

# THE CATHOLIC CITIZEN

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

VOL. V., No. 9.

September 15th, 1919.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

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 WOMEN IN BLUE.

BY VERA S. LAUGHTON.

When the Women's Royal Naval Service came into being just on two years ago, I had the good fortune to be put in charge of the first unit to be started. I shall never forget the glow of enthusiasm, the thrill of expectation with which I set forth to hold my first Selection Board—nor the same enthusiasm and expectation which I saw depicted on the faces of the women who came up for interview. Two pictures from that board stand out very clearly in my mind—the first of a young factory girl who, too shy to approach the table seated herself on the far side of the room, speechless and tongue-tied, her hands clasped in front of her, her eyes shining, her face aglow. It was her discovery that we were recruiting Immobile members, that is, women who live in their own homes and go daily to work at the naval station, that gave her speech. "Oh, no," she blurted out, "I want to join right up and go away. I want to join right up." So our visionary was directed to the Mobile branch and was lost sight of. "Rather a superior type of factory girl," said the Labour officer, my colleague on the Board, in a businesslike tone as she dismissed the candidate from her mind and turned briskly to the next . . . . but then, it was not her first Board! The other candidate, the memory of whose enthusiasm has remained with me all these months, was a young shop assistant. "I only had to give one day's notice," she informed us, "and when I saw the announcement in the paper yesterday, I gave notice at once, so am free now." That girl joined my unit so I was able to judge that her enthusiasm was not only skin deep. From her previous experience it was only possible to enrol her as an unskilled worker, but in a

short time she had qualified in one of the skilled branches and has since done excellent work.

So many people ask, "But what do the Wrens do exactly?" in a worried tone of voice as if they thought that the sailor-women might possibly be ornamental but scarcely useful, that it may be of interest to outline the work that they have successfully undertaken. At naval shore stations—not only the big Home Ports but the numerous temporary war-time bases—women have been able to relieve men for duty afloat in a large number of occupations. These women are divided into mobile and immobile—the former live in hostels and may be drafted anywhere, the latter reside at home and are attached to one base only. The two largest sections are the domestic, comprising cooks, stewards, cleaners, etc., and the clerical; women have replaced experienced naval writers on the intricate pay ledgers and have carried out confidential secretarial duties, while W.R.N.S. officers have relieved naval officers as coders, assistant paymasters, intelligence officers, etc.

In addition to the clerical and domestic sections, the activities of the "Wrens" have been many. The believers in women's inherent physical weakness would be surprised to see the W.R.N.S. porters laden with huge sacks of potatoes or the storekeepers handling heavy bales of kit or bedding. Women have also become proficient in various branches of technical work in connection with the maintenance and repair of the different mechanisms used in naval war. One group of women were trained in wireless telegraphy at a naval training centre and in their qualifying examination, they actually beat all records

of the school; afterwards they were appointed to naval stations where they kept the same watches as men, taking their turn on all-night work. As telephonists W.R.N.S. ratings carried on during air raids, calling up gun stations, passing through the orders for gunfire and barrage, and invariably acting with great coolness and self-control. Draughts-women and tracers were employed in preparing designs for all kinds of new machines, and in making maps for use abroad. This work was of course of a very highly confidential nature, but no complaint was ever received.

As motor drivers, women take full charge of the cars, washing them and doing all running repairs—the substitution of women in this capacity has been most satisfactory, even with the very heavy types of cars. At one of the biggest naval bases women bakers have entirely replaced men on the day shift and make bread for 6,000 men. Unfortunately space prevents further enlargement on the many and varied ways in which women have been able to serve the Navy. The operations of the "Wrens" have extended to the Mediterranean, and the sailor-women are a familiar sight at Malta, Gibraltar and Genoa. It was intended that women should be stationed in Egypt—at Alexandria, Ismalia and Port Said, at Bizerta, on the coast of Africa, at Corfu, Taranto, Naples, Syracuse, Marseilles and possibly Oran and Mudros, but the Armistice ended these wonderful opportunities for travel. If only the W.R.N.S. had been started a year or two earlier, it would undoubtedly have extended and developed in many interesting ways.

