

THE CATHOLIC CITIZEN

Organ of the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society, 55, Berners Street, London, W.1.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

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

—Francis Thompson.

The Position of Women under Ancient Native Rule in Ireland.*

By MARY WALL.

At the present time, unique in her sorrowful history, when the people of Ireland are beating out for themselves liberty, order and law from unutterably chaotic conditions, all who are interested in the problems of Government will welcome this book.

Its publication has not escaped the tragedy that dogs things Irish. Its learned author—a whole-hearted suffragist and a democratic feminist of the sane and wholesomely minded type the world stands so much in need of to-day—was killed by a fall in the Alps last autumn, during a holiday she had taken after final revision of the proofs of this, the latest and greatest of her books.

Here are the same conscientious patience, the accurate scholarship and those delightful touches of kindly Irish fun that characterised all Mrs. Bryant's activities, literary, educational and political.

Those who lack her trained historical sense and her ability to sift from a mass of archaic details all that is of real interest, may advantageously reconstruct from this, her resumé of the *Senchus Mor* or "Book of Great Immemorial Custom," that wonderful civilisation of Ancient Ireland, existing long before St. Patrick brought the Gospel message to her shores.

These Brehon Laws show the Irish development of that Aryan Law, according to which Europe lived as well as India long before the rise of the militant empires of the West.

Originally pagan, the Irish laws were revised in the fifth century when the nation

became Christian. Nine persons were concerned in this revision—three bishops, including Patrick himself; three kings and three poets. They were thereafter found to be so excellently adapted to meet every difficulty that could arise in conflicting relationships that they were never again altered but, being known as *Cain Patrick*, or "Patrick's Law," they were maintained amongst the Irish people for fifteen hundred years.

In the twelfth century Henry II strove to introduce English law but it made no headway; and in 1367 enactments had to be passed to prevent the English settlers from adopting the old Irish Laws!

But the wars of Cromwell, the policy of Charles II, and the result of the Revolution of 1688, all helped to stamp out the old Brehons or *judges*. As one by one the fair provinces were conquered and the chief of each was either killed or forced to make his submission, the country came gradually under English law. The old ruling that *the tribe owned the land* and that the people had rights apart from their chief was gone. The estates descended to the chief's son, the people became merely ordinary "tenants" until, almost in our own time, there began that fierce fight for the land which resulted in those excellent Land Acts that really did give the land back to the people.

Dr. Bryant's chapter on "Patrick's Eccle-

* "LIBERTY, ORDER, LAW, UNDER NATIVE IRISH RULE," by the late Sophie Bryant, D.Sc., Litt.D. To be published June 8th. 25s. net. Harding and More, Ltd., 119, High Holborn, London, W.C.1.

siastical Policy" interests us as Catholics. It shows how the Saint adapted the tribal customs to the needs of the newly Christianised Society. "The tribe of the Saint" had the Abbott as chief; while "the tribe to which the land belonged" were his parishioners. The people's rights in the Church were as clearly defined as the Church's rights in the people.

Grants might not be made to the Church so that the testator's share of the land should not revert to the common possession of the tribe. A priest on taking orders, did not therefore transfer to the Church any of his dues nor the liabilities arising from his tribal relationship.

Educationalists will be interested in the laws relating to fosterage. We may note that in 1869 the Protestant Orphan Society of Ireland, finding it difficult to rear children successfully under the "non-family" system of the Charter Schools and the "half-family" system of the Foundling Hospitals, revived and adopted the "true-family" system, corresponding to Irish fosterage. In England, too, we have seen during the past thirty years, the discredited workhouse system give place, as regards pauper children, to the more natural and more humane system of fosterage.

At a time when women are pouring into the legal professions, our Catholic law-students will be interested in that far-reaching "Law of Torts" on which the criminal law of these old Brehons was built.

The tribe and, to come nearer home, the family, would exercise a strong overseership of the black sheep, when the law insisted that *the family must pay* for the peccadilloes, the sins and the crimes of its erring members!

Work, duty and privilege were exhaustively defined. It took at least three generations to ennoble a family. The poet—like the smith—purchased his "nobility" by his art. But the study necessary for the qualification of a poet was formidable indeed!

Every individual had his "honour-price," even the young boys at the bottom of the social ladder, who had only the use of their muscles to pay with—these had a small "honour price." In this was an encouragement to self-respect.

There were three classes of men whose wives had to pay their husband's "honour-price" as well as their own. A man without possessions and without property who had married an heiress; a "man from overseas"; and a man who "followed his wife across the border."

