

WOMEN'S SOCIETY
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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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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 Age of Marriage.

By HELEN DOUGLAS IRVINE, M.A.

At the annual meeting of the National Council of Women of Great Britain to be held at Bournemouth from the 11th to the 14th of October, St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance is proposing the seventh resolution, "that the National Council of Women deplores the fact that 12 is still the legal age of marriage for girls and 14 for boys, and calls upon the Government to introduce legislation at the earliest possible moment to remedy this evil." Our Society has already been prominent in dealing with this matter. When last April, Lady Astor, in a dialogue in the House of Commons arising out of a question about the law fixing the age of marriage, stated that "this is really an old Roman Catholic law . . . and not really a Protestant law," our press secretary wrote a letter, printed in a number of papers, to point out that Canon Law, which is, like the marriage law of Great Britain, based on the law of the Roman Empire, formerly fixed the age of valid marriage as does the law of Great Britain, but that it has been amended so that it no longer recognizes the marriage of a boy under 16 or a girl under 14 years of age. The enactment adds (Canon 1067) "the pastor of souls should dissuade young people from marriage at an earlier age than is commonly the custom in the respective countries."

The enactment of Canon Law is based on

the clear moral principle that a marriage is not valid if it be between persons who have not maturity of judgment. It is manifestly unjust that a contract between persons incapable of appreciating its force and implications should be binding. It is indisputable that the capacity to gauge what marriage entails is not held by girls less than 14 and boys less than 16 years old. Nor is it reasonable to argue that in this country, where the young develop late, such capacity belongs to boys of 16 and girls of 14. Canon Law binds the universal Church, the nations which reach comparative maturity in their earlier teens as well as our own, and therefore could not, without difficulty, have fixed the age of marriage higher than it has done. But the admonitory clause added to its enactment indicates that it does not intend to facilitate marriages contracted below the age determined by the good custom of the contractors' countries. In other words, Canon Law does not excuse, even when it cannot invalidate, marriages in Great Britain which are made below the customary age.

Next to the question of justice comes that of expediency. It is universally recognized to be expedient that marriages should not be contracted before the age of puberty. It has also been held that it is expedient not to fix the minimum legal age of marriage much above the age of puberty where, as in Great

Britain, this legal age is subject to no exception. To raise it too high might debar certain girls who were pregnant from the marriage which would legitimize their offspring; and it is probably for this reason, and in view of countries and climates in which puberty occurs early, that Canon Law fixes the age of marriage as low as 16 and 14 for boys and girls, respectively. In northern latitudes, however, the age of puberty is about 17 or 18 for boys and about 15 for girls. Consequently, in Great Britain the law of the country should fix the age of marriage higher than does Canon Law.

For the exact determination of this age another point must be considered. The so-called legal age of consent, the lowest age at which the law recognizes that a girl is herself responsible for the sexual relations into which she may enter outside marriage, is in this country, 16. That she should be competent to marry before she is thus held responsible is an obvious anomaly. It is also a perilous anomaly because it allows men who have criminally seduced girls less than sixteen years old to escape the consequences of this act by marrying them. Who could argue that it is either just or expedient to permit such marriages, by which men may escape the penalties of an atrocious crime and wronged children may be irrevocably bound to their seducers? It is the earnest desire of all representative feminists, we of St. Joan's included, that no girl in this country may be able to contract a legal marriage before she is 16 years old.

To amend our marriage law in this sense would be to give legal sanction to the custom of our country which the enactment of Canon Law exhorts us to observe. For it is, mercifully, a fact that the number of girls who in this country are married before they are 15 is too small even to be tabulated, while the number of those married between 15 and 16 is certainly very small indeed. In consequence, it has sometimes been said that the question of raising the legal age of marriage is in Great Britain purely academic. To this allegation there are two answers. First, while this age is unduly low very young girls may be seduced under promise of marriage. This danger is real enough to

be noticed in the Report of the Committee of Experts on the Traffic in Women and Children. Secondly, the countries in which child marriages are an actual evil may be deterred from rendering them illegal by the support which they find in our statute book. The legal age for marriage for girls is 12 in many of our Dominions and in Greece, Hungary and Italy, as well as in our own land, and child marriages are not unknown in all these countries. By amending the marriage law on this point, Great Britain will set a powerful example to other countries in which boys and girls are really exposed to that most terrible fate, marriage during childhood.