Outside the actual work, the routine varies of course with the different stations, but in all cases everything possible is done to make the women feel really part of the great Service to which they are attached. They take a pride in their drill and the smartness of their appearance—they have not only worked with the Navy, they have played with it too, taking part in tennis, rowing, dancing and any social entertainments; "Wren" events have been features of the Annual Sports, and hockey, swimming, gymnastics, have been arranged at many units. As a rule the physical well-being of the women has improved immensely, especially in the case of those coming from quite poor homes; it was no unusual sight to see a little down-at-heel, round-

shouldered drudge, transformed after a few weeks of uniform into an upright, fresh-faced girl, with a conscious pride in the smartness of her appearance and bearing.

Demobilisation is near at hand now, for the war-time bases are closing down and the few shore billets available in peace time are eagerly sought after in the Navy, but one knows that the women will miss the full life, the responsibility and (in spite of the discipline) the freedom, tremendously. The life has been one of inspiration for officers and ratings alike; the communal life with its splendid spirit of comradeship, has an ever-growing attraction and the deep human interest of being constantly in touch with new ideas, new brains, new problems, is never-ending. One cannot doubt that these women who, many of them for the first time, have left home and tasted independence and responsibility, have gained in themselves far more than they can have given up by joining. It is true that with demobilization comes an unsettled feeling, a spirit of restlessness, but it is not a selfish discontent or a mere longing for excitement—it is a *good* restlessness, an inability to return to a life bounded only by personal aims; it is a feeling out of which something fine may grow, something taught by unselfish service, love of country and earnest endeavour.

#### WOMEN AND THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

An important Conference of Women's Organisations (at which the C.W.S.S. was represented) was held on September 4th, at the Caxton Hall, to consider the means of obtaining the representation of women on all commissions and bodies set up in connection with the League. It was decided to form a Provisional Committee to consider names of suitable women, and to report to another Conference. A resolution was passed urging the British Government and the League of Nations to carry into effect the clause in the Covenant, which declares that all positions shall be open equally to women and men. (It was decided to unite women of other countries to form National Committees to secure the appointment of suitable women, and with a view to the establishment of an International Committee.)

### NOTES AND COMMENTS.

Our friend, Father T. J. Walshe, in a farewell letter to the Committee, on his departure for California, says that it has been a privilege and a pleasure to help towards the realization of the aims and ideals of the C.W.S.S. He hopes to hear of further triumphs in the Far West, and promises us a constant "memento" in his daily Mass. We can assure Father Walshe of the Society's gratitude for this, and all his past kindness.

It has been a great pleasure to Catholic suffragists in England to learn how earnestly Catholics in Belgium have been working for the cause of women, and for woman suffrage. They have two monthly feminist papers; one, "La Femme Belge," is a review devoted to moral and social questions, literature and art. This review though not, strictly speaking, a suffrage paper takes a deep interest in the vote, and realises the importance of it, and in every way advocates the raising of the status of women.

The other feminist paper is "Le Féminisme Chrétien, organ of the Society of that name. To this society is affiliated "La Ligue Catholique du suffrage féminin," which was founded in 1913. By the kindness of the Secretary, who has sent us pamphlets and early numbers of the "Le Féminisme Chrétien" we are able to judge of the good work that has been done, and the ground that has been covered. We rejoice to see that our colleagues in Belgium have realised like ourselves the vast importance of the feminist movement, and have not scrupled to come forward, as Catholics, to claim the vote in the interests of justice, religion and morality.

Italian feminists have a weekly paper, "Il Cimento." The issue of August 3rd gives the programme of the new society The National Political Union of the Women of Italy, to comprise women of all creeds and of all classes. Amongst other things the new society stands for the defence of the family; the protection of legitimate and illegitimate children; the rights and defence of motherhood.

The Senate has passed the Sacchi Bill by 58 votes to 17. As we reported some months ago the Sacchi Bill gives to women eligibility for public offices, and admission to the professions including the law. The Bill likewise abolishes the law of marital authority, which kept married women in perpetual tutelage.

We learn from the "International Suffrage News" that Spain has affiliated to the International Suffrage Alliance. We regret to see that Miss Sheepshank's editorship of the above-mentioned paper ceases with the August issue. During these years of war Miss Sheepshanks has succeeded, with admirable tact and discretion, in keeping suffragists informed of the progress and activities of women in all countries, even women of the countries with which we were at war.

In France the Senate's Commission has rejected, by 10 votes to 3, the Suffrage Bill, which was passed by an overwhelming majority in the Chamber of Deputies last May, it has also rejected the more moderate proposal to enfranchise women over thirty. M. Clemenceau as is well-known is a determined opponent of the Suffrage, but in France as elsewhere it is merely a question of how long a popular demand can be safely resisted.

