

# THE CATHOLIC CITIZEN

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

VOL IV., No. 9.

September 15th, 1918.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

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.

## WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE STAGE?

BY CHRISTOPHER ST. JOHN.

During the last few years there have been spasmodic attempts to rouse public opinion in regard to the low moral tone of certain productions on the London stage. The agitation has been carried on for the most part on behalf of the British soldier. It is said that the revues and musical comedies which he sees when he is home on leave have a bad effect on his morals. The War Office, which was forced to put "maisons tolérées" out of bounds when public indignation manifested itself in a forcible way, is said to be waiting for a similar outburst against suggestive theatrical entertainments before it "takes steps." A Catholic priest recently brought the matter to the notice of the C.W.S.S., and asked if this agitation were not a work which women, organised in such societies, might not take up. Hence this article.

It is generally conceded that the theatre is inevitable—"irresistible," as Matthew Arnold described it. From prehistoric times it has been an institution in the life of man. It appears always to have been necessary to him. Its origin is venerable and honourable. There seems no doubt that it was born of the poet who endowed it with words, and the dancer who gave it movement. Through the medium of words and movement actions and emotions were represented, and as time went on a body of persons skilled in this art of representation grew up, a body known as actors. In days when illiterates predominated even in civilised countries, and such books as existed, produced by patient toil with stile or pen, were rare and inaccessible, the theatre was the instrument through which were made visible to the many the thoughts of the few—those few gifted with that greater vision of things human and divine which distinguishes the artist from his fellow men.

This rough and ready sketch of the origin of the theatre may serve as a reminder that when we are discussing it in its modern form we must not forget its venerable ancestry, and the deep roots which it has formed. From time to time fanatics have arisen, condemning the theatre as an evil thing, and crying out for its extermination. That the theatre is wicked in itself is of course an absurdity. Its glorious achievements in Greece when art and religion were united in a sacred bond, its revival in the Christian world in the Middle Ages when the Church wisely used it to make her children familiar with the dogmas and mysteries of the Christian faith, its position as the instrument through which the genius of Shakespeare chose to manifest itself, are sufficient indications that the theatre, like most institutions, can be used by God as well as by the devil!

A total abstainer who should demand the uprooting of the vine all over the world because people get drunk, would not afford a more ludicrous example of prejudice run wild than the man who says that the best way to mend the theatre is to end it. Are we also to put down music, painting, sculpture, poetry, and all those arts in which men have shown the vision without which, we are told, "the people perish," because these arts have been used for evil as well as for good? I am quite aware that some people deny that there is an art of the theatre, and to this very denial can be traced that decadence of the modern stage which we all deplore. If composers wrote music merely to amuse, and painters painted with the object of entertaining, if they were constantly assured that the touchstone of the merit of their work was their success in making large numbers of idle and illiterate people laugh, the

arts which they practise would also be in a bad way. I do not mean to imply by this that the theatre should not amuse, if we use that word in its old and proper sense of "interest." Probably the Greek tragedies "amused" Greek audiences. But those who provided the amusement were not slaves to a demand for it. They expressed themselves, the business of the artist, and the result, "amusement," was an incident. Now what used to be incidental has come to be the object of the theatre, and in England at any rate the stage is in the hands of commercial speculators in frivolous entertainments.

My contention is that if we are going to conduct an agitation against the stage it should take a constructive, not a destructive form, and it should be done by those who love the theatre, not by those who despise it. Of what use is it to attack managers who put on revues and plays with an atmosphere of easy morality? We have a Lord Chamberlain's Office with licensors and censors to prevent any positive indecency, and I am bound to say that inanity rather than immorality is the prevailing characteristic of most entertainments on the London stage. Before I attack the managers, who like other tradesmen are trying to make money out of their trade, I would attack the supercilious *intelligentsia* who never enter a theatre, yet criticise severely the class of play seen there. It never seems to occur to them that by absenting themselves they are helping to lower the standard. Nor will I exempt from blame the virtuous people who complain of the theatre's low morality, and also stay away from it. In particular I accuse the whole nation which does not insist on its representatives making this essential institution a national concern. They are the chief offenders, and they must bear the chief burden of responsibility for the present condition of the English stage.

