

WOMEN'S SERVICE
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THE
Catholic Citizen

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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MAY 15th, 1925.

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.

Feminism in Some Recent Spanish Plays.

By F. DE G. MERRIFIELD.

It has been said that there is kinship between the genius of Spain and of England. Their great sixteenth century dramatists, for instance, were alike careless of "the unities." To-day we have Señor Martínez Sierra, known for his book on Feminism and as a prolific writer of plays, describing the Spanish theatre from its cradle onwards, as "a surging mass of multiform life, a forest peopled by a rustling multitude—human, superhuman, celestial, mythological, and of the animal kingdom." The discourse from which this quotation is made was delivered before the first performance of his version of the legend of S. Theodora—which, in spite of its repellent title, "La Adultera Penitente," may well engage the attention of the feminist. For, notwithstanding her fall, Theodora is the sweet strong character that governs others and sheds around her a gracious influence. "With that extraordinary woman, I must come off loser," says the Devil. And when the Abbot turns her away without compunction—"in the house of God is now no charity"—on a false accusation, she quietly takes upon her the care of an abandoned infant and turns herself into a beggar for its sake. "Theodora sinned," says the Devil to her husband, and "Who has not sinned?" is her answer. "To sin is a common weakness, to forgive is strength and nobleness, and makes us like to God. Listen to your heart."

The first play in the volume in which S. Theodora's story forms the second, is "El

Reino de Dios." An English version has been played recently at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, and attention was called in the January number of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance Journal, to the scene in which the boys of an orphanage are adjured to make it their object when they grow to manhood to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. "You who have suffered injustice," urges the Sister in charge, "will know how to make just laws. . . . Say with me: 'Lord, we will never forget the bitterness of this bread, we swear to be the last to eat of it. Jesus, Son of God, Christ, Son of Man, by Thy Blood shed for us, we vow that when we are men, the last drop of our own blood shall be drained that there may be no more forsaken children, and that never any more shall there be mothers who for lack of bread and of justice are made ashamed to take their children in their arms.'" The boys, who had been in revolt against the miserable fare provided for them by a fraudulent administration, catch her fire and swear.

This Sor Gracia, seventy years of age when she thus changes the current of young thoughts, has been presented to us in the first Act of the piece as a girl of eighteen, moved already by her passionate charity to leave a luxurious home and a dearly loved father in order to dedicate her life to caring for the wretched. She feels that she has nothing to give but her gaiety, her merry heart, and these she bestows in full measure

on the poor old men who have found an asylum with the Sisters of Charity, whom she joins. The father is a modern-minded man, and can say: "Children do not belong to their parents; they are ours through our own act, and are a part of our happiness. We have no right to interpose in theirs unless they seek it by evil paths."

In Act II we find this delightful Sor Gracia, at the age of twenty-nine, serving in a Hospice for unmarried mothers, their children, and the baby foundlings left abandoned at the gate. Four years of work, which is represented as hopeless under the conditions obtaining, have dimmed her brightness, but have quenched neither her protective love nor her ardour for awakening in the variously disposed but all alike deserted women that maternal instinct which lives in her. "Here is all the sadness of the world," she says. "These women—I cannot say whether it is the desperate or the resigned among them who most distress me." "Yes, and it is worse than sadness, the vice of some, above all the lack of hope, the sense of the irremediable." "If they would but face the shame, lift up their heads and take their children in their arms, God would forgive. But no one teaches them how to call on God. And one thinks: How can they sin against a God they really seem to be ignorant of? And if there is no sin, where is the dishonour?" She is sad, weary, poisoned, as it were, by the atmosphere of hopeless misery, but her vocation holds against the plea of a man who loves and honours her, and knows that she has made no perpetual vows: "I have chosen my Love once and for all. Of old He gave me such a merry heart, I will have faith that He will give it me again, but even if not, I gave myself for ever. No one has a right to try to divert me from my path. My sadness is mine! my God is mine!"

In Sor Gracia, Señor Sierra has created a living character. We see her in the final Act walking with a stick and wearing spectacles, but "lively and smiling," and speaking "as a rule with graciousness, but on occasion with quick temper, and again with fervour and enthusiasm." We see her ruling her little kingdom of the Orphanage with decision, loved and obeyed, and, at the climax, the governing passion of her nature manifests

itself—her ardour for the Kingdom of God on earth.