The Semaine Sociale held at Nancy.

The object of the French *Semaines Sociales* is the study of social problems in the light of reason and Catholic teaching. The subject studied at the recent gathering in Nancy was "Woman in Social Life." The congress was attended by two thousand people, some coming from foreign lands. All feminine and feminist problems were passed under review, bearing in mind the nature of woman and the needs of society. Here we wish to consider chiefly questions of interest to feminists, the conclusions reached, and the spirit which animated the discussions.

Catholicism teaches that the individual must not be sacrificed to society, but 'society' supposes a common bond among men, which entails certain duties on every individual. Consequently there is no room either for the deification of society, as a devouring Moloch, nor yet for individualism. These few remarks are necessary if what was taught at Nancy is to be understood.

The family being the "social cell," of which woman is the corner stone, it is not surprising that the rôle of woman in the family was the main subject of interest, and nothing liable to divert her energies, was sanctioned at Nancy.

Thus the Bishop of Arras declared equal education for girls and boys to be a good thing, since woman needs great culture, even if her rôle in life is that of a mother only. Maternal duties demand the best possible education, which will be useful if the woman

(Continued on page 67.)

Notes and Comments.

Equal Franchise.

It seems certain that the long expected Equal Franchise measure will not materialise this autumn, and will not be introduced till the new Session in 1928. This does not mean that we shall not obtain this reform during the lifetime of the present Parliament. We believe that the Prime Minister will fulfil his pledge. It does mean, however, that the danger of disappointment is increased, there is always the possibility of the Government being forced to go to the country before women have secured equal political rights. The very thought must spur us on to greater efforts in the Autumn. Mr. Baldwin must be made to feel that women throughout the country are looking to him to fulfil the pledge which he gave, and renewed, as we believe, in all sincerity. He can prove his sincerity by making a simple franchise bill giving women the vote at 21, on the same terms as men, the first measure to be introduced next session.

* * * *

St. Joan's S.P.A. will resume open-air meetings at Jack Straw's Castle, Hampstead Heath. The first meeting of the autumn will be held on Sunday, September 11, at 7. Members and friends residing anywhere in the neighbourhood are asked to attend.

* * * *

We are glad to learn from our member, Mrs. Dooley, J.P., that at a great Demonstration of South Yorkshire Labour Women, organised by her at Pontefract in July, in which ten thousand women took part, Equal Franchise and the importance of the vote to the young women under 30, was dealt with by almost every speaker.

* * * *

In *The Catholic News* of South Africa a discussion on Woman Suffrage has been raging, arising from an article by our member Miss A. P. L. Dorman, in which she stated the case for the suffrage very clearly. We are glad to see in the July number, that the Editor sums up in favour of Woman Suffrage, urging Catholic women

to take a full share in the new social order. The editorial speaks of the great work being done by the Catholic Woman's Suffrage Society in England,—now St. Joan's S.P.A.—and quotes the late Pope Benedict XV's words to Miss Chistitch: "We should like to see women electors everywhere."

* * * *

We were grieved, however, to read the editor's comments on Militancy in England. The militants by their selfless devotion, persistence, and political sagacity, made woman suffrage a living question: a cause which inspired some women with the martyr's zeal. We have never heard of meetings at which militant suffragists made "speeches of a fragantly immoral nature." Can it be possible that our contemporary is alluding to the fact that suffragists dragged into the light of day the social evils, which undermine our civilization? In our opinion the militants by so doing, did a great service to society.

* * * *

The National Council of Women.

The Annual Conference of the N.C.W. will be held at Bournemouth from October 11th to 14th. The Conference actually opens on the evening of October 10th, when a Young People's Meeting will be held, at which the chief speakers will be Miss Nancy Stewart Parnell, B.A., Hon. Sec. of our Liverpool Branch, who will speak on "What the Vote means to me," and the Rev. Horace Fort, B.D., of U.S.A., whose subject will be: "What the Vote means to the country."

