

THE  
CATHOLIC SUFFRAGIST

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

VOL. I., No. 3.

March 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.

**APOLOGIA PRO CLERO.**

BY THE REVD. FATHER T. J. WALSH.

I am asked to write a short statement of my views in reference to Women's Suffrage, and I accept the invitation with great pleasure, because I regard the advocacy of this claim as not only a privilege but a sacred duty. Argument on the subject is almost superfluous. If woman is a rational creature, if she is really a "helpmeet," if her gifts, intellectual and spiritual, are complementary to those of man, to deny her the legitimate and effective influence of her opinions in matters educational and moral (and consequently political) is not merely an indefensible anomaly, but an outrageous blunder. In early Victorian days, when specimens of political bungling were brought to the notice of the late Duke of Wellington, he used to characterise them as "relics of barbarism." It is surely a relic of barbarism—a survival of the ages of the pagan slavery and degradation of woman—which enacts that a lady of education, one who has had experience of the world, who is possessed of property and has a stake in the country's well-being, may not register her vote in regard to important issues—may not exercise a right which is accorded to her coachman and her gardener!

From the Catholic point of view, it is the supernatural aspect of a question which carries weight. To a Catholic the words "Education," "Morality," "Marriage," connote principles and beliefs that are vital. I well remember that when, some years ago, an effort was made to crush the denominational system of education in England, how much the

monster meetings in the North owed their success and enthusiasm to the influence and action of our Catholic women. If priests engaged in missionary work in our large towns are asked what they owe to the whole-hearted co-operation of the women and girls of their parishes, the answer will be the outcome of a generous and grateful recognition of disinterested and faithful service. Their Lordships the Bishops of England, most of whom have had missionary experience in pre-episcopal days, fully recognise, I feel sure, all that is owing to the conservative temperament of women in matters of religious import. Why then (it may be respectfully asked) do not the Bishops—leaders and shepherds of the flock—why do not the priests advocate openly a measure which would make for the interests of religion and morality, and oppose a barrier to the flood of licentiousness which is devastating society?

It is not intended in this paper to criticise the action or non-action of ecclesiastical authority. The Catholic principle of respect for authority is fundamental. We recognise that weighty reasons influence the policy and attitude of the Hierarchy, and that placed at the helm of Peter's barque, they have a wider outlook which comes from their elevated position. We recognise, moreover, that a question which is both religious and political, must have a special degree of urgency and freedom from embarrassing consequences before we can reasonably expect their Lordships to take public action thereon. May not the clergy—

if not the Bishops—openly advocate this reform? Many priests (as I know from personal experience) are convinced suffragists. But naturally and properly they await direction from superiors before taking public action, and moreover they are already fully occupied by the worrying claims and calls which may be summed up under the generic name of "Parochialism."

And thus it comes to pass that one of the most important of modern movements—important, too, from a supernatural point of view—is bereft of the blessing and prestige which would accrue from the open approval of the representatives of the church. I have been reading lately the letters of S. Catherine of Siena. Those addressed to Gregory XI. at Avignon are urgent in their plea for peace. "Pace, pace, Babbo mio dolce," pleaded this wonderful ambassadress. Striking is the resemblance between her words on Frequent Communion and those of Pius X., and striking, too, is her reiterated plea for peace if compared with the last public utterance of the dying Pontiff, "I bless peace." And the question is suggested, if women had their legitimate weight in the Councils of Europe, should we now be witnessing the return to the horrible barbarism which is the outcome of modern progress and "Kultur?"

The Catholic Suffragist has other trials of patience, notably the opposition of men and women of a certain type. And here let me say that if man or woman can adduce an argument against the suffrage—an argument which is not a mere assertion of bias and prejudice—I for one will thank them and respect their view. I have often sought for such an argument. I can say with truth that my search both in conversation and in print has been in vain. In lieu of argument we hear or read truistic statements: "the home is woman's place," as if that assertion was relevant, or "militant women are a disgrace to their sex," as if all good causes had not from time to time imprudent advocates. "The suffrage movement has a vulgarising effect on women," said a lady to me some time ago. And I wondered at her mental attitude! For surely pharisaism of this type is nothing if it is not uncatholic!

