

THE

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Organ of St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance (formerly 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.

Report of the Age of Consent Commission.

From our SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.

The report of the Age of Consent Commission has now been published and its chief recommendations are given here.

The main points of interest to Englishwomen are pars 1, 5, 6. The fact that a report embodying these considerable advances should have been signed unanimously by Indians, some of them orthodox, of all shades of political opinion (for it must be remembered that only one member of the Commission was European), after a prolonged tour extending from Peshawar to Calicut, and from Karachi to Shillong, indicates how great is the extent of the evil with which the report deals.

The report is a very thoughtful one dealing with every aspect of the case.

Englishwomen will say it is folly to fix a minimum age for marriage, and then to fix an intra-marital age of consent. Canon Law has fixed the minimum age of marriage at 14 years, and then allows full marital rights. This is the only reasonable proceeding; but Canon Law urges pastors to persuade their parishioners whenever possible not to marry their girls at the early age of 14, and this in effect is the pious hope of the framers of the report. To quote the report: "The age of marriage at 14 has been recommended with a view not to disturb the practices of the conservative section beyond the necessary minimum. Several witnesses, some of them the most orthodox, have expressed their willingness to raise the age of consent within marriage to 14 or

even 15. Religious obligation, says the orthodox, compels marriage pre-puberty, but consummation of marriage is even now often not performed till one or two years after puberty."

If a Marriage Law fixing the age of 14 years for girls is passed the benefit to India will be incalculable, even should the consummation take place in every case immediately after marriage. Child widowhood will be abolished at one stroke of the pen, and the pitiful cases of injury to immature girl wives by brutal husbands will no longer be seen.

"A consciousness of the magnitude of the evil of child marriage has impressed itself on a considerable number of men and women who yet find it difficult to break away from established usages; though some of the orthodox have had the courage to marry their daughters at 16 or 18, the majority are afraid of the social obloquy, and fear of social degradation consequent on late marriage and late consummation, and these would welcome a law prohibiting marriage below a given age. Further it is found in some Provinces that castes and communities which were accustomed to post puberty marriages are now resorting to early marriages in imitation of the customs of superior castes. A law of marriage would prevent the spread of this evil."

The Age of Consent outside marriage has been raised to 18 years, this is higher than in most Western countries, and

will surely raise a storm of protest, so let us see how the report justifies its recommendation.

"The Social system is undergoing a rapid change. The middle and lower classes are engaged in pursuits and occupations which a generation back would not have attracted their attention. As clerks and typists in offices and as factory workers in big industrial centres, girls below 18 are employed in much larger numbers to-day and such employment has necessarily placed them in a position where they need the utmost protection. The migration into cities and the loosening of the tie of Joint Family, already referred to, have also placed girls of tender age, both married and unmarried, in a less sheltered position than before. Under these altered circumstances of society, it has become increasingly necessary that law should step in and afford a greater protection than it has so far given. The age of 18 does not appear to err on the side of excess in the light of these circumstances.

"We may now examine some of the objections that have been put forward for not raising the age at all, or against raising it beyond 16 years. It has been stated by some that girls in India are precocious, that they obtain puberty earlier than in Western countries, and are sexually mature generally at the age of 14 and certainly at the age of 16, and that it is idle to presume that they do not realise the nature of the act at those ages. This argument involves the fallacy that mind and body develop simultaneously and to the same extent. A physically mature body does not necessarily mean an intellectually mature mind. On the other hand with illiteracy to the extent it prevails in the country, with opportunities so few to learn the ways of the world which an Indian girl has, and with the cloistered life that she leads, she is hardly in a position to realise the grave consequences to her whole future existence which the crime involves. A more serious objection has been advanced that boys below 18 years are not protected against the blandishments of girls over 16 years, and that such boys, while at the mercy of designing girls, will be penalised for what they are not wholly or even largely responsible. In considering this objection, we may ignore for the moment

