

THE CATHOLIC CITIZEN

WOMEN'S SERVICE

LIBRARY

Organ of St. Joan's Alliance (formerly The Catholic Women's Suffrage 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

SLOWLY, LOYALLY, GENEROUSLY

These words, used by Paul VI to qualify the processes necessary for the solution of the problems of "union" will guide our own efforts when attempting to solve problems no less difficult and also concerned with "union", although of a different kind. We shall rely on their steadying support when evaluating the immediate past, its promise rather than tangible achievement and when looking into a future still uncertain and not free of anxiety for St. Joan's Alliance.

Reviewing the past, it is probably true to say that, had one indulged in feelings of triumphalism during the weeks when successive interventions by Conciliar Fathers were drawing the Church's attention to the inferior position assigned to women, we would now feel cheated of our reward. These eloquent and often moving speeches were well received; there were no rebuffs and no reasoned opposition, but the argument was dropped. "Generously . . .", we must recognise that it could not have been otherwise. Short of a miracle, no argument will alter in a trice what custom has made habitual and acceptable. "Slowly . . ." we do know it is only a beginning. As such we realise its tremendous importance, and that retrospectively it may be judged to be one of the summits of Vatican II, for it does after all refer to the status of one-half of humanity.

If we describe our past activities as "visionary" in the true sense of the word and if we treasure the encouragement given us by the many happy events of our International Council meeting, the Holy Father's gracious reception and blessing, innumerable valuable contacts with personalities of high and not so high rank, bishops, theologians, seminarists, missionaries, all interested and mostly friendly, we may be able to plan for the future. How shall we build on what is only a beginning? Pope John's characteristic saying, in his address on the Church's *aggiornamento*, supplies the answer (October, 1962): "our duty (he says) is to dedicate ourselves wholeheartedly and fearlessly

to the task our era demands of us . . .". "Generously, loyally", we mean to do so.

Every member of the Alliance who had the good fortune to live through the recent Roman episode (and we may hope those also who were only able to hear of it at second-hand) must feel immensely encouraged. They would not have been members had they not felt that they were right to include those requests and petitions to the Church in the Alliance's already venerable list of activities, but many have felt a twinge of uncertainty as to whether they were anticipating on our times. We can no longer feel this; it is a certainty confirmed by the birth of our vigorous new sections; our stake in the future cannot be bypassed.

Detail is necessarily absent from this general review of the past and future of our growing Alliance. But it would not be realistic to shut our eyes to some of the essential factors. If we are to remain one, and not just "national societies", we must shoulder the responsibilities *in common*. Miss Barry has not been replaced; we know she is irreplaceable, but someone must be found (and remunerated) to act as general secretary: to give the feeling of permanency and availability indispensable to our President (who said as much in Rome!) to be ready to learn from and then replace those who have long passed the age of retirement. To this end a Fund has been started, at a London bank, and as soon as the fund has grown to a figure which will permit the office to advertise again for a secretary, offering applicants a minimum of two years' (moderate) salary and security, the office will act. A recent attempt to secure a secretary, while unable to guarantee either salary or any security has quite naturally resulted in the loss of the advertisement fee. The fund has had a good send-off and is now in your hands.*

F. Mackenzie Shattock

*See note on Special Fund.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

New Year's Honours

As we go to press the New Year's Honour List has just been published. We congratulate the following:—Mrs. Mary Stocks, writer and broadcaster, who becomes a life Baroness; Miss Alice Bacon, C.B.E., M.P., who is made a Privy Counsellor; Baroness Summerskill, a Companion of Honour; and Miss Vera Douie, one of St. Joan's Committee members and librarian of the Fawcett Society, who has been awarded the O.B.E. *The Guardian* (1.1.66) gives the number of awards in the Prime Minister's list as 671, of which 114 go to women as compared with 111 last year.

