

# THE CATHOLIC SUFFRAGIST

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

VOL. I., No. 2.

February 15th, 1915.

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.

## SURSUM CORDA!

By Christopher St. John.

For a whole decade an army of devoted and courageous women in this country have been engaged in throwing themselves against the strong positions held by the opponents of the cause of Votes for Women. Some of them have tried to storm those positions with violence, others to undermine them with gentleness. But there is no General harder to dislodge than General Prejudice, especially when his Chief of Staff is Mr. Pecksniff, employing many arguments about the sanctity of womanhood to strengthen the defences against those who are fighting for woman's admission to citizenship. So whatever the hopes of the gallant attackers may have been, and there have been times when their optimism has led them into the error of despising the enemy, no serious hole had been made in those defences when the great civil war of humanity, called the great European war, broke out in August 1914, and a truce was declared in that other war in which we Catholic Suffragists, strong in faith, have played our part. The truce amounts to this. Suffragists have ceased for a time to embarrass the Government by a constant wearing demand for immediate legislation to enfranchise women. They have been praised, and rightly, for their patriotism; I am not depreciating this motive when I say that its mother was necessity.

And now what is the condition of affairs? I am afraid that some soldiers in our army of liberation are a little depressed. In addition

to the common grief, which must afflict all who believe that spiritual causes are greater than temporal ones, and that Christ is King on earth, at the spectacle of the brothers of Christ engaged in fratricidal strife for an end which is at best uncertain, the women who have fought for the vote, and the recognition of woman as a complete human entity which the vote implies, have to endure the pang of witnessing what appears to be a set-back to their cause. I know that there are some who can respond to the appeal "*Sursum Corda*" with a gladly confident "*Habemus ad dominum*," but I cannot doubt that there are others who are disheartened and dismayed. No thoughtful person can have failed to notice that we have slid into a rather primitive state of things. Men are fighting, women are nursing and knitting and enduring. Women are being urged to use their influence to make men enlist. Women are working for no pay as though they had never heard of the ultimate evils produced by voluntary labour. In fact they are on the old lines patiently and adorably fulfilling their functions as the help-meets of warriors. And what praise they are winning! "The war has given us back our women." There is great satisfaction in this for General Prejudice and his Chief of Staff! The click of knitting needles sounds far more pleasantly in their ears than the cry of "Votes for Women."

I hope that no one will accuse me of being

supercilious about knitting or any of the other works of relief and solace and sacrifice in which the women of England are engaged at the present time. I honour them for standing by the men and doing the thing that's nearest though it is more than dull at whiles. What fills me with apprehension is that their voluntary restriction of their activities has coincided with proposals to restrict their liberties compulsorily by law. Whether this legislation is in their interests or not is not the question. The point is that it shows that women must be on their guard lest their last state of tutelage be worse than the first.

In England, oddly enough, under the voluntary military system, the position of non-combatant women in war time is worse than in countries where conscription obtains. In France for instance the Government appealed to the women to carry on the agricultural work of the country, when the harvest of 1914 was threatened with disaster by the clearance of men from the land for military service. By showing themselves competent to do this those women can claim from the State more than a sentimental gratitude. There is some irony in the situation. Frenchwomen who are, in the mass, content without civic rights, have been given an opportunity of proving themselves indispensable citizens, an opportunity denied to Englishwomen who desire such rights and have fought for them in the face of much derision, persecution and painful misrepresentation of their ideals.

Yet *Sursum Corda!* If the importance of the woman's movement, a movement directed against evils which weigh heavily, not on women only but on the whole human race, appears to be eclipsed for the time by the importance of the bloody strife between the great nations of the world, there is nothing here for tears. In the women's struggle there is something of the nature of eternity. There will never come a time, while time is, when people with vision will say of it *Cui bono?* For people with vision will always see that what concerns the soul is the only thing in history that really matters, and will recognise that the true significance of the woman's movement was that those concerned in it fought to make the soul, where alone true

empire resides, *free*; that they fought conditions which crippled man's soul with pride, and woman's soul with irresponsibility, and defaced in both alike the image of God.

