and nurses who served on the same side for not less than six months.

If the number of women thus admitted to employment proves insufficient to meet the requirements, the Ministry of Labour will lay down the procedure to be followed in extending the right of registration to other women. —*Bulletin of The International Council of Women.*

**U.S.A.** Recently three famous American women have been honoured by inclusion in the

series of "Famous Americans" postage stamps to be issued by the United States during 1940. A stamp commemorating Frances Willard, leading suffragist and educationalist, was issued in Illinois on March 28th, one commemorating Louisa Alcott, author of "Little Women" was issued in Concord on February 5th, and the third stamp bears the portrait of Jane Addams, noted social worker and founder of Hull House.

A new Hour Law in Massachusetts gives a woman or minor a maximum of nine hours work a day which must be completed within ten consecutive hours.

"Equal Rights" points out that this means that a waitress must either choose to serve breakfast and lunch or lunch and dinner, even though she might prefer to take off a few hours in the afternoon and serve all three. It must be remembered that more generous tips are usually given for dinner service, and that waitresses who are on the breakfast and lunch shift are deprived of these.

"Equal Rights" goes on to remark that the Massachusetts law is so involved and difficult to put into operation that employers in many instances will not be bothered with it and are employing men instead of women. The Connecticut law prohibiting women from working after 10 p.m. has caused women musicians, dancers and entertainers to lose their jobs.

The Official Publication of the U.S. Department of Labour gives the following result of an inquiry. Of the 12,043 members of the federated women's clubs, only 3 per cent made no contribution to the household they lived in. The other 97 per cent supported themselves, and half of these had other persons partly or wholly dependent on them, while some few had to support from their earnings alone households of from two to eight persons. The enquiry deals mostly with women typists or clerks aged about 40.—*The International Women's News.*

**U.S.S.R.** A woman engineer has invented a new method of using electric power in propelling canal tugs. Employed at the Central Institute of Research in River Transport she has designed a special contact wagon which feeds power by cable to the tugs and slides along on wires as the tug moves. This system of electric traction is to be introduced on the New Ladoga Canal.

## The Evolution of the Status of Native Women in Colonial Africa

From the December-January *Bulletin of the International Council of Women*

When in 1919, the I.C.W. and other women's organisations petitioned the Peace Conference for the inclusion of certain points in the Covenant of the League of Nations they urged among other matters:

- (1) that the sale of women and children be suppressed;
  - (2) that the principle of woman's liberty to dispose of herself in marriage be respected and applied.
- Eighteen years later, when the League of Nations had taken up the question of the Status of Women, St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance published the results of a comprehensive enquiry drawing attention to the fate of native women in Africa (League of Nations Document A. 14, 1937, V.). It stated that it is the concern of colonial powers to raise the status of women, treated by native custom as mere chattels, as slaves, a practise destructive of human dignity. A native woman must have the right to choose her partner in marriage despite any contracts made by third parties on her behalf, and those in authority must see that this claim is granted.

Women's Organisations were moved by this report to take up the question when, in June, 1938, the International Labour Office put forward recommendations on written contracts for native workers. In June, 1939, the question was on the agenda of the International Colonial Institute which held its study conference in Rome. That same month a most comprehensive book appeared in French, a systematic legal study by a missionary and Doctor of Law, Sister Marie André (Native Woman in French West Africa, Payot, Paris, 1939), suggesting a more liberal interpretation of native custom, pending new legislation rather than the economic emancipation of native women. This legislation is now in force. A decree was introduced in French Western and Equatorial Africa on June 15th, 1939, forbidding a woman to marry under 15 years of age and providing that no woman shall be married without her consent; furthermore the widow is now entitled to personal freedom.

An enquiry begun in 1938, at the request of the Trades and Professions Committee, by the National Councils more particularly concerned, was drawn from various sources, including reports from settlers, missionaries and social workers.