Women in Office

We offer our congratulations to Mrs. Barbara Castle on her appointment as Minister of Transport, and to Baroness Phillips who has been made a Government Whip (Baroness in Waiting).

Woman to Sit on Woolsack

A motion to appoint Lady Wootton of Abinger to the House of Lords panel of deputy chairmen of committees came before the Lords in December. It is expected that in accordance with custom Lady Wootton will eventually be made a Deputy Speaker in the House and she will be the first woman to take her place on the Woolsack as a deputy to the Lord Chancellor.

University Chaplain

The Reverend R. Inledon, assistant to the Catholic chaplain at Oxford, is to be the chaplain to the Catholic students at Cambridge.

The Social Morality Council

Our member, Dr. Marita Harper, has accepted an invitation to become a member of the Bishop of London's Social Morality Council.

One Party Rule

St. Joan's was represented by Miss Catherine Dickson at the Symposium on "The One-Party State in Africa" held on December 11th at Africa House. Dr. B. J. Dudley spoke lucidly of the dangers of this system and elicited forceful reasoned arguments in its defence. Mr. E. Ngaiza, High Commissioner of Tanzania, defended the course of the one-party state in his own country.

Servers at Mass

We read in a newspaper report that Fr. John Bloms, O.S.B., invited girls and women to assist at Mass as altar servers when as he says, "we ran out of boys"; but he has been ordered to stop the practice by Bishop Reed of Oklahoma, who said in Rome, "Permission for this was never requested nor given." Father Bloms said that he knew that it was being done in other churches.

OPERATION BOOK-LIFT

On a certain gloomy evening in December the crowds who passed down Oxford Street to see the Christmas decorations might have noticed a tall young man pushing a wheelbarrow, piled high with stacks of books, from the courtyard of Dryden Chambers to a brake perilously stationed at the kerb between a busy bus-stop and the corner of Wardour Street. The police would not give us permission to park at such a time, but so swiftly was the wheelbarrow replenished by willing hands and unpacked into the brake, front, back and centre, that the whole operation was over in fifteen minutes. The books had already been embundled in the office, and moved to the ground floor with the help of the owner of the wheelbarrow—Jerry, the caretaker of St. Patrick's Schools, to whose care it was duly returned.

Thus was a great part of St. Joan's library delivered into the safe keeping of Mrs. Horton, Secretary of the Fawcett Society, and our member Miss Douie, its librarian. Mrs. Horton kindly lent and drove the brake, David Laughton Mathews manipulated the wheelbarrow, Gabrielle Daye and Phoebe May helped to fill and empty it—while the Chairman overlooked the proceedings—and now, on behalf of St. Joan's, expresses thanks to all concerned. (Next month—"The Move").

P.C.C.

The Woman Question

Evelyne Sullerot, the French novelist, writes "The Eternal Feminine is dying". With another writer, Geneviève Gennari she poses many questions as to what women will make of their new opportunities. Mme. Gennari warns, "In the life of to-morrow it is only the responsible woman who will have the freedom of the city." Both writers come to the same conclusion as the Dominican the Rev. P. Jolif, who wrote recently, "The problem of woman is the problem of the whole of humanity."

Italian Legislation Revision

Our member, Signora Maria S. Lanza Spagnoletti, Hon. Councillor to the Italian Court of Criminal Appeal for Minors, and Hon. President of the Union of Italian Women Lawyers, has expressed some criticisms of the proposed revision of the laws affecting the family. The status of the married woman is not to be raised but merely accommodated to custom; the father figure is to remain dominant and the woman remains in an inferior position. The wife is to contribute to the husband's maintenance, but the economic value of her domestic work is ignored. The husband is required to "maintain" his wife and to "direct" the family. The old regulation regarding the greater comparative gravity of woman's than of man's adultery is to remain. Our member finds herself unable to follow arguments aimed at avoiding a simple statement of mutual support.

THE POPE SPEAKS

"The hour is coming, in fact has come, when the vocation of woman is being achieved with fullness: the hour in which woman acquires in the world an influence, an effect and a power never hitherto achieved."