What is that condition? The priest who has asked us to stir up feeling against it of course speaks only from hearsay, for a Catholic priest in England may not go to the theatre. This prohibition is much harder on the theatre than it is on the priest. It is another example of the tendency to give the poor dog of a theatre a bad name—and hang it! One of the specific charges this priest brings, based on information he has received, is that the actresses in revue are not decently clothed. I must say in reference to this that much de-

pends on the motive for exhibiting bare limbs on the stage. I never heard it suggested by decent people that the classical dances of Isadora Duncan and her pupils were deleterious to morals, yet they wore very scanty raiment. Margaret Morris and her pupils, who it is instructive to remember were a failure when they appeared at a large London music-hall, also dance and mime at her little theatre in Chelsea in what is crudely and puritanically designated as "a state of semi-nudity." No one says there is an atmosphere of immorality about these very beautiful dances perhaps because it could as reasonably be said that there is an atmosphere of immorality about the British Museum where Greek vases are exhibited! It is not the "semi-nudity" which makes revue dangerous, but the fact that many girls are engaged in it not as artists but as "attractions." This brings me back to my old point, and my main point. What is wrong with the theatre is that it is for the most part no longer the expression of an art, taken seriously by those behind the curtain or before it, but a commercial amusement, too often in some of its forms made the vehicle of exploiting young girls for gain.

If we want to alter this state of things, we should beware of striking out blindly, and of hitting the theatre when it is down. What is needed is the organisation and endowment of the better elements in it. If we had one or two State-aided theatres in London where the main object was not to make a huge profit but to give plays which were true manifestations of the dramatic spirit, there would still no doubt be more or less objectionable entertainments, run by private enterprise, but they would take their proper place, and would not swamp the whole stage. In time we should be able to build up a taste for good plays, as the organizers of Promenade Concerts, after years of disheartening failure, have built up a taste for good music. There is already on foot a scheme for establishing a Woman's Repertory Theatre after the war, a woman's theatre in the sense that it is to employ women's labour in departments in which only men have hitherto been used.

I venture to say that in supporting such a scheme and in agitating for Government recognition of the theatre as an art, women would be better employed than in agitating for the protection of the morals of soldiers from the evil influences of revues.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS.

All lovers of justice and morality will be grateful to the *Daily News* for its masterly exposition of the injustice and immorality of Regulation 40D. Mr. Dillon has assured the Executive of the C.W.S.S. that they may rely on the Irish Party to oppose 40D. and "all such grossly cruel and unjust legislation." As some of our readers may not clearly understand what the regulation really means we deal with the matter in this issue.

\* \* \* \*

Following hard upon the teachers' threatened strike came the strike of the 'bus girls, and for six days London and some provincial towns were left without 'buses, and of trams, too, in some places. The girls went on strike because the Company had given the men a war bonus of 5/- per week, which it refused to the women doing the same work. The women were promised equal pay for equal work. In spite of the inconvenience, and it was very great, the public and the press were behind the women. They are doing the same work, why should they not receive the same pay, one heard on all sides. Even the few persons who were inclined to defend the 'Bus Company's action on the ground that some of the girls were receiving separation allowances quickly understood the position when it was put to them, that the Government does not pay separation allowances to save the pocket of the 'Bus Companies.

\* \* \* \*

The War Cabinet has under consideration the question of munition women's wages in relation to men's. The Minister of Munitions will issue an Order for an advance of 5/- a week for women and 2/6 a week for girls under 18. The order will apply to all establishments in Great Britain which have received the Consolidated Women's Wages Order. This award, however, will not prejudice the women munition workers' claim to equal pay for equal work, which will be considered later. It is true to say that the question is a national one, and capable of only one solution, when women do the same work as men they must receive the same pay, in the interests of all concerned. As one of the 'Bus girls was heard to say: "What would the boys think of us, when they come back, if we were to undersell them?"

\* \* \* \*

The telephone girls to the number of 800

signed an indignant protest which was forwarded to the Controller of the London Telephone Service. Their anger was justly aroused by a facetious advertisement which suggested that there was a shortage of staff owing to the "claims of love." The girls declare that the advertisement made it appear that girls enter the service for the sole purpose of getting married. The memorial protests against the use of the Press to feed the public on such gross misapprehensions, with regard to a service which, whatever else it may or may not be, is most certainly not a matrimonial agency! The correct reason for the resignation of the girls and also for the general shortage of staff, is because the girls cannot live on the remuneration offered by the department. They ask for an apology.

\* \* \* \*

We note with amusement that in the controversy in the *Catholic Times* on the family wage, and equal pay for equal work, a man writes that: "If woman's labour (excepting under present circumstances) is remunerated equally with male labour there will be no inducement to enter the marriage state, their divinely appointed place in Nature's Economy for the rearing and bringing up of children." We have heard that objection before, but were we to put forward such a view we should expect to be called haters of men and revilers of matrimony. We think, without being unduly sentimental, that the majority of women would forfeit, if necessary, even a good salary to marry the man of their choice, but under the new dispensation no one will be forced into marriage for a living. Is it really desirable that they should?