Many are the little touches in the play which come from a hand practised in tracing the interaction between woman characters and old-fashioned or jealous notions of their fitting sphere. The old men, drunken and pauperised, give to the Sister Superior of the Hospice the mocking nickname of "Obispa" (bishopsess), and loudly object to being "ruled by nuns." A woman in the Maternity Home contrasts her lot with that of the father of the child that is coming—her enforced seclusion with his liberty, to do what he likes and forget her. For her there is but one man in the world. "Right you are," says the woman who has been in and out of the Home half-a-dozen times—"for they're all alike." Another tells how she, a girl of eighteen, was turned into the streets by her mistress as soon as it was discovered that she was to have a child by the son of the house, though their relations had been well-known before to the mother, and she had favoured them as being likely to prevent or delay his marriage, an event which would mean for her the loss of half her fortune. But a baby! That was another matter, a burden and a scandal in the house. And, in the last Act, when Sor Gracia has rebuked with severity a tailor who has cruelly punished an orphan apprentice and he dares mutter: "Women should go to the kitchen!" we have her calm and smiling retort: "And men to the public house, so dividing the world between us."

The volume concludes with a Miracle Play in three scenes. It is a charming story, telling how the Madonna of a Christmas crib in a Gothic Cathedral stepped out after Midnight Mass into the streets of the city, carrying in her arms the Holy Child and accompanied by the three Archangels and St. Francis of Assisi—"a humble and celestial company." The drunkards are keeping Christmas after their fashion, and a little boy who has fallen out of their rout is welcomed in the heavenly group. He draws in in turn a woman crouching huddled in rags at a street corner, and she, with quick response, calls her friends to rejoice, because in very truth the Mother and Child are living and in their midst. As they begin to collect, the women are the first to draw near, advancing with a glad faith and curi-

(Continued on p. 41.)

Notes and Comments.

We offer our cordial congratulations to our associate, the Rev. Father H. Hall, on his silver jubilee. Father Hall is a staunch feminist, and our readers will remember that he went to Geneva for the International Women's Suffrage Congress in 1920, and preached a special sermon at Notre Dame on the occasion.

* * * *

A nun writes that she always reads our paper with great interest, and believes that St. Joan's S.P.A. and the *Catholic Citizen* have a great future before them. We hope she has the gift of prophecy.

* * * *

By the passing of the Newfoundland Bill, giving women the vote at 25, there only remains South Africa among the self-governing Dominions to be converted to Woman Suffrage. We heartily congratulate Newfoundland suffragists on their victory. Their success was foreshadowed by Lady Morris in her speech at Wembley on Newfoundland Day last July.

* * * *

We are in full sympathy with the National Union of Women Teachers in their spirited protest against the new Burnham Award, with all its injustices to women. Women teachers' salaries are fixed at approximately four-fifths of the men's rate. Besides the differentiation in salaries, there is a further discrimination in the annual increments. A man in the first year of service receives an immediate increase, but a woman teacher will have to wait two years before she receives her first increase. The N.U.W.T. points out that the Standing Joint Committee on Teachers' Salaries, consisted of forty-seven men and only three women. The result of this discrepancy may be seen in the Burnham Award.

* * * *

The feminist societies are very nervous lest the Factory Bill should deal unjustly by women—under the guise of protecting them. St. Joan's S.P.A. joined with the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, the Women's Freedom League and the Women's Engineering Society, in asking the Home Secretary to receive a deputation on the matter. Mr. Joynson Hicks replied that

he was unable to receive a deputation before Easter, and asked that a Memorandum should be sent him containing the points the deputation wished to raise. A very able Memorandum on the matter was sent to him by the N.U.S.E.C. Our own position is summed up in the following resolution:

"St. Joan's S.P.A. stands for equality as between men and women in industrial legislation. It opposes all so-called 'protective' legislation which applies to women and not to men, believing that all such restrictions should be based on the type of work and not on the sex of the worker."

We do not oppose legislation which aims at protecting the worker, and improving the conditions of industry for both sexes, but we do most emphatically protest against legislation which, while restricting woman's work, prevents her from taking her rightful place in industry.