girls who are unchaste or who belong to the professional classes of prostitutes, as their case will be considered separately. Among the ordinary classes who lead a normally chaste life, it is, we feel, an exaggeration to suggest that girls will often be the tempters of young boys of immature age. Such an hypothesis is wholly against experience and the danger if it exists, must be held to be of such a small degree that it cannot prevail in the consideration of the question. Moreover we have sufficient faith in the discretion of the trying judge and are confident that in such cases the boy would not be given a disproportionate punishment. It has also been suggested by some, that not merely young boys below 18 will be subject to these temptations, but even young men of higher ages will find it difficult to resist the temptations or solicitations of such girls. Apart from the fact that such solicitations are bound to be very rare, we see no reason to consider leniently the case of a young man so tempted. A young man of that age is said to be liable to greater temptation than a girl of similar or even lower age, because society is less severe towards an erring man than to a defaulting girl. That is a further reason why the law should step in and punish the young man.

"The case of prostitutes and girls in brothels requires separate consideration. It has been pointed out that an increase in the age to the extent proposed will give a handy weapon to the prostitute class, that blackmailing will be resorted to and that many innocent men will be unduly harassed.

The "innocent man" who goes to a brothel is just as innocent as the thief who goes to a receiver of stolen property, and the harm done to society by the thief is incomparably less than that done by the libertine. Women can no longer throw a jibe at brutal man-made laws which are always in the interests of his sex, they now have an equal responsibility for the making of the laws. Let them see to it that in future the laws protect their own sex against the crimes of men for which women always have to pay. "Blackmailing by prostitutes with reference to the charge of rape is not unknown at present and will not form a new feature of

(Continued on p. 81.)

Notes and Comments.

We offer our hearty congratulations to the Women's Indian Association on the passing of The Child Marriage Bill (introduced by Rai Sahib Sarda) by the Legislative Assembly, Simla, and Council of State. The Bill applies to all communities, and raises the age of marriage for girls to 14 and boys to 18. We also congratulate the Committee appointed by the Government of India to enquire into the law relating to the age of consent. This Committee, under the Chairmanship of Sir Morropant V. Jobhi, has just issued its report, with which our leading article deals. Two women served on the Committee, Mrs. Brij Lal Nehru and our member, Dr. Mary Beadon, who was the only European on the Committee.

Many cases have been quoted in proof that child marriage constitutes a real evil. We have ourselves received details of a recent case of a child of eleven married to a schoolmaster, who took her to his home against her parents' wishes. When brought home by her father two months later, the child had been so ill-used that her injuries will be permanent. The father instituted proceedings against the schoolmaster, who was sentenced to one's year's detention, but on appeal was let off.

L'Action Internationale Démocratique pour la Paix recently organised a pilgrimage to Paris with sections converging on the capital from all parts of France. Subsequently fifty delegates came to London as guests of the London Committee of the Adult School Union. Members of St. Joan's Alliance gave hospitality during the visit to some of the delegates, the majority of whom were Catholics, and who included in their number two priests.

We were particularly pleased to make the acquaintance of Professor and Mrs. Gemähling who have done such magnificent work for the abolitionist movement in Strasburg.

Mrs. John Scott sends us the *Montreal Daily Star*, giving a report of how she and Mrs. E. T. Sampson (who is a member of St. Joan's S.P.A.) went up in an aero-

plane and—with permission of the authorities—dropped leaflets over Montreal, advocating votes for women. Prizes were offered to those persons, who picked up the specially marked leaflets. An excellent advertisement for the cause. On landing Mrs. Scott was presented with a bouquet from the members of the Alliance Canadienne pour le vote des Femmes de Quebec.

Members of St. Joan's S.P.A. were present at the hearing in July by the Privy Council of the claim made by Canadian women to be senators. The question raised is whether women are persons under the British North American Act, 1867, which empowers the Governor to summon qualified persons to the Senate. The Privy Council's decision has not yet been issued. We hope it will be favourable to the women's claim.

Annual Mass.

The Annual Mass for deceased members, associates and benefactors of the Alliance will be offered at St. Patrick's Church, Soho, on Sunday, November 3rd, at 10-30. We hope that as many of our members as possible will attend.

Obituary.