(Excerpt from the Pope's closing message to the world at the end of the Vatican Council quoted from *The Guardian*.)

Canon Law

We are glad to know that Cardinal Heenan has been appointed to the Commission on the Revision of Canon Law. For His Eminence's information the Alliance added to its warm congratulations a copy of the petition it had sent to this Commission.

The President of our American section, whose attention to the proceedings in Rome throughout the Autumn has been unremitting, was granted an interview by Father Ramon Bidagor, S.J., Secretary of the Commission, on October 29th. Father Bigador was quite familiar with St. Joan's petition and said that he would like to see more studies made on the question of Holy Orders for women—a matter "not of fact but of principle".

Another canonist explained that, as in the case of civil law, much that can now be considered "restrictive" was originally intended to be "protective".

Several months ago the American Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary reported their intention to petition the Vatican to allow nuns to be represented on the Commission.

Magna cum Laude

Cardinal Zoungrana, the youngest of Africa's new cardinals, who sent his personal secretary to the reception held by the Alliance in Rome, "to learn all he could" received his degree at the Gregorian University in Rome "magna cum laude". His dissertation (in Canon Law) dealt with a subject in which the Alliance has long been interested—"The Liberty of Consent in Marriage", with reference to the Mossi of Upper Volta.

Women and the Priesthood

We offer our warm congratulations to our member, Sister Vincent Emmanuel, S.U.S.C., who last month at the Pontifical Institute Regina Mundi defended her thesis on "Women and the Priesthood", was "highly commended", and received her diploma. At the same time we express our regret that she and other women who study at the Institute can only receive a diploma and for their Doctorate are obliged to apply to a secular university. St. Joan's International Alliance has asked that women shall be allowed to take theological courses at Catholic universities and institutes and receive the relevant degrees.

THE "OSSERVATORE ROMANO"

Our readers who are in touch with the Italian Press will have noted with regret that the *Osservatore Romano* printed three articles by the Reverend Gino Concetti purporting to dispose, on the authority of the Council, of women's claim to ordination.

The following letter to the *Osservatore Romano* was neither acknowledged nor printed:

"When the *Osservatore Romano* (November 8th-9th) devotes half a page to an article (by Gino Concetti) which states that no woman can ever be ordained, that divine apostolic precepts exclude her for ever from the Church's service—we conclude that the petitions women addressed to the Council are alerting the adversaries of change. To them change means disaster and they do not hesitate to speak in the name of the Church to say so. The wide range and free discussion in the open sessions of Vatican II should suggest a different approach, and an acknowledgment of the possible different interpretations of historical evidence. What is not *de fide* can be discussed."

The obstacles to woman's promotion advanced in this article are not new. They have lately, as the author deplores, been found unacceptable by theologians, who "though qualified", have joined the "feminine chorus", and "far from prudent opinions".

We are content to leave the question to the Church and to those "qualified theologians" who are, as we know, of the first rank.

Mgr. Duchemin

Mgr. Duchemin, rector of the Beda College (1928-1961) died in a convent nursing home in Harrow on December 6th. R.I.P. Mgr. Duchemin was a life member of the Alliance and a very good friend. He sent messages to Miss Barry on all important occasions. The last one was for the Golden Jubilee of *The Catholic Citizen*. In it he wrote, "On the 15th January, 1915, a new voice was heard among Catholic journals. Its purpose was to set before the public a true picture of Catholic womanhood, and to defend her rights. It was a bold venture, and it called for no little courage on the part of the Editors. Thanks to them and to a determined band of supporters *The Catholic Citizen* was published and is still faithful to its original purpose. All its friends will congratulate St. Joan's Alliance for this remarkable record of Catholic Action. Its influence is more than ever needed today when the right relationship between women and the modern world is so important."

Florence Barry

Our readers may like to be reminded that January 27th will be the first anniversary of the death of our beloved Florence Barry.

