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VOLUME XXII 1936

THE
CATHOLIC CITIZEN

VOLUME XXII 1936



ST. JOAN'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ALLIANCE
55 BERNERS STREET, LONDON, W.1.

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Price Twopence.

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 Egypt

BY MARY MCCURDY, B.A.

Events since the war have shown that the old idea of an "unchanging East" will no longer stand for there has been change and even violent change in most Eastern countries. And in many of them as for example in Turkey and Egypt, the position of women has been greatly affected by the general movement away from old beliefs and customs. Indeed it is true to say that the way in which emancipation has been obtained by women in these two countries reflects the differences in spirit and manner in which all social changes have been effected in them. In Turkey where change has come arbitrarily, cutting suddenly across long habit and custom, women have been removed almost at one step from the harem to a state of equal citizenship, but in Egypt, another Moslem country, the emancipation of women has been going forward unobtrusively during the last twenty years or so—a period during which Western customs have been increasingly adopted by the country at large.

Moreover, though public opinion has been on the whole in favour of the emancipation of women, it has not come about without the efforts of the women themselves. For, as readers of the "Catholic Citizen" are aware there is in Egypt a band of active feminists united in the "Union Féministe Egyptienne." And the Union has been, and is, tireless in its efforts to secure greater freedom for the women of the country. But here it is as well to note that it is only the lives of the women of the upper and middle classes that have been directly affected, since the fellaheen or peasant women in village or town live the same sort of lives as their predecessors have done.

For Egyptian, as for other oriental women,

the first step in freedom has been the abolishing of the custom of segregation of the sexes and the seclusion of women. To-day Egyptian women of the upper and middle classes wear European clothes, go about unveiled, and visit the cinema and other public places with their menfolk or women friends. And this liberty to get out and about is still new enough to be valued by the rising generation, though it has come about almost imperceptibly without any fierce opposition having been roused. Furthermore two important reforms affecting the status of women have been made. The legal age of marriage has been raised to sixteen, and, owing to a reinterpretation of doctrine it has been made less easy for a man to divorce his wife, while hitherto he could do so easily and for the most trivial reasons.

Since 1925, too, the Government has made available to the Egyptian girl what is provided for her brother. For in that year the first secondary school for girls was opened with fifty pupils. To-day that school has five hundred pupils and there are also three other secondary schools in Cairo, three in Alexandria and one each in two provincial towns. In these schools the girls follow the same syllabus as in the boys' schools and take the same public examinations. From them girls have passed on to study at the Egyptian University, where they are to be found in every faculty, but chiefly in the school of medicine. Others have gone on to England and taken degrees there. It is of interest to note here that in these schools there are men as well as women on the staff though in every case the head is a woman.

Such improvements on their former position having been attained, the majority of Egyptian

women seem content. The vote, which has been of such burning importance to women in other countries means nothing to them. But this is in part due to the political state of the country which allows Parliament little power, for in 1919 when there was a live issue in politics women played an active part in the demand for independence and there are keen women supporters of the Wafdist or Nationalist movement.

Moreover, though numerous women are teaching and others are studying medicine there is no general desire among girls for a career, for the old idea that it is beneath a woman's dignity to work and earn her living dies hard. Also it is certain that the men would oppose any competition in the economic field.

But, on the other hand, Egyptian women are beginning to develop a social conscience and to try and do something to improve the lot of the less fortunate members of society. Thus, some of them are now co-operating with European women at the various child welfare centres and they are agitating for the improvement of sanitary conditions in the villages where pure water is often unattainable. And only this February a Woman's Peace Society was formed.

Thus in women's position in Egypt to-day one notices a characteristic mixture of what is advanced with what is traditional. And though women have succeeded in establishing a freer private life for themselves they seem hardly stirred as yet by the desire to forge out alone or to take part in public life.



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International Notes

La Revue des Deux Mondes (Paris, October 15th,) publishes an article—"A Social Scourge in Africa"—by His Excellency Mgr. Tardy, Vicar-Apostolic in Libreville, in which the position of women in polygamous countries is considered, not only from the point of view of the repopulation of the country, but also from the point of view of humanity and justice.

Mgr. Tardy says clearly that if respect for native custom has not gone as far as recognising cannibalism, ritual murders and slavery, neither should polygamy be tolerated, it being "the most odious form of slavery and one of the most hideous blots on native society."—*Revue de L'Alliance Ste. Jeanne d'Arc*.