We are glad to say that St. Joan's S.P.A.'s resolution on the Age of Marriage finds a place on the Agenda. The resolution, which is as follows, will be moved by our chairman Miss Helen Douglas Irvine, M.A., "That the N.C.W. deplores the fact that 12 is still the legal Age of Marriage for girls, and 14 for boys, and calls upon the Government to introduce legislation at the earliest possible moment to remedy this evil."

Other resolutions deal with: Equal Franchise, Women Police, Traffic in Women, Treatment of Young Offenders, Sexual Offences against Young Persons, etc., etc.

ST. JOAN'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ALLIANCE,

AND

Editorial Office of "Catholic Citizen":

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

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

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The Social Catholic Movement in Great Britain.*

Miss McEntee has laid Catholics in Great Britain under a debt by her valuable and interesting history of Catholic Social work in this country. "Social Catholicism," says Miss McEntee in her preface, "is one of the most significant developments in the history of modern movements for social reform. It originated in the nineteenth century, and is an effort on the part of public-spirited Catholics to apply Catholic principles to the solution of social and economic problems, especially those created by the Industrial Revolution." The author then goes on to speak of the increasing importance of the Catholic Social movement in the countries of Europe and the New World, and of the success achieved. The important part played in England by Cardinal Manning may be gauged by the amount of space devoted to the great pioneer, among Catholics, of social reform. After reading Miss McEntee's account of his work, one feels that some of the glamour of which he has been robbed, has been restored to the great Cardinal, who was enshrined in the hearts of the poor. He was not always understood, and his support of Stead's campaign against the prostitution and sale of young girls, brought on him the disfavour of his co-religionists, who, we may presume, disapproved of such subjects being publicly discussed. The Cardinal derived great comfort in his labour for social reform, from Leo XIII's famous Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, of which the president of the American Federation of Labour said, that in

it the Pope "showed an understanding of his subject so thorough, penetrating, and far-reaching that it embodies every phase of the principles of social justice and is as pertinent to-day as when it was written."

The Catholic Social Guild naturally claims a big share of Miss Entee's attention, and she speaks with sympathy of its works, giving a brief account of some of the founders and workers: the late Father Plater, Monsignor Parkinson, Mrs. Crawford, Father Martindale and other good toilers in the vineyard.

Miss McEntee has a separate chapter on the distinctive work of Catholic women, which will be of special interest to our readers. After speaking of the foundation of the Catholic Women's League and the League's work, the author gives an account of St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance, formerly the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society, and says that such an organisation having for its object an improvement in the status of women cannot fail to have an important influence on society as a whole. She recalls how the inspiration to found such a society came to two Catholic girls, Miss G. Jeffery and Miss Kendall, on December 8, 1910, while they waited in the crowd assembled outside Holloway Gaol to welcome some militant suffragists on their release from imprison-

*The Social Catholic Movement in Great Britain, by Georgina Putnam McEntee, Ph.D., Instructor in History, Hunter College of the City of New York. Macmillan Co. (obtainable at Messrs. Burns & Oates, 28 Orchard Street, London, W.I. 10/6).

ment. Miss McEntee speaks of the help and friendship the Society received from the late Mrs. Meynell, and of how when this paper made its first appearance in January 1915, Mrs. Meynell contributed the leading article. She speaks, also, of the Society's campaign against the article on "Woman" in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* in 1918, and points out that two years previously, an article on this question had appeared in the *Catholic Suffragist* (now the *Catholic Citizen*) and states that in 1921 the Society appealed to the St. Catherine Welfare Association, an American society of Catholic women formed for the purpose of improving the conditions of women and children, for their co-operation in getting the offending article amended. Miss McEntee's remarks on the subject of prostitution are wise and well put. She notes the changing attitude, and says that "Thoughtful English Catholics have expressed views in harmony with the best of modern developments in the attitude towards the social evil," and she speaks, of course, of the protest made by feminists against the injustice to women inherent in the toleration of this institution.

We commend Miss Entee's book to all our readers.

L. DE ALBERTI.

The Semaine Sociale.

