

THE

# Catholic Citizen

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

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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.

## Transition in Malta

By MABEL STRICKLAND.

Woman is ever a woman the world over and the women of Malta are no exception, subject however, like all others, to the effects of their environment and the limitations of their opportunities.

And what has been their historic environment? That of the women of an island people who between the stresses of wars and foreign occupations of the island—until Malta's voluntary entry into the British Empire in 1800, and of the seafaring adventures of their menfolk, asked for nothing better than the peace and safety of their homes—homes in which the woman is the rightful centre, homes which they dominate and order with efficiency and happiness in peace, and with courage and skill in war. Unchallenged and trusted by their menfolk, the Maltese woman in all classes handles the finance of the home; and in the working classes is the recipient of her husband's, sons' and daughters' wages, if the women work, until the latter marry, and even then an allowance to the family is made. Nevertheless, the law of Malta disallows any married women entering into a contract without the assistance and consent of their husbands, and exacts their husbands' signature on any deed or transfer of property. It was as late as 1937 that the law was amended to allow married women to have separate banking accounts.

Among the peasantry and tradesfolk the women work side by side with their menfolk in the field or in the shops, while in the home they discipline their daughters and spoil their sons, too often to the detriment of the male who remains tied to his mother's apron strings until he marries, exchanging one servitude for another. Families are large so it is the younger sons who suffer most, if suffering it be.

"How would your wife vote if she had one?" I asked an artisan. "Same as me," he replied, "but my son, he would vote as she told him and my daughter as she felt inclined." That reply, I think, sums up the position on the eve of the women's political emancipation in Malta.

It is an emancipation that the oldest generation of both men and women resist. Those who were themselves young in World War One, and who shared in the commencement of women taking up any employment outside the immediate sphere of the family circle other than that of domestic service and of school teachers, are in sympathy with it, for during World War Two they are themselves employed in large numbers, along with the rising genera-

tion. It is an emancipation that the young generation demands, and in fact enjoys and means to establish and maintain, within reasonable spheres and in accordance with Catholic teaching.

Men were conscripted, the cost of living rose and women had both the need and opportunity to work. Women in greater numbers became hospital nurses and V.A.Ds., telephone operators and cyphereens, clerks and cooks by the hundred in the government communal kitchens, and they hold responsible posts in private businesses. Lastly, they are employed in the dockyard, as cleaners, messengers, sailmakers, etc. With all this, hundreds have married men from the United Kingdom and Dominions and many have taken up their homes in England, for the younger English-speaking Maltese woman is eager to go overseas at the first opportunity.

The Royal University of Malta has had an influx of women students and there are five practising Maltese women doctors.

And this you learn from the libelled past, though its methods were somewhat rude,

A nation's born where the shells fall fast, or its lease of life renewed,

And the better part of a people's life in the storm comes uppermost.\*

Malta's men and women have to face the post-war period and the women have invaded the labour market and are loth to retire. Many are asking, "When the evil of war is over, must the Maltese woman go back into a life of looker-on, a burden to the male members of her family, instead of enjoying the right of planning life and living it?" The women feel they have a right to a fuller share in the nation's life than heretofore. Their brothers are of the same opinion, so Malta has reached a transition stage. The clock cannot go back. Intelligent women, and they are many, have formed themselves into the Women of Malta Association, and are asking for the franchise along with the men when Malta next enjoys self-government. The grant of the vote can do no harm. It can do much good, and even the most reactionary of Malta's men do not desire to see, when they themselves are emancipated, their women folk classed as politically inferior to the other races of the world, for they know that Maltese women have all the political acumen and qualities they themselves possess.

\* Henry Lawson.

## Notes and Comments.

The following telegram was sent to H.R.H. Princess Elizabeth on her birthday: "St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance sends loyal greetings and prayers for many years of happiness, peace and prosperity."

We congratulate our member, Don Luigi Sturzo, on his golden jubilee in the priesthood.

The following occurs in the report for the year ending Michaelmas 1943 of the Oxford and Cambridge Catholic Education Board and in the section which deals with Oxford:

"As this is the first report to be issued since the admission of women into the Chaplaincy it may be of interest to note that the change has taken place quite simply and easily. The women, as was natural, were at first slow to make use of their privileges, but gradually they have come to take their normal share in the life both religious and social of the combined Chaplaincy. The result has been to establish the Chaplaincy on a far more all-embracing basis and to quicken not merely the social activities but the study activities as well. Everything has worked harmoniously and happily."

It is very heartening that the enlightened policy adopted by Oxford has proved its worth and that the "insuperable difficulties," by which this policy had been delayed for many years, have yielded to the chaplain's careful handling. We hope that our second senior university will be encouraged to face these difficulties, which in Oxford have not proved insuperable.

