

THE CATHOLIC CITIZEN

Organ of the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society, 55, Berners Street, London, W.1.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

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

—Francis Thompson.

Why Women should Stand as Independent Candidates for Parliament.

By MRS. H. MORE NISBETT (Independent Candidate for West Edinburgh).

It is with a heart full of gratitude towards the members of the C.W.S.S. and with a feeling of deep unworthiness of the trust they are reposing in me that I begin this article regarding my candidature for West Edinburgh. I wish to take this opportunity of thanking them most sincerely for their promise of support, financial and otherwise; and also of assuring them that I go forward whole-heartedly in Catholic Principles, and humbly invoking the intercession of our patron, Blessed Joan of Arc, in the difficult task which lies before me.

Though women are at last awakening to a call to Parliament, the number of them in the House of Commons is not likely, for some time yet, to be great. The electors, at present, regard the candidature of a woman as something in the nature of an experiment; and it is only when a number of them in the same constituency agree to take a sporting chance by putting a woman in, that the number of women in the House will increase. It is for this reason that, to my mind, women who stand for election should, at present, go forward as Independents. There are men in plenty to manipulate the cumbrous machine of Party Politics, and no doubt in years to come, when women members will no longer be the *rara avis* they are now, they will work in company with party women. But, at the present time, every woman seeking admittance to the House of Commons should do so as a *specialist in Social Legislation*.

If woman's sphere is the home, it follows that she is the proper person not only to be

consulted about but also to frame legislation dealing with domestic affairs; and if the home and the cradle are the nucleus of the nation, it may be said that domestic and social legislation is the most important of any. Thus, while standing outside party politics, the Independent Woman Candidate finds herself free to work for all parties; to assist the Socialist by bringing forward or supporting legislation to uplift society; and to assist the Imperialist by endeavouring to clean up the morals of the Empire.

It is scarcely necessary in a Catholic paper, while speaking of morals, to allude to the menace of easier divorce which all who love the sanctity of home, and who believe in the Sacrament of Matrimony must view with increasing alarm and consternation. The Independent Catholic Woman Candidate is bound by conscience to fight all legislation which further loosens the sacred bonds of marriage; and indeed the whole subject is abhorrent to her; but, if legislation on the subject is to be passed into law, despite her efforts, then in the interest of her sex she must endeavour to secure equality between men and women.

My association with police work during the last few years has brought me closely in touch with crime and poverty, and has consequently led me to a careful examination into the causes of these two great evils. Crime, of course, causes poverty, and poverty causes crime, but, to get outside this vicious circle, it seems to me that the chief factors towards these evils are probably—drink; bad housing; mental

deficiency; bad company; and an unfair industrial system. To combat these things should be the mission of the Independent Woman Candidate.

As regards drink, the 1913 Local Option (Scotland) Bill, which places the number of licences to be permitted in the hands of the electorate, is a sound bill, which has my whole-hearted support. As regards bad housing and overcrowding, much legislation is required, and this should be framed by women, who rule the homes. One-roomed and two-roomed houses are a disgrace to civilisation, causing disease, restlessness and immorality; and such vital questions as rent, vicinity and accommodation should be entrusted to the consideration of women.

The care and treatment of mental defectives is a subject which, happily, is receiving more and more attention. The 1913 (Scotland) Act, whereby such people may be detained and supervised over the age of sixteen is one which should be put into operation without further delay.

Bad company concerns especially the youth of the community. The child is father to the man, and if a young person can be kept pure by Act of Parliament (i.e., a really comprehensive Criminal Law Amendment Act, which provides for the protection of boys as well as girls), until he or she attains the age of eighteen, there is hope that the discipline of restraint may be continued by habit after the age of adolescence and freedom is attained.

Women Police should be called upon to take an active part in the protection of the young. During the period when I patrolled the streets of Glasgow and Edinburgh, I was much struck with the scope for a woman's influence in dealing with the young and foolish of both sexes who wander about the streets, unchaperoned, and very often ignorant of moral danger, during the long, light evenings of summer time.

It is not possible to overrate the grave importance of moral legislation. Taking into consideration the vast problems of prostitution; the monstrous evil of child assault; the hideous ravages caused by venereal disease, no one can surely refute the statement that moral legislation is as important as any imperial question now before the country, and in this unsavoury and distressing fog of

trouble the maternal instinct of woman demands its proper place and influence.