I have touched only in the briefest possible way on some difficulties discouraging indeed,

but, as I think, transitory, and I now go on to bid my friends "be of good cheer." I would suggest as of first importance that the sacred character of their work demands above all the guidance and help which come from prayer. The cause, I am convinced, is God's. And if God be with us, the difficulties which oppose must ultimately disappear. Let us remember the supernatural direction given to Blessed Jeanne d' Arc, our patron: "sois bonne et sage et va souvent à l'église." In answer to prayer, perhaps some great prelate of the church may see his way to advocate a measure which is based on Truth and Justice, and which is sorely needed in the interests of morality. I can recall the stimulus given to Catholic social study by the writings and action of the great Bishop Ketteler. The genius and courage of that leader in Israel were main causes of the foundation of the Centre Party, of the crystallisation of Catholic opinion around various social problems which claimed attention, and of the splendid defence of Catholic rights against the persecution of the Kulturkampf. It is not a German leader that we need just now, but one who shall be of our own race and blood.

I cannot close these brief words without bearing admiring testimony to the zeal and enterprise of the Catholic ladies who have devoted themselves to this propaganda. Especially do I congratulate them on the appearance of the CATHOLIC SUFFRAGIST. I am proud to be associated with their crusade, even though my share in the work has not been of much account. But I have not hesitated to say publicly both in London and in Liverpool, that I am an advocate of Woman Suffrage because I am a priest. To me, as to many of my clerical brethren, the question of Woman Suffrage is essentially a moral question—a movement which aims at the safeguarding of Religious Education, the virtuous upbringing of the child, the stability of the marriage tie and the sanctity of the home. And if I judge aright, the successful achievement of this aim will be a much more effective means of bringing peace and concord amongst nations than the discredited methods of modern diplomacy. The reign of the King of Peace will come when the rights of all His children shall receive their just recognition.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS.

We continue to receive many letters of congratulation, and if all have not been answered it is from lack of time, and not from lack of appreciation. The *Tablet* says: "The bold spirits who have thought the present an opportune moment to launch the CATHOLIC SUFFRAGIST seem well satisfied with the immediate results of their experiment." We are; but we did not think the moment opportune. On the contrary we said that if our motives had been commercial we should have waited a more favourable opportunity. We knew the risk was great, we took it because the honour of women is dearer to us than financial gain. We hope members will buy extra copies of the paper this month to send to priests in whose conversion they are interested, so that Father Walshe's article may be well circulated among the clergy.

\* \* \* \*

In the *Daily Mail* of February 15th, Mr. Hamilton Fyfe paid an enthusiastic tribute to an English nurse, Miss Violet Thurstan, who has been on both the eastern and western fronts. Miss Thurstan is a National Union organiser, and we are proud to say she is also a member of our society. She went to Belgium at the outbreak of war, and was in Brussels when it was occupied by the Germans. She then went to Poland, where she was struck by a fragment of shell while attending to the wounded, and has now returned to the front. "Truly the British are a wonderful race," said a German officer to her when she was trying to reach a town some miles from Brussels, where help was needed, and stumbled into a German encampment. Mr. Hamilton Fyfe wonders whether any other race does produce just this type of woman—fearless, capable, energetic, yet gentle and soft-voiced; yes, every race does.

\* \* \* \*

For the second time within the last few years an Irish Bishop has thought fit to denounce the woman's movement in a Lenten Pastoral. This year his Lordship the Bishop of Ross speaks of women being bitten with

the craze for higher education; of their aping man's dress, and copying his social habits; of their efforts to escape from dependence on man; of their replacing him in most callings except in the trenches and fighting line, and on board the Dreadnoughts. This is an unworthy jibe. Women are doing the State good service, and suffering terribly from a war for which they are in no way responsible. It is pitiful enough that Christian men should be killing one another by tens of thousands. Would it be an advantage for women to join in the dreadful slaughter? Would it be an advantage to the State to kill off all women of military, that is of child-bearing, age? We hear of women giving four, five, and six sons to their country. Such women are better represented in the trenches than if they were there themselves; many would prefer to be.

