

WOMEN'S SERVICE
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THE
Catholic Citizen

Organ of St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance, (formerly Catholic Women's Suffrage Society), 55 Berners Street, London, W. 1.

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15th MAY, 1934.

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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.

On the Position of Women in the British Cameroons and in Nigeria

BY HIS EXCELLENCY ALEXANDRE LE ROY, Archbishop of Carie,
Formerly Vicar-Apostolic of Gabon

The minutes of the Session of the Mandates Commission of the 23rd October, 1933, record Mlle. Dannevig's observations on the position of women in the British Cameroons and in Nigeria and the replies made by Captain Buchanan-Smith.

These replies call forth the following reflections:—

(1) In the first place surprise is expressed that as regards the position of women the attitude of the Colonial Administration differs so widely from that of the Missions. The reason is that the Administration sanctions native customs, giving these the force of law, while the Missions condemn in the name of justice and morality, those customs concerning marriage and the family which, in reality, reduce the woman to a state of slavery. It is impossible to reconcile these two conceptions.

(2) But Captain Buchanan-Smith says of Nigeria, as M. Marchand said of the Cameroons, that the woman if she wishes can work and gain the money required to redeem herself. This surely admits that she does not belong to herself, and since she does not belong to herself she cannot work for her own gain, all she earns goes to her lord and master and to the upkeep of the family.

(3) The Captain says that in Nigeria there is a Marriage Ordinance for Christians, in virtue of which the woman can if she wishes, leave her husband and regain her liberty, without even having to pay back the "dowry" given for her. These provisions do exist in

Nigeria and it would be all very well if they were carried out. But when these cases occur they are taken before native tribunals where native chiefs sit who judge according to their own customs and these judgments are *always* sanctioned by the European authorities.

(4) Captain Buchanan-Smith says that all the women in Nigeria are married and if the husband dies the widow has no better protection than is given her by the husband's family, that is why she lives with his family until she can marry again. The truth is that the widow cannot go anywhere else except to her dead husband's family, which inherits her, and this family in its turn disposes of her by marrying her in exchange for another dowry. Thus when a Christian husband dies the family immediately takes possession of the widow and the inheritance, and if this widow in order to recover her liberty, wishes to apply to the tribunal, she has not the necessary money and even if she had, she would never gain her cause before the native judges, whose decisions are always sanctioned by the British authorities. This is an accepted fact.

(5) Captain Buchanan-Smith adds that the women are so little opposed to native customs and to their so-called sale that when the "dowry" agreed on is judged too little by them, they are so offended at what they consider an indignity that they will initiate an action for divorce. This only proves that these unfortunate women are so down-trodden by accepted custom that they have lost all sense

of their own dignity. Generally speaking they do not wish for liberty until they have come into contact with Christianity.

To sum up. To the observations of M. Marchand and Captain Buchanan-Smith in favour of native customs, the best answer has been given by M. Bonnacarrère, the present Commissioner of the French Cameroons.

M. Bonnacarrère, in estimating the growth of Christianity among the natives, considers that the laws should correspond to this growth. In consequence in a circular dated the 14th December, 1933, the revision of marriage customs is envisaged as follows:—

(1) The term "fetisctic marriage" as applied to native Christian marriages is unjustifiable and should be abolished. Christian marriage should be recognised as such in the courts, i.e., as being obligatorily monogamous, just as Mahomedan marriages are recognised.

(2) When after marriage either the husband or wife wishes to give up polygamy and to become monogamous, they should be able to do so.

(3) The widow should recover her liberty in such a way as to enable her to dispose of herself and her children as she thinks fit: remain with her husband's family, return to her own family, or re-marry.

(4) Lastly, a maximum price should be fixed for the dowry and marriage gifts, in such a way as to stop the exploitation of the future wife and to encourage the marriage of young people.

The Missions ask for nothing better than this.

INTERNATIONAL NOTES - Continued.

