

THE CATHOLIC CITIZEN

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

VOL. IV., No. 12.

December 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.

WOMEN OF SERBIA.

BY ELISABETH CHRISTITCH.

All the world knows how the Serbian soldiers fought in this war; and anybody who has studied the history of the Serbian people knows that it would have been wiped out long since but for the steadfastness of the women, more important for the survival of a race than even the martial qualities of the men.

Fidelity to faith and to nationality, taught in the home during centuries of Turkish misrule, enabled Serbia at last to throw off the yoke. A hundred years ago when a band of weary war-worn combatants returned in discouragement, saying they could no longer face an army quadruple their number, Princess Liubitsa, of the Obrenovitch line, who was with her women engaged in baking bread for the army, untied the strings of her apron and handed it to the Commander, saying:

“Stay here, then, and bake the bread; but give us your rifles and we will, ourselves, defend our babes and homesteads.”

The tired combatants, stung by these words, turned back to fresh endeavour and in a vigorous attack once more routed the invaders.

The women of former days often marched side by side with the men, carried food and munition to the trenches, and, especially in Montenegro, were indispensable factors of victory in the incessant campaigns against the Turks. In the more recent wars of 1912-1913 Serbian women's activities were mostly confined to care of the wounded. There are no professional nurses in Serbia, and it was volunteers of the better class, wives of Cabinet Ministers, lawyers, merchants, professors, and above all of officers, who helped in surgery work, undertook the cooking, laundry, and general administration of the hospitals.

They had had no regular training for work of this description, and their efforts were admirable as their goodwill was praiseworthy. When Great Britain joined this war, of which Serbia bore the first brunt, these volunteer nurses as a rule withdrew thankfully to give place to the highly capable, well-organised and well-equipped British units which did monumental work before the disaster of the invasion.

How the Serbian women met that invasion, faced the calamities of separation from their dear ones, flight, famine and penury, yet maintained their trust in God and their certainty of a better future, was borne in on us who saw them as refugees in Terstenik (Central Serbia). Three of us had remained to take over the hospitals full of the heavily wounded left behind by the retreating army, while the remainder of our party made their way over the Albanian Mountains, through much tribulation to reach the sea and eventually their homes in England.

Our first efforts to create order and distribute relief among the fugitives converging here from all parts of Serbia were at once understood and splendidly seconded by the women. It is true that the men who remained—a small number—were either aged, crippled or otherwise unfit for military service; yet it is quite remarkable how the women, hitherto accustomed on all occasions to defer to the men folk as to final authority, now took matters into their own hands, combined their resources, shared their experiences and their knowledge, and planned, among other things, equitable solution of the difficult housing problem. A feeling of solidarity such as we had not yet encountered, sprang up and ex-

panded together with a new and salutary sense of responsibility. We admit that in that vast crowd there were some faint hearts. We had sad cases of suicide among the so-called "spoiled children of fortune." These were the wives of fond but misguided husbands who had kept them from the ordinary cares of life—women who had scarcely ever handled money, finding all their wants supplied; rarely gone for a walk without an escort, and now suddenly confronted with the problem of fending for themselves and their families, sought death in their bewilderment. But the mass of the refugee women worked valiantly, helping us to distribute the bulk of our stores of limited food, blankets and woollen comforts among the departing troops, and concealing the remainder in private houses so as to elude confiscation by the enemy close at hand. Afterwards concealment was rendered possible by the temporary nature of the first troops' occupation. They came and went, passing through swiftly, only bent on pushing further on, and had no time to do more than look round. Only after several weeks was a settled government installed and regular perquisitions begun. By that time there was little left of our stores that could be useful to them, and the villagers too had managed to secret most of their belongings. Some of the women, rather than risk that the wool in their mattresses be taken and converted into uniforms for the enemy, extracted it, replacing it with straw, rolled it up compactly with a big stone inside, and under cover of the night sank it in the river Morava. This was a financial loss, for the much coveted wool was priced and paid for by the authorities. Although many houses were at first stripped of furniture and kitchen utensils, the women soon became adepts at hoodwinking the searchers. They represented that they had already been victimised, and indeed where Hungarians, Austrians and Germans were coming and going it was difficult to control the partition of booty. Articles of value were dissimulated by the owners among the lumber in the loft and many a good sofa or armchair likely to be carried off by the sergeant commander of a neighbouring village, now a high and mighty personage, were hidden in an outhouse or otherwise put out of sight. Dodg-