\* \* \* \*

Nor is this the time to hold up man's rule to our admiration, and to call upon women in the name of God, to show their willingness to submit to male dominance. The blood-drenched soil of Europe cries to Heaven against man's rule, and the hearts of women, though wrung with pity for suffering humanity, can still burn with anger at the ruin brought upon the world by the failure of rulers, by the failure of diplomatists, by the failure of men to rule. His Lordship, Dr. Kelly, has chosen a singularly inopportune moment for his condemnation of progressive and intelligent women.

\* \* \* \*

Members are requested to pray earnestly for the recovery of Miss Abadam, who is seriously ill with pneumonia. The Suffrage movement owes much to Miss Abadam's zeal and eloquence, and no one needs to be reminded how greatly Catholic Suffragists are indebted to her. God grant her a speedy recovery.

Next month we shall publish "A Word of Welcome," by the Very Reverend Prior McNabb, O.P.

## THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETY,

Office: 55, BERNERS STREET, LONDON.

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

## BLESSED ART THOU AMONGST WOMEN.

I once heard a sermon by the late Monsignor Benson which gave me keen pleasure. Of the text I have no recollection, but during the course of his sermon Monsignor Benson spoke of righteous anger, and told his hearers that Christians should fight for their faith. He spoke of the divine anger of the Master, and said that if he, the preacher, were to address a certain class of persons, however richly they might deserve the censure, as: "Ye hypocrites, ye white-washed sepulchres," or to allude to some public man who had abused his trust, as: "That fox Herod," the Monday papers would bristle with headlines: "Lamentable display in the pulpit." It was incomprehensible to him, he declared, how Christianity had come to be regarded as a namby-pamby creed, instead of a militant one.

And it occurred to me as I listened, that a similar disservice is done by many to our great Mother, we hear so much of her meekness, that we are apt to forget her valour. She was the valiant woman, not the colourless figure so often presented to us. Truly she was meek, so was our Divine Master; but there is such a thing as false meekness, and just as simplicity is often an euphemistic term for stupidity, so much that passes for meekness in our day is mere apathy.

It is indeed amazing the strange idea some devout Christians have conceived of our Lady. Not long since an earnest missionary nun was invalidated home after two years only of missionary life, though her heart had always been in foreign missions, and her work in that short space had been of lasting effect. The body

was frailer than her great spirit. One of her sister nuns offering consolation, said: "Well, after all, Our Lady did no missionary work, she was content to spend her life washing dishes."

Our Lady did no missionary work; think of it! Surely of all missionaries her harvest is the richest. How His followers and disciples, apostles and evangelists must have turned to Her for comfort and guidance; how they must have gathered round Her to hear of His childhood and manhood. She had deep knowledge of the Scriptures, she was in herself an interpretation of them; but to this pious nun, she was her mother it is true, the dear lady of her prayerful homage, and yet just a woman, who had been content to pass her life washing dishes. I do not scorn the washers of dishes, 'tis an honourable calling, and one as open to sanctification as another, but could misconception of God's greatest creature go further?

And many of us know how this misconception has worked against us, how too often an attempt has been made to use this great heroic figure as a barrier to woman's development, as a check to woman's desire for service.

Our Lady lived a hidden life, true, but she faced the rabble on Calvary; she shunned publicity, may be, but she was foremost among that gallant band, that splendid multitude of women, who followed to Calvary ministering unto Him. They were there to minister and to weep; she was there for more. Mother of the Divine Criminal she claimed her share of

the shame, though she had claimed no share in the hosannahs. She stood by the Cross amid the ribald soldiery, a target may be for their vile jest.

And so when pestered with idle talk, with such patience as we can command, we fling back at our critics those sublime words:

Stabat Mater Dolorosa,  
Juxta crucem lacrymosa  
Dum pendebat filius.