* * * *

As regards the Summary Jurisdiction (Separation and Maintenance) Bill, we have been pressing for the insertion of a clause making the adultery of either husband or wife a ground for a separation order in a Court of Summary Jurisdiction. Unfortunately the Bill was hurriedly passed through its third reading in the House of Commons just before the recess without this clause. Efforts will be made to have an amendment to this effect inserted when the Bill comes before the House of Lords.

The present law is unjust to those who cannot afford the expense of going to the High Court, and particularly affects Catholics and those sections of the community who under no circumstances apply for divorce, but who do apply for a Separation Order.

Canon Law sanctions separation, even perpetual, of married persons on account of the adultery committed by husband or wife, and this amendment would give the protection of the civil law to a separation which Canon Law permits.

The C.W.L. and Catholic Social Guild have co-operated with us and have sent resolutions to the Home Secretary asking for the insertion of this clause in the Bill.

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 Women of Nigeria's Petition to Government.

We have received from the Council for the Representation of Women in the League of Nations, a petition which has been sent to them by Mrs. Obasa, Hon. Secretary of the Lagos Women's League, which petition was presented some time since to the Governor, Sir Hugh Clifford. The women of Nigeria will welcome any support British women can give them. The Petition complains that hardly any provision is made for the employment of women, it complains of the housing conditions, the liquor traffic, etc.

The conditions under which the majority of women have to live, bear, and train up their children, says the Petition, are such as to increase the death roll and retard progress. "Throughout Nigeria there is no Maternity Hospital, nor is there any provision made for the care of sick children and infants who have lost their mothers." . . . "In Lagos the Government has made no provision for the education of girls. This is considered very unfair. Schools after the style of those established in America for negroes, it is considered, would be most beneficial. There Literary and Industrial training is given side by side, and girls are turned out with very high literary and musical attainments, and are fully qualified in various industrial subjects. They come out to the world fully equipped in every respect, and are quite an asset in their respective towns, in that alongside with their books they were taught the dignity of labour."

The Petition further states that mothers

are quite at a loss to know what to do with their boys, and the women urge that Technical and Mechanical Institutes should be established in Lagos and other parts of Nigeria for the theoretical and practical training of youths in the various trades and industries.

The Petition goes on to state that the Christian women in particular have noted with grief that the Government has for some years adopted the system of leaving the more backward native races almost entirely alone in their backwardness, making no effort whatever, as in the days of Queen Victoria, to civilise them.

In those places it appears that the chief concern of Government, after prohibiting human sacrifice and slavery, is to establish civilised system of collecting revenue and of getting all raw materials on and in those lands to enrich other lands, and give the owners nothing stable in return.

The Christian women, knowing how much they have benefited by the religion of Christ, and of education and civilisation, pray that it may please Government to grant the same advantages to their backward sisters and brothers throughout Nigeria.

The Governor, while replying in detail to the Petition, received it unfavourably, speaks of maternity hospitals as a medical luxury, and declares that the statements respecting the more backward native races show that the women have no knowledge of the question.

The women, in a well reasoned and dignified reply, reiterate their demands and express surprise that the Petition should have given offence to the Government. They say that they have a great deal of knowledge of the work done amongst the backward races, for though the bulk of the work is done by Europeans, yet they take with them natives from the more enlightened towns, and these people being their own kith and kin, information is easily obtained from them. They state that in their opinion the day has passed when maternity hospitals should be considered a luxury.

We are not in a position to judge of the grievances contained in this Petition, but we feel that when intelligent and trustworthy women are convinced grievances do exist, there is a case for an impartial enquiry. We are glad, therefore, to give publicity to the Petition, and wish the women of Nigeria success in their efforts to improve the position of women, and of the backward races.

L. DE ALBERTI.

FEMINISM IN SOME RECENT SPANISH PLAYS

(Continued from page 38.)

osity. The men approach more slowly, and there is a talk between one Simon and St. Francis. But at last, when they find they cannot get close to the Child because of the adoring women: "You're in the way," says one of them, "as usual. Get along!" But there is a quick reply: "So that you men," says one of the women, "may push yourselves in foremost, the same as you do everywhere. Ah! my son, *here* we are neither men nor women, but just all children of God."