ing the enemy was the great preoccupation of those evil days and our hospital was a depôt of weird-shaped bags confided to us because of our expected immunity from perquisition. The women of Terstenik more than repaid us for these little services later on by helping us to dissimulate human goods on the road to the mountains that meant freedom. They hid, fed, and helped on their way the escaped prisoners and convalescents, who left our hospital as freely as they entered it, at night, until the authorities put armed sentries at the gate. Thenceforward the escapes were effected by the back door, and although the whole town knew of it we were not betrayed. When finally the leakage in the number of patients to be delivered over to them became too apparent to the Austrians, and Miss Christitch was summoned before the Military Court, crowds of women accompanied her in the streets, ready to stand by her to the last. I think it was the demonstration of these brave souls that influenced the Commander to accept her protest that while supervising a surgical and a typhus hospital, of which latter she was also the sole nurse, she could not well act as police to the patients; and also to adopt her suggestion that he should increase the number of sentries at the gate! But the humours of our situation were few, and the troubles many. Our great consolation was to see the sisterhood of women developing and the splendid practical use they made of the sudden predominant position given to them.

Horrible rumours reached us—dwellers in the towns—of massacres and outrages in outlying districts too remote for our verification of their authenticity; but we had one example brought to our very doors in the person of a child of 16 shot in the side by a Hungarian soldier for refusing to open to him in her mother's absence. This little heroine left us, apparently healed, but the bullet had not been located and she carries it about with her still. Many women were arrested and imprisoned for defiant speeches; but they soon learned that the best way to serve their country was by silence and intensive work in keeping up each other's spirits. By openly braving the tyrant more personal satisfaction and a measure of popularity could be obtained, but

(Continued on page 95).

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

By the time the CATHOLIC CITIZEN is in the hands of our readers the first election, in this country, in which women have taken part will be over, and we shall soon learn the fate of the women candidates. The following is a list of the women who contested the election:

Miss Mary Macarthur (Lab.), Stourbridge.
Mrs. M. C. Ashby (L.), Ladywood.
Miss M. Carney (S.F.), Belfast.
Miss Violet Markham (L.), Mansfield.
Mrs. Despard (Lab.), Battersea.
Mrs. Dacre Fox (Ind.), Richmond.
Miss Alison Garland (L.), Portsmouth, South.
Mrs. Pethick Lawrence (Lab.), Manchester, Rusholme.
Mrs. J. McEwan (L.), Enfield.
Mrs. H. M. Mackenzie (Lab.), University of Wales.
Mme. Markievicz (S.F.), Dublin.
Mrs. How Martyn (Ind.), Hendon.
Miss E. G. Murray (Ind.), Glasgow, Bridgeton.
Miss Christabel Pankhurst (Coalition), Smethwick.
Miss E. Phipps (Ind.), Chelsea.
Mrs. O. Strachey (Ind.), Brentford and Chiswick.

* * *

By kind permission of the authorities, the High Mass at Westminster Cathedral was offered on December 14th (at the request of the C.W.S.S.) to beg Divine Guidance on the men and women electors.

* * *

It is reported in the Press that the Hungarian Government have appointed Fraülein Rosika Schwimmer to be Minister Plenipotentiary for Hungary at Berne. Fraülein Schwimmer, the first woman diplomatist, has long been an active suffragist and feminist, and is well known to English suffragists.