Turning to the cloud of industrial unrest, lying so ominously upon the peace and prosperity of the country, I am more and more of opinion that a system of levelling up would be a sounder solution of the puzzle than one of levelling down. In other words, the worker, instead of being tied to a fixed wage, would have a great stimulus to work and a better chance of social improvement if he worked for a percentage on the profits of his industry. Ambition is a natural human instinct, and it is only right that those who work hardest should achieve the best results. In order to prevent degrading poverty and suffering, there should be a fixed minimum wage in every trade, but a man should be enabled, by his own efforts and a profit-sharing system to make considerable sums of money over and above his weekly salary.

Lastly, if a woman's maternal instinct predisposes her to uphold the defence of those who are too helpless to fight for themselves, then the protection of dumb animals should come especially within her scope. And I go forward as an Independent Candidate in the interests of the dumb animal creation. The Humane Slaughtering of Animals, the Prohibition of Performing Animals and the Taxation of Cats—the most ill-used and disregarded of all our domestic creatures) are matters of great importance to our four-footed friends who need a specialist within the House to plead their cause.

Thus, the position of the Independent Candidate is a strong and comprehensive one. She can support any Bill which bears upon her own especial social subjects, no matter by which party it is introduced; and, while not being in a position to be whipped out into a party lobby to be made a voting box of, she can voluntarily give her support to any legislation of which she is conscientiously in favour.

If Socialism means Brotherhood, if Liberalism means Liberty, if Conservatism means Patriotism, then there is room for the Independent who can embrace and work for these three noble ideals.

IVEIGH MORE NISBETT.

Inspector, Women's Auxiliary Service.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

Our member, Mrs. H. More Nisbett, is so well known to our readers that it is unnecessary for us to dwell upon her qualifications for Parliament. Her article this month gives both her reasons for standing as an Independent and the ideals for which she will work. Her standing for Parliament is, however, conditional on her election expenses being paid, as we report in another column.

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We are glad to see the principle of equal citizenship is recognised in Ireland by the Irish Constitution.

The voting age for both men and women is twenty-one, the bad example set by Great Britain has not been followed by others.

* * * *

We were both sorry and indignant to read of the defeat of Lady Rhondda's claim to take her seat in the House of Lords. Women are now pressing the Government to bring in a Bill amending the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act, which would open the House of Lords to peeresses in their own right. Mrs. Wintringham asked a question on the point in the House recently. We gather from Mr. Chamberlain's reply that the Government will not tackle the House of Lords on this question at present. The Premier and his colleagues may rest assured that women will not let them forget their promises of sex equality. The General Election cannot be much longer postponed. It will be a Day of Reckoning for many.

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The Council for the Representation of Women in the League of Nations has received information from the Medical Director of the Health Committee of the League of Nations that that Committee has recommended to the Council of the League the appointment of Dr. Josephine Baker to the Health Committee. Dr. Baker, who is Director of the Bureau of Child Hygiene, Department of Health, New York, has accepted the nomination, and it is expected that her appointment will be made during the next session of the Council, which takes place this month.

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Jus Suffragii reports that Dr. Paulina Liusi has been appointed by Uruguay as their

official representative on the League of Nations Advisory Commission on the Traffic in Women and Children. As our readers no doubt know, Dr. Liusi is the Leader in Latin America for the suppression of State Regulation of Vice.

* * * *

We rejoice in these appointments which are an object lesson to our own country. Not one single British woman has been appointed by the Government in any official capacity, nor can the authorities be prevailed upon to appoint a woman. Our Government persistently ignores the clause in the Covenant of the League which establishes the principle that all offices shall be open to both men and women, and yet they passed a Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act. What a farce!

* * * *

A Conference of delegates from various women's organisations met in Manchester on June 17th, to discuss "Higher Education for Working Women." The meeting was the fourth of a series arranged at various places by Ruskin College, Oxford.

Miss I. Knowles and Mrs. T. M. Smiley represented the Liverpool Branch of the C.W.S.S. The opportunities for higher education, especially of a residential kind, were shown to be few. "The Purposes of Education" and "Methods of Education" were discussed. The Conference was enthusiastic in its desire for education as a means of broadening the outlook of working women and enriching their lives.

PARLIAMENTARY REGISTER.