The other day I turned over the pages of the recently published life of Disraeli. I found it interesting chiefly because it revealed the fact that all that statesmen thought evil and dangerous in the middle of the last century, and about which they used many big words, was not so evil and dangerous after all. . . . The restoration of a Catholic hierarchy in England for instance! The prophecy was that it would rekindle the fires of Smithfield . . . and dreadful language was used about the Pope. Yet now our statesmen have sent a special ambassador to the Pope. In those days of the Crimean War the Tsar of Russia was the Atilla of Europe, and his soldiers the Huns! . . . And now! I need not press the point. I mentioned it only to indicate that we must never be depressed if the world in general attach huge importance to things which are temporal, and fail completely to recognize the importance of those which are eternal. . . . We Catholic women should rejoice that two Supreme Pontiffs, the dead Pius X and the living Benedict XV, have both uttered words about this cruel war which show a divine disregard of worldly arguments. "I bless peace," said one. "Let arms be laid aside," says the other. There is cause for joy in this fearless attitude of Christ's vicars on earth. There is cause for joy in the known heroism of men who have died bravely and in the unknown heroism of women who are living bravely, though desolate and despoiled. There is cause for joy in the thought that this war will in the end fulfil God's purposes not man's.

*Sursum Corda!*

The Reverend Father T. J. Walshe, one of our earliest friends, has very kindly promised us an article for next month. Another pleasure in store for us is a "Word of Welcome" to the "Catholic Suffragist" from the Very Reverend Prior McNabb, which will appear in the April number.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS.

We have reason to be well pleased with the reception of our first number, and we thank all those who have written to congratulate us. We have received letters from priests and nuns, from Catholics and non-Catholics. We also thank the Suffrage Societies for their kindly welcome. The "Common Cause" says: "It is a spirited action to start a new propaganda paper in these days, and we are inclined to the belief that no movement but ours would have had the courage to do it." "Votes for Women" says: "All Suffragists owe their thanks to the enterprise of the C.W.S.S. in bringing out the first number of their new monthly organ during a European War. United Suffragists will especially welcome the support of their own determination to keep the flag flying. . . ." "The Church League" and the "Free Church League," "The Vote," and "The Woman's Dreadnought," all speak well of our courage and of our paper. To the "Catholic Times" we owe a special word of thanks. In another column we give extracts from the article by "Papyrus" on THE CATHOLIC SUFFRAGIST, which appeared on the 5th inst. We have been told on all sides that which we already knew, that we are singularly fortunate in being introduced by Mrs. Meynell. "The new publication is to be congratulated," says the "Irish Catholic," "on obtaining such a brilliant writer as Mrs. Meynell to contribute to the first number." "Mrs. Meynell finely expresses the religious spirit of the suffrage movement and its temperate demands for certain reforms," says the "Manchester Guardian." We are only too happy to acknowledge our indebtedness to Mrs. Meynell. We also thank Miss St. John for her beautiful article this month.

\* \* \* \*

On Sunday, January 24th, at St. Mary's, Cadogan Street, Father Hugh Pope, O.P., preached a very interesting sermon on "Women's Work." The war, he said, while plunging the world into frightful misery, had at the same time produced an extraordinary harmony. Things formerly contentious and disturbing could now be viewed in

a more generous and broad-minded spirit. Women's claims would have to be met after the war. Not in marriage only were men and women 'one,' at all times men and women were one entity, and what concerned the one must concern the other. In Pre-reformation times women voted and sat in Councils. St. Hilda was literally the councillor of kings. Men at this moment were dying heroically for their country, women were living and working in heroic patience, which was perhaps the harder task. We are grateful to Father Hugh Pope for his beautiful sermon.

\* \* \* \*

Our member, Miss A. H. Bennett, has a book in the press, which should be of great interest to all suffragists. It deals with English Medical Women. In the first part the author tells the story of the entrance of modern women into the medical profession; the efforts of the pioneers to obtain a degree at Edinburgh, and the subsequent founding of the London Medical School for Women. The second part describes the hospitals in England, founded, officered, and carried on by women; with an account of the work done by women in the military hospitals in Antwerp and France during the present war. There is a particularly interesting chapter dealing with famous medical women of olden times, including Saint Hildegard, who was a great physician, and wrote several medical books.

\* \* \* \*

We regret that Father Higley should have seconded the resolution passed by the managers of the Poplar and Stepney Sick Asylum to compel women in the employment of the Board to resign upon marriage. This penalising of married women has the most disastrous results. So long as her work is not neglected, the employer has no business to enquire whether a woman is married or unmarried. These hard and fast rules answer no good purpose, and do very considerable harm. Apart from this, for men to lay down laws to turn women out of work without consulting them is not only grossly unjust, it is also grossly impertinent.

## THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETY,

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

## A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS.

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness. A woman's voice, and she cries among the multitude in this vast wilderness of men. Many have stopped to listen, and have gone on their way. Women, they have said, should hold themselves aloof from questions of public morality. . . ."