International feminism has suffered a great loss by the death of Dr. Aletta Jacobs, the great pioneer of suffrage in Holland. We offer our sincere sympathy to our Dutch colleagues.

Pit Ponies.

We are asked by the Pit Ponies Protection Society to call the attention of our readers to the cruel conditions under which ponies are worked in the mines. The Society is urging certain reforms on the Government, in which it should have the support of all humane people. The literature sent to us makes very sad reading. Information of this question may be obtained from the Hon. Secretary, D. Jeffrey Williams, 10 Park Place, Cardiff.

ST. JOAN'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ALLIANCE,

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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The Traffic in Women and Children.

The Session of the Commission on the Traffic in Women and Children, held in Geneva a few months ago, was of considerable interest. The discussion on the question of the abolition of the system of licensed houses shows that opposition to the infamous system is increasing, as Governments become more enlightened.

On behalf of his Government the French delegate stated that the authorities were following closely the evolution of public opinion in regard to the abolition of State regulated houses. He declared that this could be done with the greater freedom since no law existed for the regulation of prostitution, regulation in France is merely a municipal police measure, enforced by the town authorities under the law of April 5, 1884, which empowered them to take the necessary steps to guarantee order, and safeguard public health, and to issue decrees to combat the evil effects of prostitution, when such action seemed advisable. The Municipalities could, therefore, abolish regulation without altering the law, or referring to the central authorities. Strasburg and Colmar, and other important towns were making the experiment. The French delegate, M. Regnault, added that the way to secure the triumph of abolitionist views is to organise public opinion, he emphasised that it would be essential to have complete information regarding the measures adopted in abolitionist countries to preserve order and safeguard public health.

It is strange that anyone should still place

confidence in the regulation of vice as a "safeguard" to immorality. We may quote in this connection a "communiqué" issued by the Departmental Council for Hygiene of the Lower Rhine, to which the Council "asks the Press to give publicity in order to combat the false and dangerous idea that tolerated houses offer any security from a sanitary point of view. On the contrary results tend to prove the contrary." We hope the Council has sent their "communiqué," which shows an important decrease in venereal disease since the closing of licensed houses, to the French delegate.

M. Regnault further recalled that a Commission set up in France for the prevention of venereal disease had prepared an abolitionist bill at the moment tabled in the Senate.

The Belgian delegate said that in his country also the question of licensed houses was left to the communal authorities, and their abolition depended upon converting the authorities to the abolitionist point of view. This was already the case in Antwerp.

The Japanese delegate stated that a bill for the abolition of licensed houses had been submitted to the Japanese Parliament last March—the result of the work of national philanthropic associations. It will be remembered that the Report of the Experts who, at the request of the League of Nations, conducted an enquiry into the traffic in women and children, stated definitely that licensed houses are an incentive to the traffic both national and international, and that

therefore the question of the retention or abolition of such houses has acquired an international as well as a national character. International discussion is of the greatest importance, and the League's commission is doing invaluable work. We do not forget that the British Empire is not fully purged of the infamy of regulated vice. We are glad that the League is to extend its enquiries into the international traffic in women, to countries not yet visited, especially to Eastern countries.

L. DE ALBERTI.

Future Events.

There are several events in the near future to which we wish to call the attention of our members and friends.

On Saturday, October 26, at 3 p.m., a Jumble Sale will be held at the South Kilburn Mission Hall, Cambridge Road, N.W.6. We want to make this a really big financial success, so will all members help by sending goods. These may be sent to the Hall on the morning of the Sale, or may be addressed to me (marked "Jumble Sale") at 57 Carlton Hill, N.W.8. Or if I am notified, I will try to arrange for goods to be called for. We also want helpers at the Sale who should be at the Hall at 2-30 p.m. Buses 28, 31, 6, and 36. Bus stop: the Chippenham.

Two dances are being organised for the funds of the Alliance. Both will be held at the Westminster Cathedral Hall from 7-30 p.m. to 11-30 p.m. The first on Thursday, October 31, will take the form of a "Hallowe'en Revel"—there will be prizes for the prettiest dance frocks and for a Waltz Competition. On Tuesday, November 12, a Grand Carnival Dance will be held. Tickets for both dances—2s. 6d. each—may be obtained from 55 Berners Street, W.1. Refreshments will be obtainable at moderate prices.

