

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.

THE FEMINIST GOAL IN POLITICS.

BY VERA S. LAUGHTON, M.B.E.

Feminism a few years ago was a comparatively straightforward easy doctrine; the movement centred round the struggle for the vote, and though some cared more than others, there was unity of aim; everyone knew where everyone else stood and mentally it was plain sailing. Things have moved rapidly during recent years, and it behoves one now to take a look round, to see where we are making for and what is the ultimate aim of the feminist movement.

Even a cursory glance will show that all who call themselves feminists are no longer united in aim, though some are as yet unconscious of the fact. Feminists of to-day seem to be divided roughly into two classes; one looks on women as beings whose advent into politics is invaluable owing to the introduction of a different point of view, an expert and special knowledge of one side of human life, and feels that without women the Government of the country must be lop-sided. The other believes that the barriers which have in the past divided men's and women's activities, restraining women's energies and turning them all into one channel, are artificial; that human beings are not endowed with brains, foresight, vision, according to sex; that women's gifts and capabilities are equal to those of men though in many cases not yet fully developed, and that so long as woman's voice is not heard in the counsels of nations, whatever be the matter under discussion, it is unlikely that the best brains are representing the country.

Here then are the two points of view, and strangely enough those who think that women should concern themselves first and foremost with what are called women's questions (which generally include children's questions, though why women and children should always be bracketed together is not clear) consider themselves the most advanced feminists. They call enthusiastically on women to hold together, to stand as women's candidates, or candidates of a women's organisation, oblivious of the fact that they are only claiming a crumb of the political loaf, when the chance has come for them to take a slice out of the middle. As a matter of fact, the future position of women in politics is being endangered by this very type of feminist, which thinks itself extreme but in reality only goes half-way.

Firstly from the practical point of view, it is to all intents and purposes, impossible for a woman standing only as a woman's candidate to be elected to Parliament. In any election the number of electors who go to a meeting or actually hear the candidate is very small compared with the total number of electors. If a candidate is labelled by one of the well-known party labels, it is known to a certain extent in what direction his views run, and the average apathetic, or busy, elector can be moderately sure of his man (or woman). A candidate who is labelled "Independent" frightens the elector who has not time or inclination to delve deeply into each candidate's individual views on every sub-

ject—he may, in private life, uphold independence of spirit and run down the party machine, but he votes where he feels safer. And that any woman, standing not only as an “Independent” but definitely as a woman’s candidate, should be returned to Parliament, is hardly feasible. Not only that, it is not desirable. Quite apart from the question of practical politics, there is the much greater question of living up to true feminist ideals. It is only accentuating the old evil to emphasise continually the difference between men and women, and the separation of their interests. They have been kept separate quite long enough; and surely if these so-called feminists have their way, there is a danger of building up a new barrier which will in turn have to be cast down before the fair field of equal opportunity is reached.

Of course we shall be told that this is only a temporary state of affairs, that as long as inequality exists, and unjust laws remain, so long is there bound to be a special woman’s point of view. This is certainly true, but as a political policy it shows no foresight or vision for the future. For women, in limited numbers, are already right inside political life, they are actually now in the House of Commons, and it is essential that they should start on a correct footing. If it is once accepted, and the gentlemen who are our legislators will be only too willing to fall in with such a plan, that women should be relegated to “women’s subjects,” to domestic and social legislation, then in a few years’ time, when there is no longer an “equality” programme, women will wake up to their mistake. Then there will be a renewal of the old struggle before they are able to progress further, and the last state will be no better than the first.

If women in politics are content to deal only with social affairs they will very soon find that they are bound hand and foot. For excepting for the legal sex inequalities which are rapidly growing less, social conditions are largely the result of wider issues, and social legislation depends on many outside causes. For instance, much of the misery, unemployment, and bad conditions at the present time, is a direct outcome of the war, furthermore any social legislation requiring the expenditure of large sums of money is

definitely put on one side because the financial state of the country cannot support it. It would appear therefore that women who are deeply concerned with such schemes as Widows’ Pensions, or Family Endowment, would more greatly benefit the causes which they have at heart, by making their influence felt in questions of foreign policy, trade, finance, and national prosperity, rather than by concentrating entirely on dependent subjects.