August 10th is the last day for claims to be sent in for the Parliamentary vote. We ask all our readers entitled to a vote to ascertain that their names are on the Register. The list of electors may be seen at Municipal Offices, Post Offices and Police Stations. The General Election will very probably be fought on this Register, therefore it is most important that everyone should make sure of their vote.

THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETY.

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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SEPARATION AND MAINTENANCE ORDERS BILL.

This Bill, which passed its second reading in the latter half of May, and which is being supported by a number of societies, including our own, might be more aptly termed a Bill for the relief of the unhappily married.

It would be childish to pretend that there are not many persons whose marriage has proved a hopeless failure, who, through the fault of one or other of the partners, are leading a wretched existence, and who would be far happier apart. The children of these unhappy marriages would have a better chance of growing up into decent and useful citizens if they were placed in the charge of whichever of their parents is the most fitted to care for them.

The law as it exists at present is faulty, it is unequal as between man and wife, and between rich and poor. To obtain relief at all a woman must first leave her husband, and how can she do that if she has neither money nor friends?

She cannot take her children with her, and in many cases it would be impossible for her to leave them behind. The new law changes that.

But the present law is in some ways unfair to the husband, and the women societies, standing as they do for equal laws, have been quick to take note of the injustice. The Bill in question has been promoted by the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, and under the new Bill the injustice would be removed. At present a woman can obtain a separation on five grounds: desertion, persistent cruelty, neglect to provide maintenance, aggravated assault and habitual drunkenness.

A man cannot obtain a separation on any grounds save that of habitual drunkenness.

Originally the new Bill contained a clause enabling men and women to obtain a separation for adultery. The clause was dropped, as in some quarters it was considered contentious.

The C.W.S.S. regret the change. The clause was in accordance with Canon Law, and so far from being a concession to the clamour for easier divorce, the Bill was opposed by the Divorce Law Reform Union, on the grounds that it would postpone "Divorce Law Reform" for perhaps another generation.

From our point of view, that is an excellent recommendation for the Bill, apart from other good reasons for supporting it, for we do not take the word *reform* in the sense it is taken by the Divorce Law Reform League. Nor do we feel, with some other opponents, that the Bill would make for the unnecessary break-up of homes.

The main changes which the new Bill would make in the present law are:

(1) It adds to the grounds on which a man can claim a separation order.

(2) It enables the Court to grant a separation and maintenance order, whether the couple are living together or not.

(3) It strengthens the power to enforce maintenance orders.

(4) It makes the suffering from venereal disease in a communicable form a ground for separation.

Under its prosaic title the Bill contains the promise of relief to many sufferers, and we hope it will reach the Statute Book.

L. DE ALBERTI.

SUFFRAGE AND THE INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUES.

Woman Suffrage was discussed at the International Congress of the Catholic Women's League and the result of the discussion may be considered as satisfactory in that it brought out very clearly the fact that the vast majority of the Societies belonging to the League is strongly in favour of the women's vote. All recognise the great importance and the gravity of the question and feel the obligation of taking part in civic duties and of interesting themselves in the great questions of the day and in all legislative matters. Since legislation touches on the religious, moral and social sides of all civic life and on that of the individual citizen, and since many countries have already enfranchised their women, while it is merely a matter of time for other countries to follow, if tardily, in their wake, it is recognised by the leagues that it behoves all catholic women to prepare for the serious responsibilities which are either already theirs or likely to become theirs at no distant period. The League recognises that catholic women must not stand on one side, and so leave the power which the vote confers to those who may use it in a manner antagonistic not only to Catholic principles but even to the moral and social principles of all Christian and right-thinking peoples. To this end the Committee proposed resolutions to the effect that: Catholic women of all nations must understand their moral responsibility as regards the electoral suffrage: that they should prepare themselves to exercise their civic duties by carefully studying the moral, religious and civic aspect of legislative measures since religion cannot be divorced from legislation: furthermore that as the moral life of a country depends on its legislation each elector has a grave moral responsibility in the election of the legislators, which consequently cannot be evaded.

It is a distinctly hopeful sign that only an insignificant minority of the members of the C.W.L. are opposed to women's enfranchisement and the opposition appears to have come from those who have "fears" (How the Suffrage movement has suffered and does suffer from inordinate "fears"!) or from those who cannot distinguish the views of a few extremists from the great question which we firmly believe and know to be based on true orthodox, Catholic principles.

