

# Catholic Citizen

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

—Francis Thompson

## The New Woman

BY PROFESSOR MARY HAYDEN, M.A., D.Litt.

With "The New Woman" by Alice Curtayne I have become acquainted only in its printed form, and that quite recently. The lecture, of which this pamphlet is a reproduction, was delivered in the Theatre Royal, Dublin and was printed by the Anthonian Press (Dublin) last year. It was listened to by a crowded audience, and many distinguished gentlemen appeared on the platform. No woman, save the lecturer, found a place there.

In the last section of the booklet, the "Conclusion," a vivid picture is painted of the London office girl's life. "Next time you are in London," we read "stand any morning between eight and nine, say, at the foot of the escalator in Charing Cross Tube Station, and watch the army of girls hurrying from Suburbia into the City prisons that go by the name of offices. The dreadful similarity of these girls is the first thing that dismays the observer. The fact that their lives are regulated by the same sort of machine system has simply stamped out their individuality. They bound from the trains and dash into their pent houses . . . if they are so many minutes late, a corresponding number of pennies is deducted from their weekly pay cheque. You can imagine how long their vitality lasts when it is expended in this way." Regarding their later years it is recorded that they usually as "sad spinsters" foregather in some of the cheaper boarding houses "cursed with a loneliness that is worse than the curse of Cain."

There is, it must be confessed, some truth in this sketch, although its shades are darkened

and its lights dimmed. The office girl has her evening hours of leisure, her week-ends, her annual holiday, and these she enjoys with a zest little known to her less-employed sisters. In many cases she marries, if she finds a life-partner to her mind. Marriage is not the only alternative for her to semi-starvation or soul-killing dependence on charity, public or private. If she does marry, she usually proves a capable wife, for she brings the habits of order, the punctuality, the diligence, the thoroughness to which she has been trained into the management of her house and her children. Even if she remains single, she is not necessarily left without human ties and outside interests. Probably she has brothers and sisters, perhaps nephews and nieces. At all events, there are the poor, whom, as our Divine Master has said, "are always with us" and to whose service she can turn her thoughts. A large part of the charitable activities of lay organisations all over the world are carried on to a great extent by those "sad spinsters" of whom Miss Curtayne speaks. Most of these women cannot give money, but they do better—they give themselves, their leisure, their sympathy, their intelligence, to help their suffering fellow creatures. It is, I think, the experience of most people who organise what is called "social work" that their readiest and most reliable helpers are to be found, not amongst leisured women, married or single, but amongst workers who are willing, when their own hours of daily toil are over, to devote a portion of their free time to the sacred cause of charity.



But let it be agreed that, in spite of all these alleviations, the life of the woman office worker is, to a considerable extent, monotonous and devitalizing and that her old age may be dull and lonely. The question now arises, why did she embark on this career? Miss Curtayne seems to hold that she did so by deliberate choice; that, moved by a spirit of sex rivalry, "and in search of freedom and independence," she abandoned "the family rôle," thrust aside the needle and the frying pan (with the prospect of the wedding ring quite certainly in the future) grasped instead the attaché case and flung herself "into competition with man in public life." With this view I wholly disagree. Rather is it true, as Miss Grace Abbot the Government representative from the United States of America declared at a recent International Labour Conference, "women work for the same reasons as men . . . they must work to live." This *mutandis mutandis* applies as much to the office worker as it does to the women engaged in industrial occupations.

Certainly a fair number of the younger members of the attaché case brigade have for the present no absolute necessity to work. Their fathers—professional men, civil servants and the like, are still alive and able to maintain them in fair comfort. But the future must be considered. The time will come when the father is no longer there or is no longer a bread-winner. If his working life has been of average length, his home-keeping daughter will be, when he dies or retires, with a small pension or without one, at least 35 or 40 years of age, too old to be trained for any occupation likely to yield her a living wage. It is not probable that the father, especially if his family was a large one, has been able to lay aside sufficient capital to afford a decent income even for one daughter, and there may be several. If she has failed to marry, and opportunities of marriage do not come to all girls, what is she to do? Supposing she has no brothers or married sisters or rich relations to whom she may become a burden, probably to her own degradation and their disgust, she is likely to become one of the unfortunate elderly spinsters of whom we have all met specimens, looking for employment and willing to do anything but, alas, knowing how to do nothing except a little sketchy house-keeping. Alternatively, she often drifts to the charity "Home" or even to the workhouse, to await there until either death or the attainment of the age which will entitle

her to the modicum of State aid sufficient to rent a tenement room and live in it on a diet of bread, margarine and tea. Surely, even the cheap boarding house is better than this.

For the majority of office girls, however, the necessity to work is not a future but a present one. Their parents are unable to support them or, at any rate, to do so without an unreasonable curtailment of their own comforts. The daughters, when their education and their training is over, must begin to earn, either living at home and contributing to the family expenses or, if their home is distant from their place of work, settling themselves in boarding houses or in "digs."