Now is the time, when women are still new to Parliamentary affairs, to take up the stand which will ensure a proper status in the future. By entering the big political parties and obtaining a footing inside, they can compete with men on their own ground, and having proved themselves, as all newcomers in politics must do, they can proceed to greater responsibilities and positions of power. Not only that, it is from the inside that the parties can be reformed, and no one will dispute that reform of some kind is necessary.

The position is very different now from the days when voteless women, behind the barred doors of political life, eschewed all parties, and banded together in the battle for freedom. The doors are open now, and the feminist torch must be carried through and placed, not so as to brighten only one corner, but on high, where it will shine on every department of public life, and will throw new light on many dark spots in national and international affairs.

Woman’s Freedom League

The Woman’s Freedom League gave a dinner on September 25th in honour of Mrs. Smith, M.P. for British Columbia, the only British woman Cabinet Minister, and of Mrs. Hilton Phillipson, M.P., for Berwick-on-Tweed. Members of the Executive Committee of the C.W.S.S. were present. Dr. Knight was in the chair. Mrs. Smith, who received a great ovation, said she had learnt to be a suffragist at her grandmother’s knee. When she stood for Parliament in British Columbia, she was opposed by two ex-Service men, but secured a majority of four thousand votes because her programme appealed to the electors. It included a minimum wage for

(Continued on page 79.)

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

Our editorial this month deals with the attack on the International Women’s Suffrage Alliance, made by the International Catholic Women’s Leagues. There is one thing in the Manifesto of the I.C.W.L. which pleases us. The President takes for granted that the members of all her affiliated societies are partisans of woman suffrage, now that their fears have been allayed by Catholic writers. Perhaps it is permitted to hope that the I.C.W.L. will now take part in winning the vote in Catholic countries. So far they have left the work of winning the vote to others.

We are glad that the Suffrage Congress at Rome has drawn from the President of the I.C.W.L. the acknowledgment that the enfranchisement of women is an excellent thing.

We offer our cordial congratulations to the Reverend Dom Gilbert Higgins, C.R.L., who celebrated his golden jubilee in the priesthood on October 5th. Dom Gilbert Higgins is an associate of the C.W.S.S.

Women will have noted with deep interest the appeal of the Chinese delegate to the League of Nations for the abolition of maisons tolérées in all countries. France again blocked the way, Senator Raynald maintained that this was a question for every State to decide for itself.

On the same occasion Dame Edith Lyttelton made an eloquent appeal for the continuation of the good work the League is doing for the repression of the White Slave Traffic, and urged particularly the extension of the women police service in the different Countries.

The Assembly discussed at length the question of intellectual co-operation, Dame Edith Lyttelton being primarily responsible for the resolution urging all Governments to take steps to ensure that children should “be made aware of the existence and of the aims of the League of Nations and the terms of its covenant.”

The Annual Conference of the National Council of Women will be held in Edinburgh from October 16th to 22nd. The resolutions to be debated deal chiefly with “the call of the children.” Mrs. H. More Nisbett will

represent the C.W.S.S. and will move a resolution urging the Government to adopt and pass into Law the Guardianship Maintenance and Custody of Infants Bill. Other resolutions deal with Child Assault, Affiliation Orders, Women Police, Pensions for Fatherless Children, Employment of Children and Young Persons, etc.

Through the efforts of Mr. Frank Gray, M.P. for Oxford, an amendment has been added to the Representation of the People Act, by which the wives of University dons have been enfranchised.

We ask the prayers of our readers for the repose of the soul of our associate, Monsignor Canon Stuart. Canon Stuart took a deep interest in our Edinburgh Branch, was ever ready to take the Chair at public meetings, to give advice on local movements, to lend the Cathedral Hall. His death is a great loss to the C.W.S.S.—R.I.P.

By the death of Mrs. Hertha Ayrton feminism loses another distinguished advocate. Mrs. Ayrton was the first woman to be awarded a medal by the Royal Society for her scientific research, and in 1915 she invented an anti-gas fan, which was used with success during the war. Her death is a loss to science as well as to the woman’s movement. R.I.P.

We hope that all members within reach of London, will come to the Extraordinary General Meeting to be held at the Caxton Hall, on October 20th, 3 p.m., to decide on the Society’s new name.

(Continued from page 78.)

girls and women, pensions for mothers, legal adoption for children, equal guardianship, etc., all of which proposals had passed into law.