The Council has spoken with no uncer-

tain voice as to the necessity of the women of all countries standing for one moral law for both sexes. To this end it was urged that mothers should bring up their children *and in particular their sons* to realise this obligation which is the great Christian law of morality and justice. That there should be a propaganda by means of scientific publications and popular literature to disprove the pernicious error that continency, which is obligatory alike to men and women, is harmful to the health of men. Congress also protested against the principle of Regulation of Prostitution and against prophylactic measures and called on the members of the Leagues to study carefully the legislation of their respective countries in the struggle against venereal diseases so as to assure themselves that there was nothing in the legislation dealing with these diseases which was contrary to Catholic principles of morality and justice. Finally there was a strong resolution opposing sex education being introduced into public schools with a rider that it is parents who should undertake this important duty as they can by watching individual development of their children find the psychic moment for the instruction.

The Catholic Women's Suffrage Society not being affiliated to the C.W.L. the delegate appointed to represent the Society could only be admitted to the public session without right of speech, hence this somewhat brief digest of the proceedings. The President, the Countess Wodzidra, who is a strong suffragist kindly granted a long private interview to your delegate and gave what facilities it was within her power to accord for information, and ticket of admission to the open sessions at which His Eminence Cardinal Mery del Val was present. From conversations and observation we find there is a strong movement to prepare women for their political and civic duties and rights when they shall have obtained them or where they have already obtained them. Those women who are valiantly fighting to win electoral rights for women may take to themselves this consolation: where the victory is gained there will be a large body of women, well organised and instructed ready to make good use of the vote which has been won for them by those who have borne the burden and heat of the fight.

A. L. P. DORMAN.

INTERNATIONAL NOTES.

Our contemporary, *La Française*, together with all French organisations keen on women's political and social status, is mourning the death of Madame Jules Siegfried, for many years President of the National Council of French Women (of which *La Française* is the organ). Mme. Avril de Sainte-Croix among others testifies to her long life of devoted service on behalf of her own sex, for Mme. Siegfried was not only a firm believer in the essential need of the suffrage, but she was also the practical founder of many admirable philanthropic enterprises for the benefit of work-girls. The daughter of a Protestant pastor, Mme. Siegfried's activities naturally lay outside the sphere of Catholic influence; none the less we wish to pay our tribute to a feminist of the highest character who gave half a century of unstinted service to the cause of women's progress.

The French Union for Women's Suffrage held a very successful annual conference last month at Clermont-Ferrand. A long summary of all that women have achieved politically in other countries led up to the final emphatic *voeu* on behalf of the suffrage to be forwarded to the Senate.

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La Femme Belge continues to be a monthly witness to the splendid activity of Belgian women to-day in promoting every sort of *oeuvre*—educational, industrial and moral—for the benefit of women workers. A woman's congress is to be held in September which is to be "a manifestation of the whole Christian feminine social movement" and which will discuss the future policy to be pursued. A full and illustrated report will be published.

* * * *

An extremely well-informed article in the *Christliche Frau* (May) describes the condition of Austrian women as the result of the war. One is glad to read that slowly the worst sufferings are passing away, thanks in no small measure to the courage and resource of the women themselves. The writer, Frau Nagl, welcomes the immense progress, industrially, politically and socially, won by women in these years of stress and gladly notes the vastly increased demand for every form of

vocational training. She naturally laments, however, the widespread necessity for married women to supplement their husband's earnings and sees in the habit a real danger to family life. A great development, she says, has taken place in every form of Catholic professional organisation for girls with excellent religious results, but she adds that the school question is one in which Catholic women will need to assert all their influence. Happily, as regards women's public life, she is able to write: "In political life Catholic women have become an esteemed factor, indeed it may be said with pride that one of the leaders of the Catholic women of Austria, Countess Franziska Starhemberg, has not only played a very active and fruitful part in the public life of her country, but has also taken a successful part in international congresses both at home and abroad."

* * * *

Woman's Social Work (Melbourne) reports an inspiring address by Fr. Wilfrid Ryan, S.J., to the Catholic Women's Social Guild in which he pointed to the prominent role played by women in the early Church and urged on his hearers to take a wide view of the social service they were called on to render.