L. DE ALBERTI.

## OFFICE RENT FUND.

## AN URGENT APPEAL.

The 25th of March, the great feast of Our Lady, is a most important day in the history of our Society. It is our birthday—our 4th birthday. But it is also our rent day. Our office costs £40 a year, and as that amount is too heavy a tax to be borne out of the general fund, a special Office Rent Fund was started, and I was told that I was to be responsible for it. At the present moment this fund shows a balance on the wrong side, and I should feel some apprehension did I not know that the needs of the C.W.S.S. have only to be made known to be met. I appeal to the members to celebrate our birthday by sending a contribution to this fund. It would be a great relief if I could inform our Hon. Treasurer, Miss Whately, that our rent was assured until Christmas next. Will you help to relieve us of this anxiety by sending a contribution today? Nothing is too small to send, and nothing too large. Next month we hope to publish a list of all the contributors. Make sure that your name will be on the list by forwarding your donation without delay.

B. GADSBY.

55, Berners Street,  
London, W.EXTRACTS FROM SOME PRESS NOTICES  
OF THE CATHOLIC SUFFRAGIST.

*The Christian Commonwealth*:—"The Suffragettes are nothing if not courageous; and their courage is displayed as prominently in their journalism as in their public propaganda. The Catholic Women's Suffrage Society has actually chosen this time of war in which to issue the first number of their new monthly journal . . . the place of honour is given to an article by Mrs. Alice Meynell.

. . . We wish our courageous young contemporary a prosperous career."

*Franciscan Annals*:—"To those who would like to know something about women's suffrage from the Catholic standpoint, we can heartily recommend this new publication, and we wish it every success."

*The Globe*:—"Domestica," of the "Globe" speaks of the Catholic Suffragist as the newest addition to feminist literature, "the first number of which is graced by a beautiful and characteristic paper by Mrs. Alice Meynell. . . . Mrs. Meynell regards the movement from a high and spiritual standpoint . . . and wonders that all Christian women are not, as yet, supporters of it."

*Irish Citizen*:—"That Catholic women suffragists should be so organized as to feel the need of an organ of their own speaks well for the movement." . . .

*The Month*:—"In marked contrast to much wild writing on the subject of the vote, the views contained here are sanely and temperately expressed. It is the desire of all real reformers that the C.W.S.S. should exercise a powerful influence upon the whole movement in keeping it, in all its manifestations, within the bounds of Christian morality. We are glad to think the CATHOLIC SUFFRAGIST, judging from its first two numbers, is well calculated to effect this result."

## "THE CATHOLIC SUFFRAGIST."

Many thanks to all who have sent donations and subscriptions; also to our loyal papersellers. Paperselling is a splendid Lenten exercise, which, started in Lent, can be carried on throughout the year. Will some more of our members kindly volunteer?

Donations and Subscriptions to 6th March:

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## RECENT LEGISLATION CONCERNING WOMEN.

## BRITISH NATIONALITY AND STATUS OF ALIENS' BILL.

It is constantly being proved, even in the case of conquered countries, that so inherent a human characteristic as nationality cannot be destroyed or alienated by any human means, and that legislative tyranny can only deprive a human being of legal rights and protection.

In 1870, Englishwomen for the first time were forced to become of the nationality of their husbands, the only comment on the point being that it did not matter much, as it did not materially affect propertied women. Previous to 1870, by the Common Law of England, women who married aliens, and aliens who married Englishmen, retained their nationality.

The present Bill was passed last August, ostensibly to make the status of British nationality, white or black, uniform all over the Empire. Ostensibly uniform only, because in certain parts of the Empire women British subjects have the citizen right of the vote, and in others the right is denied, although by this Bill, secured to male niggers and semi-civilised natives, as in South Africa, an important inequality and indignity of status which men legislators in Britain, not responsible to women, would be careful to ignore.

This Bill still refuses to recognise the existence of women as a separate entity, and being passed after the declaration of war, its hardships became obvious, so that it has been indignantly protested against by women of all classes throughout the Empire.