* * *

Regulation 40D. has been withdrawn. We prophesied some time ago in the CATHOLIC CITIZEN that the Government would not face the new women electors until this infamous regulation had been repealed. Lord Moulton's Committee without pronouncing any final

opinion on the merits of the regulation, advised that in its present form it should be regarded only as a war measure, and should be dropped on the cessation of hostilities. We note the words "in its present form," but we are no longer to be governed by military gentlemen, and Orders in Council. We do not think that a House of Commons, responsible to women, will pass any measure of the kind. Indeed the Government knew it was impossible to pass such an odious regulation through the last House of Commons, that is the reason an Order in Council was resorted to. The Criminal Law Amendment Bill, and the Sexual Offences Bill are likewise dropped, unmentioned.

* * *

Some of our members who read in the *Times* the paragraph reporting that the C.W.S.S. was supporting the Coalition, may not have seen our contradiction of the statement. Nevertheless we feel confident that they will have understood that the report was an error, for they know that we are a non-party society, and therefore cannot support any party.

* * *

Miss O'Sullivan has very kindly given us a telephone as a thanksgiving for the vote. Will members please note that our telephone number is Museum, 4181.

LONDON AND BRANCH NEWS.

The Office, 55, Berners Street, W.1. Tel.: Museum 4181. The Office will be closed for Christmas Vacation from December 20th. Correspondence attended to as usual.

Since the beginning of the war, Holy Mass has been offered, at the request of the C.W.S.S., every first Sunday of the month, at St. Patrick's, Soho, for Peace, and all those who had died in the war. The last Mass was said on Sunday, December 1st, and was offered in thanksgiving for Peace, and to beg Divine Guidance for the men and women electors.

The C.W.S.S. placed a wreath, tied in the colours of the Society, at the shrine of Blessed Joan of Arc, in thanksgiving for peace.

The Jumble Sale for the "Catholic Citizen" Fund realised the sum of £15 6s. 5d. The proceeds of the Christmas Sale amounted to £18 6s. We offer our best thanks to all those who worked and helped in various ways to make these sales a success.

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Office: 55, BERNERS STREET, LONDON, W., 1.

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MISS BRADY.

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

WAR, PEACE—AND AFTER?

The greatest day in political, perhaps I should say secular, history has come and gone. We shall not soon forget the spontaneous outburst of joy when London after the bitter strain of these four years went mad at the prospect of peace. Nor shall we forget the crowds that surged round Buckingham Palace after the maroons, in proclaiming the armistice, had sounded their own knell. Nor the motley vehicles with their exuberant crews, nor how we lustily sang God save the King, and the Marseillaise, nor our disappointment that we had not yet mastered the intricacies of the Star-Spangled Banner. But the first outburst of joy is over, and though the relief to know the carnage has ceased is great, we are left chastened and sobered to contemplate a world in ruins, and the awful total of dead and wounded. Those of us who have been claiming a share in the governance of the world may well be tempted to shrink back. For this cataclysm which has overtaken the human race, and for which history knows no precedent, is the result of misused power, of misused political power.

We have said, and we have said truly, that the responsibility for the European tragedy does not lie with women, for no women of any nationality had a share in governing the various countries. But now we have succeeded in winning a certain proportion of power, and though we are as yet by no means on a footing of equality with men, nevertheless we shall be

to some extent responsible for the new world, good or bad, which will rise from the ruins of the civilisation which has passed away. I am not, of course, rejoicing that the power of women is not equal to that of men, for I am amongst those who believe that the world will not be properly governed until such time as men and women stand on equal terms in governing. I look to the time when a candidate will be chosen to fill an office of responsibility not on the grounds of sex, but on the grounds of ability to fill that office, irrespective of sex. I look to the day when no woman, merely because she is a woman, will be compelled to bury her talents in a napkin.