(Continued from page 64.)

has to earn her livelihood; perhaps, as a humanist might think, disinterested culture will be saved from extinction by women. But the work of a married woman, mother of a family, outside of the home, was considered a grave and complex problem. Without thinking of contesting her right to work, which, as Père Sertillanges, quoted by Professor Turmann, has said: "Would be to put a premium on celibacy, sterility and concubinage," it is questionable whether married women's work outside of the home, is the best remedy to the difficulties caused by the high cost of living, and a legitimate desire for a better standard of life. The Conference was of opinion that, apart from certain privileged professions, which demand special consideration, the work of married women outside the home was an evil, and that every possible effort should be made to

render it unnecessary. The system of Family Allowances should be developed until the workman has sufficient, with his wages, to provide for the needs of his family and himself.

As to the actual claims of feminism, for civil and political rights, there were no opponents of political equality, and Professor Deslandes, who spoke on suffrage, made out the most telling and comprehensive case it would be possible to make. But as regards civil equality, some demurred, for which no doubt the Code Napoléon is responsible. Certain rights, however, were claimed for the wife, including the administration of her own property, a right to decide in certain matters pertaining to the home, and up to a point, a share in paternal authority, leaving the husband *chef de famille*, but not *chef de sa femme*, his equal.

The Conference likewise discussed the protection of women against seduction, the problem of the illegitimate child, and the question of prostitution, which led to an absolute condemnation of state regulation of vice. Finally, Monseigneur Beaupin exhorted Catholic women to take part in international life by joining the great feminist associations, which work in conjunction with the League of Nations, thus lending personal help to their often excellent work. [Translation.]

We are indebted for the above interesting report to Mme. Vallé-Genairon, Secretary of the Federation Suffragiste du Sud-Est, France.

Equal Franchise Demonstration.

St. Joan's S.P.A. was well represented at the Mass Demonstration in support of Equal Franchise, which was held in Trafalgar Square in July. Over forty women's societies sent representatives. Miss Kathleen FitzGerald, B.A., the first chairman of the Society, and Miss Butler-Bowdon, represented St. Joan's S.P.A., and spoke in the name of the Alliance.

At the end of the Demonstration the following resolutions were carried: "That this Mass Demonstration, supported by over forty organizations, welcomes the Prime Minister's promise of a bill giving votes to women from 21 and on the same terms as men, and calls on the Government to intro-

duce and pass without delay a simple Equal Franchise measure so as to ensure the inclusion of the new women voters in the 1928 Register in time to vote at the next General Election."

"That this Mass Demonstration demands for Peeresses in their own right a seat, voice and vote in the House of Lords."

International Notes.

Frau Olga Rudel Zeynek who was the only Catholic woman to sit as member of Parliament for Austria prior to the last Elections is now a member of the "Bundesrat," or Second Chamber, having been elected by the diet of the province of Styria. In a letter to us she tells us that if no elections intervene, next December she will be the President of the "Bundesrat" and will be the first woman in Austria to occupy this position.

Frau Zeynek attended the Semaine Sociale at Nancy, of which we speak in another column. She was asked to propose a toast at the luncheon in honour of foreign journalists. She profited of the opportunity to speak on Woman Suffrage, her remarks meeting with great approval. Frau Zeynek thinks that the semaine sociale will bear good fruit for feminism.

We are glad to learn from Madame Schleimer Kill of the progress of the "Action Féminine" an organisation composed chiefly of Catholic women of Luxemburg, of which she is the Hon. Secretary. An office has been opened, so that women may obtain information on Feminist questions and the Organization deals mainly with remedying the legal injustices of women.

Latin News.

La Nacion (Buenos Aires) announces that Doctoresa Maria Teresa Ferreri de Gaudino has been appointed deputy professor in the Obstetrical Clinic by the council of management of the Faculty of Medicine of Buenos Aires. This is the first time a woman has been appointed to a teaching post under this faculty.

The same paper reports that the National Council of Women of Argentina has resolved that its Vice-President, Doña Etelvina Gonzalez Chaves de Torello, shall draw up and present her scheme for women police.

El Mercurio (Santiago-de-Chile) states that the Chilean Ministry of Justice has issued a decree nominating Doña Olga Maturana deputy secretary to the secondary judge of Antofagasta.