L'Egyptienne (Cairo) publishes a very interesting article on the question of polygamy which comments on the opposition that active Society, "L'Union Féministe Egyptienne," still encounters in its splendid fight for the abolition of polygamy in Egypt.

A member in Uganda writes:

"I think you would be interested in the Maternity centres governed by European Doctors, but run entirely by native midwives. Sometimes it is difficult to get the native mother to have her baby in these centres, but once she does consent there is no trouble. She goes there for all her babies."

This is a splendid example of the overcoming of prejudice both in regard to the possibility of training African women, and, among the women themselves, in regard to the benefits of skilled care in childbirth.

From the *Bulletin of the I.C.W.* we note with pleasure that the Cabinet Council of Belgium has abolished the decree of December 8th, 1934, authorizing the Minister of Labour to fix the proportional number of women who may be employed in commercial and industrial undertakings, which (see November *Catholic Citizen*) had been temporarily suspended. The Cabinet Council has also revoked the circular prejudicial to the recruitment of women functionaries in the Civil Service. To quote from the *Bulletin*:

So the women's organisations, who opposed these and other restrictive measures, have all reason to be proud of the completeness of their victory and grateful to the Government Commission which was appointed to inquire into the desirability and effects of these measures detrimental to women's right to work. There can be no doubt that the conclusions of this Commission presided over by Mme. Emil Vanderveelde and counting women representing various shades of political opinion among its members, have largely contributed to the Government's changed attitude.

(Continued on p. 5)

Notes and Comments

St. Joan's Alliance offers warm congratulations to Dame Christabel Pankhurst on the D.B.E. conferred on her in the New Year's Honours List. The name of Christabel Pankhurst is known all over the world as the leader, with her mother Mrs. Pankhurst, of the famous militant suffragette movement. During the heat of the movement her name, though revered by her followers, was regarded with obloquy and scorn by those who did not understand the spirit and the ideals of the women who were striving for liberty.

In an interview reported in the press, Miss Christabel Pankhurst said of her honour: "I take it as a recognition of the historic importance of the political enfranchisement of women, which has completed the British Constitution. This has made us a wholly free nation."

We may regard Miss Pankhurst's honour as a good augury for the New Year to the women who are still struggling to obtain full equality.

The Law Reform (Married Women and Tortfeasors) Act which amends the law relating to the capacity, property and liabilities of married women in contract and tort and abolishes the liabilities of husbands for their wives torts, came into force on January 1st.

The second reading of the Employment of Women and Young Persons' Bill was passed on December 17th. Though, as a Society we hold no brief either for or against the two-shift system, we record that this Bill makes permanent the right of women to work on this system. During the debate in the House Miss Horsburgh (U) said she had come to the conclusion that the majority of women would like the chance of being able to work on the two-shift system. Mr. C. Brown (Lab.), a member of the Departmental Committee investigating the subject, said that it was only here and there that they found any women opposed to the system.

With Sir John Withers (U.) we object to the classification of Women and Young Persons together for which, as he said, there is no justification. We also strongly object to those clauses of the Bill which empower the Home Secretary to delegate to the Chief Inspector of Factories or to any superintending Inspector of Factories any of the powers and duties conferred on him by the Bill—a dangerous precedent.

We offer our congratulations to Miss Nancy Stewart Parnell, B.A., on her election as President of the National Union of Women Teachers. Miss Walmesley, another member of our Alliance, has been re-elected to the Council of the N.U.W.T.

The Rev. Dr. Bernard Grimley of the Catholic Missionary Society paid a well-deserved tribute to Mrs. Hand, a member of our Executive Committee, at the opening of the recent Sale of the handwork of people of the distressed Northern areas which took place at the Westminster Cathedral Hall, under the auspices of the Grail. As quoted in the *Tablet*, Dr. Grimley said that one woman, Mrs. Hand, who was the first to raise a finger and a voice for Cleator's woes, ought to be there that night to witness how her example was being valiantly followed by the young girls of the Grail. A national system was required, he added, for adequately amending the present wretched conditions. His Grace the Archbishop of Westminster advocated the immediate setting up of a representative Committee in order to influence public opinion.

For three years past, by her own personal efforts aided by the publicity given in the *Catholic Times*, Mrs. Hand has collected large consignments of clothes from people in the London area for distribution by Father Clayton to the unemployed of Cleator. If there is, as we hope, to be a National Catholic scheme for the assistance of the people of distressed areas, we are proud that Mrs. Hand should be one of its initiators.