Women are legislated for on equal terms with men in "The Law of Social Connections."

These are the connection of a Chief with his tenants; of the Church with her tenants of ecclesiastical lands; of a father with his daughter; of a sister with her brother; of a son with his mother; of a foster-son with his foster-mother; of a tutor with his pupils; and of a man with a woman.

Under this last the question of the unmarried mother, which is now vexing our Parliament men, was dealt with with a generosity that safeguarded the life of the child.

The duty of providing fosterage falls on the father of an illegitimate child, "if he is known and can be found and is sane."

"Equal Pay for Equal Work" is a slogan to-day. The text of the *Senchus Mor* says: "If a woman has the full work of a man—whether the work be productive or non-productive—she shall obtain the value of the full work of the man."

Exhaustive rules are laid down for equal division of property in cases of matrimonial separations.

Daughters might inherit land if there were no sons; the chief's daughter might even become the "geilfine chief." But on her death half of the property reverted to the kindred and only half to her sons and daughters. Certain lands, however, given by a father to a daughter "out of affection," were secured to her absolutely.

The Brehon legislation concerning difficulties involved in the fact that land inherited by a woman might be transferred by her marriage to a foreign tribe is very fair. The chosen people's legislators were up against this same perplexity (see Numbers XXVII).

The famous case of the judgment of Brigh, the woman Brehon, is quoted. She first ruled that a woman had rights of suc-

(Continued on page 43.)

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

A few weeks ago, the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society received official information from Rome that in accordance with a ruling of the Holy See, no Society calling itself Catholic may take part in, or be officially represented at, any meeting of a non-confessional, Protestant or neutral nature, and referring to the announcements in the press that the Society would be represented at the Rome Congress. The Committee immediately petitioned the Holy Father, explaining the position and policy of the Society towards the International Woman's Suffrage Alliance. His Eminence Cardinal Bourne kindly forwarded the letter for the Society to Rome. The reply from Rome is to the effect that His Holiness adheres to His decision. Therefore the Society will not be officially represented at the Congress.

* * * *

The appointment of Miss Lilian Barker as Governor of the Borstal Institution for Girls, Aylesbury, has given great pleasure to women's societies and others. It is not often that a Government appointment meets with such general approval. Miss Barker was asked by the Home Secretary to give up her post of Executive Officer of the Central Committee on Women's Employment to take up this new work. She will have a free hand to inaugurate reforms, and we have no doubt that she will seize every opportunity of doing so.

* * * *

In March Mr. Foot asked the Prime Minister whether he had the intention of introducing a Bill to give women the franchise on the same terms as men. The Premier replied: "The answer is in the negative." The N.U.S.E.C. is obtaining the signatures of Members of Parliament to a memorial which we hope may induce Mr. Bonar Law to change his mind. There really is no valid argument against this simple measure, which is in accordance with justice and common sense. Mr. Foot, in spite of the Premier's reply, introduced an Equal Franchise Bill on April 26th, which was passed without a division.

* * * *

The following resolutions in connection with the Traffic in Women and Children were

adopted at the Council of the League of Nations:—

- (1) All information readily accessible is to be collated and presented by the Secretariat.
- (2) A special inquiry is to be made in conjunction with the International Labour Office on this traffic in connection with emigration.
- (3) The diverse views expressed on the Advisory Committee regarding the abolition of employment of foreign women in maisons tolérées to be transmitted to all Governments.
- (4) States maintaining regulation are to be asked why they maintain it, and States that have abolished it are to be asked why they have done so, and with what results in each case.
- (5) A world-wide investigation on the whole subject of conditions under which the traffic is carried on to be undertaken by a small body of League experts.

The appointments to this body are to be made at the Council Meeting in June.

We welcome this world-wide investigation which only the League of Nations could have undertaken.

* * * *

The Third Catholic Congress organised by the International Catholic League of Defence and Progress, which has its headquarters at Graz, Austria, will be held this year at Constance, Switzerland, from August 10th—15th. A large gathering is anticipated and Catholics from all countries will be made welcome. Among the subjects discussed will be the re-Christianising of the proletariat, the Catholic press, emigration, cinema films, and the promotion of the effective organisation of Catholic young people.

* * * *

The untimely death of Srta. Angeles Mateu Pla has cast a gloom over the women societies in Spain. A young girl of exceptional ability and untiring zeal, she devoted herself to the progress of women, and was Secretary to the "Institute of the Working Woman." We had the pleasure of a visit from her in August of last year, and can fully sympathise with our Spanish colleagues in her loss.

THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETY.

AND
Editorial Office of "Catholic Citizen":

55, BERNERS STREET, LONDON, W., 1. Tel. Museum 4181.

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

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THE GUARDIANSHIP OF INFANTS BILL.

This Bill, our readers will remember, was being considered by a Joint Committee of both Houses, set up under the late Government, and but for the General Election stood a fair chance of becoming the law of the land. It has been re-introduced into the House of Lords by Lord Askwith, and another Joint Committee is being set up to take evidence and report upon the Bill.

The most important change proposed by the Bill is to make the mother joint guardian with the father, and give to her equal rights and responsibility with respect to the child. As the law stands at present the father is sole parent, the wife is not a legal parent at all. Thus if she gives notice, for instance, that she has an objection to her child being vaccinated, she will be told that "the parent" must apply. In this respect the unmarried mother is in a better position legally than the mother of a legitimate child. The mother of an illegitimate child is by law the sole parent, and has the same rights as the father of children born in wedlock.

Unless he is notoriously unfit the law will uphold the father's wishes against the mother's in every detail of the life of a legitimate child. Nor can the position be evaded by pre-marital agreement, for it has been laid down that no promise, whether written or verbal, respecting the custody and upbringing of his children made before marriage, is binding on the father.

It is scarcely necessary in a paper such as ours to dwell upon the humiliating position in which the mother is placed by such a law.

The fourth Commandment does not say "Honour thy father only"; it says, "Honour thy father and thy mother," but the law dishonours the mother.

A law similar to the new Bill has been in operation in British Columbia and other parts of the British Empire for some years. Mr. F. W. Wade, Agent General for British Columbia, writing in the *Times*, May, 1921, says of this Law: "During four years since its enactment no amendments have been found necessary, except one or two of a technical nature. It has been a complete success, and has had the effect of wiping out one of the most abominable anomalies of British law, under which, for centuries, mothers have been deprived of the natural right to the guardianship or to a share in the guardianship of their children."

Nearly thirty of the United States of America have also adopted the law of equal guardianship. Are we to suppose that Englishmen are less reasonable than men of other nations? For if the opponents of this Bill were to be absolutely frank they would be compelled to own that they believe that the peace of any home would be in jeopardy unless the father's will is law in all things. We believe that they do men an injustice.

Supporters of the Bill maintain that if the harmony of a home is already endangered, and it is only in such cases that the law will be resorted to, the very fact that the mother has equal rights will tend to induce the couple to find an agreed policy. Supporters maintain, moreover, that as there is no reason to

suppose that all parental wisdom is centred in the father, the Bill will make for the welfare of children. Who otherwise in this enlightened age would care to support it?

The Bill also provides that the parents of every legitimate child under the age of sixteen shall both be liable for the maintenance and education of that child according to their means. In reckoning the liability of the mother to make any payment, her work for the child in the home shall be deemed a contribution to the maintenance. The Bill also comprises powers to enforce orders made by the Court regarding the custody, maintenance and education of infants.

The Guardianship of Infants Bill is supported by over fifty national societies, including the C.W.S.S., and it is to be hoped that the Government will have the good sense to realise that it is time it reached the Statute Book.

L. DE ALBERTI.

C.W.S.S. Meeting.

At an informal meeting, held at 37, Woburn Square (by kind permission of Miss Gorry), on April 23rd, Mrs. Finlayson Gauld gave an interesting account of the work of the Edinburgh Branch of the C.W.S.S., of which she is Vice-Chairman. The members of the Branch, which has only recently been started, have been very active in organising meetings to arouse the interest of Catholic women in political matters. The meetings were held in different parishes, the first one in the Cathedral Hall, kindly lent by Mgr. Cann Stuart, who is himself an Associate of the Society. The Chair was taken by Mrs. Clayton.

YORK BRANCH.

Hon. Secretary: Miss Kennelly, 73, Goodramgate, York.

Owing to the resignation of Miss Donoghue, who has left York, Miss Anna Kennelly has kindly consented to fill the post of Hon. Secretary.

A meeting was held on April 11th, by kind permission of Mrs. Cassidy, at her house, and arrangements were made for monthly meetings of the Branch.

Garden Fete at Hampstead.