Besides these self-supporting girls there are others, quite a large number, who have besides themselves, dependents to maintain. Some thirty years ago, the English Fabian Society sent a short questionnaire to a very large number of women workers of all sorts, from charwomen to doctors and lawyers, throughout the British Isles. One of the questions asked was whether the worker had dependents whom she wholly or partially maintained from her earnings. From the replies to this it appeared that almost half these women (the exact figure was forty-nine and a decimal per cent.) had such dependents. The situation is probably at least the same to-day. According to a detailed enquiry recently made in the Union of South Africa, out of 343 employed women, 34 per cent. belonged to families without a male bread-winner, 6 per cent. were the sole bread-winners of the family, 40 per cent. helped to support the family.

How many of these girls coming by Tube to their daily toil in London would be found, if their circumstances were known, to be little heroines deserving not pity for their folly, but respect for their gallant self sacrifice?

Some no doubt have rejected or will reject offers of marriage, but not because they have been, as Miss Curtayne asserts "taught from their earliest childhood" (one presumes by their Mothers) "that a profession or a career is a far superior thing to marriage," or that they have reached any such belief for themselves, but because they will not abandon the grey-haired mother, the invalid sister, the little brother, or the orphan niece or nephew whose only means of support is the money earned by these "new women," and for whose sake the daughter, or sister, or aunt has given up the prospect of attaining herself wedded happiness and having a home and children of her own.

## Notes and Comments

Her Majesty Queen Mary headed the King's Birthday Honours List with the award Dame Grand Cross of the Order newly-opened to women,—the Royal Victorian Order.

We offer warmest congratulations to our member the Right Honourable J. A. Lyons, Prime Minister of Australia, on his appointment as Companion of Honour.

As usual the awards granted to women in the Honours List are noticeably inadequate.

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With great joy we welcome the good news from Melbourne of the foundation of the Australian Section of St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance, which received the blessing of His Grace the Archbishop of Melbourne on May 30th, St. Joan's Day. This happy achievement is in great measure due to the energy and initiative of the Section's valiant Hon. Secretary, our good friend Miss Margaret Flynn, who on her arrival home in Melbourne last March, lost no time in calling a meeting of the Australian members of the Alliance for March 25th. As the meeting was about to open a telephone call arrived from the Rt. Hon. J. A. Lyons, C.H., sending good wishes also from Mrs. Lyons, who regretted her inability to be present. The meeting decided that the Headquarters of the Section should be in Melbourne, and an Executive Committee was appointed, with Mrs. Lyons as President, Miss K. M. Walsh—who was in London last year—as Vice-President and Chairman; Miss Margaret Flynn, Hon. Secretary and Treasurer. On the first Sunday in May the Committee received Holy Communion in a body. With such an auspicious beginning and such officers we cannot but feel confident of the success of the Section, under the protection of our Patron, St. Joan. The foundation of two new Sections of the Alliance, as far apart as Australia and Brazil makes a fitting celebration of our Jubilee Year.

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In connection with the agitation for pensions for spinsters at the age of 55 it is worth while noting several objections to this scheme. In the first place many women are at their best between the ages of 50 and 60 or even later—so why should they be expected to give up their job at the comparatively early age of 55? Undoubtedly this would be the general expectation and for this reason women would be relegated to the position of eternal juniors with no

chance of rising to responsible and well-paid posts. From the point of view of livelihood the scheme would lead to undercutting and lower wage rates. Moreover since it would force many women to live on the pension, however small, they would have to look to relatives or the Public Assistance Committee to bring it up to a living rate.

It is sometimes just as well to look a gift horse in the mouth.

\* \* \* \*

Mr. Buchanan (Lab. Gorbals), speaking on May 29th in the Adjournment Debate on Unemployment Assistance Regulations said:

"The most tragic position that I see in my day to day rounds is that of the single woman receiving only 15s. a week unemployment benefit . . . It is a human impossibility for a single woman not resident with her parents, but in lodgings, to live on an income of that kind. I earnestly plead with the Minister that, whatever else is done, the single woman should not be given less than the single man. We demand equal pay for Civil Servants, and I can never understand why the far more human appeal for equal remuneration for the unemployed woman is not granted. It is a far more human case than that of the Civil Servants, for they at least have a minimum standard."

As we go to press the new regulations for Unemployment Assistance are not yet available. St. Joan's Alliance reaffirms its demand that the Public Assistance Rates when amended, should be made equal for (1) men and women (2) boys and girls, and that either husband or wife should have the right to apply for family relief. We are grateful to Mrs. Tate who in the House of Commons, on June 22nd, re-asserted her support of equal payments.