Many years have passed since Josephine Butler wrote those words, and yet when a proposal to re-introduce the Contagious Diseases Act was recently discussed at Plymouth, the same complaint was brought forward: "Protests have come mainly from Women's Societies; women who do not understand."

It is perhaps not generally known that Josephine Butler went to Rome to appeal to the Holy Father for encouragement in her work. She fell ill before accomplishing her mission, and bequeathed her unfulfilled task to the late Dr. Agnes MacLaren, member of the International Federation for the Abolition of State Regulation of Vice, and one of the earliest members of our society. Neither Josephine Butler nor Agnes MacLaren had any misgivings as to their reception by the Pope, they had but to remember the famous words of Pope Pius IX, who, in writing to Victor Emmanuel to protest against the introduction into Rome of the iniquitous system, stigmatized it as "a traffic in human flesh patented by the Government."

In a very interesting pamphlet\* issued by

\* Réponses données par deux Souverains Pontifes Léon XIII. et Pie X., 22, Cardinaux, et 126, Evêques à un Appel fait par Agnès MacLaren en faveur de la Fédération Internationale Abolitionniste.

the British Branch of the Federation, Dr. MacLaren gives the result of her appeal to the Catholic Ecclesiastical Authorities. Pope Leo XIII. sent a message of encouragement, in which he says: "Whilst working for the abolition of State regulation, the other sides of the question must not be forgotten. The chief cause of the demoralisation of our days is that woman is not respected as she should be; consequently, one must try to raise the position and dignity of woman. . . . Demoralisation is also due to the miserable wages paid to women; wages so paltry that it is impossible for them to live honestly upon their earnings. Every effort must be made to remedy this great evil. Moreover generous assistance must be given to women who are in need, that none may be forced into evil courses to gain a livelihood."

After granting two private audiences to Dr. MacLaren, in which she fully explained the aims of the Society, Pope Pius X. accorded the apostolic blessing to the work of the Federation, writing the formula with his own hand.

In 1894, furnished with a letter of recommendation from Cardinal Vaughan, Dr. MacLaren began a tour of France, calling upon the dignitaries of the Church, and received from them the warmest encouragement. She also received letters of support from the generals of six religious orders. The General of the Trappists wrote that before becoming a priest he had been an officer in the army, and knew the evil which arises from State regulation. The Mother Superior of an order of nuns, whose lives are

devoted to rescuing and uplifting these poor women, said: "I realise the importance of the question, if you can succeed in procuring the abolition of State regulation, our work will be greatly facilitated."

Monseigneur Touchet, Bishop of Orleans, concludes his letter with the noble words: "Religion is bound to speak upon this question, and is not silent, but there is a voice which speaks in tones as loud, as clear, as persuasive, as sonorous as those of religion, it is the voice of human solidarity."

The Episcopacy of England, says Dr. MacLaren, is entirely on our side, and from the earliest days of our fight we have received the warmest support from Cardinal Manning and his successors at Westminster.

The Plymouth Town Council complained that practically women alone protest against the Contagious Diseases Act, this pamphlet quotes the opinion of many men, men whose opinion carries weight.

Yes, here no one can doubt that the Church stands upon our side. In the light of Christian teaching let the shameful system be revealed in all its vileness. Mr. Asquith assured the Women's Freedom League that no powers have been given to the military authorities which would enable them to revive the Act, but there are weighty reasons for supposing the military authorities think otherwise.

Let no woman stand aside, but let us prove that the cry sent up by Josephine Butler has swelled to a great chorus; has become a mighty battle cry: "These, too, are our sisters, you shall not lay this curse upon them."

A curse from which, humanly speaking, there is no redemption.

L. DE ALBERTI.

Under the title "The Worth of Woman," "Papyrus," of "The Catholic Times," gives a welcome to our paper. He says: "I heartily wish the periodical a complete success. It is welcome. It was wanted. Now that it has arrived will women support it? In other words, will women support themselves, defend their own cause, by subscribing to and securing a circulation for this monthly magazine which aims to champion the rights of women and obtain a fuller recognition of the value of women's work in human society? Catholic women must answer. If they

believe in the worth of woman's work they can prove their belief by supporting the CATHOLIC SUFFRAGIST. . . . May its voice echo through our land and bring together all intelligent women in the crusade of female suffrage! . . . As Mrs. Meynell says, in the opening article: "The function of full citizenship will arouse all that is now inactive, or rather ignorant, in the collective conscience of women. And a collective conscience is needed." . . . Can women convert women to take part in collective action on behalf of their sex—and of ours too? They must answer. But wherever there is a thoughtful woman, a good wife, an intelligent mother; wherever there is a young woman anxious to uplift her sex, to battle in the world for purity and justice and reform and improvement in the condition of the poor; wherever there is a woman who believes in the worth of woman, there should be, and I hope will be, a constant supporter of this happy little periodical: THE CATHOLIC SUFFRAGIST."