\* \* \* \*

As a result of the strikes the Bus girls have won, and the Government have appointed a Committee "to investigate and report as to the relations, which should be maintained between the wages of women and men, having regard to the interests of both, as well as to the value of their work. The recommendations should have in view the necessity of output during the war, and the progress, and well being of industry in the future." The Committee consists of Mr. Justice Atkin, Chairman; Dr. Janet Campbell, Mrs. Sidney Webb, Sir Lynden Macassey, Sir W. W. Mackenzie, K.C., with Lieut-Col. Sir Matthew Nathan as secretary.

## THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETY.

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Monthly, post free, 1s. 6d. per annum.

Hon. Editor . . . . . MISS LEONORA de ALBERTI.

Hon. Treasurer . . . . . MISS BRADY.

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

## REGULATION 40D.

In an article entitled "A Foul Scandal," the *Daily News* stated that it was difficult to believe that public opinion would long tolerate such a hideous scandal as Regulation 40D. We also believe that when the public has grasped what is happening in our courts the regulation will be withdrawn. For whatever change may have come over certain persons in authority the bulk of our countrymen are still lovers of justice. It has been the boast of generations of Englishmen that any person accused of a crime is held to be innocent until proved guilty. Under Regulation 40D that has been changed for women. This regulation, as our readers are no doubt aware, makes it a punishable offence for a woman suffering from venereal disease to solicit or have intercourse with any member of his Majesty's Forces. It is no offence for a soldier to communicate disease to a woman, the law is therefore directed against one sex only. Any man then protected by his Majesty's uniform suffering from venereal disease can accuse any woman he pleases of having infected him. There is only one way in which she can prove her innocence and that is by submitting to a loathsome and degrading examination. It is said that 50 per cent. of the cases have broken down, medical examination having proved the women to be free from disease. But the man who has lodged the false charge is immune, he need not appear in court, his name is not published, he is a privileged person who must

at any cost be protected from the result of his own deeds; though as a protection the regulation is in point of fact utterly futile. The regulation is a grave danger to all women engaged on work which brings them into touch with the men of his Majesty's Forces. When a young woman refused recently to submit to the ordeal of medical examination the prosecuting counsel, Mr. Muskett, did not scruple to ask the magistrate to assume her to be guilty and punish her accordingly. This the magistrate refused to do, but remanded her on bail, when she ultimately agreed to the examination she was found to be free from disease. Again when the point was raised whether it was necessary for a woman to know that she was suffering from disease, Mr. Muskett said that if knowledge had to be proved the regulation would be unworkable. Surely the persecution of women in the alleged interests of men has never before been carried to such a pitch. In their anxiety to protect the soldier, the military authorities backed by the Cabinet, not indeed by the House of Commons, are making a byword of the justice of our Courts.

Over 500 resolutions of protest have been sent to the Government. The C.W.S.S. has protested singly, and in conjunction with many other societies. Every member should write to her M.P., many of us are voters now, and our opinion carries weight, and enlist his services in the campaign against this

horror. The Labour Party has again sent up a protest, and Mr. Dillon assures the Executive of the C.W.S.S. that they may rely on the Irish Party to oppose 40D and all such grossly cruel and unjust legislation. Speaking in the House of Commons on July 24th, Mr. Dillon complained that 40D was passed behind the back of the House, and was the most scandalous act of executive government he could remember, the Government themselves were ashamed of it. Mr. Lees Smith, Mr. Walter Roch, Mr. Chancellor and others have also endeavoured to obtain the withdrawal of the regulation.

I have dwelt on the inequity of 40D., is it necessary in a Catholic paper to dwell on the immorality of the order? It is practically a revival of the Contagious Diseases Acts, and we who thought that Josephine Butler's victory was final are witnessing the re-establishment in England of State Regulation of vice. It is the very negation of Christian teaching, and as a preventive of disease its futility has been everywhere demonstrated. The whole weight of medical opinion, with few exceptions, of instructed lay opinion, and of the Royal Commission on Venereal Disease is dead against it.

The Medical Congress held in Brussels pronounced against the State Regulation of Vice, the Medical Congress held in London in 1913, attended by 8,000 doctors, was practically unanimous in admitting that the policy of State Regulation is a failure, and should be abandoned.

It is said that the order has been issued in the interests of the soldier. Is it indeed in the interests of the soldier to instil into his mind that the authorities are anxious only to protect his health, and care not a jot about his morals? By condoning vice and creating a false impression of security the authorities are doing precisely what they are endeavouring to avoid—by increasing the volume of immorality they are increasing the volume of disease.

