

THE CATHOLIC CITIZEN

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

VOL. IV., No. 3.

March 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 IN MUNICIPAL WORK.

BY COUNCILLOR ELLEN CHAPMAN.

No article can be written on Women's Work without first paying a tribute of appreciation to those pioneer women whose labours in various directions met with scant sympathy or approval at best and only too often with contumely and insult.

Undeterred by unfavourable criticism they bravely persevered with their self-sacrificing work and so rendered the present-day position of woman a far easier one.

Miss Nightingale wrote in her biography: "There is an old legend that the 19th Century is to be the Century of Women." At the time she wrote she added: "The century has not yet been theirs." This is so far true that even at the present day many of the laws which militate against sex equality are still in force, but had it not been for the "spade work" of the many notable women of the 19th Century we should not have been as fit as we are now to avail ourselves of the position created by the world's war which, while in itself an appalling series of tragedies, has undoubtedly created a totally different aspect of the woman's cause.

The resource, the energy and the talent of women have been unhesitatingly given to the country in this hour of her great need, and the work women are doing to-day has indeed more than justified the belief of those who have advocated their cause. But space is limited, and the foregoing words are only an introduction to the subject of this article which is written in the hope that as time and circumstances permit more women may take on their shoulders the yoke of public service.

Frances Power Cobbe, a foremost pioneer

in the Woman's Movement, says: "In all public work we must accept and seize every instrument of power, every vote, every influence which we can obtain to enable us to promote virtue and happiness." Up to the time of the war have not men too often lost sight of the power of women to co-operate with them in working for the public benefit? Of course now this will probably be realised by thinking men, but unfortunately there is a class of mind in which prejudice dies hard, and from their narrow point of view they resent the idea that it is possible women can or should have equal influence. If we are not at present as capable (which I am very far from admitting) it is not our fault, we have not had the opportunity and education to fit us for taking our part in many branches of work. At the present time we have no chance of testing how far public feeling has been aroused as to the necessity of having women in municipal government, because during the war there are no public elections for County or Town Councils. Candidates are nominated by members and elected by the number of votes, but while it seems probable that in face of the splendid work done by women since 1914 their chances of election may be improved, it is necessary to widen the voting rights of women. Party feeling everywhere runs too high to allow of the risk of losing a seat by either side nominating a woman.

As regards the present position of women in local government, a revised leaflet recently issued by the Women's Local Government Society shows that there are 8 women serving on County Councils, of whom 4 are mem-

bers of the L.C.C. In the 80 County Borough Councils throughout the country there are 15 women serving, in the 245 Town Councils there are 11 women members. Metropolitan Borough Councils, which are notoriously difficult bodies to approach and unusually prejudiced against the admission of women, have 23 women members divided up among them. There are over 800 Urban District Councils throughout the country, and there are 19 women serving on them—not a very good proportion certainly, and one which shows the need for a more vigorous propaganda to awaken public interest in municipal affairs. A wider knowledge of the work which has to be done by local governing bodies would convince all thinking persons of the immense advantage, not to say the necessity, of having women to participate in the administration of municipal business.

Then with regard to Boards of Guardians. In 1914 there were 194 Unions without Women Guardians. How such questions as the care of babies, nursing, the placing out of girls, and above all the problem of the unmarried mother can be dealt with exclusively by men is a riddle difficult of solution. Fifteen thousand babies are born in workhouses every year, of whom 70 per cent. are illegitimate. In many cases the mothers of these infants are more or less mentally defective.

Surely such matters as the housing question, the improvement of social conditions generally, the reduction of infant mortality, and so on, vitally affect the Home which Anti-Suffragists used to be so fond of saying was woman's sphere—a sentiment we heartily endorse, but on the broader basis which enables us to give practical effect to our views. To secure this there should be no municipal council without a woman member, and it is to be hoped that as has been the case with the Women Guardians the number will increase as the value of their efficiency and capability is more and more realised. There are now (1917) according to the figures published by the Women's Local Government Society, 1585 Women Guardians, and only 185 Unions without any women members.

It is significant that on nearly all the official instructions issued by the Local Government Board lately, it has either been ordered or suggested that women should be placed on

the various Committees. That same body has also at last realised the importance of pre-natal conditions, and now insists on the establishment of Infant Welfare Centres, to which they are prepared to give financial assistance.

Sanitary matters, Baths, the better Housing of the working classes, Common Lodging Houses, the Milk Supply, the administration of the Acts dealing with the care and employment of children, the regulation of shop hours—all these are subjects which any average woman could undertake. All will readily grant that administration to be really efficient should be in personal touch with those it affects. This is where the voluntary worker is so useful, because official work so often falls into a groove. It is of course essential that any woman taking up public work should train herself for it. When the need for war workers is past the need for women in local government work will be greater than ever, and probably the broader outlook on life which they have gained in their various war vocations will have taught them how to cope with the difficulties that all public workers must encounter.