Members unsuccessfully proposed an amendment that a woman on marriage with an alien should be entitled to make a declaration whether she decided to retain her nationality or to accept that of her husband. It was rejected on the ground that it only represented a small local grievance and a merely theoretical advantage. Other members pointed out the economic disabilities of poor women and the civic rights of which they were deprived under this Bill if married to aliens in this country, as so many in the East End of London are, such as old-age pensions and insur-

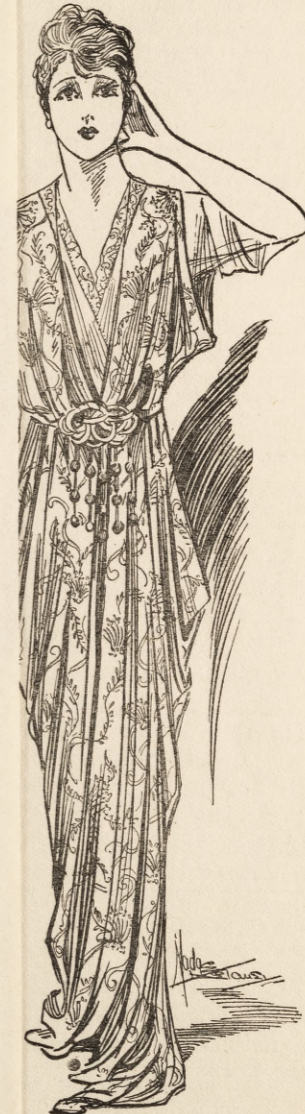
ance benefits. And while superior persons were writing to the *Nineteenth Century* that only stupidity or dishonesty could see any parallel between Woman's Suffrage and the Ulster claims, a member in the House was pointing out that Members of Parliament who were prepared to go to the length of civil war rather than be forced out of the jurisdiction of that Parliament, were perfectly willing to vote a woman out of her nationality against her will, and dispose of her by the operation of laws she could not control. Meanwhile an alien may not only naturalize himself, but also children born before his own naturalization; and children may take the original nationality of their mother while she remains an alien. We know that in the last White-chapel election, election addresses were written in Yiddish for the convenience of naturalized electors, and that the liberties of Englishwomen may be voted away by them, and other aliens. Distinguished foreigners found under suspicious circumstances can be complimented on being friendly aliens; and special measures are passed for Lithuanians and Armenians, etc., but a poor day servant born at Southampton, a fourteen years resident at Bournemouth, and the eighteen years widow of a German, was fined £3 and costs out of her poor wages, and her landlord heavily fined for aiding and abetting an alien enemy. A destitute old lady over eighty, whose brothers had both served in the Indian army, but who was the widow of an Austrian general, was ordered out of Worthing, and her landlady who took care of her also heavily fined on the same grounds.

By a final amendment to this Bill, which was adopted, the wife of a British subject who changes his nationality after marriage, may make a declaration retaining her status as a British subject.

This proves the artificiality of the alleged difficulties in allowing a wife the choice of retaining her nationality under any circumstances.

BLANCHE SMYTH-PIGOTT.

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## RECENT LEGISL

## BRITISH NATIONAL

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## LONDON NEWS.

Office: 55, Berners Street, London. Hours, 3-30 to 5-30. Saturdays, 10 to 1. Other times by appointment. Library volumes 2d. per week. Mass is offered for the intentions of the Society at St. Patrick's, Soho, every first Sunday at 10-30. We hope members will attend. Miss Christopher St. John is very kindly giving a lecture for the Society at the Suffrage Club, 3, York Street, St. James's, on Tuesday, March 23rd, at 8 p.m. The subject will be: "Hroswitha, the first woman dramatist." Mrs. Belloc-Lowndes has promised to take the chair. Admission free. We have been asked to call attention to the churlish manner in which the statue of Florence Nightingale was unveiled. More courtesy might certainly have been shown to the memory of a great woman. Our members will be glad to hear that our Society was the first to pay public tribute to the gracious lady, our wreath was the first to be placed on the statue.