ST. JOAN'S ALLIANCE

founded 1911

BRITISH SECTION OF ST. JOAN'S INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE

AND

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

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THE LOT OF THE ETHIOPIAN WOMAN

Joan Morris

On my way round the world, showing the film "The Tower and the Dove" to many different nations, I am, at the same time, picking up information regarding the position of women in these various countries. Ethiopia is particularly interesting because of the antiquity of their long held traditions. However, these too are fast breaking up under the influence of the West; I am only just in time to be an eye-witness of customs which soon will only be read about in books.

On the Sunday after the day of my arrival, I attended the Catholic Coptic Cathedral High Mass. I took my seat among the more empty benches, but suddenly realised I was on the men's side of the Church, and I moved to the women's side which was fuller; before long the men's side filled up well too. At least there was no dividing grill as in the Orthodox Coptic Churches in Cairo.

At the back of the Church stood a row of singers—men with rough brown drapery flung over their shoulders. At their feet sat young boys with drums which they beat with incessant solemn repetition giving a reverent reverberation.

The Mass was said in the sacred language of the Ethiopians, not understood by the greater part of the people any more than Latin in Europe; but the men all joined in at the responses which they evidently knew by heart as few had books. The women either side of me were silent. I looked behind me and saw one or two women moving their lips but hardly as much as a whisper could be heard.

After the Mass, I questioned the Abba of the

Cathedral regarding the very slight participation of the women in the responses of the Mass. He said it was the custom, believed to be based on the instruction of St. Paul that women should be silent in Church. The Abba admitted it was a pity as the Sacrifice was for all and all should join in. He said efforts were being made to teach them to take part. He also acknowledged that the custom was pre-Christian and anterior to St. Paul. Nor was the silence of women confined to Churches; in the home also men sat at the table together conversing whilst women waited on them during the meal and ate later at another table apart.

Two young Ethiopians, who took me for a drive round the country in the afternoon, complained that the girls did not express themselves frankly and that it was difficult to know what they thought. This cautious attitude in expressing one's opinion, I am told, is also characteristic of Ethiopian men as well as women. The Ethiopians speak with softly modulated voices with no guttural harshness. The narrow facial bones, fine hands and feet all contribute to singular dignity and beauty.

It is still the custom for the parents to arrange the marriage for their children. At one time the bride and bridegroom did not meet till the actual day of the wedding. Today, however, both parties can refuse the suggested partner. I asked my two guides what they thought about it and whether they thought their parents knew best how to choose the bride, and they in a spirit of submission agreed it was so.

Three forms of marriage are recognised by the State:

- (1) The marriage celebrated in Church.
- (2) The contract marriage, which can easily be broken by mutual agreement. The woman is protected by a law which gives her the right to half her husband's property. If a woman is divorced several times, she can become very rich.
- (3) The marriage by which the woman is paid monthly by the husband. The children are considered legitimate. The woman generally looks after the child till seven years of age, and afterwards, the father indicated by the wife is held responsible.

The Catholic coptic woman has certainly a better position than the Orthodox Ethiopian woman. Neither the young man or woman take Communion after the age of 15 and commonly remain without till old age. However, they can do so after confession, I was told, but it is not clear that they often do this.

The teaching of religion to the laity consists chiefly in the saying of certain prayers and keeping strictly to the fasts (60 days in Lent) and abstinences (every Wednesday and Friday and very many vigils).

The Orthodox women religious are chiefly contemplative. I visited an anchoress called an *Akebite*—a word meaning "mother" and denoting her special work of preparing the bread for the Eucharist. The *Akebite* I saw lived in a rough shed under the Church. There were no windows; the floor and bedstead were covered with straw. The wall was adorned with a painting of Our Lady and St. Michael hung on a nail without any attempt at alignment.