The Ministry of Labour has announced that "young mobile women" may enter private domestic service, in preference to the Auxiliary Services or employment in a factory, (a) if the need for them be urgent, (b) if no older and immobile woman be available to supply it. They will not be directed to private households as they are to hospitals and other institutions, but they may, if they choose, go to work in a private family judged to be suffering hardship because it lacks domestic help. In four weeks ending about the beginning of April, 1,371 households were supplied with servants on these terms by the Ministry. The principle that housework can be national service has thus been conceded.

What a change is here! Fourteen years ago the Canal Boats Bill was talked out in the House of Commons, and "the kind busybodies," to quote our issue for June 1930, "who are ever anxious to protect women by turning them out of work, were responsible for a clause which prohibited women from living on refuse boats." We recall a lively meeting in the House, organized by the O.D.C., at which women barges voiced their own protest against such attempt to "protect" them. They were supported by our and other feminist societies, and Miss Rathbone would have moved an amendment to the objectionable clause had it been reached, as it was not. Now the government is calling out for women volunteers to be trained to man boats on the canals. On the Grand Union Canal women are already manning the boats which carry coal from Warwickshire to London, and steel, aluminium and copper back from London to Birmingham. And they are enjoying the job for all that it is "very dirty, very hard and very continuous."

Congratulations to our member, Miss Margaret Shattock, now B.A., B.M., B.Ch.!

## NATIONALITY OF MARRIED WOMEN.

In our issue for April, 1943, we reported a statement on behalf of the Home Secretary that he would be "anxious" to take, in consultation with the Dominions Secretary, "any opportunity that may occur for further consultation with the Dominions" on the subject of the nationality of British women married to aliens, and that he would be "on the lookout for any suitable occasion of seeking a way round the difficulties."

We are therefore at a loss to understand the following recent proceedings in Parliament:

On April 25th, Commander King-Hall asked the Prime Minister whether he would ensure that the disabilities under which British married women suffered under the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Acts would be given consideration at the forthcoming conference of Dominion Premiers. Mr. Graham White asked the Prime Minister if it was his intention to ascertain the views of the Prime Ministers of the Dominions on the subject of the nationality of married women during the forthcoming Dominion Conference.

Mr. Attlee.—"The forthcoming meeting is a personal meeting of Prime Ministers for discussion of broad issues of policy arising out of the war. I do not think that the question which my hon. friends have in mind could appropriately be discussed."

Mr. Pethick-Lawrence said that the right hon. gentleman would no doubt realise that this question could not be left indefinitely in cold storage. Could he give an assurance that at least the Prime Ministers would be asked to discuss this matter in their respective Dominions with a view to a discussion being held at their next joint meeting? Mr. Attlee said he would like to consider that point. It was rather a different matter.

On April 27th, in reply to Mrs. Cazalet Keir, the Home Secretary stated that "in the year ended March 31st, 3,564 British women had registered with the police under the Aliens Order after marriage to aliens of Allied nationality."

The Nationality of Married Women Committee, of which St. Joan's is a constituent society and Miss Barry the acting honorary secretary, has sent a memorandum to Mr. Churchill and the Dominion Premiers with a request that this question of great urgency for women citizens of the Empire in war, and after war conditions, will receive consideration at the forthcoming meeting of Dominion Premiers.

On April 27th, Colonel Deneys Reitz, High Commissioner for the Union of South Africa, received a deputation from the British Commonwealth League of which St. Joan's is a constituent organization. He expressed himself as personally in favour of a woman having the right to retain her nationality on marriage with an alien. He thought it was unfair and illogical to force a woman to take her husband's nationality. Anomalies had occurred in South Africa where South African women married to Germans had to be regarded as enemy subjects, while German women married to South Africans or to British husbands were regarded legally as British or South Africans. Colonel Reitz hoped that Empire uniformity would in the end be found possible, but in the meanwhile he was of opinion that if Great Britain took the lead the Dominions would follow in due course.

We ask for prayers for our member, Canon William Finucane, of Menevia, who died at Brecon on 27th March.—R.I.P.

## Saint Joan of Arc.

BURNT AT THE STAKE 30th MAY, 1431.

It is a remarkable fact that Saint Joan's mission to raise the siege of Orleans and reunite France was not merely the result of her own originality, initiative and enterprise, but was actually ordered by God, acting through the counsels of her heavenly Voices, Saints Michael, Catherine and Margaret. Saint Joan acted under obedience to divine commands. That is to say, we do not merely look backwards to her through history, as we do to the reforms achieved by Florence Nightingale, in which Providence clearly blessed the unusual career and work of a great woman. Saint Joan was singled out and personally commanded, above all contemporary men and women, to perform her colossal task, and thus for ever placed equality of soul between the sexes beyond dispute, in accordance with the teaching of the Church.