One of the women, Ubalda, has borne seven children, of whom four have died in infancy of starvation, and her youngest fighting the Moors. "And how could it serve the King that the Moors killed my son, or if it had been the other way, and my son had killed a Moor, with a mother of his own and the same enjoyment of his life as he had?" The remaining son is in prison for assaulting a "señorito" who had seduced his sister, and the girl has taken to an evil life. All the poor people pour out their troubles and wrongs to the Blessed Virgin, who has come among them—out from seclusion, letting the Magdalen of the streets approach her, rejoic-

ing the heart of the little ones and the despised, fulfilling the vision of the mystic. It is a parable of the part in life that women should claim and take, adventuring themselves, meeting demands far wider than those once deemed to be within woman's sphere. But the Sacristan, having missed the statue, sallies forth to bring her back, and a contest arises between the two parties. The Blessed Virgin serenely lays her Child in the arms of Ubalda as a Treasure bestowed on all, and the people exult: "He is ours! Christ is born for us!" Then the sacristan appeals to her to come back to the crib herself—"as for the Child, we will get the one in St. Joseph's arms or St. Anthony's," a telling reminder of his ideas being bounded by the statuary in the cathedral. But St. Francis, upbraiding his blind materialism, cries: "Ring all the bells, open wide the doors of the temple, and let all who will come in, for he who from his heart seeks the Son and His Mother, will find them there."

A very lovely passage towards the close is the Madonna's narration of the Child's dream in her arms that Christmas in the cathedral, and how He had said they must go forth and seek the lost. The piece ends with her prayer for the persecuted, the wanderers, the shipwrecked, the sinners, and "for those who help watch over the dreams of God."

Chile.

A recent number of the *Mercurio* announces that for the first time in the history of Chile, a woman has been appointed to a post in a law-court, Senorita Jovita Valenzuela having been nominated by the Minister of Justice to the Juzgado de Letras of Valdivia.

The same newspaper notes that, also for the first time, a woman has become driver of one of the motor omnibuses which ply, with a dash and speed unknown to London, between the east and west ends of the Alameda in Santiago-de-Chile. She is said to display "equal skill and coolness."

We ask the prayers of our readers for the repose of the soul of Miss Blackledge, one of our earliest members, who died recently.—R. I. P.

International Notes.

An admirable article by Miss Helen Ward in the *International Woman Suffrage News* (reprinted from the *Women's Leader*), puts clearly and forcibly the point of view of most Suffrage women against the "protective" view of legislation for "women and children," which unhappily appears to be gaining ground with the International Labour Office. Restrictive and differential legislation for women was not, as is now sometimes assumed, one of the "principles" on which the I.L.O. was intended to work, and it seems more than ever desirable that Suffragists should make it clear that in their opinion, if in backward countries some restrictive legislation may be temporarily necessary, the ideal is "to base protective legislation, not on the sex of the worker, but on the nature of the work."

Cuban women held their second annual congress in April, and in addition to Woman Suffrage, discussed all the legal, social and labour problems that we should have discussed at a congress in Europe.

Mrs. Wades-in-the-Water is the first full-blooded Indian woman to be employed as a police-woman. She finds moral suasion more effective than force.

As is now well-known, the Belgian Chamber, before its dissolution, deliberately shelved the question of the Provincial vote for women, which will now have to come up afresh in the new Chamber. In view of this disappointment it is all the more interesting to read in *Le Féminisme Chrétien*, that the names of several women candidates appeared on the electoral lists for Brussels (voting in Belgium is by the complicated methods of *scrutin de liste* and proportional representation), and among them that of our valued confrère, Melle Van den Plas. None of them, alas! was given a place which allowed of any chance of success, but at least it was a beginning!

The French Chamber has at length passed the Bill giving the Municipal vote to women on the same terms as to men. But the Bill still has to be adopted by the Senate, and it has been delayed so long that it will not be possible for the women to vote at the May elections, as had been hoped.

La Française reports that the Minister of the Interior in Uruguay has passed a decree suppressing all *maisons de tolérance*. This is a great victory for the women, who, led by Dr. Paulina Luisi, have been agitating for a long time for this moral reform.