"*L'Action Féminine*," Luxembourg, devotes most of its March issue to an enthusiastic account of the International Alliance for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship Congress. The Staff of "*L'Action Féminine*" under the direction of their Chairman, Frau Schleimerkill, welcomed the President of the Alliance and the Delegates on March 17th, and on March 18th they were given an official reception by the Municipality of Great Luxembourg, and on March 19th by the Municipality of Esch-Alzette.

The same paper reports the passing of an amending law permitting Luxemburg women married to foreigners before November 1926, to regain their nationality, if they so desire, by making a declaration to that effect six months after the incorporation of the new amendment into the statutes. S. A. B.

International Notes

Amidst all the outcry against the right of married women to earn, it is encouraging to read in a recent issue of "*The Catholic Women's Review*" of *New South Wales*, that: "Decent work for a decent wage should be the right of every woman, married or single. A woman must live; she should be allowed to use her own judgment about how to earn her living." It further remarks that "it ought to be obvious too, that if a married woman wishes or needs to take a paid position she has common sense enough to know why, and should be allowed to take and keep a job should any such be offered. It should be a purely domestic matter of arrangement between her husband and herself. . . . A woman may hesitate about taking such a step, but if so, she has only to ask her own conscience whether she is right or wrong."

* * * * *
A member from the West Indies sends interesting information concerning the franchise in Dominica. She tells us that women have had the vote since 1924 but they are enfranchised at 30, men at 21. The voting qualifications are (1) to own real estate over £100 in value, or (2) to have income of £30 or over, or (3) pay taxes of 15/- a year or over. This sounds like a large electorate but in reality it is not so as the population is poor. Our member adds that under present conditions the franchise is of very little use to anybody since the elected members of the Legislative Council find themselves outvoted in every financial measure by the nominated officials.

* * * * *
In the death of Joseph P. Riordan, former Mayor of Harrison, New Jersey, the feminist movement has lost a sincere friend. During the campaign for woman suffrage, when throughout New Jersey feeling was running high against extension of the suffrage, he called a meeting in the Harrison Town Hall and spoke in favour of votes for women.

After signing the petition of Catholic men to the League of Nations, asking for equal nationality rights between men and women, he remarked he was sorry to have been asked to do so little for such a worthy cause.—R.I.P.

* * * * *
We congratulate Mrs. Hilda Hedstrom Quirke, our co-religionist and an ardent feminist, on being appointed City Registrar of Boston, Mass., U.S.A., at a salary of £1,000 a year.

Notes and Comments

This month we are again privileged to publish an article by Archbishop Le Roy. Readers will remember that last October Mgr. Le Roy wrote for us on the position of women in the Cameroons and Equatorial Africa. The present article, written on the authority of two missionaries recently returned from Nigeria, is a reply to criticisms of the Archbishop's statements put forward in a discussion during the twenty-fourth Session of the League of Nations Mandates Commission. We are once more indebted to Mademoiselle Dannewig for her courage and persistence in drawing attention to this problem.

Neither as Christians nor as feminists can we share the complacency of those who countenance customs which derogate from the essential dignity of a human being made in the image and likeness of God.

* * * * *
In pursuance of the policy of the British Commonwealth League in arranging deputations of Dominion women to the various Dominion Offices with the object of pressing for a uniform policy in the matter of nationality throughout the Empire, a joint deputation from the British Commonwealth League and the Nationality of Married Women Pass the Bill Committee was received by the Acting High Commissioner for Canada on March 27th. The deputation asked that the Canadian Government should adopt legislation conferring equal nationality rights as between men and women.

* * * * *
We note with regret the retirement of Miss Philippa Fawcett, Assistant Education Officer to the L.C.C. Miss Fawcett was appointed Principle Assistant 29 years ago and in 1929 she became Assistant Education Officer. Throughout her career she has been chiefly concerned with higher education. Feminists will remember that in 1890 she beat the Senior Wrangler in the Mathematical Tripos at Cambridge thereby doing great service to the cause of Woman's Suffrage—a burning question of the time—by demonstrating the fact that a woman was able to engage in abstract study to as much advantage as a man. We appreciate with gratitude the fact noted by "*The Tablet*" that Miss Fawcett has been a good friend to aided Catholic Secondary Schools.