A number of women are taking part in the meeting of the British Association this year. Zoology, Botany and Education, are the chief subjects they will deal with.

We shall have a stall at the Christmas fair to be organised by the Women's Freedom League, to be held at the Central Hall, November 28th. and 29th.

The Hon. Secretary will be most grateful to receive all useful gifts as early as possible. Every member can give most effective help by making at least one article for the Sale.

As announced last month, jumble goods are also urgently wanted and may be sent to the office.

THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETY.

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

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THE CATHOLIC CITIZEN.

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Hon. Editor . . . . . MISS LEONORA de ALBERTI.
Hon. Treasurer . . . . . MISS BRADY.
Signed articles do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Society.

THE LAODICEANS.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the feebleness, not to use a harsher term, shown by the Government in dealing with the Bills introduced either in the House of Lords or the Commons during the Session which has just closed, purporting to give to women the equality which was promised to them at the General Election. The Prime Minister and Mr. Bonar Law must be getting a little tired of being reminded of their famous manifesto that it would be "the duty of the new Government to remove all existing inequalities of the law as between men and women." We trust that they may become so weary as to resort at length to the desperate expedient of fulfilling their pledges. There has been a procession of these Bills passed by one or the other House, blessed by the Government and consigned to the dustbin. The Barristers and Solicitors Bill, the Women Justices of the Peace Bill, the Women's Emancipation Bill and finally the Sex Disqualification Bill. The latter Bill was introduced into the House of Lords recently by the Lord Chancellor, in order, as we reported last month, to squash the Emancipation Bill upon which the Government had been defeated—as regards the franchise clause—in the House of Commons. The Bill consists of two Clauses.

1. A person shall not be disqualified by sex from the exercise of any public function or from being appointed to any civil or judicial office or post, or from entering or assuming any civil profession or vocation, and a person

shall not be exempted by sex from the liability to serve as a juror, provided that:—

(a) Notwithstanding anything in this Section, His Majesty may by Order in Council, authorise regulations to be made prescribing the mode of admission of women to the civil service of His Majesty, and the conditions on which women admitted to that service may be appointed to posts therein, and providing for the exclusion of women from admission to any branch of the civil service in any of His Majesty's possessions, or in any foreign country; and

(b) any judge, chairman of quarter sessions, recorder or other person before whom the case is heard may, in his discretion, on an application made by a woman to be exempted from service on a jury in respect of that case by reason of the nature of the evidence to be given or of the issues to be tried, grant such exemption.

The second Clause of the Bill deals with the right of peeresses to sit in the House of Lords.

It will be noted that Section (a) of Clause 1 practically renders that Clause null and void, it becomes a fine promise to be set aside by an Order in Council. A very influential deputation from many societies of women therefore waited upon Mr. Bonar Law and the Lord Chancellor and laid their views before them. As far as the admission of women to the Civil Service is concerned, the Ministers received them sympathetically, and assured them that the Government's intentions had been mis-

construed. The supporters of women, however, prepared various amendments dealing with the franchise, the Civil Service and Juries, and the Bill was to have been taken in the House of Commons on Friday, August 15th. Mrs. Strachey, writing in the "Common Cause," gives a lucid account of the discreditable methods used by the Government to shelve the Bill fearing the determination of the women's supporters and seeing that that in all probability the amendments would be carried, and their Bill turned into a real Emancipation Bill. She describes how the Scottish Land Bill, to which there was no opposition, was dragged out for five hours, and was not stopped till half-past four, the House rising at five, and how, when the turn of our Bill had actually come the Prime Minister himself came down to the House, the Treasury Bench filled up, and "at 4-30 some new business was invented, and amendments hastily sent down from the Lords to the Welsh Disestablishment Bill were moved and taken—hurriedly and unpreparedly, unseen and unwanted by an indignant and unwarned House." In spite of Lord Robert Cecil's protest, and the protests of other members, the Woman's Bill was shelved.

It is quite like old times, but we are not as helpless now as in those unenfranchised days. There will come a day of reckoning, sooner possibly than the Government believes, and when that day of reckoning comes, women electors will remember how Mr. Lloyd George made it his business to come down to the House of Commons to vote for the shelving of the Women's Bill.

L. DE ALBERTI.

LONDON AND BRANCH NOTES.