Abba Hapta Mariam, Dean of the Orthodox Cathedral of the Trinity, took me to see a convent in the vicinity of Addis Ababa, where the sisters work on the land and make basketware. These sisters live under modern conditions—prayer is still their chief occupation and the convent as all others is sustained by the Diocese. On feast days they wear a yellow habit like the Buddhist monks.

Forward-Looking

At a conference on "Religion in Life" at Dayton University, Ohio, U.S.A., Mother Mary Anne, of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, stated, "The second Vatican Council should release us from Canon Law mentality which regards sisters as minors. We are looking forward to participating actively in the official affairs and liturgical functions of the Church. With few exceptions we have lived 'ghettoed' in convents, outside the stream of emergence of women into civic life."

New Section

We are glad to know that the Belgian section is being organised and we look forward to hearing further details in the near future.

AFTER THE COUNCIL

Optimism

The *Universe* reports (December 24th) that at a Press conference in Rome Archbishop Pelegrino of Turin, Italy, said that the Vatican Council had eliminated all discrimination based on sex.

Speaking of the simplification of clerical dress and titles the Archbishop is reported to have said, "The sooner we accelerate the process of simplification the greater the gain for the Church. Public opinion no longer tolerates things that were all right in past days."

Woman Consultor

A report from Holland tells us that the first woman to be appointed to a central office of the Catholic Church is Professor Christine Mohrmann, consultor to the Post-Conciliar Commission on Liturgy Reform.

Disappointment and Regret

John Wallis in an excellent summing up of the achievements of the Vatican Council, wrote from Rome, for the *Telegraph*, "My personal regret is that the Council did not pay enough attention to the rôle of women in the Roman Catholic Church. But even here one noted that nuns were adopting a more independent attitude towards priests and no longer saying 'Yes, Father' to everything some less intelligent cleric told them. Perhaps, however, the next Council, if there is one, will do something to elevate the standing of these devoted and often brilliant women."

Reporting on schema No. 6, on the Missions, Fr. Congar, O.P., refers to the regret expressed at the Vatican Council that the missionary vocation of the laity and in particular the missionary rôle of women had not been sufficiently affirmed.

(*Informations Catholiques Internationales*,
November, 1965)

Next Council Meeting of the Alliance

During the weekend of August 28th our 1966 Council Meeting will be held in London at Crosby Hall. Our International President discussed matters concerning the Council meeting with our member Miss Morris who, on reaching New Delhi, showed her film to a highly appreciative audience at the Belgian Ambassador's residence. We look forward to seeing Miss Morris on her return via Bangkok, etc.

Another Optimistic Note

One of our members at Mass at the Dominican Priory at Haverstock Hill noted that the preacher, speaking of vocations for men, added, "Women being *not yet* ordainable."

LE PLAIDOYER FEMININ

L'interrogation de Francis Thompson, que reproduit en exergue chaque numéro du *Catholic Citizen*, pourrait servir aussi de liminaire à l'important travail que le Révérend Père Xavier Tilliette, S.J., vient, dans la revue de son *Ordre "Etudes"*,* de consacrer à la femme et aux problèmes du féminisme:

"Fille de l'ancienne Eve, nous savons ce que tu fus et te devons. Mais toi, fille de la nouvelle Eve, qui saura ce que tu es, ce que nous te devons?"

Sur cette femme des temps nouveaux, il a été beaucoup écrit depuis quelque temps.

"La résonance que trouve un peu partout l'évocation des problèmes signale l'un des phénomènes les plus caractéristique et, à longue échéance, les plus importants de notre époque," écrit le Père Tilliette. Et l'on peut dire que, de ce phénomène, il se montre l'un des observateurs les plus attentifs et les plus pénétrants.