Before this paper is in the hands of our readers our first election will be over, and we shall soon know whether any women have been elected to Parliament. The time between the passing of the Bill making women eligible, and the election was so short, that not much could be done towards educating the electorate, and possibly their judgment has not been equal to electing many, if any, women candidates. Old Parliamentarians tell us that a Parliament elected under the peculiar circumstances now obtaining will not be of long duration, and on all sides one has heard complaints of the vagueness of the various policies put before the country. The fact is that in a world changing daily before our eyes, no one can foretell what the morrow will bring forth, and so there is perforce some vagueness in the

future plans of parties, societies and individuals. No one in the country could object, for instance, to the policy which has for its object "to promote the unity and development of the British Empire . . . and to bring into being such conditions of living for the inhabitants of the British Isles as will secure plenty and opportunity for all." It is when you come to details that controversy arises. Again all agree that slums are not fit homes for the men who have won this war, or for their children. For ourselves we did not wait for a European War to discover that many of our people live in hovels that are not fit for any man to live in, be he hero or coward, still less are they fit for women to live in and bear children in, and for those children to grow up in. The question we ask is Why has a rich country allowed such a state of things to exist for so long? The housing question is indeed one of the first national problems to tackle; it is a little late in the day to begin. And with this housing problem is connected the problem that is always with us—the moral problem. Upon that question we shall almost certainly have a stern battle to fight with the reactionaries and the ignorant.

Whatever is doubtful in the future, this much is certain, there will be no lack of work, and no lack of battles, and we shall need great enthusiasm, much faith, and above all a never failing hope. For hope, as a Spanish poet has beautifully said, is the Viaticum of life.

L. DE ALBERTI.

(Continued from page 92).

other results were vexations visited on relatives and friends. Sometimes an entire town became suspect because of the threats of an incensed patriot, and in the raids that ensued not only valuable weapons were discovered but escaped Serbian prisoners who were waiting as we all did then for the Serbian army's return. A very noble part was played by the school mistresses who gave asylum to the men that tried to help the insurrection in Bulgaria. Two were hung for treason in Krushevat. These devoted women did not deny the accusation and went calmly to death.

When we cleared our hospital and proceeded to Belgrade we found great misery, but also great fortitude among the women. Many whom we had formerly known as living in

affluence,—refined and educated women,—were doing menial work and looking for odd jobs of any description in order to support their families. Some undertook to teach, other to char and mend or to sweep the streets. I found a Colonel's wife whitewashing a kitchen. Girls who had been successful university students made a living by going to fetch beans, potatoes and flour from the peasants in the adjacent villages and then selling them at a profit. The journeys had to be done by night; and often, to escape the vigilance of the enemy sentries they had to stand in water knee deep with their bundles on their heads or held in their arms.

Many families managed to come together on special evenings to sing patriotic songs and teach the children the Serbian's glorious past and speak to them of the day when their army would return in triumph. The peasant women deliberately thinned the crops they had been forced to sow for the invader, and kept secret stores of grain in reserve for the possible inrush at any time of the allied troops. Serbia is now shorn of all the necessities of life, but stands resolute and hopeful at the beginning of a new era thanks to the valour of the men and the loyal fortitude of the women.

RHYMES WITH REASONS. (Burns and Oates, 1/-.) By the Author of "Aunt Sarah and the War."

There is not only reason in these delightful verses, there is also wit, humour and vision. We should expect from their author a sympathetic understanding of women, and we are not disappointed. For instance, the entry of British troops into Jerusalem brings to the poet's mind the mothers whose sons contributed to the victory, but did not live to see it.

Mothers of sons who fell that day,
I see you foremost in the fray.
Men took the citadel, the mine, the mart,
But you took Calvary—to your heart.

Or, again, to the Bearers of Lost Sons:
Mothers who suffered love's sharp joy—
By Christ, who bore one Cross,
Twice blest be you, who bore the boy,
And now who bear the loss.