## THE CATHOLIC SUFFRAGIST.

We thank all those who have sent subscriptions and donations. Will members and friends who have sent annual subscriptions accept our thanks, and will they kindly look upon the receipt of the paper as an acknowledgment of their subscription. We are very grateful to the paper-sellers who have helped us this month: Misses Atkinson, Bain, Barry, Brady, F. and M. Cochrane, Fedden, Mrs. Head, Misses Hogg, Jeffery, Laughton, A. Lynch, O'Sullivan, Packman and Smyth-Pigott. We have also to thank those who have undertaken to supply the paper to Catholic repositories. We shall be glad if more paper sellers will come forward. Will volunteers kindly send in their names to Miss O'Sullivan at the office.

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## RECENT LEGISLATION CONCERNING WOMEN.

A very lucid summary by Mrs. Swanwick on the subject of women's Government allowances appeared in the "Daily News" of Jan. 19th. She points out that months after the outbreak of war there is still the utmost confusion in either paying the allowance, or relief, and in decision of the amounts. New orders are constantly appearing, and it is not even clear whether the allowances are considered as wages or as relief. If relief, why do they depend on the soldier's conduct; if part of his wages, why on the wife's behaviour? The Select Committee on Pensions is composed entirely of men, to deal with pensioners who are women and children; and meanwhile so great is the confusion that voluntary agencies, largely financed by the Prince of Wales' Fund, have been called in to deal with it; and these agencies have employed untrained, inexperienced and unsalaried women, working under superior orders, who have no authority or responsibility given them by the men, who keep all the power in their own hands. There is the cruel order that a woman may be suddenly deprived of her compulsory allowance unless she insists that her husband must allow her what he says he cannot afford. Indeed, in many cases wives were so treated without the husband's knowledge and sanction and while he was actually paying the full allowance. It has been enacted that the soldiers' support of their dependents, such as mothers, is to be voluntary, and that unless they make this allowance the Government will make none, though by the law of England even girls of 15, out of their sweated wages, may be compelled to contribute to the support of parents.

Meanwhile the wages paid for much army work are before us, the Fair Wages clause in Government contracts only applying to men with Trades Union rates of wages. Blue serge tunics 2/6 a dozen, paying for own thread; Khaki haversacks 2/6 a dozen, finding own thread (6½d. a spool of 2 oz.); kit bags of brown canvas 1/9 per dozen; saddle covers for the army 1d. an hour; ground sheets 2d. to 3d. an hour; sailors' shirts 2/6 a dozen, work fetched, and finding own cotton; soldiers' beds 1d. each; coat 4d. each; making bed cushions 1d. an hour. The East End Suffragettes who pro-

tested to the War Office against the wages for shirt making were referred to the Board of Trade, which replied that as there was no fixed minimum wage for shirt making they could do nothing. The hand drawers in brush-making (163 groups of bristles in each brush, attached with wire) 1d. a brush, or wood choppers 2½d. for a 100 bundles, supplying own tools. Further, the Government continues to postpone the amendment of the Trucks Act, and women are still fined for trifling offences, and sometimes owe more for fines than they earn in the week's wage. And yet in the debate on widows' allowances our statesmen tell us that women will prefer the honourable independence of work, and that it is better for them to work, by which they can add to the "comforts" of their 7/6 or 10/- pension. Mr. Asquith even feared that a higher allowance might affect the labour market; he could not have meant that such wages could be lowered, surely he did not fear that they might be bettered. For the Government employs one-twentieth of all self-supporting women, and by its exploitation of them in offices, and sweating in factories, and through contractors, undeniably lowers their wages throughout all ranks, for women can bring no political pressure to bear as men can. A striking proof of this was the Holt report on Post Office conditions. It was proposed in debate that a special Committee should sit on the subject, in order to relieve Members from the pressure of public servant voters. In the result all the benefits granted were for the men only.