Au travers d'un nombre imposant de titres récents son étude d'aujourd'hui va se dérouler. Les deux pôles en seront en quelque sorte: d'une part—l'âpre et revendicatif ouvrage d'Andrée Michel et Geneviève Texier, "La condition de Française d'aujourd'hui" encore strictement dans la ligne égalitaire du premier féminisme (celui qu'il est de bon ton de dire maintenant "dépassé") d'autre part le spirituel et bondissant, "Métier de femme" de Ménie Grégoire, tentative, utopique peut-être, de conciliation, des contraires de jusqu'ici, et essai de pont par-dessus les antagonismes.

Entre les deux cette "Femme mystifiée—maintenant démystifiée—de Betty Friedan, l'Américaine qui, à la fin de la guerre, à l'heure du retour des héros fatigués, fut elle-même conviée à revenir vers ses fourneaux étincelants pour le plus grand profit des marchands d'appareils ménagers mais au grand détriment de son équilibre psychique, en proie bientôt à on ne sut d'abord quel "indéfinissable malaise" générateur de névroses: celui de "la femme être-humain virtuel, enfermé dans son sexe fortuit."

De toute cette littérature, quelque soient les orientations propres des auteurs, une constatation se dégage: l'ancienne image, celle de la femme enclose dans les horizons domestiques et ne communiquant avec le vaste monde que par personnes interposées—cette image-là appartient au passé. Elle est unanimement rejetée.

Laquelle la remplace? C'est ici que naît la perplexité, ici que s'ouvre la recherche. L'image reniée est-elle définitivement abolie? N'en subsiste-t-il pas des traces? Il semble bien que si. Ne pourrait-on pas aller jusque'à se demander s'il n'y a pas là un résidu dernier, un noyau irréductible équivalent à cet "éternel féminin"—assujettissement physique et psychique à la loi de l'espèce—dont les uns nient

réalité, et pour lequel d'autres, comme Ménie Grégoire, continue à revendiquer? La femme de demain connaîtra-t-elle encore les conflits et les incertitudes de la femme d'aujourd'hui? La question reste posée pour longtemps encore sans doute.

Il faudrait pouvoir suivre pas à pas le Père Tilliette, dans toutes les voies qu'il ouvre à notre réflexion. La place nous manque. Contentons nous d'aller le retrouver au dernier chapitre, celui qui a pour titre "La femme et l'Eglise", et qui, au lendemain de notre congrès de Rome, revêt pour nous une importance exceptionnelle.

En dépit de ce qu'il affirme, on ne s'aperçoit guère, en lisant son étude, des "obstacles insurmontables que devrait franchir (et a franchis) un religieux, célibataire, catholique et français (toujours) pour rejoindre, en telle ou telle occasion, la perspective de femmes affranchies, laïques, incroyantes et socialistes" (comme sont Andrée Michel et Geneviève Texier). Mais ce qui est sûr, c'est que, plus aisément encore, le Père Tilliette entre dans la psychologie des féministes catholiques.

"L'antiféminisme de l'Eglise catholique est un lieu commun de la polémique féministe," écrit-il. Plus exactement, l'attitude de l'Eglise et la morale catholique illustrent la conception traditionnelle de la féminité, avec son mélange d'humiliation et d'idéalisation, contre quoi se hérisse la propagande libertaire. . . . Effectivement, l'Eglise maintient dans ses structures apparentes, hiérarchiques, la totale subordination de la femme au mâle. . . . Une mystérieuse loi salique y exclut les femmes de toute fonction d'autorité. . . . L'Eglise n'a pas adapté à ses propres institutions les requêtes et les conquêtes de la femme moderne. . . .

. . . Il n'est pas vrai que l'Eglise n'ait pas de théologie de la femme comme telle. Mais il est exact qu'elle n'est pas assez explicite. Exclues totalement du ministère et presque autant des sciences sacrées, les femmes n'ont eu aucune part à l'élaboration du donné révélé, elles n'ont pas eu leur mot à dire sur certains points de morale qui cependant les intéressent directement. . . .