55, Berners St., London, W.1. Office Hours 3-30 to 5-30, Saturdays 10-30 to 12-30. Other times by appointment.

We sent a representative to the joint meeting of Catholic Societies, held recently at Birmingham, to secure in writing of Catholic action in connection with the Ministry of Health Act. Our Honorary Secretary, Miss Barry, was appointed to the committee, which is to consider further action. Miss L. de Alberti represented the C.W.S.S. at the Conference of Women's Societies to consider the

means of obtaining the representation of women in the League of Nations, held at the Caxton Hall on Sept. 4th. On Sept. 10th. Miss Fennell addressed a meeting of members of the Association of Women Clerks and Secretaries on the question of mothers' Pensions. We regret that Miss Northcote has been obliged to resign from the Committee of the C.W.S.S. owing to the fact that she has gone to reside in Exeter.

LIVERPOOL & DISTRICT BRANCH.

The Branch presented Fr. Walshe and Mrs. Macdonald each with a lounge chair and address, on occasion of their departure for California. They will be a very great loss to us. Our chairman, Mrs. Macdonald, and Miss Bullen have been indefatigable in selling the Catholic Citizen and in attending to all the Branch business in connection with it. Mrs. Parnell, 91 Bedford St. Liverpool, has kindly consented to act as Hon. paper secretary.

The Hon. Treasurer's Appeal.

Money received from 4th August to 4th September, 1919, including donations to the Office Rent Fund.

Table with 3 columns: Name, £, s. d.
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Bellasis, Miss G. E. ... 0 8 6
Beer, Mrs. M. ... 0 3 6
Bootsma, Miss ... 0 1 0
Crowle, Mrs. ... 0 1 0
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Dorman, Miss A. L. P. ... 0 10 6
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Hayes, Miss ... 0 1 0
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Neill, Mrs. M. F. B. ... 5 0 0
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O'Sullivan, Miss K. ... 0 10 0
Welsh, Miss S. ... 0 2 6

£17 8 0

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## FRATERNITY.

Of all the terms in common use Fraternity seems to me to have the greatest hopes and the best results vested in it.

Reconstruction is far and away the most popular, and with Mesopotamia would make quite the finest twins, inasmuch as both can be used as pieces of by-play to ward off serious effort or thought. But the term I have chosen has such a far-reaching significance, is so well-founded, and at the same time precedes by its nature all else in the world of real progress, and being understood clearly will tend to the greatest utility in the work of to-day.

Its true significance can be grasped in the word brotherhood, or even better as the dictionary says: "The state of quality of a brother." In attaching it to individual societies or groups of people we limit its power, whereas my purpose is to exhibit it rather in the light of a great spirit that can overshadow all societies that have for their objects the uplifting of humanity. Societies or individuals for that matter, whose existence is for their own glory, or possibly a fad, are of little use in this age. It is far too frequently to be heard that this, that, or the other society is but a clique, or very select, and such can have no fraternity. They seem to resemble a sort of lunatic who would be self-confined and self guarded.

A family, which is the true society, possesses in its members varying degrees and accomplishments, but each have equally the state or quality of a brother and contribute to the general wellbeing. And what is true of this in an ordinary family, can, and should be translated to our several societies if we would accomplish much in the way of progress.

Catholics in particular are defined in the Gospel as being "the salt of the earth," and our claim is that no lasting reform or advance can be secured without the true religion. Hence true religion places before us the simple truth, in terms of salt, of our Sonship and Brotherhood, with their correlative obligations. That these duties are often overlooked needs no illustration from me, and that our power as salt is thereby weakened. And my suggestions to Catholics and Catholic societies is that they should show as far as they possibly can that they are the true representatives of brotherhood, and the plan for so