The easiest Board on which to gain a seat is the Board of Guardians. For some reason there is not the same eager competition to undertake the duties, and so many of the Poor Law questions are ones which are equally, if not better, understood by women than men, that it would be well if the number of women guardians were greatly increased. In my own Union we have 6 women on the Board and 2 women chairmen of committees. There are also 2 priests, so Catholic interests are well looked after, which, strange as it may seem in these days, is very necessary.

"Women should stand for the safeguarding and promotion of the interests of women and children—not because these are antagonistic to the interests of men, nor because a woman citizen is incapable of holding a sound opinion on more general matters—but because she can bring to this work a more personal and detailed experience than can men."

May I conclude with a quotation which seems to me to describe exactly the ideal which every woman worker should have: "The woman who takes up any form of public service literally gives herself, her time, her

(Continued on page 21).

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

It was a great pleasure to the Executive Committee to see such a large attendance of members at the Annual Meeting, and at the Thanksgiving Mass at the Cathedral. The following resolution was carried unanimously at the Annual Meeting: "That this Meeting of the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society approves of the continuation of the Society with the intention of working for the further extension of the franchise to women on the same terms as it is, or may be, given to men, to establish the political, social and economic equality between men and women, and to further the work and usefulness of Catholic women as citizens." In another column we give a report of the proceedings.

* * *

The thanks of all decent people are due to the Association of Social and Moral Hygiene for their perseverance in bringing to public notice the scandals connected with our armies abroad. Also to the Bishops and Members of Parliament who have taken up the matter. There is not much point in talking of our noble ideals while we are tolerating such iniquity. It is not the first time the authorities have been asked to put the "maisons tolérées" of France out of bounds for the British troops. With respect to the house of ill fame which has been established at Cayeux in the principal street facing the sea, the inhabitants petitioned to have it removed. The French military authorities, according to the *Shield*, declare that this house was opened in the neighbourhood of a large convalescent camp for British soldiers by request of the English military authorities. This the latter deny, but have not placed the house out of bounds, and it is the English troops that are stated to be causing the trouble. The C.W.S.S. have sent a resolution of protest to the War Office, and a resolution to his Eminence begging him to use his influence to have the evil remedied. Representatives of the C.W.S.S. also attended the annual meeting of the Association of Social and Moral Hygiene to support the resolution of protest. We will return to the subject next month. As Mr. Walter Roch justly said in the House of Commons, six million women voters will look upon this subject from a different standpoint to men.

Some of our readers will remember the case of Julia Decies, the young woman who was sentenced four years ago to a term of seven years' imprisonment for shooting and slightly wounding the man she had been living with, who was about to desert her for another woman, though she was expecting a child of which he was the father. Her child was born in prison. By her good conduct three years of the sentence have been remitted, and she will be free in November, but Mrs. Cobden Sanderson and others interested in her case, are endeavouring to procure her immediate release. In view of the leniency with which soldiers accused of murdering their wives have been treated recently, the Executive of the C.W.S.S. has written to the Home Secretary appealing to him to set Julia Decies at liberty, and allow her to rejoin her sister and her little son and live in peace. Surely she has been punished enough.

(Continued from page 20).

powers and sympathies to uplift the nation. She must be guarded in word and deed, for she is subject to public criticism; humble, for she is human, and there is more to be learnt than one life-time can compass; dignified, because she represents womanhood; judicial, because there are two sides to every question, and those who ask for fairness must be ready to give it; kind, for it is woman's task to help the desolate and oppressed. Above all she should never forget that she stands not for mere material welfare alone, but also for the highest interests of the human race, spiritual forces which make for the righteousness which alone can truly exalt a nation. Noble aims must ever be kept in view if true national greatness is our object. It is the special work of women to lead upwards as well as onwards. May many respond to this high vocation!

P.S.—Since the above was written, but for various reasons delayed in publication, two momentous matters bearing on the subject have taken place. The first is that by the new Representation of the People Bill six million women have been enfranchised. The second matter is the very drastic proposal of the L.G.C. of the Ministry of Reconstruction to transfer the functions of Boards of Guardians. It is out of the question to do more now than to point out that even our would-be executioners refer in their Report to "the devoted work of the Guardians and the continuous improvement in Poor Law Administration, especially in respect of the children and the sick."

E.C.

THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETY.