. . . Au regard de l'impressionnante évolution du monde féminin, les interventions épiscopales, l'invitation d'auditrices au concile, la tiède mue des congrégations religieuses féminines et les légères modifications du rituel du mariage constituent un début timide, presque dérisoire. Mais ce sont les imperceptibles souffles d'un printemps. Le moulin de Dieu moud lentement. A ces quelques indices, on peut espérer que la femme prendra dans les institutions une part et une place plus importantes. . . . Mais il est davantage symptomatique que la délicate question l'ordination sacerdotale ou diaconale soit posée—c'eût été impensable naguère—qu'elle le soit par des théologiennes dont la soumission égale la sin-

cérité, la science et l'argumentation persuasive. . . .

Il nous est bon d'entendre le Père Tilliette poursuivre: "Tant que l'Eglise n'a pas canonisé une symbolique des sexes et fait d'une raison de convenance une proposition de foi, le débat est permis; au surplus, il choque de moins en moins nos habitudes de pensée; peut-être est-ce une semence jetée au vent de l'Esprit?"

Nous n'en oublierons pas pour autant les recommandations de prudente patience que notre requête pourrait être tentée d'omettre. Nous devons savoir que "la réflexion théologique part des sources de la révélation et non des situations humaines. C'est l'homme qui est référé à Dieu, objectif en lui," et on peut risquer, dans les rangs féministes, d'adopter la démarche inverse. "Les obstacles, les prudences demeurent encore déterminants."

Mais nous retiendrons surtout les lignes de conclusion: "Le féminisme a éveillé les problèmes de la femme; c'est à la femme de dénouer les problèmes du féminisme."

P. Archambault

*15, rue Monsieur, Paris VIIème. Nos. de Mai et de Juin, 1965.

IN PARLIAMENT

Tragic events in Africa have cast their shadow over Parliament, as over the rest of the country, but time has been found for the progress of much other business. On November 10th, Lord Arran reintroduced the Sexual Offences Bill, which passed through all its stages in the Lords during the last session, but never reached the Commons. Mr. Berkeley, Conservative M.P. for Lancaster, who was successful in the Private Members' Ballot, has introduced a similar Bill in the House of Commons, which is due to be read a second time on February 11th. An attempt to block the Bill, of which the object is to legalise homosexual practices in private by consenting adults, will then be made by Mr. William Shepherd, Conservative Member for Cheadle, who, in traditional language, has given notice that he will move that "the Bill be read a second time upon this day six months".

The second reading of the Abortion Bill took place in the House of Lords on November 30th, when Lord Iddesleigh, in his speech, presented the traditional Catholic view. Not only did he consider abortion to be morally wrong, but he felt the Bill to be both extreme and premature, since various Committees still had to report on the subject. It was claimed that the Bill, if passed, would place a curb on the back-street abortionists, but he was getting more and more doubtful of the legislative principle that if you cannot stop something bad from being done, then you had better legalise it under restrictions. He also enquired what would be the position of conscientious objectors to abortion, which included nurses as well as doctors. Baroness Audley, one of the three hereditary peeresses, making her maiden speech, also spoke from the Catholic point of view.

On November 2nd, in the House of Lords, in the debate on cervical cancer, Lady Summer-skill said they were told that the failure to take more energetic action was due to the shortage of suitable women for training in the necessary techniques. The Royal Free Hospital had estimated that altogether 5,000 women on the medical register were not practising. Many of these were married with young families. Owing to the absence of domestic help, these women could not work full-time, but they had part-time to spare. Use might well be made of this reserve of trained skill.

Speaking in the debate on the National Plan on November 24th, Lady Phillips said that there was little doubt women would be the main source from which the necessary increase in the supply of labour would be drawn, and that these women would be mostly married women. She asked for further provision for the care of their children. The Department of Education and Science had made a start in providing nursery classes for the children of returning women teachers, but there was also a shortage of nurses and midwives and of all kinds of social workers. It seemed to her wrong that a decision of what should be provided in this respect should rest with one Ministry, particularly when it was an interested party.