At first the settlers seemed surprised that the scantily clad young woman they met in the backwoods with the baby bound to her back was entitled to a legal status. Then they voiced all the difficulties: "To study the life of women in the Congo is to travel back through the centuries. Women in towns lead the life of the 20th century, seamstresses, nurses, domestic servants, do not live so very differently from the women of the working classes in other lands. In the neighbouring villages somewhat medieval conditions prevail. The native women live as peasants, as artisans, whose only contact with the outside world is the market, where husbands sell the produce of their wives' labour unless they are away on some palaver or task imposed by their chieftain. The woman in remote districts lives as our earliest ancestors did, tilling the land around her hut—which, happily for hygiene burns down every two or three years—making her own clay pots, curing the skins her husband brings back from the forest, weaving the family clothes from fibre and bark. At nightfall she cooks a meal and goes to the river for water

balancing a heavy jar on her head with superb poise." "How can we give you information," say the settlers, "about women who lead such very different lives."

What is the native woman's problem in Africa today? Her legal position is that of the primitive tribe, and the coming of the white man with his judge made law, has tended to crystallise immemorial custom at a time when the native woman is caught in the vortex of a quickly changing world. Remember that the heart of Africa has been open to civilisation for less than fifty years. It is to the credit of women's international organisations that they have drawn attention to the necessity for change. Of course the responsible authorities have to take facts into account, and to be mindful of transitions. The sudden upheaval of native civilisation would spell disaster for women, but the application of native customs without due interpretation hinders the progress of the African family and leads to tragic difficulties.

It is always hard to realise what lies behind the law in a faraway community so complex and so different from our own. We are told that woman is a slave, a chattel whom her father disposes of to any suitor willing to pay her dowry. We exclaim in horror, and then our informant adds: "It would be folly to do away with the dowry! The price paid for a woman gives her the value of several cows, and ensures to the wife decent treatment and a certain matrimonial stability." We retort: "Nevertheless such lack of independence is shocking," only to learn from our investigation that the native woman is very versatile and goes long journeys to visit her family, sometimes for months at a time, without her husband daring to demand her return. The women till the fields and cook the food, so they control the resources and they enjoy complete financial independence. Property is not common to the spouses, and in the family business is conducted on a give and take basis. If a man emigrates to work in some large mining concern, he is astonished at being expected to support his wife out of his wages, and, on the other hand, a woman expects her husband to pay her for knitting him a cardigan. In the Congo women disposed of their wages freely before such a right was granted them in Belgium, though we hear that in other parts of Africa, the husband or the tribal authorities are entitled to a woman's earnings.

The interpretation of native custom differs in the different territories. Some authorities have been so scrupulous in their respect for native tradition and their fear of giving a Christian interpretation to tribal law, that they have sanctioned forced marriages. A French colonial official reports in 1936 that it was only by a wanton act of authority that he was able to save one of his best midwives from a terrible fate. The girl, brought up in European ways, was engaged to a doctor when she went to visit her family, only to hear that she had been sold in her early childhood to a neighbouring farmer, an old and decrepit leper, and that the time had come for her to comply with the marriage contract. In other territories native custom is interpreted as giving a woman the right to refuse to be married against her will. It has often been debated whether it is wiser to emancipate the civilised native from tribal law or to interpret tribal law in a humane and progressive manner; this

problem has been solved in a different way in different parts of the continent. Some laws consider a native girl of 14 as an independent adult, while according to others, a native woman never comes of age.

Besides this diversity of law and interpretation, the diversity of economic and social status greatly influences native family life. In certain parts of Africa women remain in their native villages even if their husbands work in far away districts for years on end. It has been alleged that the frequent and long absence of the men has developed the independence and initiative of the black woman, but other observers report that such conditions cause poverty and immorality. One is told the story of a young Mianka recruited in the French army in the last war, who complained on his return to Africa, three years later that his elder brother, to whom he had entrusted the care of his wife, had not given him a son. The elder brother protested in vain that his sister-in-law was repulsive to him; a colonial judge ordered him to pay the husband compensation. In the Belgian Congo, mining concerns have tried to solve the labour problem by settling workers and their families in the neighbourhood of their works. Only legal and monogamous families are allowed to live in these camps. The woman who has dwelt all her life in a primitive forest hut, is given a modern home, is taught hygiene and the use of a sewing machine, whilst her boys and girls are obliged to attend school. But a set back is also possible. A few years ago the crisis brought about the return of many workers to their native villages, where the authorities encouraged cotton growing as a way out of the difficulty. Agricultural labour was in great demand, and women being the only competent farm hands in the Congo, dowries rose and polygamy increased. Planters bought up all the available women and young men were prevented from marrying.