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We have received a pathetic appeal from Fr. Basilio Massari (Missionary at P.O. Leiktho, Toungoo, British Burma) on behalf of his native Christians. That part of Burma, it appears, is suffering from a famine caused by rats who come in swarms and devour corn, sugarcane, coffee and any food or seeds stored in the ground. Much suffering is the result and the missionaries are hard put to it to relieve their congregations for whom they beg alms, however small.

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The *Luxemburger Frau* is refreshingly critical in its reports of the recent conference of the *Action Sociale de la Femme* in Paris, admirable as this was in its main features. Their delegate in a vigorous article protests strongly, as she protested at the time, against the suggested *vote familial*, i.e., to give a married man an extra vote for every child his wife bears him, brought forward approvingly,

it would seem, by one of the presiding chairmen, M. Souchon. Such a law, she truly says, would be a manifestation of man's pride and egotism. Unhappily the idea is very popular in certain French circles. The paper also identifies itself—and so do we—with the protest made by the Dutch delegate in *De Katholike Vrouw*, against the invariable habit at the A.S.F. of having a male chairman. Surely French-women, of all women, should be capable of presiding gracefully and well!

V.M.C.

MRS. MORE NISBETT'S ELECTION CAMPAIGN.

As announced in the "Catholic Citizen" last month, our member, Mrs. H. More-Nisbett, at the instance of the C.W.S.S. and other Societies in Edinburgh has decided to stand for Parliament at the next Election as an Independent candidate for Edinburgh West.

Her standing, however, is conditional upon the Societies supporting her being able to find the necessary funds for her election expenses, the maximum sum allowed by law to be expended by a candidate in that constituency being £650.

On hearing of Mrs. More-Nisbett's decision the Committee of the C.W.S.S. felt it was their duty and privilege to give her, as a member of the society and a trusted feminist, their utmost support. To do this they felt that the first thing necessary was to contribute a fair proportion of her election expenses, and it was decided that the C.W.S.S. should guarantee to raise £100.

Most of our members are well acquainted with the magnificent work Mrs. More-Nisbett has done in the Women's Police Service (now the Women's Auxiliary Service), of which she is an Inspector, and those who have heard her eloquent speeches in this cause will realise what a force she will be in Parliament and what a privilege it will be to have there a member who so fully represents the views of the Society.

We know that our members will welcome this great opportunity, and that they will give as generously as they are able towards

the £100 fund, as a first step in our efforts to secure her return.

We think that one of the best ways of raising it would be for members to undertake to collect some definite amount whether it be £5, or £1, or even 10/-, which could be collected in small sums of a shilling or so. It should be quite easy to enlist the support of non-Catholic friends and acquaintances as well. As a well-known feminist and as an animal lover, Mrs. More-Nisbett should appeal to a very large circle outside the C.W.S.S.

Collecting cards will be sent to any members of the C.W.S.S. who apply to the Hon. Secretary.

GABRIELLE JEFFERY.

LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT BRANCH.

Hon. Sec. Miss A. J. Musson, Fair View West, Rainhill. The Committee are earnestly hoping that the branch will take part in the Liverpool "No More War" Demonstration to be held on July 29th. If there are any local members or others who would be willing to walk in the procession from St. George's Hall to Sheil Park, starting at 3 o'clock, or to assist in arranging a tableau for it, they are asked to communicate with Mrs. Parnell, 91, Bedford Street, Liverpool, as soon as possible for further details.

The demonstration is worthy of the support of Catholic Suffragists, and is under the patronage of His Grace the Archbishop.

We offer our hearty congratulations to our member, Miss Nancy Stewart Parnell, who has passed her B.A. (Hons. English Literature) at Liverpool University.

As we go to Press we learn that the distinguished Catholic prelate, Canon Giesswein, D.D., member of the Hungarian Parliament, is coming to London, and we hope that all members will come to the C.W.S.S. meeting to welcome him, and show their appreciation of the work Canon Giesswein has done for suffrage.

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OBJECT.

To band together Catholics of both sexes, in order to secure the political, social and economic equality between men and women, and to further the work and usefulness of Catholic women as citizens.

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All Catholic women are eligible as Members, who approve the object and methods, and will pay a minimum annual subscription of 1s. Men are invited to join as Associates, on the same conditions, with the exception that they may not elect or be elected to the Executive.

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