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On the 27th May, for the eleventh time, Woman Suffrage in provincial elections was defeated in the Quebec Legislative Assembly. Reading the account of the defeat in the *Gazette* (Montreal) one can hardly believe one's eyes. Not only are the opposition speeches unconsciously comic, but one is compelled to the conclusion that some deep hidden "complex" must lie strangled at the bottom of these men's minds for them to make so much fuss about the possibility of their wives voting!

We congratulate our very good friend, Mrs. John Scott and her colleagues, on the fine struggle they put up this year for the success of the Woman Suffrage Bill. We sympathise with them in their disappointment, but we know their motto is: "Never say die"!

(Continued on page 63)



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

AND

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

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## Women in the Consular and Diplomatic Services

After an inexcusable delay of nearly two years the Government has at last yielded to the demands of the women's societies and has published both the Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Admission of Women to the Diplomatic and Consular Services\* and its own considered verdict upon the matter.

Both are disappointing. As most of our readers will be aware the Government having studied the Report has come to the conclusion "that the time has not yet arrived when women could be employed in the Consular Service or in the Diplomatic Service with advantage to the State or with profit to women."

With regard to the decision about the Consular Service (admittedly the more difficult issue of the two) the Government can, unfortunately, shelter comfortably behind the Report, since the only dissentients to this policy were the two women members of the Committee—Miss M. Ritson and Miss Martindale, O.B.E. Even they, gallantly though they obviously strove and much indebted as we are to them, were a little too inclined to accept the *status quo* in our Civil Service. Instead of protesting against those restrictions which prevent women gaining the special kind of mercantile knowledge and experience essential in most consulates, they suggest "the adoption of the method of seconding a limited number of women officers from the Home Civil Service" to the Consular Service as a test of the fitness of women for this service. The Government in its statement on the Report brushes aside even this compromise, and entirely ignores the women members' further suggestion that "women should be considered

\* Cmd. 51 66 (1936).

together with men for appointment as unsalaried consuls in those places which are not of sufficient importance to justify a career consul." The Government's conclusions savour more of rationalisation than reasoning, e.g., "In the very large majority of Consular posts, officers have to deal with a number of matters which it would be difficult for the average woman to handle . . ."

In its verdict on the employment of women in the Diplomatic Service the Government has shown its timidity, its lack of any real regard for the interests of women and the superficiality of its judgments even more clearly than in the case of the Consular Service, for here the practical difficulties are very much less and the reform could be immediately and easily introduced. Also, the Committee were fairly evenly divided on this issue, the two women favouring the immediate permanent opening of the Service, the Chairman, Sir Claud Schuster and Sir James Rae advocating a period of experiment in the matter and the other four members on very inadequate grounds opposing the admission of women altogether even for a trial period. It was this last point of view that was adopted by the Government despite its own confession that the success or otherwise of women could only be proved by experiment.

"His Majesty's Government do not consider that any injustice is being done to women by their continued exclusion from the Diplomatic Service . . . it is . . . doubtful whether the admission of women would contribute any special advantage to the State." In regard to the first statement there are many brilliant young University women who would, if they were men, find in these services the natural outlet for their gifts and energies. It is surely

a significant thing that the principals of all the women's colleges should have sent a joint letter of protest to the *Times* upon this very point. As to the doubt as to whether the admission of women would be of "any special advantage to the State," in the words of the *Manchester Guardian*: "Must women, then, plead that their employment would be of 'special advantage' before they are entitled to the barest measure of equality with men?" Incidentally it is obvious that to limit the choice of candidates to one sex must rule out some who are specially suitable in gifts and personality.

For many years now we in St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance have worked for women's right of entry to the Consular and Diplomatic Services, and our chairman, Mrs. Laughton Mathews gave evidence to the Committee on our behalf. We must continue that struggle even more vigorously, not only that a few brilliant women may enter some extremely important spheres of human activity, but far more, that our principles may steadily permeate the whole of life.

NANCY STEWART PARNELL.

## Look to Your Votes

Again we remind our readers of the importance of inspecting the lists of electors which were published on July 15th.

The annual register of electors will be published on October 15th next and will remain in force for a year. The preliminary lists may now be seen at the various post offices and other public buildings and at the office of the registration officer in each district. It is important that these lists should be inspected to ensure that names are not omitted.

Should the name of any person entitled to a vote be omitted from the list, a claim should be sent in at once to the registration officer at the local town hall. The last day for sending in claims is August 7th in England and Wales, and August 22nd in Scotland.

It is not perhaps generally known that persons other than naval and military voters who are registered, or claiming to be registered, may claim to be placed on the Absent Voters List for the purpose of voting by post at Parliamentary elections if their occupation, service or employment may debar them from voting at the poll. Such claims must be lodged not later than the 18th of August in England and Wales, and September 1st in Scotland.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

(Continued from page 61)

We have received the following appreciation of our paper from Sister Mary Joseph, Librarian of Webster College, U.S.A.