Saint Joan was definitely not a saint of the gentle and submissive type, anxious for penance, self-sacrifice and obscurity above all else. Such a character, however holy, would have been utterly unsuitable for the gigantic task allotted to her.

As a child she appears to have been indulged by her parents and family, and in spite of dire threats of whipping or drowning by her father, when she desired to see the king, there is no record of the mildest kind of punishment having been inflicted on her at home, either then or earlier. She apparently ruled the village endearingly as she ruled her own family. She was accustomed to order the bell-ringer about affectionately that he might remember to ring the bells for the offices of the church. Thus she obtained good practice for

ordering about the king, the court, the generals, the army, and finally—for a period—all fighting France.

She is one of the rare saints on record who is not known to have performed corporal penance of any kind. She was brave and adventurous, but she frankly feared physical pain. She was of the joyful disposition that naturally arises from an almost perfectly balanced mind and a splendidly healthy body. Indeed, her wonderful balance of character is probably her outstanding quality, which sets her apart from almost all other men and women, saints, geniuses or others. She was radiantly happy as a child, deriving the utmost pleasure from helping her mother in the little brown house at Domrémy, playing in the fields, dancing with her friends round the "fairy tree." She loved gay clothes and colours, and enjoyed the novelty of her brief stay at court. She was not shy of the praise lavished on her at her triumphant entry to Orleans. She was deeply stirred by the glorious scene of the king's coronation in Rheims Cathedral. Although she detested the thought of actual killing, she took a soldier's delight in the more comradely and cheerful aspects of warfare.

Her final penance and period of intensive suffering were beyond all that she would ever have aspired to endure. Her answers before her judges confounded the latter at every turn by their wisdom. After her betrayal by her countrymen, whom she had so loyally served unto death, her hour of passion—in her burning at the stake, sealed her for ever as a foremost disciple of Christ Crucified, and as that true daughter of God she ever claimed to be.

MARY DRESSER JEEVES.

## The Africans' Champion.

We offer our hearty congratulations to Father A. Burbridge of South Rhodesia on the celebration of his Golden Jubilee in the Society of Jesus. We recall with pleasure his visit to our office, when last home on leave, and the encouragement he gave us in our work for African women. Only last month we received a letter from him congratulating us on the criticism in the *Catholic Citizen* of the Beveridge Report, as it affects women, and enclosing two new subscriptions to the paper. In his letter Father Burbridge says he cannot understand the illogical attitude of those who oppose the principle of equal pay. On his resignation from the Salisbury and District Native Welfare Society, the Society appointed Father Burbridge a Life Vice-President and in their letter of appreciation told him that the Secretary of Native Affairs associated himself with their chairman's statement in praise of Father Burbridge's "great contribution to native welfare." Father Burbridge also did much for native education, more especially for the language question.

Bishop Chichester, in writing to the *Missionary Magazine* of the English Jesuit Missionaries, endorsed these tributes and added an appreciation of Father Burbridge's long years of solid, lasting work on behalf of the raising of the status of Africans and his successful efforts in improving economic and moral conditions at the Location in Salisbury. Father Burbridge enabled Africans throughout the colony, said Bishop Chichester, to "contract marriage in a manner acceptable to both Church and State, and he expounded and defended, before competent and responsible officials, the rights of the native in the light of sound economics and religion." *Ad multos annos!*

## REVIEW.

*La Femme et Sa Mission*, par M. Donnay, Dr. P. Merle, P-H Simon, Yvonne Estienne, R. P. Lavaud, Daniel Rops. "Présences." Plon, Paris.

To the English reader, being, as we are, in the midst of war, with all its urgent claims on women's participation, this will seem an odd moment for solemnly discussing the place of woman in the "new humanism" and what she may be expected to contribute. Yet this is precisely what our French friends have done in the volume before us.

Père Lavaud, O.P., contributes a learned theological treatise on woman throughout the ages, pointing out how the rigid interpretations of Catholic doctrine beloved by Tertullian and others were, bit by bit, toned down by Augustine and onwards to Bossuet. He admits that it has often been the tyranny of man that has provoked the revolt of woman, but he clearly fears that the last state of the emancipated woman will be worse than her first. It is, however, a sign of grace in him that he concludes his very solid chapter with the poetic lines that have figured so happily from the first on our front page.