On Thursday, June 7th, at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, Viscount Leverhulme is throwing open his beautiful grounds at "The Hill," Hampstead, for a Garden Fête for the women's societies and, needless to say, our gallant little C.W.S.S. will be there with a stall. The Italian garden, the terraces, pergolas and vegetation are so lovely at "The Hill" that even anti-suffragists, if there be any left, will flock there to enjoy them. Suffragists will have an additional draw in that they will be helping on the struggle for the complete enfranchisement of women. Catholic suffragists will have a still greater attraction in that the C.W.S.S. stall is to be devoted entirely to filling the coffers of the *Catholic Citizen*, our magnificent little organ of propaganda.

Too little has been done for our paper in the past and now we shall have an opportunity of giving for it in money and kind.

It is orthodox and sound, to the point, succinct, compressed, up-to-date, enterprising and always truly Christian.

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Please send donations in kind or money to Miss Barry, Hon. Sec., 55, Berners Street, Oxford Street, W.1.

Help our little eight year old paper!

M.F.

Paris Conference.

Meetings were held in Paris last week under the auspices of the Action Sociale de la Femme. Owing to the fact that the question of votes for women will come up quite soon in the Chambre des Députés, it was decided to reserve the last day's sitting for the discussion of Women's Suffrage. The meeting was very well attended, several speeches were made by men and women suffragists. The C.W.S.S. was represented by Miss Kathleen FitzGerald, B.A. A detailed report will appear in our next issue.

International Notes.

La Femme Belge re-prints an address given by Mme. Montessori, on "Religious Education and the Active Life of the Child." It is full of beautiful understanding of child nature and explains the wonderful results obtained by her methods in the Montessori school at Barcelona. It is no longer for us, she says, the merely personal task of filling a void with our knowledge, but rather of collaborating with humility in the creative work of God. The moral of Bible stories, she insists, should not be emphasised: children are quite capable of drawing it for themselves.

* * * *

From our ably edited contemporary, the *Giornale Della Donna*, we learn that Mussolini's intentions as to Woman Suffrage are being eagerly discussed in the peninsula. It is thought he intends granting only the municipal vote in the first instance, and in any case only to enfranchise women of means and education. As a journalist, Innocenzo Cappa, has neatly phrased it, he will enfranchise the *Signora* and leave the *Donna* voteless.

* * * *

It seems that Mme. Octave Mirbeau, the widow of the novelist, has given over her beautiful country house to be used as a holiday and rest-house for over-worked men of letters. Recently a request was made to her for two women of letters to be received there, and this met with an emphatic and insulting refusal from Mme. Mirbeau. No woman was to be admitted. Naturally French authoresses are not a little indignant.

A certain French deputy, so we learn from *La Française*, has been discussing the population question, and has attributed the reduced birth rate in France to the selfishness of her women. *La Française* protests vigorously, and demands that men should bear an equal share of the blame.

At the opening of the Silesian Diet recently a woman was called on to preside, as she was the *doyenne* of the Assembly. She clearly had made no secret of her age.

* * * *

The half-yearly *Bulletin* of the Catholic Women University students (Montpellier) bears witness to much good work and to

steady progress. All the Catholic students' associations of France, save those of Nancy and Strasburg, have now joined the Federation. Each Association has an active autonomous life, of which the Sunday Mass and lecture are the main feature, but students from all parts of France can meet together twice a year, in April for the annual congress, held this year at Aix, and in September for a retreat at Lourdes.

* * * *

The *Luxemberger Frau* prints a sympathetic summary of our Annual Report.

* * * *

From Mexico comes a new illustrated feminist monthly paper, entitled *La Vida*. It is a paper of high ideals, dedicated to the interests of women. We wish our new colleague a long and prosperous career.

V.M.C.

Rome Congress.

Nearly forty countries, including China and Egypt, are taking part in the Rome Congress. Among the delegates are women members of Parliament, women doctors, barristers, solicitors, professors of music and singing, writers, teachers and women engaged in trade and commerce; in fact one may say women of all classes and all professions will be represented at Rome.

* * * *

The resolutions to be discussed cover a wide field. Amongst the resolutions from Great Britain is one urging the League of Nations to set up a Commission of Investigation, consisting of an equal number of men and women, to enquire into the various forms of slavery, and quasi-slavery, which exist in the world to-day, and urging the League immediately to make representations for the abolition of slavery recognised in certain mandatory territories. France urges all women to unite against war. Roumania asks for the establishment of an international women's political party. Other resolutions deal with the economic position of women; the illegitimate child; equal pay for equal work; and an equal moral standard.