"I read each of the numbers you sent and feel that you are engaged in a very worthwhile enterprise that will be productive of much good. At present I have placed the copies at different sections of the library and you will be glad to know they are attracting attention and doing good."

We wonder if any zealous soul would subscribe for the *Catholic Citizen* to be sent to this College?

\* \* \* \*

Feminism is not a word that appeals to everyone, yet the essential Catholicity of true feminism could scarcely be better brought home to one than by studying what a complete absence of feminism means, and the consequent need for the work being done by Christian feminist movements.—*Catholic Herald*.

\* \* \* \*

Members enjoyed a delightful ramble through Kenwood on June 27th. We thank Miss Gadsby who provided a delicious tea at her house in Highgate, and we also thank Miss Terry for her after-tea character delineations. The proceeds of the afternoon came to £1 12s., a welcome addition to the funds.

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The Alliance was represented at Mrs. Despard's 92nd Birthday Party given by the Women's Freedom League at the Caxton Hall. Miss Barry was proud to present this veteran suffrage worker with flowers, in the name of the Alliance.

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We ask the prayers of our readers for the repose of the soul of Mr. Daniel O'Brien who died on May 29th, aged 78. For many years Mr. O'Brien worked as an employé of the Westminster Highways Committee and did duty two or three nights a week as watchman.

Mr. O'Brien was an ardent and life-long supporter of woman suffrage and a warm friend of St. Joan's Alliance. Whenever he met us selling papers he would make a point of buying one, sometimes adding a donation, and would enquire solicitously after the fortunes of the Alliance. R.I.P.

We ask prayers for the repose of the soul of Mrs. Powell, a most regular subscriber to the *Catholic Citizen*. R.I.P.



## International Notes

From the *Catholic Times* we note that at Ciudad Camargo in the State of Chihuahua (Mexico) three women of the Mexican Women's Union were killed and several wounded, while on a deputation to the municipal *presidente* to petition that the number of priests be increased. The official's reply to their peaceable petition was a volley of shots, with the resultant tragedy.

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We draw our readers' attention to an interesting and informative article on "Polygamy in the Cameroons" by the Rev. Pierre Pichon, S.Sp., which appeared in the section devoted to African Studies of "La Revue de L'Alliance Ste. Jeanne d'Arc," the March-April issue. The Revue can be obtained from the Hon. Secretary of our French Section: Mlle. Lenoël, 72, Av. de la Bourdonnais, Paris VII. It costs 10 francs per year, and as a great deal of information on the subject of African women appears in its pages we strongly recommend those interested to subscribe.

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We have received a most encouraging letter from Mrs. M. M. Bennet of the Mt. Margaret Mission, Western Australia on the subject of Mrs. John Jones's splendid article "Girl Slaves in Christian Countries" published in the February issue of the *Catholic Citizen*. We quote the following extracts which speak for themselves:

"I want to thank you with all my heart for the magnificent article which has just appeared in the *Catholic Citizen* on the terrible plight of the Australian Aboriginal child, ignored and condoned in Australia to Australia's disgrace. . . . A few magnificent women and men are fighting for national enlightenment and possible conditions of survival for our wholly lovable Aboriginal race, and your splendid championship should prove of the greatest support and help and also make for national enlightenment. . . . I shall be very grateful if you will kindly send me copies to the value of 5s. enclosed of the issue with Mrs. John Jones's article on the Aboriginal girl (quoting the story of the Bathurst Island child who had to undergo ordeal by spears) so that I can send it to different friends in Australia and so by your kind help obtain a more wholesome judgment on such matters of human justice.

"There is not the slightest excuse for denying education to this most gifted race. . . . I demand education for every child born in Australia, irrespective of race, with the vote, on passing the education test.

"God bless and reward you for your generous help to this oppressed race."

Dschamei Kin, the first Chinese woman doctor has just celebrated her 75th birthday. She studied in New York and gained her medical degree after a hard struggle. The Chinese Government, recognising her ability, recalled her, and put her in charge of a hospital and clinic for women in North China. She had to organise everything, the training of nurses and doctors, the running of the hospital, dispensing, ambulance work, with only four tumble-down buildings at her disposal. Through her efforts these were rebuilt. Modern methods of hygiene and surgery were introduced by forming a nucleus of nurses and young practitioners who were willing to study these methods and go to Europe and America to complete their medical education. Owing to the pioneer work of Dschamei Kin, China now possesses a multitude of excellent doctors and nurses.

Dschamei Kin is not only a doctor she is an apostle vividly concerned with the development of the Asiatic woman.—*Mouvement Feministe*.