L. DE ALBERTI.

## CLIQUES.

Miss Isabel Willis writes:  
May I be allowed a word of comment on the article on "Cliques" in this month's CATHOLIC CITIZEN? That cliques are bad

and should be abolished is a statement which in a general sense we should all probably be willing to endorse. It is when one comes to particulars that difficulties arise. Miss Pearson seems to assume that it rests with women to introduce a wider spirit into the relations between men and women; that, as she says, antagonism in letters and speech between the two sexes should be deemed pre-historic," and again, "when questions are mooted of national importance let us take our stand by the side of the men." In another part of the very same number of the CATHOLIC CITIZEN we have an article on the Maternity and Child Welfare Bill from which we learn that it has been decided that no midwife shall serve on the committees which have to administer this Act (although 90 per cent. of poor mothers are attended by these certified midwives) that no district nurse shall serve on them, and that only two women of any sort shall be allowed on them. The writer of this article calls it "scandalous" that a committee should be chosen to look after the needs of maternity which is composed almost entirely of men, and I think most of your readers would agree with her, though we must conclude that Miss Pearson would urge us to "take our stand by the side of the men." In the daily papers we read of the lawyer "clique," which is persistently opposing the admission of women to the legal profession, and of women-teachers and women tram-workers driven to the desperate measure of a strike because men are withholding from them an equal wage for equal work. Which sex in these instances is showing most of the "Clique" spirit? Women will gladly take their stand by the side of the men when they are allowed to do so; but "Que messieurs les assassins commencent."

## LONDON.

Office: 55, Berners Street, W.1. Hours: 3.30—5.30. Saturdays, 10.30—12.30. Other times by appointment. We remind our members that Holy Mass will be offered for the intentions of the C.W.S.S., that is for Peace, and for all who have died in the War, at St. Patrick's, Soho, at 10.30, on Sunday, October 5th.

LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT BRANCH.—Hon. Organizing Sec., Miss A. J. Musson, Fair View West, Rainhill, Lancs. It has been decided to appoint an organizing secretary to this branch and we are very grateful to Miss Musson for having kindly consented to undertake this work. Mrs. Murphy will still continue to act as Hon. Sec.

## WOMAN AND THE HOUSING PROBLEM.

For very many years those who opposed our claim to the Vote said to us that woman's place was in the home, and they said it so often, and repeated it so loudly, that one would have thought that since it was universally accepted that the home was the partial sphere of some women, the house which formed the home would therefore be constructed, as far as possible, for the comfort and convenience of the individual whose partial sphere it was. But the following quotation from the "Labour Woman," of March, 1918, will show how little this was the case:

"When we (the Women's Labour League) gave evidence before the Local Government Board recently, the Chairman of the Committee said that he could not understand why women had so long put up with so many inconveniences and discomforts in their homes. He was met by the cry of the witnesses in one united exclamation of, 'We've never before had the chance! You've never before asked us what we thought.'"

That women have now had this chance, which ought to bear much fruit, is, in great part, due to the action of the Women's Labour League in organising a housing campaign. They have issued some very interesting and attractive plans of houses accompanied by a set of questions which they are asking the working woman to answer, and thus they are obtaining a very clear view of the type of house the working woman wants and the working woman of the future will obtain. They specially ask those to whom their questions are addressed not to consider the question of rent in planning the house they want. This is a very important point, and its virtual acceptance marks the throwing overboard of the old doctrine that houses built out of the public funds ought, like houses built by the ordinary speculative builder, to pay an economic rent, or that services such as tramways, etc., provided by the Local Authorities ought to show a monetary profit similar to that gained in like circumstances by a private company. That the doctrine has been thrown overboard is evident from the fact that the scheme of the Local Government Board for the provision of

houses after the war, unsatisfactory as it will later be shown to be, makes provision for meeting part of the loss on approved building schemes out of the national funds. Probably there are still many to whom this action will be anathema, such people as opposed the Act for building labourers' cottages in Ireland on the ground that such cottages were to be let at less than an economic rent. The Act was passed, however, and of its success no one who has visited Ireland since it was carried out may doubt. Yes, the older point of view is quite clearly passing away. Working men and women are coming to be regarded not as mere units of production, capable of performing so much toil, and consequently receiving so much pay, but as human beings, possessed of human personality, and, by reason thereof, claiming certain minimum conditions of living. The State is recognising this, there are certain minimum conditions of housing, of health, of recreation, of education, etc., the enjoyment of which it must obtain for its members. This doctrine would sound new and strange in the ears of many who lived during the last century, but it is no new doctrine, it is as old as the Catholic Church itself, though it is a doctrine that since the Reformation was becoming gradually forgotten, and which the Industrial Revolution and its consequences nearly succeeded in wiping from out men's minds.