Will feminism soon flourish in Africa? Mr. Sohier, a Belgian official, in his report to the International Colonial Institute (18, avenue de la Toison d'Or, Brussels) seems to think so, and he says speaking of Katanga: "The native woman is conscious of her rights. She does not hesitate to apply to the courts, to defend her interests. She shows a certain sex solidarity. A few years ago all the wives of the workers in a mining concern went in orderly procession to the law courts in Elizabethville to lodge a protest with the magistrates. Delegates put their request very clearly and the whole group went calmly home again when they had been assured that the question would be given due consideration. Such an incident is not only a proof of woman's emancipation under European influence," adds Mr. Sohier, "but is based on ancient custom." If I understand him rightly the honorary magistrate means to allude to polygamy which in practice freed many wives from too close marital supervision and taught them to control their own affairs and to collaborate in furthering a common end.

May one hope that a scientific institution will soon take up the methodical study of the legal, economic, and social status of the black woman? At one time it seemed that the League of Nations would favour such an undertaking. However it is every woman's responsibility, especially in those countries that assume the tutorship of African races, to study this question and to use her influence on behalf of the human rights of the African women. Polygamy must go, and an epoch that has done away with slavery ought not to tolerate forced marriage out of respect for traditional matrimonial custom. F. BAETENS.

## Twenty-Five Years Ago

From the *Catholic Suffragist*, July, 1915:

The country has not made use of the services of women as much, or anything like as much, as it might have done. At the same time we are by no means satisfied that the women who are replacing fighting men, are being paid a proper wage—an equal wage for equal work. There seems to be good reason to believe that they are being exploited to their own injury, and to the prejudice of the working man. It is no lack of patriotism which causes suffragists to demand that this shall be remedied.—*Notes and Comments.*

Joseph Clayton in the *Catholic Suffragist*, August 15th, 1915:

*Sed nondum est finis*—but the end is not yet. Nations in arms against nations, and kingdoms risen against kingdoms. All European civilisation rent and broken, and the old order of things, so firmly established as it seemed little more than a year ago, crumbling to pieces before our eyes. Unspeakable crimes and deeds of finest courage (commoner both in peace time than we are apt to notice) now of daily report. The resources of science organised for wholesale murder, and for the saving of life maimed and broken by the instruments of war. Men and women driven to finding new values for countless things all the world over. *Sed nondum est finis.*

## Hon. Treasurer's Note

We thank all those members who so promptly responded to our appeal to pay subscriptions due to the Alliance and the CATHOLIC CITIZEN immediately. We should like to point out to defaulters that if we are obliged to stop sending the paper to them, almost the only link which binds us of St. Joan's together in these hard times will be cut. As our members know it is almost impossible to arrange regular meetings and functions in war-time.

The response to our appeal for jumbles was not very encouraging, and we are extremely short of marketable goods just at present. Surely members on the move or those having a Summer clear-out could send us something—it doesn't matter what—to enable us to continue the Market Barrow. This is one way in which we can all help, for if everyone were to send only one unwanted object, the result would be very satisfactory. We do appeal to readers to run upstairs, fetch that "rubbish" and pack it off immediately!

J. M. ORGAN.

For Liverpool Note see next page (76)

## LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT BRANCH

*Hon. Secretary:* Miss Bowden, 22 Fern Grove, Liverpool 8.

Letters were sent to the Prime Minister and the local M.P.s in May begging that the Maisons tolérées should be placed out of bounds for the B.E.F.

On June 7th a Bridge Party was organised by the Branch in aid of the Catholic Women's League Huts, and we were glad to be able to hand over £2 to the C.W.L. Huts Committee. Miss Bowden attended a meeting of this Committee when it was decided to hold a flag-day to collect funds for a Canteen in Liverpool, as requested by His Grace Archbishop Downey.

We have been glad to welcome two new members just recently and hope the old members will remain loyal to the Branch in spite of war-time difficulties.

We hope to hold the Annual Garden Party in August, by kind permission of Miss Barry, at her home in Birkenhead. Members will be duly notified.

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