There are some fine commemorations of the gallant dead; and the poem, "Concessions," gives us a vivid picture of one of the side issues of war. We can positively see the man who defied the Food Controller to feed the pigeons, and the policeman passing on, and we become the public who were cheered by the sight.

For wit, the best thing in the book is the last quatrain, "Leap Years." The author reminds us that in 1867 Lord Derby described his Reform Bill as a leap in the dark, and in 1918 the Lords passed the Bill enfranchising six million women:

But exit Darby—enter Joan!
The Lords this lucky night,
Took, from the darkness of their own,
A leap into the light.

Rhymes with Reasons should find as many delighted readers as "Aunt Sarah and the War."

WORK AND WAGES.

Of all the numerous problems that will have to be solved by someone, somehow, in the great "Reconstruction" to which we look forward after the war, the wages question is not the least difficult or intricate. Already some of us are feeling bewildered when we see the words "Family wage," "Minimum wage," "Equal wage for equal work," for we know what an array of arguments can be brought on one side and the other. We can almost sympathise with the poor worried man who declined to hear more than one side of any question, declaring that to be enough for an honest man. However, I am not proposing to give way to this temptation at present, but rather to bring forward the facts and arguments most commonly heard on both sides in the hope that readers of the CATHOLIC CITIZEN may be helped in coming to a right conclusion.

To take the Family wage first. The honest man as described above might have at first some difficulty in deciding between it and the Equal wage for Equal work, for both seem in some points fair and just. The Family wage, of course, implies that a superior wage should be paid to the head of a family, because he (or she) has to provide for others besides himself. This is right in theory, but it is when we see it being carried into real life that doubts arise. How can the employer discriminate between a married man with children and a single man, a widow with children, a single woman supporting her parents, or other dependants, and a single woman who has only herself to support? It is evidently impossible that an employer should do this, and consequently in practice it has come about that a man has uniformly been paid a higher wage than a woman quite irrespective of whether he is a single man or has a dozen children to support, or whether his or her work is the more valuable. This is not the fault of the employer, but of the system itself. It probably came about not through any intentional deliberate preference, but from the sort of bargaining naturally going on between employer and employed—the one trying to get labour as cheaply as possible and the other trying to get the highest payment he could demand. When women came into the labour market they were content at first to accept less than the men

because, as a rule, their requirements were less. Some writers lately have been endeavouring to show that this system is a just one because of what they describe as a man's natural functional dignity. But no abstract argument of this kind will ever convince the ordinary common sense of the majority of us that to pay a single man a higher wage than a woman for doing the same, or possibly inferior work, simply because he is a man, is in accordance with justice, and this instinctive feeling is turned into a settled conviction when we see the system actually being carried out, not only to the injury of the woman, but of the man himself, who finds his employer preferring to engage a woman to do his work because she can be got for a lower wage. Men have been slow to realise this, though it has been continually pointed out by women speakers and writers, but now that they have really grasped the idea they are becoming most emphatic in their support of the women's contention that the unjust system must go, and that of an Equal Wage for Equal Work must take its place. The Government, too, has taken the matter up and appointed a Committee with instructions to "investigate and report as to the relations which should be maintained between the wages of men and women, having regard to the interests of both, as well as to the value of their work." We shall look forward to learning the result of this Government enquiry, and if it results in any legislation, women voters must see that such legislation is really in the interests of both men and women.