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We are delighted to record that Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur has been appointed by the Government to serve on the newly-constituted Educational Advisory Board in Delhi.

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Among the sixteen women delegates to the Twentieth Session of the I.L.O. Conference at Geneva was our member, Miss Brigid Stafford, Government Adviser to the Irish Free State.

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In Finland, by a recent law, married couples are now taxed separately. There is also now a "Bachelor" tax of 20% on the incomes of unmarried persons of both sexes from the age of 24 and on childless married couples.—*International Women's News*.

S. A. B.

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*Frauenland* (June) reports the death, at the early age of 50, of Dr. Elizabeth Cosack, one of Germany's most distinguished Catholic women. For twelve years Dr. Cosack has been the editor of *Frauenland*, inspiring it with her deeply religious spirit, her love of home life and her devotion to all women's interests. In spite of severe illness she continued her editorship to within a few days of her death. Hundreds of women, carrying wreaths, walked in procession behind her coffin to the grave.—R.I.P.

V. M. C.

## British Commonwealth League Conference

The twelfth annual Conference of the British Commonwealth League took place on May 26th, 27th, and 28th, at the Y.W.C.A. Central Club, London, Mrs. Corbett Ashby presiding. Over 50 organisations sent delegates, including St. Joan's Alliance. Women's progress towards equality in Government Services and in changing Africa, was the subject taken.

St. Joan's Alliance seconded the resolution urging woman suffrage in Quebec, and a resolution was also passed, urging women's franchise in Bermuda. African women were dealt with in three resolutions which pressed the necessity for the education of native girls and women, urged the allocation of a larger proportion of revenue for purposes of health and education in Africa, and the necessity for the regular employment of a larger number of women in Health and Education Services; and urged "respective Governments to safeguard African women from sexual exploitation for profit" and "to subject the whole problem of African prostitution to a careful investigation on social and economic lines." The resolution on the equal education of African women was proposed by Miss Eleanor Hawarden of the South African League of Women Voters, and seconded by Miss Christine Spender, on behalf of St. Joan's Alliance. Miss Hawarden contributed a most informative paper on "Women under Native and European Law," and Mr. S. Merle Davis, Mr. C. Roden Buxton, Miss Grace Saunders and Miss Nina Boyle were others who spoke on aspects of "Changing Africa." On behalf of St. Joan's Alliance Mrs. Laughton Mathews proposed a resolution heartily congratulating the British Government "upon the appointment of a Commission to proceed to Hong Kong and forthwith examine into the position in regard to Mui Tsai" and trusting that "as a result of the investigation the evils of this system will be entirely abolished."

Of the emergency resolutions passed, one dealt with the Irish Free State and the woman industrial worker:

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled expresses its consternation that the Irish Free State should have passed into law Section 16 of the Conditions of Employment Act 1936, which gives power to a Minister to prohibit the employment of female workers in any form of industrial work, or to fix a proportion which the number of female workers employed by any employer may bear to the number of other workers so employed.

The Conference declares that the position of women industrial workers within the Irish Free State has been made intolerable in being made subject to an arbitrary power with undefined limits against the exercise of which it is impossible for them to obtain any legal redress, since they are outside the rule of law.

Other resolutions passed urged the opening of all posts in the Diplomatic, Trade and Consular Services to women on the same terms as men; the immediate appointment of an increased number of women in the Colonial Services; equality within the Civil Services; that opportunity be given to Indian Women "of association in the administration of every Province" and that Indian women should be appointed to each Public Service Commission; that the British and Dominion Governments pass legislation to give the married woman her nationality on the same terms as a man or a single woman. Three comprehensive resolutions dealt with the Geneva resolution on the Status of Women. In them it was urged that the British Government should invite the co-operation of the women's organisations concerned, in the preparation of any Report on the civil, political and economic status of women, to be submitted to the Assembly of the League of Nations and also that the International Labour Organisation should make a clear declaration of the principle of a woman's right to earn on the same terms as men.

Among further emergency resolutions was one supporting "the demand of the enfranchised women of Australia for women as paid protectors amongst aborigines and half-castes" and another urging that New Zealand legislation should be altered on the lines of equal pay for equal work between men and women.

C. S.



### MILL HILL

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### Liaison Committee of Women's International Organisations

At its Congress in 1925, held in Washington, U.S.A., the International Council of Women decided to invite other women's international organisations to form an international standing committee with the object of working unitedly for the appointment of suitable women on commissions and other bodies of the League of Nations where women's opinion should be represented. That invitation was accepted by most of the women's international organisations and a "Joint Standing Committee of Women's International Organisations" was formed, which has for ten years carried on the special work of watching over the representation and position of women in the League of Nations and the I.L.O.

It was, however, frequently found that its members desired to consult together on questions of a more general character, and to be able to co-operate when matters of international importance arose which made united international action desirable and effective.