Mrs. Phillipson made a charming speech in which she expressed her belief that the best work would be done by men and women together. She would be pleased to see anyone at the House, and hear their views. The W.F.A. is to be congratulated on this most successful evening.

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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OUR REPLY TO THE INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUES.

In June last the President of the International Catholic Women's Leagues issued a manifesto condemning the programme of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, and calling upon Catholic societies in all countries to protest against the resolutions adopted at the Rome Congress last May.

The I.W.S.A., at the request of some of its Catholic members (of whom there are many in different lands) wrote for an explanation of this manifesto. We have now received from the Alliance a copy of the President's answer, which we propose to examine.

The President says, in the first place, that she is aware that the Alliance does not pronounce directly against the indissolubility of marriage, but she alleges that nevertheless several of the national societies, in their respective countries, have initiated a campaign in favour of divorce.

This first charge need not detain us. It would be as reasonable to warn Catholics against the League of Nations, because all the States Members of it do not accept Christian ethics. We may remind our readers that the I.W.S.A. has publicly declared, "that divorce has never formed an item on the programme of the Alliance, or been discussed at its Congresses. With so many Catholic members it is of the greatest importance to the Alliance, that no misunderstanding should arise on this point."

But the letter goes on to say, that the protest applies to all resolutions:

(1) "Which isolate woman in an egoism con-

trary to her nature, and induce her to neglect the duties of wife and mother;

(2) Resolutions concerning sexual education, women's work, etc., which take no account of the principles and teaching of the Catholic Church."

To take the question of sex-education first, that is the instruction of children in the knowledge of the meaning and sacredness of sex, it may be as well to quote the resolution in which the President of the I.C.W.A. can find no trace of Catholic principles. It is as follows:

"Considering the harm that has come to the human race through irresponsibility in sex relations, through ignorance of the gravity of venereal diseases and through the absence of a high standard of morality accepted as necessary and possible to both sexes:

The Congress resolves that in all countries instruction, both moral and biological, should be given to teachers of all grades and by them transmitted to all adolescents of both sexes, in a manner both idealistic and sufficiently precise to enable them to understand the duty and necessity of chastity. It is the absolute duty of educators, whether parents or teachers in schools, not to maintain silence, but to give instruction to adolescents upon the terrible dangers which accompany the infractions of the moral law, as well as their responsibility towards the family and society. Their duty is not only to lay down the principles of morality, but to give the biological reasons for these principles."

In objecting to this resolution the President of the I.C.W.L. is confusing custom with principle. It is not customary among Catholic parents to give any instruction to children in matters of sex. Too often they are left to pick up the knowledge as best they can, and come to think that there is something shameful about a function that is sacred.

Young girls are still launched on the world with the haziest notions of the dangers they may encounter, parents and guardians trusting to their pure instincts and upbringing to shield them from danger; but how many come to grief from lack of knowledge?

If the President will make enquiries among her co-religionists she will find that there is an ever increasing body of Catholic opinion alive to the necessity of some instruction in sex being given to children. The danger of indiscriminate teaching was fully realised by the Rome Congress.

To turn to the resolution concerning women's work: we presume that the I.C.W.L. can raise no objection to all professions being open to women, or to equal pay for equal work, but that their protest concerns the clause which asks that 'no obstacle be placed in the way of married women who desire to work.' Anyone who is conversant with present social conditions knows full well that a very large percentage of married women are compelled to work. Nor is there any hard and fast rule in the Catholic Church which would preclude them from doing so. If there were it would be wrong to employ a married woman. Yet the most rigid member of the I.C.W.L. would not scruple to employ a married washerwoman, a married charwoman, a married dressmaker, nor would she consider it necessary to enquire whether the actress or singer who provides her with entertainment, is married or single.

As we understand it, the teaching of the Catholic Church would be: that a woman who enters upon matrimony contracts certain duties towards husband, children and home, which she must not wilfully neglect. One woman, however, may find that she can better fulfil her duty by working outside her home, another by working at home. Every case must be judged on its merits. The I.C.W.L. accuses the Alliance of being individualistic, but in matters of private conscience such as

this, no one can be more individualistic than the Catholic Church.

The women assembled at the Rome Congress did not undervalue the importance of women's work in the home; on the contrary, they declared their belief: "that married women who are bringing up the children, who are the future citizens of the States, are doing work of as great importance to the community as those men and women who are producing material wealth, or giving remunerated services of hand or brain."