Don Enrique Balmaceda, the Chilean Minister of the Interior, has issued a note to the chiefs of departments depending on his ministry, in which he recommends that women be employed on the office work of the civil service. He explains his motives with interesting frankness. Women, he believes, will thus be prepared for the economic independence which is the basis of moral independence; a woman who works usually spends her money for her own benefit and that of her family, vice being commoner among men than among women; the employment of women on office work will set men free for more directly productive and more virile industry; and women work more conscientiously than men, want lower wages, and, owing to their more moral lives, are less tempted to dishonesty when they are handling money. At the same time, the Minister lays down as a rule that the whole staff of any one office, both chiefs and employees, shall be of one sex, in order that there may be no suspicion that women have exercised undue pressure on men, or conversely. Certain high offices are reserved to men.

A law recently promulgated in Ecuador excludes women from the lead painting industry. Such protective legislation is particularly regrettable in tropical countries, where there is always a strong tendency to exclude women from pleasant or remunerative work.

President Calles of Mexico has issued a decree which confers on the women of this country the same civil rights as the men. It is a pity that an anti-Catholic president should lead the way in Latin America in performing this act of justice.

H. D. I.

"International Affairs and the Woman Voter."

The Women's International League is offering a week's holiday (with travelling and all expenses paid) at an International Summer School in 1928 to the young woman under 30 who submits the best Essay on the "Vote and Foreign Affairs" by December 1, 1927.

The W.I.L. hopes that this Competition will make the future voters realise that their responsibilities will be International as well as National, and that on their shoulders also will rest the burden of procuring International Peace.

Amongst the distinguished Judges for this Competition are: Professor Gilbert Murray, Mrs. H. M. Swanwick, Miss Evelyn Sharp, Miss Sybil Thorndike, and the Principals of Newnham College, Cambridge; and of St. Hugh's, St. Hilda's and Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford.

For further particulars write at once to the Secretary, Women's International League, 55, Gower Street, W.C. 1.

The August number of *The Policewoman's Review* is full of interest. The leading article by Councillor Mrs. Phillips, J.P., Deputy Mayor of Honiton, deals with the need of Women Police in County Areas. Other articles deal with Women Police in the Provinces; the Conference of German Women Police, etc., etc. *The Policewoman's Review*, recently founded, is published by the Women's Auxiliary Service; single copies, (price 3d.) may be obtained from Messrs. W. H. Smith and Son's Branches. Annual subscriptions 3s. 6d., post free, from the W.A.I., 51 Tothill Street, Westminster, S.W. 1. We welcome this new Review, and wish it every success. It should greatly help the movement of Women Police.

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TREASURER'S NOTE.

During August the subscriptions have, naturally, flagged somewhat, but with the opening of the autumn's work we hope members' thoughts will turn once more to our financial needs. The quarter's rent, due on September 29, is a first necessity. Then the Equal Franchise Campaign must be pushed forward with ever-increasing vigour, and for this a solid fund must be built up. Members are also reminded of our Christmas Sale, which will be held, as usual, in November.

G. JEFFERY.

LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT BRANCH.

Hon. Secretary: Miss N. S. Parnell, B.A.,
45 Falkner Street, Liverpool.

In the absence of our official delegates, Mrs. Murphy and Miss Jervis, the Branch was represented by Miss Parnell at a meeting of the Peacemakers Pilgrimage Committee on July 21st, where it was decided to hold a series of open air meetings in September. The Hon. Sec. spoke on Equal Franchise and distributed leaflets to St. Hugh's Branch of the C.W.L. towards the end of the month. During August no meetings were held.

We offer our congratulations to Miss McCurdy, our paper secretary, on attaining the degree of B.A. with Honours in English Literature at the University of Liverpool.

The prayers of members are asked for the repose of the soul of Mrs. Lennon, the mother of one of our members. —R.I.P.

**ST. JOAN'S SOCIAL AND
POLITICAL ALLIANCE.**

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THE

**Social Catholic Movement
in Great Britain.**

BY

GEORGINA PUTNAM McENTEE, Ph.D.

INSTRUCTOR IN HISTORY, HUNTER COLLEGE
OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK.

A history of the the Social Reform Movement amongst British Catholics from the restoration of the Hierarchy to the present day.

The Macmillan Co.

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