On February 12th, 1931, was formed the Liaison Committee of Women's International Organisations, based upon the same lines of working as the Joint Standing Committee.

During the five years of its existence the Liaison Committee has dealt with a number of leading questions affecting women throughout the world and has established itself as an important co-ordinating body of international opinion among women.

With a view to economising the number of meetings and the secretarial and clerical duties associated with the Joint Standing and the Liaison Committees of Women's International Organisations, it has been decided that the purposes of both shall be united under one Committee, which shall bear the name of the Liaison Committee of Women's International Organisations.

The Hon. Secretaries are Miss Zimmern, who will continue as General Hon. Secretary of the amalgamated body, and Mrs. Bigland, who will continue to act for the business connected with the appointment of women to Commissions and other bodies of the League.

Societies comprising the Liaison Committee are the following: The International Council of Women, The International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship, The World's Young Women's Christian Association, The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the International Federation of University Women, The World Union of Women for International Concord, The World's Women's Christian Temperance Union, St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance, Equal Rights Inter-

national, International Federation of Women Magistrates and Members of the Legal Profession, International Federation of Business and Professional Women.

The address of the central office is 26 Eccleston Square, London, S.W.1.

### THE DOWRY DRAIN IN INDIA

We take from *Stri Dharma* the following:

Last month three sisters committed suicide together to save their parents from the worry and poverty and ruin that was inevitable in their attempt to provide suitable dowries for their daughters! What a situation is disclosed! It is common all over India. Girls of self-respect revolt at being considered curses to their family. Girls of affectionate nature are pulled between seeing their parents aged and ill before their time through scraping money enough to get the girls married and thus "respectably settled in life," or seeing them miserable in mind if the girls determine to remain unmarried if no one will marry them dowerless though by such conduct the whole family can maintain itself in financial comfort. The three sisters cited seem to have judged that by cutting the Gordian knot by suicide the loss their death would inflict on their parents would be felt less by them than the loss of caste conventionality or the loss of material comforts for the remainder of their lives. But what throes of mental anguish such sensitive awakened girls must be going through up and down the land! The dowry got together with such difficulty is not spent on the girl, not invested for her future needs. It goes to educate the bridegroom, it goes to buttress his business, or pay election expenses, or for some purpose connected with the man, not the girl. But most of all it is a drain imposed by a convention of family pride for making a "show." Utterly disproportionate sums are extravagantly spent on the marriage ceremonies, on days of feasting then processions, entertainments. The sacrifice of such girls throws a lurid light on the chains that the people are hugging to them. The dowry system must be ended. Marriage expenses must be reduced, ceremonies and customs simplified. Girls should not kill themselves but seek help from Homes where their case would evoke sympathy and where they would receive training by which they could become independent, earning servants of society, instead of feeling themselves mill-stones round the neck of their fathers. The present system of dowries and marriage costs, pithily says Lady Nilkanth of Ahmedabad in the Press, "is vanity, not sanity."

### Reviews

*As Time Went On . . .* By Ethel Smyth. (Longmans, 15s.)

The power of projecting one's personality into the printed page is the quality that gives life to the narrative of a writer of memoirs. In this quality Dame Ethel Smyth is pre-eminent; so that her readers must think of her not as a person whose book they have read, but as a person they know. A person, too, whose life has been rich in interests, in friendships, and in entertaining incidents. How vigorously and wholeheartedly she has lived her life and with what gusto she writes of it!

In this book Dame Ethel adds another chapter to the autobiography she began seventeen years ago in "Impressions that Remained," and carries her story down to the year 1894. Yet it is more than the record of a few years in the nineties. Greater age bringing greater detachment, Dame Ethel, in a resumé of her previous volume, writes more plainly than she did of the happening that broke her friendship with Lisl and affected her life for many years. And in an epilogue, she looks over the whole course of her life as a musician and writes of it with calmness and assurance. This volume is principally the record of friendships especially with Lady Ponsonby, and with one, "the chief good life has brought me," Henry Brewster. There is a detailed and instructive account of her struggles to get her Mass performed and of the aftermath. And for sheer entertainment there is a glorious account of a visit to a native chief in Algiers. It is all so enjoyable that one wants more.

M. McCURDY.

*Musings of a Scottish Granny.* By Ishbel Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair. (G.B.E., LL.D., J.P. (Heath Cranton, 6s.)