They declared: "that necessitous widows with dependent children should receive adequate pensions from the State or Municipalities for themselves and their children."

While holding that husband and wife should have complete control of their earnings, income, and property, the Congress declared: "that in view of her care of the home and children, a wife shall have a right to a certain portion of her husband's income" . . . "that where the husband refuses to allow his wife the share of his income to which she is entitled, the Court may order a certain proportion of his wages or other income to be paid to her direct."

The Congress further asked: "that the law which in many countries permits a husband to disinherit his wife and child for no cause shall be amended so that the wife and children shall have claim to a reasonable proportion of the husband's estate at death."

We deny most emphatically that the resolutions passed at the Rome Congress are calculated to destroy family life.

On reading the manifesto of the I.C.W.L. one is forced to the conclusion that the President and her advisers fully expected that a congress of women drawn from every quarter of the globe, and professing every known creed, must necessarily pass resolutions contrary to Catholic principles; and in that expectation have misinterpreted both the resolutions adopted at the Rome Congress, and the aims and ideals of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance.

L. DE ALBERTI.

Five women have been elected to the new Irish Dail, but as four are Republicans it is probable that they will not take their seats.

International Notes.

Under the title Bureau d'Etudes et d'Informations Féminines, the Action Populaire, once of Reims, but now domiciled in Paris, has resolved to bring out a quarterly publication giving news of feminine activities in all countries. It will aim at providing "a centre of thought and of documentation." The first two numbers have reached us, admirably printed and edited; they are full of varied information concerning all social, educational and economic movements that affect women. We are particularly glad to note the friendly references to Suffrage matters.

* * * *

Mme. Avril de Sainte-Croix testifies (in *La Française*) to the splendid work, educational philanthropic and social, achieved in recent years by the women of Greece. One very rich woman, Mme. Syngros, has shewn an enlightened patriotism by devoting a portion of her fortune to founding and supporting in Athens a hospital for the treatment of Venereal disease, equipped with every modern appliance. During the exceptionally difficult times that the country has been passing through, a great deal of valuable preventive work has been done in regard to the White Slave traffic under the auspices of the National Council of Greek Women.

* * * *

The French Minister of Labour has recently given a very important decision in answer to an enquiry as to the legality of a condition of employment imposed by a well-known French firm, to the effect that every female employee is bound to give notice of her intended marriage and relinquish her work within a month of the notice given. The Minister has declared that such a condition is not only illegal in his opinion, but contrary to public interest and morality, and that he is prepared if necessary to amend the law in order to render such an abuse impossible. This is a very satisfactory decision.

* * * *

It seems that Mussolini has decreed that Italians who give up their nationality shall not be allowed to resume it. This has been done in order to render divorce more difficult, for it seems that at present Italians anxious to

divorce become naturalised in some country where divorce is legal and later apply to resume their Italian nationality.

* * * *

Nylaende (Christiania) continues full of international news, and must certainly keep Norwegian women well informed as to the women's movement throughout the world. Among recent features we note a translation of Mrs. Chapman Catt's travel-letters to the *Woman Citizen*, a memorial article on Mme. Bogelot, an account of the early Suffrage movement in the United States, the position of women at Cambridge University and so forth.

V.M.C.

Reviews

THE PLAYS OF ROSWITHA, translated by Christopher St. John, with an introduction by Cardinal Gasquet and a critical preface by the translator. (Chatto & Windus, 5s. net.)

Some of our readers will remember the lecture on the 10th century nun, Roswitha, given to the C.W.S.S. by Miss St. John in 1915, and will have been expecting the translation of these plays. The war delayed publication and the mss. was burnt at the publishers' premises in Dublin during the Irish insurrection of 1916. Miss St. John has earned our gratitude by redeeming her promise in spite of this catastrophe, and giving us in English the plays of this remarkable woman who, in her way, stands unrivalled. Roswitha shows an understanding of human passion and a charity for those who sin in the blindness of love that is amazing in one who had forsaken all earthly things at an early age, and chosen to seek divine love in the shelter of the cloister.

Roswitha tells us in the preface of her plays her reason for writing them. It was: "to glorify, within the limits of my poor talents, the laudable chastity of Christian virgins in the selfsame form of composition which has been used to describe the shameless acts of licentious women. One thing has all the same embarrassed me and often brought a blush to my cheek. It is that I have been compelled through the nature of this work to apply my

C.W.S.S. DINNER.