Office: 55, BERNERS STREET, LONDON, W., 1.
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Hon. Editor MISS LEONORA de ALBERTI.
Hon. Treasurer MISS BRADY.
Signed articles do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Society.

THE FUTURE OF THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETY.

Long before the resolution dealing with the continuation of our Society was put to the Annual Meeting it was apparent to all that there was not one person in the large audience who intended to vote against it. Every speaker had a different reason for desiring the continuance of the C.W.S.S., but everyone was fully determined to work under the Society's banner for the uplifting of woman, and the consequent uplifting of mankind. As Miss Christopher St. John pointed out, in a world that is changing daily it is impossible to have a rigid programme, nor would it be desirable. Our Society is composed of women of every shade of opinion linked by a common faith, and by a common determination to raise the status of women. Some are conservatives, some liberal, some labour, and some never have and probably never will belong to any political party. But the social and moral reforms which we wish to promote are above party. Mrs. Fawcett, in the *Common Cause*, calls attention to a remarkable fact about our Bill. "Every other great Reform Bill," she says, "has been carried only after a tremendous party conflict, which has split the country into rival factions, breathing forth hatred and suspicion against one another. Our Bill, as we are proud to call it, has been carried by the consent and co-operation of all parties. In the House of Commons it was supported by every leader of each of the great political parties. There has never been anything like

it before, and we may perhaps look upon it as a happy omen of a new spirit which women may bring into politics."

Some members have asked whether we cannot have articles in the *Catholic Citizen* telling our readers how to use the vote. We cannot do that without telling them what candidate to vote for. All that we can do is to put before them schemes that we think worthy of their support, and leave it them to get their particular candidate to pledge himself to support such schemes. For instance, we have had recently three very able articles from Judge Neil, Mrs. Crawford and Mrs. Stephen Gwynn dealing with Mothers' Pensions. Or sometimes, as in the case of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, we have placed before our readers reasons why certain clauses were unjust to women; or as in the present issue we put before them the scandals revealed by the Association for Social and Moral Hygiene. Members will see the action taken by the Executive of the C.W.S.S. Our branches might send up similar resolutions, or readers who serve on various committees might induce the latter to protest in a like manner. All this is making use of the power given by the vote. I can imagine that some members may say: Is not that much the same as we have been doing all along? Well Suffragists have always acted like public-spirited citizens, but they had no power behind them. Now they have both the spirit and the power.

At the same time, though the signed arti-

cles in the *Catholic Citizen* do not commit the C.W.S.S. (and the Editor claims no greater authority for her articles than for others), if any members think their own views have not received due attention, or if they disagree with the views put forward, we shall be glad to hear from them. The more the *Catholic Citizen* provides a platform for progressive Catholics to discuss the questions of the day, the better pleased we shall be. Frank and free discussion is the best way of coming to a profitable solution of any vexed question. Just as the best way to overthrow an opponent is to meet him face to face and hear what his aims and motives actually are, and not to depend upon what someone else has said that they are.

The C.W.S.S. has more than justified its existence in the past; I believe it has a great work to do in the future. We have pledged ourselves to carry on. And if there are days when the road seems long and weary, and the evils against which we have set our faces well-nigh insurmountable, we may recall the words that came at intervals in "our Mass" of thanksgiving: "The Lord will overshadow thee with his shoulders, and under his wings thou shalt trust: his truth shall compass thee with a shield."

L. DE ALBERTI.

The Birthday of the C.W.S.S.

AN APPEAL.

On the 25th of March, that great feast of our Lady, we celebrate our seventh Birthday, and it is truly fitting that at the age of 7—the age at which a child attains the use of reason—our legislators should have granted us a somewhat restricted right to the use of our political reason.

We rejoice in the great victory that has been won, and we invite our members and friends to mark the occasion in a practical manner by sending a birthday offering in the shape of a donation to the Office Rent Fund. £40 is the sum required. Birthday gifts, which should reach the Office on or before the 25th instant, will be gratefully acknowledged in the next month's issue of the *Catholic Citizen*.

B. GADSBY.

55, Berners Street,
Oxford Street, W.1.

LONDON AND BRANCHES.

Holy Mass will be offered on Sunday, April 7th, at 10.30, at St. Patrick's, Soho, for the intention of the Society. We give in another column the report of our Annual Meeting.

On Saturday, March 23rd, at 2.45, by kind permission of Mrs. Cameron Head, a meeting will be held at 40, Lowndes Square, S.W. Speaker, Miss Abadam. Any of our members who visit the London Coliseum should look out for the leader of the Ladies' Orchestra, and recognise in her a fellow member of the C.W.S.S., Miss Nellie Fulcher.