Lady Aberdeen's memoirs are of unusual historical interest. She gives us a sketch of a Scotland in her youth which was still almost feudal and remained so till the war. She says, in passing, that whole glens had never been touched by the "Reformation" and all the inhabitants were Catholic. The latter part of the book contains a full length and rather remarkable portrait of Mr. Gladstone and his wife and there are sketches of friends made in visits to America and Canada—such famous characters as Moody and Sankey. Of much interest to Catholics is the delightful chapter on Father Lacombe, the famous French-Canadian

Missionary to the Indians and half-castes of North-West Canada. The Aberdeens made "fast friends" with him and he used to write Lady Aberdeen long letters addressing her as "Ma Chère Socur." The account of Lord Aberdeen's tenure as Viceroy of Ireland and of the two campaigns inaugurated by the Aberdeens during their stay in Ireland, one against T.B. and one in favour of Irish industries, not only make most interesting reading but show us two people whose great delight was to do good and whose innate sincerity caused them to triumph even in the most difficult situations.

C. S.

*A Catholic Catechism on Social Questions.* (Catholic Social Guild.)

Most of the points dealt with in this handbook seem to be treated with an admirable mixture of exact definition and clear exposition. It is only on two or three points, where the first quality is sacrificed to the second, that there is ground for criticism.

In the first place should it not be clearly stated that a Catholic *may* believe in the evolution of the human body without loss of loyalty to the Faith? It is important here, as is done in the answers on Socialism and Communism, to show exactly what is condemned in modern theories and how much may be accepted without suspicion of disloyalty to the Faith. In the second could it not be made clearer that it is Naturalism and the denial of Original Sin that is condemned in co-education, not the bringing up of boys and girls together, for the latter implies not only a condemnation of the large elementary schools which do, with no thought of acting contrary to the Holy Father's wish, educate boys and girls side by side to the age of 14 and beyond, but also seems to ignore both the natural life in the family, and the Christian schools of the Renaissance which were an extension of the family, and blessed by no less a person than St. Thomas More. Lastly, Father O'Kane's generous championship of the oppressed, leads him into the classing of women and children together as equally needing protection. Feminists must always protest against this classification, not as if they resented protection, but as demanding that they should be considered as full adults entitled, like men, to as much protection as is required by the nature of their work. Otherwise injury is done to the status of women workers by their

(Continued on page 68)



## Barbarous Marriage Customs

Readers will remember that twice we have quoted letters of the Archdeacon of Kavirondo on African marriage customs. Recently he wrote again to the *Manchester Guardian* on this subject, and we publish extracts from his latest letter:—

"Last year you kindly allowed me to draw attention to some barbarous features of African marriage customs. I gave instances of violently protesting girls being dragged forcibly along the public roads in the Reserves, to 'marriage' with men who claim them, in spite of their resistance, because they have paid to the girls' relations a certain number of cattle or goats, the 'bride price.' Mr. J. Kenyatta wrote that tribal custom did not sanction girls being forced in this way.

"The 'East African Standard' reports the trial of a Tanganyika girl named Kekwe, 18 years old. In true African fashion her people accepted the bride price from a man towards whom she had expressed her aversion. She ran away to the man she preferred, was followed, and, in the presence of her relatives, stabbed the man who wished to take her away. Unfortunately, the stab proved fatal. She was convicted of manslaughter, and sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment.

"The fact that eighteen year old Kekwe was resisting in spite of the sanction of her family and tribe does not seem to me to invalidate her right to defend her physical person and her spiritual personality. What girl under such circumstances could keep so coolheaded as to take heed that the knife went in thus far and no farther? I see Kekwe as a victim of a custom which is barbarous, a custom which has broken the lives of countless thousands of African girls. (The girl I mentioned in my last letter has since died.) Had Kekwe no right to withhold her body from the detested man, whose only claim was that he had paid a certain number of goats that he might possess that body? In previous letters I wrote that 'in certain circumstances native marriage customs seem to involve a kind of slavery for reluctant women.' It took me long years in Africa before I would yield to a conclusion so condemnatory of African social life. I tried to defend it, but the anguish of decent girls, oft repeated, broke down my defence . . .

"The degradation felt by African girls when dragged off is unspeakable . . . I would that I could make your readers see and hear it. What were Kekwe's feelings when she thrust the fatal knife?"

(Continued from page 67)

being put in the same category as children and unconsciously regarded as such.

These are matters of importance, for in the first place it is not good for ardent youth to feel it is suspected of disloyalty in accepting modern theories in so far as they have not been condemned, nor is it good for girls to grow up with a feeling that it is somehow wrong for them to take whatever place in the world their talents fit them for.

P. C. C.

## SOME NEW EXCHANGES

Recently we have acquired three new exchanges with the *Catholic Citizen*: *Liturgy and Sociology* (New York), organ of the Campion Propaganda Committee; *The Social Order* (Allahabad), published under Indian Catholic auspices; and *The Women's Supplement to International Information* published by the Secretariat of the Labour and Social International. From these reviews we make the following selection of quotations which may be of interest to our readers:

"If he (the Negro) is to be a social asset he must live in a world devoid of conditions which stunt his spiritual growth and impair his economic welfare. Prejudice and discrimination are destructive of the Negro's personality and will to live."—*Liturgy and Sociology*.