## BRANCHES.

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

**BIRMINGHAM AND DISTRICT.**—Hon. Sec., Miss Grafton, Manresa, Vernon Road, Edgbaston. The first annual meeting will be held at "Manresa," Vernon Road, on Tuesday, March 16th, at 7 p.m., Miss O'Sullivan, of the London Committee, has very kindly promised to speak to the members of the Branch and their friends.

**BRIGHTON AND WEST SUSSEX.**—Hon. Sec., Miss Busse, 5, Belvedere Terrace, Brighton. A committee meeting was held on Friday, February 26th, at the Women's Franchise Club. Councillor Ellen Chapman was elected Chairman, and Miss A. H. Bennett, Vice-Chairman. After the meeting there was a small social gathering of the members of the Society at which various matters of interest were discussed.

**LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT.**—Hon. Sec., Miss A. L. Rodgers, 66, Park Road, South Birkenhead. A whist drive was held on February 10th, at which four new members joined. The office, 18a, Colquitt Street, will be opened on Saturday, March 20th, for tea, from 3 to 6 p.m. Miss O'Sullivan, of the Executive Committee, London, will be present, and will be very pleased to meet our members. The paper can be bought at the Catholic Repository, Manchester Street, also at the office. Annual subscriptions are due and may be sent to the Hon. Treasurer, 139, Northbrook Street, Liverpool.

**WIMBLEDON.**—Hon. Sec., Lady Laughton, 9, Pepy's Road, Wimbledon. The first annual meeting of this branch was held on February 12th at Lady Laughton's house. Miss Fennell took the chair and spoke of what women had done since the outbreak of war, and of how they have worked and suffered. Miss Fedden was the speaker, and gave a very interesting lecture on "Women before and after the Reformation."

## THE IRISH CATHOLIC WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION.

This Society held its first meeting on February 23rd, at 15, Ely Place, Dublin, Mrs. James O'Mara in the chair. The Chairman explained that the Association had no wish to cause a split in the Suffrage movement, but hoped to bring in women who have not joined the existing Leagues. Miss Hayden, M.A., pointed out the need for organising the Catholic women of Ireland, that they, being the majority, should be ready to cope with the great changes which are bound to come at the end of the war. Miss Gleeson, from her experience in building up a women's industry, urged that the working girls should be brought into the movement, they being so much oppressed by the present social conditions. Mrs. Gwynn explained that the Association would be non-political and non-militant, and that it hoped to attract the working women and to spread the suffrage movement in country districts, where so far women have taken no interest in social reform, and have not realised the use to which the vote could be put.

## REVIEWS.

**ENGLISH MEDICAL WOMEN.** The chief interest of Miss A. H. Bennett's book, "English Medical Women: Glimpses of their work in Peace and War" (Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, Ltd., 3/6), lies in her vivid account of the hospitals run by women doctors. Most of us were vaguely aware that medical women had proved a success, but against what fearful odds that success was won, and the extent to which their work has grown many of us had yet to learn. Miss Bennett tells us in her preface that she has tried to emphasise the "womanly touches" noticeable in these hospitals; some of them are very charming, and as grateful and comforting to the hearts of their admiring fellow-women as their thoughtfully provided tea to the waiting out-patients of the South London Hospitals. It is a pity that Miss Bennett should accept as true the alleged increase of drinking among women since the war, and the excessive drinking among soldiers' wives. These slanders have been denounced by many who can speak with authority upon the point and was recently refuted by the N.S.P.C.C. In spite of a few literary blemishes, such as unnecessary notes of exclamation, the book is full of useful and interesting information, and every feminist should make a point of reading this splendid record of the dogged perseverance, steadfast courage, and ultimate triumph of our medical women.

**HOW THE WAR CAME.** This is the first of a series of pamphlets on the war, which the Independent Labour Party are issuing. Their motive is to discover the true causes of the war, and to prepare the way to secure a lasting peace. Any honest effort to check the tide of hatred of our present enemies, who will one day be our friends, must have the respect and sympathy of all women. The cause of peace and the woman's movement are closely linked together. But while working to convert present foes into friends, let us beware of sowing seeds of future ill-will which may convert present friends into foes. Of this there seems to be some danger.

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