On November 14 and 15, Thursday and Friday, our Alliance will have its annual stall at the Green, White and Gold Fair at the Caxton Hall. Goods for the Stall and the names of helpers for both days (3 p.m. to 9 p.m.) are urgently needed and should be sent to 55 Berners Street, W.1.

Vera Laughton Mathews,
Hon. Treasurer.

Report of the Age of Consent Commission.

(Continued from p. 78.)

the amended law. But such blackmailing is resorted to in cases in which consent is denied, and not generally in cases in which the age of the girl is below the statutory limit. There is not much scope for it in the latter class of cases as the blackmailer himself or herself will in most cases be acknowledging guilt as an abettor of the offence. In the case of brothel-keepers, the argument against blackmailing is even stronger. We cannot ignore the tendency in several parts of the country to legislate for the suppression of brothels. In the cities of Bombay and Calcutta there are Acts of the local Legislatures prohibiting girls under a certain age from residing in brothels. A bill for the suppression of brothels is now on the anvil of the Madras Legislative Council. The raising of age to 18 years will be particularly helpful in dealing with the growing evils of brothels in big cities."

Jury Service.

In a recent case at the Old Bailey, a man charged with offences against a girl, challenged women jurors, who were replaced by men. The Recorder, while objecting to the practice, said he could not stop it.

In cases of this nature a woman's point of view is of great importance, and St. Joan's S.P.A., the Women's Freedom League and other societies, are urging that the challenging of jurors on the grounds of sex shall be made illegal.

The I.L.O. and Seamen's Welfare.

St. Joan's S.P.A. and other feminist societies have been organising opposition and asking support from the Government and Delegates against two recommendations of the Sub-Committee on Seamen's Welfare, which are to be considered at the 13th Session of the International Labour Conference, to be held in Geneva this month. These recommendations are:

1. Prohibition against the employment of female attendants in places where strong drinks are served, and the lodging of seamen thereat.

2. Strict medical control of women who have illicit intercourse with men.

We consider that to turn women out of employment is unjust, a gross interference with an adult woman's right to choose her own occupation, and may increase prostitution. As a protection to men it is futile. As to the medical control of women who have illicit intercourse with men, it is State Regulation of Vice, an immoral system, the futility of which, as a protection to men, has been long since exposed, and more recently by Experts of the League of Nations. Does the League work in water-tight compartments, or do the experts of the I.L.O. disregard the experts of the League?

National Council of Women.

St. Joan's Alliance is taking a prominent part in the deliberations of the National Council of Women's Annual Conference to be held in Manchester, October 14-18. The following resolution on the opening of the Diplomatic Service to women will be moved by Mrs. Laughton Mathews on behalf of the Alliance:

"That in view of the fact that the work of the Diplomatic, the Consular and the Indian and Colonial Civil Services affects women as much as men, and in view of the special desire evinced by women to further international understanding, the National Council of Women calls upon the Government to rescind the Order in Council of July 22nd, 1920, which debar women from all posts in these services; and further, so to amend, the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act so as to delete the proviso to Section (1) providing that His Majesty may by order in Council authorize regulations with regard to the conditions of retirement and appointment of women in the Civil Service and excluding women from any branch of the Civil Service overseas or in a foreign country."

The resolution on Affiliation Orders overseas will be moved by the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child and seconded by St. Joan's Alliance:

"That the National Council of Women calls upon the Government to introduce without delay a Bill providing for the enforcement of Affiliation Orders overseas on similar lines to the Maintenance Orders (Facilities for Enforcement) Act, 1920,

and to bring before the Imperial Conference the urgent need for reciprocal legislation, in order that a man may not be permitted to evade his responsibilities to a child, whether legitimate or illegitimate, by removal to another part of the Empire."

The resolution asking for information on Artificial Birth Control to be given at Maternity and Child Welfare clinics in receipt of Government grants, will be vigorously opposed by St. Joan's Alliance.

National Catholic Congress.