Let us not forget the Registrar General's recent statistics concerning widows. Even at the early age of 25, 1000 more widows die every year than single women, and 700 more than married women; at the age of 30 a 1000 more than other women, and by the age of 55, 2000 more widows die yearly than others, so hard is their lot and so heavy their anxieties and responsibilities. "Here, then, is the bitter anomaly of the widow's position in the economic sphere. As head of a family she ought to be able to earn a family wage. As woman she can only earn the customary price of individual subsistence." ("Philanthropy and the State," Kirkman Gray).

BLANCHE SMYTH-PIGOTT.

## LONDON AND BRANCHES.

Office: 55, Berners Street, London. Office hours, 3-30 to 5-30, or at other times by appointment. We hope to see many of our members on the first Sunday in March at St. Patrick's, Soho, the Mass at 10-30 will be offered for the intentions of the Society, that is, for peace and for those killed in the war. We hope none of our members forget their daily "Hail Mary" and the ejaculation, "Blessed Joan of Arc, pray for us," for the success of our cause and the welfare of the Society.

N.B.—Branch reports should reach the Editor by the 5th of the month.

BRIGHTON AND WEST SUSSEX.—Hon. Sec., Miss Busse, 5, Belvedere Terrace, Brighton. The first annual meeting was held on Friday, January 29th, at the Brighton and Hove Women's Franchise Club. Councillor Ellen Chapman, of Worthing, took the chair, and gave a most interesting address. The Hon. Secretary having read the report for 1914 the election of the committee took place. Mrs. Chapman and Miss Major, Hon. Secretary for Worthing, were the new members elected.

LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT.—Hon. Sec., Miss Rodgers, 66, Park Road, South Birkenhead. The office will be open every 3rd Saturday from 3 to 6, when we shall be very glad to welcome any of our members. A whist drive is being held to help the funds of the branch. The burden of war falls heavily on women, and we hope all will help to keep the suffrage flag flying, that we may be powerful to get wrongs redressed when peace is restored. Subscriptions are now due, and should be sent to Miss McKinley, 139, Northbrook Street, who is kindly replacing Miss Reddy as Hon. Treasurer. We tender our thanks to Miss Reddy for her good services.

PLYMOUTH AND DISTRICT.—Hon. Sec., Mrs. Kent, Warwick Park, Crownhill, S. Devon. Members are asked to pray for the repose of the soul of our member, Mrs. Davey, lately deceased. R.I.P. We are glad to welcome back Mrs. Kent.

## THE WOMAN'S DREADNOUGHT.

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Mrs. Cavendish Bentinck, Mrs. Agnes Harben (back from Red Cross work in Paris), Mr. H. W. Massingham (engagements permitting), Mr. Henry W. Nevinson, Mrs. Ben Webster and Mr. Israel Zangwill.

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## "The Shepherds" at the Cathedral Hall

The production of "The Shepherds," a Nativity play, by Father Cuthbert, O.S.F.C., given in aid of the Franciscan Hop-Fields Mission, being, as we are told, the first public production of a play by a Franciscan since the Middle Ages, is a vivid reminder of the debt which the dramatic art owes to the Faith of our fathers. The drama was then the servant of religion, and by that service was preserved through those days of transition, until it was barred from the service of God, and handed over to the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. Not that the celebrated three were absent from the religious drama, but they were innocent of the art of theatrical make-up, the devil had not learned to masquerade as the hero or heroine of a problem play, but with horns and tail undisguised was easily recognisable as the villain of the piece.

The atmosphere of those guileless days was revived as we listened to Father Cuthbert's version of how the shepherds watched their flocks by night, heard the angels' song, and wandered through the city of David, seeking Christ the Lord, until they were led to Him by Miriam, the only woman in the cast, and the only person in the city, who had taken pity on the weary travellers and given them shelter in her father's stable.

The play was beautifully acted by professional players, who had given their services in a good cause, among them being such well-known names as those of Miss Ellen O'Malley and Mr. Patrick Kirwan.

Miss Edith Craig's staging was, as it invariably is, a triumph of artful simplicity. She managed to get exactly the right atmosphere and effects with nothing but a blue star-spangled back-cloth, draperies and limelight. The motionless figures of two Capuchin friars standing on either side of the stage, to draw and close the curtains, gave a quaint medieval touch to the effect of the whole.

Such a performance is not to be criticised by ordinary standards. When Christ, the Lord, was found at last, and the final tableau disclosed the lovely face of the Virgin Mother, spreading her blue mantle above the manger with an exquisite gesture, St. Joseph in the background, and two Botticelli angels and the shepherds kneeling breathless with adoration, the audience was in no mood for criticism and the general impulse was to a surreptitious drying of eyes or an open joining in the *Gloria in excelsis Deo*.

A.D.A.

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