Miss O'Sullivan asks the prayers of members for the repose of the soul of her mother, who died recently. R.I.P. We offer our colleague our sincerest sympathy in her loss.

BRIGHTON, WORTHING AND WEST SUSSEX BRANCH.

At the adjourned General Meeting of the Brighton and West Sussex Branch of the C.W.S.S. the following resolution was proposed by Miss Merrifield, seconded by Miss Bennett and carried unanimously.

"That this meeting of the Brighton and West Sussex Branch of the C.W.S.S. approves of the continuation of the Society, bearing in mind that its object, viz., the extension of the Franchise to women on the same terms as it is or may be granted to men, has not yet been attained. It resolves to work to establish political, social and economic equality between men and women and to further the work and usefulness of women as Catholic citizens."

It was proposed, seconded and carried unanimously, "That the name of the Branch be changed to Brighton, Worthing and West Sussex Branch."

Hon. Sec., Miss Major, Wymstead, Steghe Gardens, Worthing.

HASTINGS AND ST. LEONARD'S BRANCH.

One of our members, Miss Raphaelle Murray, has just received the Mons Ribbon for services rendered during the 1914 campaign. The Mons Star will follow in due course. Miss Murray is a trained nurse, but receives the decoration for her work as interpreter and organiser, when she was superintendent of a large Nurses' Home at Calais. She is now residing at Bexhill, but lived at St. Leonard's for some years.

LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT BRANCH.—Hon. Sec., Mrs. Murphy, 12, Anson Street, Liverpool.

On February 1st a Whist Drive was held at 18, Co'quitt Street. This, while being enjoyable and successful, was not so well attended as the previous one. A larger affair is being organised for March 15th, at Hardman Hall, Hardman Street, when it is hoped that all members will endeavour to be present. Tickets 1/6.

A meeting of the N.U.W.W., to discuss the formation of a Council of Women Citizens, was held in Liverpool, on March 27th, at which the local branch of the C.W.S.S. was represented by Mrs. Macdonald (Chairman), Mrs. Parnell, Mrs. Deery and Mrs. Mills.

FREE CHURCH LEAGUE FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.—Change of address: 30, Holborn Hall, Gray's Inn Road, W.C.1.

ANNUAL MEETING.

There was a very large attendance at the Annual Meeting held at the Catholic Association Rooms on the 16th ult., when the future of the C.W.S.S. was discussed. The chairman, Mrs. Walter Roch, opened the meeting with a short eloquent speech, in which she welcomed members as citizens, and alluded to the change in the name of our paper to suit the new status of women. Miss Whately read the annual report, the adoption of which was moved by Miss Christine O'Connor, and seconded by Lady Laughton. The Treasurer having read the Financial Statement, its adoption was moved by Mrs. Finlayson Gauld in a very apt speech, in which she spoke of the *Catholic Suffragist* as the cement of the Society. She thought that the work of the C.W.S.S. was more than ever necessary. Women had won a great weapon, and must use it in a great manner. The adoption of the Financial Statement was seconded by Mrs. Anderson.

Miss Christopher St. John then moved the resolution, which ran as follows: "That this meeting of the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society approves of the continuation of the Society with the intention of working for the further extension of the franchise to women on the same terms as it is, or may be, given to men, to establish the political, social, and economic equality between men and women, and to further the work and usefulness of Catholic women as citizens."

It was very necessary, Miss St. John said, for the Society to continue in being and to enlarge its sphere. The resolution was ambitious, but at least it showed that the C.W.S.S. aimed at the sky. It was necessary to use the vote with discretion, but the very fact of possessing it altered the whole position of women. She hoped the women's societies would be a centre of thought, leading the way against the corrupt party system. We had reached the dawn of a new epoch. Miss Bennett said she was greatly pleased to second the resolution. The Society had always contributed to the woman's movement a sane and well-balanced judgment, and its work was much needed. Councillor Ellen Chapman read a resolution from the Brighton Branch supporting the con-