Equal Rights devotes an article to the international activities of Miss Alice Paul, whom we had the pleasure of meeting during her recent stay in London. The linking up of the suffragist women of all countries, which was one of the aims of Miss Paul's European visits, is a first step towards the holding of the International Parliament of Women, the date of which is fixed for next December in Washington. Miss Paul, it will be remembered, is a Vice-President of the National Woman's Party.

We are glad to see the *Bollettino* of the Italian Catholic Women's Union definitely pronouncing in favour of the municipal vote for women, and protesting against the many delays in passing the measure promised by Signor Mussolini two years ago.

L'Égyptienne, the new Egyptian monthly devoted to women's interests, founded by Mme. Hoda Charaoui, does the greatest credit to its producers. It is strongly suffragist, nationalist and progressive in its programme, and promises to exert a real influence for good in the troubled politics of the country.

Catholic Council for International Relations.

Though we can take no part officially in the Catholic Council for International Relations, members of St. Joan's S.P.A. are very active in the Council. Miss Mason was appointed to the original Executive Committee formed at Reading. Mrs. Crawford and Miss Christitch are on the panel of speakers; Miss Harley Bacon is one of the Hon. Secretaries of the Moral and Legal Committee, and other members take a keen interest in the Council. Mrs. V. M. Crawford presided at the meeting on International Morality, at which Mr. Fortescue Urquhart, M.A., was the speaker. The meetings have been already fully reported in the Catholic Weeklies.

THE LITURGY. By M. A. R. TUKER. (Handbook to Christian and Ecclesiastical Rome. A. & C. Black, Ltd. 7s. 6d.)

This is a new and revised edition of a book which very rightly met with high praise when it first appeared. It is a learned and fascinating account of the history of the Liturgy of the Catholic Church. We should like to see it in the hands of all Catholic parents and teachers of youth, that having imbibed a love of the Church's liturgy themselves, that love might be transmitted to those under their care. Children would then once again be trained to follow the ceremony of the Mass with devotion and interest, and the present distracting hymns of the "Children's Mass" be allowed to drop. It would certainly mean a decrease in the output of those little books of devotion, which Father Vannutelli, quoted on p. 107, calls "a symptom of religious decadence, and of a weakening of the Christian spirit."

Learned as it is, the book is not written in a heavy and dreary manner, but to quote Archbishop Ireland, "is presented in attractive style, and gives evidence of deep historical research and ecclesiastical learning." The new edition has been issued to meet the need of pilgrims and tourists to Rome during the Holy Year. It is intended as a Guide to the great Christian memorials, monumental, liturgical, monastic and papal, which meet the traveller on all sides in Rome.

But it is not only travellers to Rome who should buy it, it will be equally useful to stay-at-homes, and non-Catholics as well as Catholics will find a great deal to interest them in it. It was a happy thought on the part of the publishers to issue a new edition of this unique and valuable Handbook.

L. DE A.

The Government's scheme for Widows' Pensions is a disappointment to the societies which have been working so long for this reform. We have always asked that the pensions should be on a non-contributory basis, as otherwise a large proportion of widows of the poorest class are left out of the scheme, and still remain at the mercy of the Poor Law. We feel also that the amount is totally inadequate. We will deal with the subject fully next month.

LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT BRANCH.
Hon. Secretary—Miss Jervis, 99 Edge Lane Drive, Liverpool.

On Saturday, April 4th, members attended an afternoon's Retreat at the Cenacle Convent, Wavertree.

A very enjoyable Social was held on April 20th, at 119 Shaw Street, when members and friends recited and sang, and Miss Parnell, B.A., spoke on the aims of the Alliance.

The branch is co-operating with other organisations in the city in pressing for the appointment of women to the Boards of the Royal Infirmary, and the Northern and Southern Hospitals.

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TREASURER'S NOTE.

I regret to have to report this month that expenses have again outrun our slender income, and the Alliance is now some £13 in debt. With Spring advancing many members will be overhauling their wardrobes, discarding last year's raiment and making new additions. We beg of them to think of the Alliance during this process and to send us a large parcel of jumbles. All goods of this kind are a most valuable gift which will speedily be turned into £ s. d., wherewith to meet current expenses and next quarter's rent.

GABRIELLE JEFFERY.

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