At the Annual Meeting of the Council for the Representation of Women in the League of Nations, resolutions were passed re Child Protection in Ceylon, the Study of Nutrition, and one moved by Miss Barry on behalf of St. Joan's Alliance urging the Government to press for an extension of the power of the Slavery Committee to enable it to receive information from private organisations and private persons.

We welcome the appointment, by the Archbishop of Westminster, of Miss W. L. Armstrong (32B Ebury Street, S.W.1) as Secretary for Social Work for Women and Girls in the Archdiocese. Miss Armstrong was trained in social work at the Josephine Butler Memorial House, Liverpool. We wish her all success in her work.

ST. JOAN'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ALLIANCE,

AND

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55 BERNERS STREET, LONDON, W.1. Tel. Museum 4181

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

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MISS CHRISTINE SPENDER, *Hon. Editor.*

A Silver Jubilee

On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception the Executive Committee gave a party in Hampstead to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of Gabrielle Jeffery, co-founder of the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society, now St. Joan's Alliance. On this great Feast of Our Lady twenty-five years ago, Miss Jeffery was first inspired with the idea of her future foundation.

When the guests had assembled Miss Barry read a number of messages of congratulation from members at home and abroad, including those of the French Section and the Liverpool Branch of the Alliance.

Mrs. Laughton Mathews then made the speech of presentation. She said many of us had good ideas but few of us carried them through. Pioneers were different—they started and went on and Miss Jeffery had been one of these pioneers. During all the twenty-five years she had led and watched over the Alliance, Miss Jeffery had never sought the limelight and she had never compromised in a matter of principle. Mrs. Laughton Mathews hoped Miss Jeffery was satisfied and pleased with the growing-up of her "child"—even though the growing up of one's children was sometimes rather an anxious time. Even when the necessity for the work of the Alliance should be over, the results of that work would always be there and show themselves in the emergence of a nobler and better world. The members of St. Joan's Alliance were grateful to Miss Jeffery for putting their hands to work so well worth while.

The presentation was then made by Elvira Laughton Mathews with the words "The women of the future join with the women of the present in thanking you Miss Jeffery." The

presentation consisted of £25 and a brooch in the colours of the Alliance, a gold bar set with turquoise and pearls, engraved on the back.

Miss Jeffery, in reply, said that she did not take to herself all the kind things that had been said, but saw only in the occasion the desire of the Alliance to honour Our Lady and St. Joan. She could never thank everyone enough, but accepted with the greatest gratitude the magnificent gift of £25, all the more so that she would presently have the pleasure of handing it to the Hon. Editor of the *Catholic Citizen* in memory of Leonora de Alberti, our former beloved Editor. She protested at having also been given a brooch, but admitted that she had had hankering after just such an one.

Miss Jeffery then paid generous tribute to her colleagues in St. Joan's and drew attention to that war of the spirit that all must wage from the cradle to the grave. In concluding she again expressed her thanks to everyone.

Then all went in to tea to find St. Joan's banner decorating the tea-room and an enormous birthday-cake iced in blue, white, and gold ablaze with twenty-five candles, gift of Christopher and David Laughton Mathews.

Miss Jeffery also received several individual gifts including a poem on vellum dedicated to her by Miss Spender, a New Testament, and a lovely sheaf of Madonna lilies which she later took to the Lady Chapel in Westminster Cathedral.

And so, in gratitude and loyalty and strengthened to go forward, we passed another important milestone in the history of the Alliance.

Among the many letters congratulating Miss Jeffery was one from the Rev. Mother Provincial of the nuns of Our Lady of the Cenacle, who was one of the earliest members of the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society. Mother Gadsby assured Miss Jeffery of her prayers that the Alliance might continue to prosper under the protection of St. Joan.

We have much pleasure in quoting from two further letters:

Dom Gilbert Higgins, C.R.L., writes:

I shall not fail to pray for Miss Jeffery (on the 8th particularly) and to assist in spirit at the tea-party given in her honour. The Suffrage Society, St. Joan's Alliance owes her a debt that will not be forgotten and cannot be paid off. It must give Miss Jeffery deep satisfaction and inspire her with fresh hopes and courage when she compares the present status of the Society with its small and apparently unpromising beginnings. I congratulate her on the success of her labours, a success all the more to be admired for its being not in a physical field but in a moral one, justice versus might was the point at issue. Miss Jeffery has won her case, St. Joan be thanked!