tinuation of the Society, and spoke warmly in favour of the continuation of the Society. Miss Isabel Willis spoke for the Hastings Branch, and said that she had always felt that the C.W.S.S. occupied not only an important, but a unique, position as forming a link between Catholic and non-Catholic women. Lady Laughton supported the resolution in the name of the Wimbledon Branch, Miss Barry for Liverpool, and Miss Anderson for Birmingham. Miss Kathleen FitzGerald said that our resolution had been called ambitious. The C.W.S.S. was ambitious, had it not been so it would not be in the position it held. Had it not been ambitious there would have been no *Catholic Suffragist* in war-time. The C.W.S.S. could look back and be glad, and it could look forward. She was ambitious enough to hope that every word of the resolution would be realised. Mrs. V. M. Crawford spoke very earnestly of the importance of continuing the C.W.S.S. When it came to a further extension of the franchise, all the old arguments would be resurrected. She would be particularly sorry for the paper to cease; she had had an opportunity of knowing that it had an audience outside the Catholic body as well as within. She knew that non-Catholics set value on the paper. She always looked upon the C.W.S.S. as the progressive wing of the Catholic body. There was the conservative mind and the progressive mind, and she might say with truth that the members of the C.W.S.S. had progressive minds. The Society had shown great courage in the past, she had no doubt it would have opportunities of showing courage in the future. Miss Whately said she felt very strongly that if the Society were to cease there was no society to replace it. The only other important body of Catholic women had barred politics even from the pages of their magazine until the actual passing of the Franchise Bill; they could not therefore take the leading part Catholic women should take, nor could they be expected to have the experience of politics, politicians and questions of social reform which the members of the C.W.S.S. had acquired during their long struggle for the vote. After Miss Fedden and others had

spoken, the resolution was put to the meeting and carried unanimously to the strains of a brass band, which obligingly passed by at the psychological moment.

DORA SIGERSON SHORTER.

IN MEMORIAM.

When genius is joined to a fascinating and endearing personality, as in the late Dora Sigerson Shorter, the literary world mourns her departure from our midst, but with this beautiful poet, freedom was her watchword, her life, her *raison d'être*. She was the daughter of a great Irishman, Dr. George Sigerson, the well-known biologist of Dublin, and he is, as a critic has said, in many ways the father of the Irish literary movement. Her country was intensely dear to her, its sorrows were keenly, and indeed fatally, felt by her. She was ever jealous for its restored freedom as a nation and the interests of her soul and heart were with her night and day. Her lovely poem, "When I shall rise," pleads that when she dies:—

"Killiney's silver sands and Wicklow Hills
Dawn on my frightened eyes as I draw
near."

Married in 1896 to Mr. Clement Shorter, the able and delightful critic and journalist, her home was in London, but you have only to read her works to discern her aspirations and the dignity of her patriotism.

There is a pathos which runs, like a thread, through all her work, but it is the exquisite Celtic yearning for some elusive ideal—there is the love of legend—and her ballads are perfect in finish and atmosphere. Culture and refinement are hers, but withal, that width of view and power and zeal which make for beauty. She was an intensely devout Catholic.

With Moira O'Neill and Ethna Carberry she breathed the new movement in Irish literature, or rather the renaissance of the old. Her volumes of poems were brought out under three names—the first being in 1894—"Verses," "The Fairy," "Changeling," "The Lady's Slipper," "Ballads and Poems," "The Father Confessor," "The Woman who went to Hell," "The Song of

Earl Roderick" and others followed. Her "Collected Poems" appeared in 1907, with an introduction by George Meredith.

There are two dainty little volumes of hers brought out by Maunsel, "Madge Lindsey and other Poems" and "New Poems," 1912. "The Four Children" in the latter volume is exquisitely told, a weird little homily on good intentions; the perfect melody of "Rain after Drought" is felt in this verse:—

"All night the small feet of the rain
Within the garden ran;
And gentle fingers tapped the pane
Until the dawn began."

One could quote at leisure, but space forbids.

She studied Art and we all know her husband is a centre of London literary life, and one can only infer the great blank she leaves in that circle of friends, and, above all, by the young writers she will be missed, for her delight was to help on the genius of youth.

She lies in that historical cemetery Glasnevin, near the great liberator of her country. May God rest her beautiful soul.

EDITH PEARSON.

At the Cathedral.

There was a large attendance of our members at Westminster Cathedral on Sunday, the 17th ult., at the High Mass which was offered in thanksgiving for the Suffrage victory, and to ask God's blessing on the new electors. We were very glad to welcome Mrs. Fawcett, Miss Garrett, and all our friends from the other societies. Among these were Mr. and Mrs. Cobden Sanderson, Mrs. Nevinson, Miss Underwood, Mrs. Percy Boulnois, Miss Mercer, and Miss H. C. Newcomb. Seats in the nave on the epistle side were reserved for suffragists. At the end of the Mass, led by Miss Jeffery, founder of the C.W.S.S., and the Hon. Mrs. Walter Roch, the suffragists walked in procession to the shrine of Blessed Joan of Arc, our patron, when Miss Jeffery placed a laurel wreath, tied with our colours, upon her statue. The *Vote* says in its report that the religious services of the week have been a genuine reunion of Christendom, bringing together women of all the churches in one great general Thanksgiving.

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