doing lies in their abilities to give and take. It will not be possible to do either unless, like the relations of a family, they are on intimate terms with each other, in a word they must get to know each other's aspirations, ideals, and objects, not in an outside sort of way but by close internal contact. The great cause of the weakness amongst societies in general is a certain conservatism and a want of knowledge of the activities of other people. Let me illustrate by the example of the Catholic Federation receiving speakers and delegates from other societies, and not only Catholic. Imagine the meeting of The Herald League and the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society, where in open discussion, each point of view could be seen on a social question; or The Catholic Social Guild meeting the British Socialist Party of Great Britain to dissect Socialism, and many other illustrations could be given where the Fraternal contact would be to the mutual advantage of all parties. In a word, the meeting together of United Societies on public matters and full and frank discussion by all would go a long way towards solving the difficulties that surround the lives of us to-day. In the unity of our forces, flagrant and public evils would be the more easily attacked, and we should discover each in the other the special qualifications that make a society to be the distinctive worker in any field. The fear of the one absorbing the other need not exist, provided that the members were imbued with the spirit of Brotherhood. One of the best illustrations that I can submit to the reader of the idea in any semblance of working order is that of The Catholic Reading Guild in its Central Library, at 17, Red Lion Passage, where you can meet members and representatives of many societies. The Secular Society, Fellowship of Reconciliation, The Herald League, Dr. Orchard's Free Catholic movement, Women's Political Societies, Catholic Social Guild students' Federationists, Ransomers, and others too numerous to mention, and the conversations that ensue leads one to the firm conviction that because of the contact, the C.R. Guild becomes a sort of channel through which the spirit of Fraternity is enabled to operate with all who have in view the great good. In a similar way I suggest that Catholic Societies could meet each other, and

even Non-Catholic bodies, not only as individuals but in groups for discussion and Fraternal contact. There must always remain, as in the family, individual inequality, but is it to the real advantage of two-pence that he should look down on three-halfpence and does two-pence minimise three half-pence just because he looks down on it. Many are so fearful of what they call over-lapping or of appearing to touch something outside their own scope, and it is my firm opinion that so soon as the several societies come more closely into contact with one another and clearly see the work of each, so much the quicker they will become the effective salt, and the foundations of real progress be cemented in the state of brotherhood. GEO. E. J. COLDWELL.

## Correspondence.

To the Editor:

May I draw your attention to an article in the "Shield," entitled "Prostitution not a Legal Offence."

You will note that proposals are being made in this country, and elsewhere, to make the sale or purchase of promiscuous sex-relations in itself a criminal offence. This Association, founded by Josephine Butler in 1870 and with 50 years practical study of law in relation to prostitution, desires publicly to disassociate itself from this propaganda for the reasons given in the article referred to above.

I may briefly summarise these reasons as follows:—

- (1) The personal sex-relations of adult people are a matter for their own conscience, and ought not to constitute a legal offence unless they involve other conduct of a criminal nature.
- (2) It would be unfair to proceed only against men and women concerned in cash sale and purchase. Logically, all extra-legal sex-relationships should be liable, as practically all are paid for in some way or other. This would be impracticable, and even if practicable an unwarranted interference with private affairs, leading to the maintenance of an army of spies and informers.
- (3) Venereal disease is engendered and spread quite as much in unpaid sex-relations as in those with professionally immoral women.

- (4) A law which, if it could be enforced, would turn a very considerable proportion of the adult population into criminals would not be supported by public opinion, and would therefore lead to every kind of bribery, corruption of the police, and unfair discrimination.
- (5) The offence of sale or purchase would be incapable of proof in most cases except by the use of "agents provocateurs." If purchase could not be proved against men the law would tend to be worked by attacking women alleged to be immoral on the assumption of sale having taken place. This merely extends and perpetuates the present one-sided and useless method of dealing with prostitution.
- (6) The better way is to convince the majority of men and women that continence is possible for both sexes and must be striven for when that is the only honourable course; that trading in sex is equally wrong and anti-social for both sexes, and that the "prostitute" and her partner stand on an equal level in the eyes of all good citizens.

Until these fundamental principles are much more generally accepted, this Association is of opinion that to make prostitution in itself illegal would not only be futile, but would tend to bring the law into contempt.

Yours faithfully,

ALISON NEILANS, Secretary.

Continued from Page 71

For "Catholic Citizen."

de Alberti, Miss A. ... ..	0 10 0
Dorman, Miss A. L. P. ... ..	0 10 6
Kempthorne Bennett, Mrs. ...	0 2 6
	£1 3 0

Through the generosity of the above members, I have been able to make up last month's deficit and to provide for the Society's needs for another four weeks. I would remind those who have not yet responded to my urgent appeal, that £12 at least must be forthcoming each month to meet the barest expenses, and that the work cannot be extended unless this sum is considerably increased.

GABRIELLE JEFFERY.

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WILL HOLD

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 „ 15th—Miss **LIND-AF-HAGEBY**: "The Re-valuation of Women."  
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