One new life peeress has been created in the person of Lady Hylton Foster, the widow of one Speaker and the daughter of another. The announcement was made on December 10th that Lady Phillips had been appointed a Baroness in Waiting (i.e. Government Whip). This is the first time a woman has risen to ministerial rank in the Upper House.

In the reshuffle of the Cabinet announced on December 22nd, Mrs. Barbara Castle, formerly Minister of Overseas Development, was appointed instead to the arduous office of Minister of Transport.

In the House of Commons, on November 18th, Miss Quennell raised the question of the appointment of more women to economic boards and councils created by the Government. She pointed out that there were no women at all on the Boards and only three on the Councils. Mr. Albu, in reply, claimed to be rather a feminist himself, but said that the first consideration was the contribution those appointed were likely to make to the work, and that one should not necessarily take sex into consideration when making such appointments.

On December 8th, Mrs. McKay asked the Minister of Labour to what extent the marriage bar was still practised in commercial and industrial employment, both in the public and private sector. In reply, Mr. Gunter said married women were not employed by the Scottish police forces or recruited by the British Transport Police. Only single women were employed as air hostesses, and in

Scotland banks usually retained married women only in a non-pensionable capacity. In the private sector, information was not available, but the employment service rarely encountered a marriage bar, and employers in general encouraged married women to remain at work.

Vera Douie

FILM REVIEW

"Monsieur Vincent" is one of the many excellent French films made since the last war. Its hero is a saint—Vincent de Paul—and the film begins in 1617 with his arrival at Chatillon-en-Dombes, a miserable plague-stricken village which has been ten years without a priest. He is greeted by closed doors, shuttered windows and a fusillade of stones. Undaunted and unaided he sets about his work—he re-opened the church which had become a hen roost and a home for tramps, and buried the dead. Gradually the people accepted him.

In 1625 he returned to Paris to work among the poor and with the help of Madame de Gondi, in whose house he was at one time Confessor, the Ladies of Charity were founded; all the high born ladies of the day deemed it an honour to belong. One of the most touching moments of the film is when Marguerite Nazeau, a devout peasant girl offers her services to "perform tasks too heavy or disagreeable for the great ladies". These must have been many. Geneviève More brings a lovely simplicity and humility to the part but the film is irradiated by the performance of Pierre Fresnay as "Vincent" whom we see first as the young priest, strong and fearless, then through middle age and so on to old age, still working among the poor but feeling that all his work has been so little. The Sisters of Charity who have foundations in so many countries prove this fear to have been unfounded.

G.D.

IMPORTANT

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

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

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SPECIAL FUND

The most generous response from our members to our appeals throughout 1965, greatly heartened headquarters staff in their efforts to maintain the standards achieved throughout the lifetime of Florence Barry; it is a very practical proof of the affection and esteem in which she was held. During the Council Meeting in Rome the question of continuing the work of the Alliance was discussed at great length and it was unanimously agreed that it was essential to employ somebody who would be capable of eventually taking over the work at headquarters.

To obtain the right person means having to pay a reasonable salary and to this end a special fund has now been opened. Members of the British section have already subscribed £200 and it is confidently hoped that many of our members all over the world will wish to subscribe. It will be known as the "Special Fund", and will be operated in a separate account. Unless sufficient money is forthcoming it is impossible to look for the assistance we require. Subscriptions will be listed in *The Catholic Citizen*.

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TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO

Women Parish Assistants

A correspondent to *The Standard* (Ireland) writes that there is in Germany a development of Catholic Action which is unique. It is the Gemeindeführerin or parish female assistant—a paid profession of women which obliges them to assist the priest in all parochial duties and activities. It began some fifteen years ago when a German priest found it necessary to employ a secretary to assist him in his writing, book-keeping and instruction of converts. Now there are over four hundred Gemeindeführerinnen properly trained and qualified at work in Germany.

(*The Catholic Citizen*, 1941)