* * * *

Mrs. Jinarajadāsa, one of the delegates from India to the Rome Congress, sends news to the

I.W.S.A. that in order to introduce popular government into Rajkot State a House of Representatives, consisting of ninety members, has been established. The subjects of the State were given universal suffrage for the purpose of electing their representatives, and two women members have been elected to the new Assembly.

L.A.

REVIEW.

THE MAID OF FRANCE. By Andrew Lang. (Messrs. Longmans and Co., 7/- net.)

The glamour of St. Joan of Arc attracts to her worship a varied crowd, her magnetism extends far beyond the Catholic fold. Among her devout worshippers was the late Andrew Lang, and this new edition of his *Life of the Maid* will be welcome to many, even to those to whom it is already familiar.

In the brief preface to the new edition, Mrs. Andrew Lang speaks of the joy which would have thrilled through Andrew Lang at the knowledge that the Church that Joan of Arc so loved had at last bestowed "the highest honour in her gift on the woman held by her chronicler to be the most perfect human being born into the world since Christ trod its streets and hills."

It was once said in these columns that Saint Joan inspired true chivalry, and that the true note of chivalry runs through Andrew Lang's reverent picture of the holy Maid. Reading this *Life* once again that impression is as fresh as ever, but the book is not only a devout tribute to St. Joan, it is also an accurate history, and one that must ever be prized by all lovers of St. Joan.

L. DE A.

We were glad to read in the Catholic press of the reception into the Church of that ardent feminist, Dr. Letitia Fairfield. Dr. Fairfield is well known to all suffragists, and is, we believe, the only woman who is both a doctor of medicine and a barrister-at-law. She was a member of the W.S.P.U. in the great fight.

* * * *

We offer our good wishes and congratulations to Miss E. C. Hughes, our member and a contributor to this paper, upon her marriage with Mr. J. F. Mills. We wish them both all happiness.

(Continued from page 38.)

cession to land. And we read of Seither, the first woman to establish her claim to succeed to land, "freed by her tribe from obligation for services of attack and defence." But, because of this, half of the land must revert to the tribe after her death.

Seither "was a woman of two races, her father being of the Ulta and her mother of the Feina of Teamhair; and the land was dear to her."

Under Brehon law the wife ranked with her husband with equal rights in the business of the home and the farm. "If she be of equal property and of equal family she can disturb the man's contracts if they be ill advised." She was entitled "to give presents to poor friends or relations at her will."

Seven cases are described of women who "though bound by son and security may separate from living with their husbands whatever day they like, taking their dowry with them; or they may remain in the law of marriage."

Our Author points out that three of these cases are of the nature of an insult and, when practised against a wife, were considered to justify separation. "A woman upon whom her husband gives circulation to a satire until she is laughed at; a woman on whom a cheek blemish has been inflicted; a woman of whom her husband circulates a false story; a woman sent back and repudiated, etc."

It will be seen from these very inadequate extracts, that the position of woman under the ancient native rule in Ireland was one of considerable dignity and influence.

The book is a rich treasury of knowledge to the feminist as to the historian, each reader being sure to find much of peculiar interest to the bent of his mind.

Dr. Bryant tells us she was moved to write it "for the satisfaction of her own soul." And she suggests that a wider knowledge of the "Great Immemorial Custom" may help to revive "that old delight in the sanctity of contracts and equitable law which is expressed in the pages of the *Senchus Mor* and the other Irish law tracts."

We ask the prayers of all our readers for the repose of the soul of our member, Mrs. Welch, who died on Palm Sunday. R.I.P.

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LECTURES.

Wednesday, May 23rd, 8-15 p.m. "Utopia and its meaning." Mr. W. LOFTUS HARE.

Wednesday, 30th May, 8-15 p.m.
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING,

Wednesday, 6th June, 8-15 p.m. "American Women in home and politics." Miss HELEN FRASER.

Wednesday, 13th June, 8.15 p.m. "Women's Institutes." LADY ISABEL MARGESSON, Chairman, LADY LLOYD-GREAME.

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THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S
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Organ—"The Catholic Citizen," 2d. monthly.

OBJECT.

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

METHODS.

1. Strictly non-party.
2. Active propaganda by political and educational means.

MEMBERSHIP.

All Catholic women are eligible as Members, who approve the object and methods, and will pay a minimum annual subscription of 1s. 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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The Monthly Organ of

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