The National Catholic Congress meetings have been so widely reported in the Catholic press that it is only necessary for us to offer our congratulations to all the organisers.

Particulars were given in last month's *Catholic Citizen* of the women's meeting at the Albert Hall, and our readers had Miss Gordon's fine speech in full in the leading article.

We were enthralled by the beautiful orchestral music composed specially for the occasion by our young member Miss Dorothy Howell, F.R.A.M., one of our leading young composers of the day.

Our thanks are due to our devoted band of paper sellers, who so nobly bore the burden of the heat and of the day by selling 15,000 copies of *The Catholic Citizen* in the streets during the Congress. They were Misses Barry, Bate, Butler-Bowdon, Connolly, Fedden, Foot, Hodgson, Gordon, Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Kerr, Misses Kerr, Molony, Nancy Parnell and Stack.

Dinner at Rendez-Vous.

St. Joan's S.P.A. is giving a dinner at the Rendez-Vous to Mlle. Lenoël, Hon. Sec. of the Orleans Suffrage Society, on Tuesday, November 19, at 7-15 for 7-30.

Mrs. de Fonseka will also be a guest of St. Joan's S.P.A. on that occasion, and has promised to speak on the position of women in Ceylon. Tickets 4s. 6d., apply to 55 Berners Street, W.1., as soon as possible.

Please remember to send Goods for the Jumble Sale. See "Future Events" on page 81.

International Notes.

We offer our heartiest congratulations to the various suffrage societies in *Rumania*, on having won the right to vote and eligibility to municipal and departmental elections, for certain categories of women. They will first exercise this right in the November elections. Equal franchise, we hope, will follow soon.

* * * *

From our member Frau Rudel-Zeynek we learn that on July 18, a Bill greatly extending pensions and allowances, and removing from the recipients any pauper stigma, was passed through the *Austrian Bundesrat* without opposition. Frau Rudel-Zeynek, who was herself the reporter in Parliament, has worked unceasingly for this reform against heavy odds for the last seven years.

* * * *

Frau Rudel has just returned from Geneva where she served as delegate for Austria to the Inter-Parliamentary Union. She has been commissioned to furnish a report on illegitimate and neglected children for its next meeting.

* * * *

From *La Française*, we learn the good news that our member, Madame Vallé-Genairon has by the request of the new municipality of Mâcon been one of the two women chosen by the Union Française pour le Suffrage des Femmes to serve on the "Commission d'assistance et de bienfaisance." Both nominations were ratified by the Municipality. We send them our congratulations and best wishes for the success of their work.

* * * *

We must be most grateful to Père Albert Bessières, S.J., who is using the centenary of the conquest of Algeria, which is to be celebrated next year, as a means to make known the appalling conditions under which Algerian women are now living. In *Le Féminisme Chretien de Belgique*, Père Bessières draws attention to the fact that there are from thirteen to fifteen millions of Mahometan women in the French colonies alone. These women, who can possess no property; not even their own children, are sold by their fathers to polygamous husbands who can divorce them at will and without

stating the reasons. On the death of a husband the wives are sold with the rest of his property.

B. H. M.

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Hon. Secretary: Miss N. S. Parnell, B.A.,
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The Branch resumed its activities with a very enjoyable Social on September 27th. Besides re-uniting us after a long vacation, it also augmented our funds, as everything (apart from the expense of the room) was very generously contributed by members to whom our best thanks are due. During the course of the evening, Miss J. E. M'Crindell, one of the directors of the proposed social survey of Liverpool, explained to us its purpose and scope, and invited our co-operation in the religious section of the inquiry. Several members volunteered their services and are shortly to begin work in the Edge Hill division of the city. Miss F. Jervis, one of the earliest members of the Branch, has been unanimously elected to the vice-chairmanship in succession to Mrs. Parnell.

The Committee are hoping to hold a dance before Christmas—our first venture in the direction for many years. Miss M. Noonan, whose suggestion it is, has very kindly undertaken to organise it in co-operation with the Committee.

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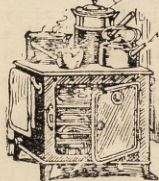
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