Yvonne Estienne, the only woman in the team, clings closely to Catholic and Latin tradition, and although she supplies an instructive account of the work of the "Assistances Sociales" and others, trained workers who do much of what we call social service, she insists that it must be accomplished as a special vocation of love and not in any sense as a liberation for women to choose a career for themselves. Of the remaining writers P-H. Simon is at once the most readable and the most sympathetic to his subject, while Dr. Merle does at least frankly favour the higher education of women. But one closes this serious controversial volume with the conviction that it ought really to have been addressed to our grandparents.

V.M.C.

## POLICEWOMEN.

A crowded Conference of National Organisations on *The Need for More Women Police*, at which the Archbishop of Canterbury was the chief speaker, resolved to ask the Home Secretary to make the appointment of policewomen compulsory for defined duties and to appoint a woman Assistant Inspector of Constabulary. Miss Margaret Bondfield, from the chair, outlined the history of the campaign and deplored the fact that policewomen did not receive equal pay with policemen. St. Joan's Alliance was represented at the conference which was initiated by the N.C.W.

Subsequently, and in answer to a question in the House of Commons by Sir L. Lyle, Mr. Morrison said on April 19th:

"The action I have taken has not been by a hard and fast Order, but . . . I have called the attention of police authorities to the need for an adequate number of policewomen in those parts of the country where large numbers of troops are concentrated. Experience has shown that much valuable work can be done by policewomen in checking misbehaviour and exercising a restraining influence, and while . . . we must in the main rely on other agencies than the police for the inculcation of standards of conduct, this is not the reason for omission on the part of any police authority to appoint policewomen to deal with those aspects of the problem created by war conditions with which the police can properly concern themselves."

We note with satisfaction that under Sir Percy Sillitoe, Chief Constable for the Kent Combined Constabulary, the Kent force is to have one woman inspector, two women sergeants and twenty women police, and that women recruits are to be provided with more becoming uniforms and with shoes instead of heavy police boots.

## DISCUSSION MEETING.

**The Nationality of Married Women** was the subject of our April meeting, held on the 26th, at the Interval Club under the chairmanship of Miss Graham.

Mrs. Hartree, chairman of the Nationality of Married Women Committee, showed that the government has done nothing to implement its declaration in 1931 that "all disabilities of married women in matters of nationality should be removed," the excuse being the necessity for uniformity throughout the Empire. The Countess de Kerdrel, a British woman with two sons and one daughter in the British forces, who married a Frenchman in 1914, gave concrete instances of the hardships consequent on loss of nationality, especially during the two World Wars. During this one she has been fined for failing to register as an alien. Mrs. Rischbieth, of the Australian League of Women Voters, spoke of the Australian and New Zealand laws which enable British women, who by reason of their marriage to an alien, have acquired their husband's nationality, to retain, while in these Dominions, "all political and other rights, powers and privileges and be subject to all obligations and liabilities to which a natural British-born subject is entitled or subject." But this in no way affects her nationality outside these Dominions; she has no right to a British passport nor to the protection of the British diplomatic and consular services abroad.

Miss Daisy Solomon, chairman of the British Commonwealth League and an old campaigner for Woman Suffrage, spoke of her own country, South Africa, which, unlike Great Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, has not ratified the Hague Convention of 1930, under which the British-born wife of an alien retains her own nationality unless she acquires her husband's by the law

of his country. Miss Barry alluded to the Eire Act of 1935 under which Irish nationality is unaffected by marriage except that the naturalization of the alien spouse of an Irish citizen ordinarily resident in Eire is facilitated.

The following resolution was moved from the chair and carried unanimously:—"This meeting of St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance calls upon the Government so to amend the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act that a British woman, on marriage with an alien, shall have the same right as a man, to retain or change her nationality. It urges the Dominion Governments to concur in such amendment and to bring in parallel legislation in their own states. It further calls upon the Government to ensure that this matter be discussed at the forthcoming meeting of Dominion Premiers."

**Come at 6.45 on Wednesday, May the 24th, to the Interval Club, to hear Miss Dorothy Crook, of the U.S.A. Office of War Information, on "Equal Work = Equal Pay in the U.S.A." Miss Challoner in the chair.**

A meeting was held at St. Joseph's Schools on May 4th of the Highgate Branch of the Union of Catholic Mothers, with Mrs. McFadyen in the Chair. Miss E. Fitzgerald spoke on "The Rate for the Job," and there was a lively discussion.

## TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO.

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

"The Government, it appears, then, will not as yet re-open the Franchise Question, but we remind our readers that Governments, whether this or another, are apt to change their minds in response to public opinion and popular pressure. In the opinion of the people we have a foolish Franchise Bill—why not change it?—Leonora de Alberti in "Equal Citizenship."

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