There is so much that is evidently right in the principle of an equal wage for equal work that we may be in danger of shutting our eyes to the fact that there are certain difficulties attendant on it in practice, though we believe these may be overcome without injury to the principle itself. If payment is to be made according to the value of the work done, it is evident that this payment cannot at the same time take any account whatever of the circumstances of the person who does that work, provided that it is a living wage. Therefore we are confronted at once with the question as to how dependants shall be provided for. An equal wage may not after all be a fair

wage in all cases, for it may mean poverty to a man or woman with children to feed and clothe, and wealth to a man or woman with no dependants. There is, however, a way out of this difficulty. As far as the employer is concerned, the rule of equal wage for equal work must be taken as the established one; but the problem which remains as to how the family should be provided for can be solved by calling in the State—representing as it does the whole community—to make up the inequalities. A few years ago this plan would have had no chance of being accepted, but we have now become familiarised with the idea through the separation allowances to the dependants of our soldiers and sailors. Is the system to be carried out to a far greater extent by being applied to the workman and workwoman as well? It is a matter worthy of the most serious consideration. If the principle were accepted, then the equal wage would in reality be equal. What would be generally accepted as a fair living wage would have to be agreed on between employer and employed, and beyond this the State would be the paymaster, making an allowance for each child, or other dependant, such as an aged parent, precisely as is now being done in the case of the Army and Navy. Thus the two plans worked in combination should lead to a successful result. Doubtless, difficulties would arise in this plan as in others. For one thing, great care would have to be taken that the family really got the benefit of the allowance, and not only the husband himself. Some interesting revelations that have lately appeared in the daily papers have shown the necessity of being on our guard; as we are told of husbands who have habitually kept their wives in ignorance of the amount of their wages, so that in the early days of the war, where wives went to receive from the firms a war allowance of half their husbands' previous wages, some rather amusing incidents happened. But difficulties which look formidable when viewed from a distance are apt to diminish or vanish altogether when a scheme is in actual working. This particular one is of course a form of Endowment of Motherhood, as to which there has been much discussion. There are undoubtedly dangers attendant on allowing State interference with the details of our lives. The "thin edge of the wedge" argument is

one that has been used to block many proposed reforms; but I do not myself feel much fear of this "wedge." It seems to me that what we have to do, each of us individually, and all of us as a community, is to labour for what seems right and just for our own day and our own set of circumstances, and trust that those who come after us may also be guided to do the right thing for their own time too. It is really impossible for us to-day to judge of the future action of any of the measures which we are constantly introducing, for things have a way of turning out very differently from what their original framers expected. We are, notoriously, as a people, suspicious of new ideas and slow in adopting them, but in this matter of a fair wage, at least, they are being welcomed in many quarters, and to quote from a recent article in *The Nation*, "We are coming more and more to see that to make the happiness or misery of his family depend on the success or failure of a man in the industrial struggle . . . is to do a violent wrong to the children. We have only to glance at the significance of this rapid triumph of the principle of equal pay for equal work to see what vast dilemmas are before us. If we may borrow a phrase from the military correspondents all the lines of our social thinking have become liquid, and nobody can tell in what form our society will finally emerge from this new struggle of ideas."

But I do not think that we as Catholics need be at all afraid of new ideas. We have always the great principle of justice to hold on to, and justice will always be justice as long as the world lasts.

ISABEL WILLIS.

LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT BRANCH.—Hon. Org. Sec.: Miss A. J. Musson, Far View West, Rainhill, Lancs. A successful meeting of the branch was held at 6, Lord Street, on November 21st. Miss Josephine Ormandy was in the chair. Mrs. V. M. Cramford gave a most interesting address on the Catholic Labour Movement abroad.

During the election period the branch was able to give political information of a non-party nature and answer inquiries; also dispose of the "Citizen," at 91, Bedford Street, owing to the kindness of a member of the Committee, and also at 6, Lord Street, through the N.U.W.S.S. Information Bureau.

A Mass will be said on the day of the election, at 9 o'clock, at St. Nicholas Pro. Cathedral, for the intentions of the C.W.S.S.; that is, to beg Divine Guidance for the women electors.

THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETY.

Office—55, Berners St., Oxford St., London, W.
Patron: Blessed Joan of Arc. Colours: Blue, White & Gold
Organ—"The Catholic Citizen," 1d. 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.

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By D. M. HUGHES B.A.

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