Now this is the Housing situation which will confront us immediately after the War. A competent authority has stated that following immediately upon demobilisation there will be an actual shortage of houses in England and Wales of 500,000. And if we add to this number the houses now occupied, but which fall below the recognised minimum in sanitation, numbers of rooms, etc., the total number of new houses required will be little short of a million in England and Wales alone, and the problem is equally urgent in Ireland and Scotland. In the past when houses for the working classes were built, it was too often the minimum requirements that were regarded. If the houses were provided by the ordinary speculative builder, it was, too often, the very least that would satisfy the sanitary inspector that was provided. In almost any

large town streets of such houses abound. Such localities have a population specially their own, from among whom are recruited the casual labourers of the docks and the victims of the sweaters, and, when there is an epidemic, these streets usually give up a considerable quota of their population. But a small proportion of the children born there reach maturity, and such as do, bear its mark to the grave. The Houses built in the past by the Local Authority, except in the rather rare case of an enlightened municipality too often also bear upon them the marks of their origin. Here it was the case of doing as well as possible the work in hand without unduly burdening that patient animal the Ratepayer, who was capable of insubordination if driven too far. The compromise between the good intentions of the Local Authority and the fear of overburdening the Ratepayer usually took the form of hideous model buildings. The working woman is quite assured that she doesn't want any more of this description. Not only is the supreme ugliness of such buildings, and the absence of any little plot of ground to call one's own against them, but one can picture the weary mother or tired father, toiling up the long hard stairs worn out by the day's work. . . . These flats, too, will go sometime, and in the meantime, the new houses to be built must be something very different. As to the minimum provision, it would seem that there must be three bedrooms, a bathroom, kitchen, and parlour or living room. Then there must be a small garden to each house, houses must be built in blocks of two or four to permit the passage of air, and for the same reason there must be no more narrow streets, whether the extra space be taken up with roadway, pathway, or front garden. These are the minimum, less cannot be accepted, but how far beyond the minimum, schemes may go, is evidenced by the proposal of the Bradford City Council, always to the fore in matters of this kind, to build a circle of garden cities on the hills outside the town. It sounds a most attractive plan, and one hopes may be successful.

Now whence are to come the funds for this much to be desired object? Where is the money to come from that is to bring about this change, fruitful in good health for the

generations yet to be? The scheme of the Local Government Board is to lend the necessary capital to the Local Authorities at the prevailing rate of interest, and to meet out of Treasury funds three-fourths of the loss on any approved scheme, furthermore, when the rate of rd. in the pound is not sufficient to make up the remaining fourth, the Government will supply the deficit. This is not sufficient, however, it throws too heavy a burden on the Local Authority, and offers no alternative where, as sometimes happens, the Local Authority is supine and indifferent. While the advanced municipality like Bradford would throw itself eagerly into the scheme, there is no guarantee that the indolent Local Authority would not continue to drag out its sleepy existence, regardless of its debt to the men and women who look to it to provide them with houses which will enable them to live a higher type of life than in the past. The Local Government Board if it is really in earnest, must do something further to mitigate the burden of the Local Authorities, and we women must see each in our own district that our Local Authority is not indolent or supine.

A. M. CARROLL.

## REVIEW.

HOUSING REFORM (Church League for Women's Suffrage, 4d.). The sub-title of this pamphlet is a call to Church and Nation, for the author, Mrs. E. L. Acres, considers that it is the business of the Church to remind the world that "Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." She gives an account of the efforts made to meet the problem, and of the great work that remains to be done. Mrs. Acres boldly pleads that it would be better to run up temporary buildings, on the plan of the Government buildings, rather than that housing schemes should be rushed through, without due consideration of all the aspects of the question. She dwells upon rural housing, not because it is necessarily more urgent than reform in urban districts, but because if rural conditions were to be so improved as to cause a "back to the land movement," the overcrowding in towns would gradually right itself. Mrs. Acres concludes with an appeal to her readers to consider the subject not only on the practical side, but to turn a willing ear "to the artistic (the word here used in the widest possible sense), the ethical, the religious aspects of the question. Do not let us be afraid of dreams. Remember "The dreamers of dreams . . . are the movers and shakers of the world." A useful bibliography is appended, and a list of societies interested in Housing.

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