Mrs. Rischbeith, one of the Australian delegates at the Rome Congress was entertained to dinner by the Executive Committee on Monday, Sept. 10th at 37, Woburn Square (by kind permission of Miss Gorry).

Mrs. Rischbeith made a very interesting speech on the feminist position in Australia and showed the need for more co-operation between the different States. She gave an amusing description of the successful campaign of Australian women to get the Federal Government to appoint a woman delegate to the League of Nations.

Another guest was Mdle. Odette Simon, a French barrister-at-law, who gave an account of the work of women barristers and spoke of other professions into which Frenchwomen are now entering. She hoped that the example of other countries would soon induce France to grant women the franchise.

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I am glad to acknowledge £9 collected since last month towards the office rent, but still want £1 more to complete the amount, and there is nothing in hand for general expenses. Will every member please make a note of the date of our Xmas Sale, November 23rd and 24th. If each one would begin now to collect or make a few small contributions we should have a well-stocked stall wherewith to replenish our coffers.

G. JEFFERY.

mind and my pen to depicting the dreadful frenzy of those possessed of unlawful love, and the insidious sweetness of passion—things which should not even be named among us. Yet if from modesty I had refrained from treating these subjects I should not have been able to attain my object—to glorify the innocent to the best of my ability . . ." (p. xxvii.)

These beautiful and touching words show Roswitha as the true follower of the Friend of Publicans and Sinners, one who did not shut her eyes to the dark side of life but drew it in vivid colours that the sinner might hear and forsake the path of sin.

Miss St. John believes the plays were meant to be acted and has given us a translation that reads with ease and can be spoken. Those of us who remember the convincing simplicity of Paphnutius, when given by the Pioneer Players in 1914, will hope that some enterprising manager or company will give us the opportunity of seeing others of these plays acted.

LE DOCTEUR ODILE. By Docteur Marthe Bertheaume and Myriam Thelen. (Paris.)

This novel by two French Catholic feminists tells the story of a very modern young woman, whose professional duties as a doctor bring her into a perilous position in which professional honour and love come into conflict. Docteur Odile, whose Alsatian upbringing stands her in good stead, comes through the danger triumphantly, indeed heroically, and in sacrifice recovers the faith of her early years. The authors evade, with success, a banal ending, it would have been so easy to dispatch the woman, who stood in love's way. Interest in their story never flags, and incidentally one learns something of feminism in post-war France. Amongst other things, we learn that it has become démodé for mothers to accompany their daughters to dances. That is, perhaps, a small matter, but significant of many changes.

L. DE ALBERTI.

We offer hearty congratulations to Miss Margaret Bondfield on her unanimous election to the post of Chairman of the Trade Union Congress General Council. It is the first time a woman has held this position.

THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETY.

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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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WEEKLY LECTURES.

Wed., Oct. 17th—"The Crosby Hall Endowment Scheme." 8-15 p.m. . . . PROFESSOR WINIFRED CULLIS, O.B.E., D.Sc. Chairman, Miss SYBIL CAMPBELL.
Wed., Oct. 24th—"Some Famous Classical Stories." 8-15 p.m. . . . J. WELLS TEACHER (Barrister-at-Law) Chairman, Miss KATHLEEN FITZGERALD.
Wed., Oct. 31st—Announced later. 8-15 p.m.
Wed., Nov. 7th—"Shakespearian Recital." 8-15 p.m. Miss GRACE BUMPSTEAD
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Thursday, Oct. 18. Speaker, Mrs. JUSON KERR. Subject, "Tea and Sugar Boycott Scheme." Chairman, Mrs. Mustard.
Thursday, Nov. 8. Speaker, THE VISCOUNTESS RHONDDA, who will open a discussion on the "Domestic Service Enquiry." Chairman, Miss Elsie Morton, M.B.E.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Monday, Oct. 29, at 7 p.m., in Minerva Cafe, 144, High Holborn, W.C.1. Speaker, Mrs. NORTHROFT (who has just returned from Geneva). Subject, "Women at Work in the League of Nations." Chairman, Mrs. Dexter.
Friday, Nov. 2nd, at 8-15, at Minerva Club, Brunswick Square. Speaker to be announced later. Subject, "The Unemployment of Women."

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