Miss A. L. P. Dorman writes from S. Africa:

"I feel all Catholic women owe Miss Jeffery a deep debt of gratitude for the existence of St. Joan's Alliance. I feel that I must say of her that 'Gabrielis ab ore' has founded us in 'Sanctae Joannae Societate'!—a very bad parody of a most beautiful hymn so forgive me! But it does seem a wonderful work to have sprung into being from that inspiration of 'our Gabrielle' and I feel quite excited to know it originated on that most beautiful feast of Our Lady. As a special child of Our Lady of Lourdes, I love that feast, and am so glad it is connected with 'St. Joan's' origin.

The Catholic Citizen

Owing to Miss Jeffery's generous donation to the *Catholic Citizen*, on the occasion of her Silver Jubilee, the paper is now out of debt and starts the New Year clear. But many free copies are sent to those likely to be interested, who are unable to pay for themselves, and we should be most grateful if readers would pay for some of these and thus help us to continue clear of debt. Bishops, missionaries, convents, libraries and clubs all over the world receive our paper. Owing to the generosity of one member we have been enabled to send copies to 25 Indian addresses during the last two years. Farthings and threepenny bits collected by another reader have covered six subscriptions for missionaries. We would value it greatly if readers when paying their yearly subscriptions would include an extra 2s. 6d., and select a person or institution to which they would like the *Catholic Citizen* to be sent. Much good propaganda can be done in this

way, and we beg our readers to think it over and include that extra 2s. 6d.

INTERNATIONAL NOTES—Cont. from p. 2

From *L'Aube* (Paris) we are glad to note that the women's syndicates of the French Federation of Christian Workers recently organised a meeting in Paris to protest against decrees operating against women's work and to assert the right of women to paid employment. Women of all professions were represented and a resolution was adopted which pointed out that married women often have to supplement the family income; that single women often have dependents; declaring that a woman has a right to remunerative work and to equal pay with men and protesting against laws which would prohibit married women's work and against the generally low level of women's wages; and also protesting against the decrees of July 16th which made special discriminations against women working in the public services and administrations.

From *La Française* (Paris) we note that on the initiative of the French National Council of Women a liaison Committee of Women's Organisations is to be formed in Paris which will meet whenever women's right to paid work is menaced, so that common action may be taken. L'Alliance Ste. Jeanne d'Arc is one of the co-operating Societies.

We offer our congratulations to Mme. Joliot-Curie, who, together with her husband has been awarded the Nobel Prize for Chemistry for work done in pursuance of the scientific research begun by her famous parents. Mme. Joliot-Curie and her husband have also had conferred on them, by the French Government, the distinction of Knights of the "Legion d'Honneur."

We are glad to note from the *I.C.W. Bulletin* that Mme. Joliot-Curie spoke at a Mass Meeting on women's right to earn, held recently in Paris, in defence of the married woman's "right to occupy, on equal footing with men, positions for which they are qualified by their work and achievements"

A Hungarian member of the Alliance tells us that in Hungary a regulation has been passed by the Chamber of Lawyers that no woman may become a member—which means in effect that no woman may practise law as all lawyers have to belong to the Chamber.

Reviews

Peter and Veronica Growing Up. By Margaret Beech. (Herbert Jenkins, 2s. 6d.)

This book, which claims to answer questions likely to be asked by children of fifteen to seventeen years, is of the "Harry and Lucy" type, familiar to one's childhood. Even at that remote period one found such a mode of presenting facts rather irritating. The children were so inquisitive, the replies to their questions so lengthy, and the adult dispenser of information so dull. That may however be merely a personal objection on the part of the reviewer, who preferred to derive information straightforwardly without impersonation. If one is free from this dislike, it should be possible for children of an enquiring turn of mind to enjoy the book. The questioning boy and girl, their various friends, and the learned uncle, are quite attractively presented. Their doings and conversations form a thread of interest which links together the various parts of the book. Their manner of conversation is natural and convincing, and as would be expected, the style is colloquial, though nothing appears to be gained by the use of ugly slang words like "stunt."