"She (woman) is now fast bound with the new order and stands by man in all practical walks of economic life, and the economic world has to make room for her . . ."—*The Social Order*.

"The notion that women are to be mere ornaments of society is gradually wearing out; but a few more must step into the domain of public life before their usefulness can be convincingly proved."—*The Social Order*.

"The 'Daily Herald' has published the following 'eye-opener' for those who think running a house is an easy job for a wife. At the institute of medical psychology 'home-duties' and 'domestic service' accounted for 140 out of 500 cases of nervous disorder and mental anxiety treated by the experts. The effects were so deep-seated that only half the patients could be described as 'relieved' three years after their discharge."—*The Women's Supplement*.

"This system (of procedure at the National Conference of British Labour Women) has its good side, but it also has its dangers, when it leads to a problem as important as sterilisation, which in our view requires a searching discussion and a foremost place on the agenda, being disposed of, as it was, in 20 minutes. Thus the legislation on sterilisation was approved with a disconcerting rapidity, against the opinion moreover of the Executive."—*The Women's Supplement*.

As regards the first quotation substitute woman for Negro and the sentiments entirely represent the feminist point of view.

Add to this list *Univers* (Lille) a digest of International news of interest to Catholics which often contains informative articles on the position of women in various non-European countries.

"In closing the discussion Mlle. Dannevig makes a statement which applies equally well to Catholic or Protestant Missions. We repeat it hoping that the French Government in particular will take the hint: 'The State profits by the very useful work done by the Missions in the medical and educational spheres . . . But it seems to count on outside contributions for the upkeep of these Missions. Is it not strange that the Government profits in this way from the Missions without rendering them any assistance in return?'"—*Univers*.

## CHILE REGIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE

The Regional Labour Conference held at Santiago, Chile, during January, as one of a series of Labour Conferences under the auspices of the International Labour Office, presents a strange contrast in the resolutions adopted that affect the question of discrimination between the sexes. There are some which might have been passed at a meeting of St. Joan's Alliance, while others follow the point of view that women in industry need special protection, for instance: "The employment of women should be prohibited in dangerous and unhealthy industries and in those contrary to public morals." We cannot think that the Conference really meant to imply that men should be employed in industries contrary to public morals, but what are we to understand from this resolution? Does it by chance refer to prostitution, or the trade in contraceptives? However let us concentrate on what is sound and just in the recommendations of the Conference and rejoice that resolutions were passed as follows:

The Conference draws the attention of Governments, employers and workers to the following principles:—

Equal wages should be fixed according to the nature of the work irrespective of the sex of the worker.

The maximum working day of women should be the same as that of men.

All legislation relating to social insurance which is applicable to men should apply to women on a basis of absolute equality, and special attention should be given to maternity insurance and protection against unavoidable dismissal.

We should like to see our own Government adopting the above recommendations of the Santiago Conference.

## CATHOLIC WORKERS' COLLEGE

We are delighted to learn that it is again possible for women to be at the Catholic Workers' College, Oxford.

The College gives residential university training to adult working class students. Two scholarships for next year have been awarded to women; one, given by a benefactor specifically for a woman, was won by Miss Hilda Humphreys of Darlington; while the scholarship given by the London Council of the Catholic Social Guild, open to men and women equally, has been won by Miss Honora Dempsey.

Miss Dempsey is employed in the post office, and has been a student in the Workers'

Educational Association and has already held a scholarship at Hillcroft College for working women.

Contributions towards the London Scholarship will be very gratefully received by The Hon. Treasurer, Mr. H. G. L. Hussey, 3 St. Mary's Road, Wimbledon, S.W.19.

C. L.

## LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT BRANCH

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

A Garden Party will be held at 66 Park Road South, Birkenhead, by kind permission of the Misses Barry on Saturday, August 15th—3.30 to 6.30 p.m. Our Hon. Secretary from Headquarters will be there to tell us about recent activities of the Alliance at home and abroad. Tickets 1s. from the Hon. Secretary.

## HON. TREASURER'S NOTE

The holidays are starting and it will be a relief to get away from work if only for a few days. But the work of St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance must continue and in order to do it, funds are required. So before you go please forward subscriptions overdue, or if these have been paid, please send a Jubilee Donation in gratitude for your work, your holiday and St. Joan.

The "Barrow" needs clothes. When looking out clothes for the holiday send those you feel are not quite good enough.

While on holiday remember our stall at the Green, White and Gold Fair in the Autumn, and do please either make something for it or bring back some suitable gift.

Another holiday task might be the sale of *Catholic Citizens* outside the local Church. Anybody who is willing to sell a dozen papers or dispose of such to friends, kindly apply to the office.

C. J. GARRARD.

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