The topics dealt with are mainly biological and psychological. To omit questions on the physical aspect of nature seems strange, given such observant children. However, such questions are outside the scope of the book. Some of the subjects discussed are; the habits of ants, the behaviour of monkeys, evolution, instinct and intelligence, the human soul. The chapters on ants are particularly interesting, and would hardly fail to grip children. They support the reviewer's contention that animal studies in the schools are often deplorably dull and meaningless, owing to an excessive insistence on structural features, leaving aside all reference to the behaviour and habits of the creatures in the living state. The study of structure should be subservient, though not neglected altogether, for children of the age we are considering—a criticism which might be directed to this book. It tends to go to the opposite extreme and deal almost exclusively with behaviour.

The subject of instinct and intelligence is well presented. Indeed most of the explanations are lucid, and are calculated to arouse the interest of children of an enquiring turn of mind. The subject of man and woman is quite reverently treated, and is entirely free from unnecessary

details regarding bodily organs and processes, which disfigure most of the books designed for the information of children. One may doubt however whether this treatment would satisfy the children. Spiritual things are given due place, without over-emphasis.

On the whole the book may be recommended as a reader for children of the specified age.

ETHEL M. WATTS, D.Sc.
(Mrs. Humphrey Watts.)

Rudiments of Sociology. By E. T. Ross, B.Com. (Lond.) Instructor in Sociology, St. Louis University. (Bruce Publishing Co., New York.)

Miss Ross has written a useful, short and very lucid treatise on a science with which we should all be more familiar.

To the European reader the chapters on the National Recovery programme and other side-lights on local conditions are of special interest. We regret to note that such an experienced sociologist is still in favour of "protective" legislation for women. If man is allowed to choose his work may this same privilege not be extended to women, in the name of fairness and good sense? Special legislation has not proved a blessing for women and it has circumvented the public demand for laws enforcing legislation to protect male-workers from dangerous or insanitary conditions of work. Underpaying and "protecting" of women have always finally hit her male partner as hard or harder than herself.

Ideal Motherhood. By Dr. Mary Kidd. (Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1s. 6d.)

Dr. Kidd addressing herself to the expectant mother describes in simple language the processes leading up to the birth of the child. Her book contains advice which will help to mitigate the discomforts sometimes incident to pregnancy and draws the mother's attention to what must be regarded as possible danger signs requiring further advice. Her insistence on ante-natal supervision will be a valuable reminder to the women she addresses, but we fear that the very minuteness of her instructions on diet, clothes and occupations may suggest to her readers that maternity is not a perfectly normal process. There is also the possibility of focussing the mother's attention too closely on her physiological functions. This danger has to be avoided in preventive work of this kind. The advice given to the expectant

mother to relinquish employment outside her home early in pregnancy requires further qualification. It is of course never desirable to do more than one whole-time job as many women are now forced to do—the whole work of their house and a whole-time outside occupation enabling them to support their family. It is even less conducive, to good health during pregnancy and may imperil the child's life. With this important reservation it is all to the good if a woman is allowed to continue her occupation during a normal pregnancy unless there is a definite reason to advise her differently.

There is another criticism on a minor matter. To point out what is right according to the moral law is the privilege of the Catholic writer. It is probably more forcible if the Catholic medical writer points out the truth without drawing the lesson. There are many who will prefer to make their own deductions.

We heartily concur with Dr. Kidd in regretting that not every local authority has followed the good example of the Metropolitan Borough Council's response to the Mother's and Children's Milk Order (1918).

F. M. S.

Social Thought and Action. A Series of Social Sermons. By the Rev. Albert Muntz, S.J. (B. Herder Book Co., 7s.)

This series of notes for sermons contains a most sympathetic chapter on "The Celibate Catholic Woman." The chapter entitled "The Menace of the Empty Cradle" is sensible and straightforward, putting clearly the Church's attitude towards "Birth Control."

C. S.

OBITUARY

The prayers of our readers are asked for the repose of the souls of two of our members—Miss Gallagher, an early member of the C.W.S.S., and Mrs. Kerr, both of whom died recently.—R.I.P. We offer our deepest sympathy to Mr. and Miss Kerr on the loss of their mother, whom we remember with gratitude as one of our most valiant paper-sellers.

* * * *

The women workers of Ireland have lost a true friend in the death of the Very Rev. John Canon Flanagan, P.P., from whose famous letter in their support we quoted an extract in our last issue. The prayers of our members are requested for the repose of his soul. R.I.P.

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