We are glad that Raj Kumari Aurit Kaur has been appointed to serve as Liaison Officer between the All-India Women's Conference and the feminist organisations of Great Britain. She is one of the three women delegates sent by the Women's Organisations in India to give evidence on their behalf before the Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform and we had the pleasure of meeting her on several occasions when she was in England.

Mrs. Lankester has been appointed the Liaison Officer for this country.

The report of the Conference and the resolutions passed there, both of which the Raj Kumari has sent us, will be dealt with in our next issue.

* * * * *
The Alliance was represented by its hon. secretary and editor on May 8th at a lunch given by the Women's Freedom League at the Minerva Club in honour of Lady Muir, Mrs. Pethick Lawrence presiding. Lady Muir who was interpreter to the Bulgarian delegation in Paris when the Treaty of Versailles was signed and was subsequently first Secretary to the Bulgarian delegation in Washington, spoke on "Women in the Diplomatic Service." Her experience made the talk she gave us of special interest. After a general survey of women's part in present and past diplomacy, she put it forward as her considered opinion that women would be a valuable addition to the British Diplomatic Service. It would be exceedingly unreasonable of our Government to exclude from the Service women who had the reputation of being among the most progressive in the world.

We are happy to count Lady Muir among the members of our Alliance.

* * * * *
We congratulate our member Miss Eileen Hickey, B.Sc., M.D., D.P.H., President of the Queen's University Women Graduates Society, on qualifying as a Member of the Royal College of Physicians, Ireland.

* * * * *
The Committee has unanimously elected Miss Christine Spender as Hon. Editor of "*The Catholic Citizen*." We are grateful to Miss Spender for undertaking this difficult work and wish her all success in her responsible position.

ST. JOAN'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ALLIANCE,

AND

Editorial Office of "Catholic Citizen":

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

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

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Women in the Civil Service

Committee F., the Joint Committee of official and staff representatives set up to consider the recommendations relating to women in the report of the Royal Commission on the Civil Service 1929-31 (the Tomlin Commission), have now issued their report. The committee was constituted to give representation to the National Association of Women Civil Servants and the Council of Women Civil Servants (Higher Grades), organisations which have for years waged a magnificent fight to attain equality of status between men and women throughout the Civil Service.

The report begins by agreeing with the recommendation of the Royal Commission that the appropriate course as regards the employment of women is to adopt . . . "a fair field and no favour" and adds that it "follows from the adoption of this policy that all posts in the Civil Service should be open to members of both sexes equally, except where adequate and publicly announced reasons exist to the contrary." In order to give effect to this the Committee propose that departments should undertake an immediate review of posts which are at present reserved either to men or to women.

It is well for women that reasons for their exclusion from a post must be publicly stated, but many of the cases considered by the Tomlin Commission cannot be regarded as adequate reasons for exclusion. It is however something gained that the principle of a fair field and no favour has been clearly enunciated and seriously considered by the Treasury side so that posts will not, it is hoped, be closed to women merely by Departmental custom.

The question of "aggregation" is considered

and the report makes it clear that the "general rule should be that in any Class or Grade in which members of both sexes are employed the principle underlying their employment should be that of aggregation of work and of posts." The vindication of a claim long urged by women should be a cause of satisfaction and it is for the organised women in the Department to see that the principle is carried out.

As regards the marriage bar Committee F. do not see their way to recommending its complete abolition and content themselves with a consideration of the circumstances in which exceptions to the present rule are especially desirable. The Tomlin Commission considered the case in which the retention of a woman would clearly be in the public interest. Committee F. recommend the waiving of the bar where the hard circumstances of the officer are the chief concern. They also make recommendations as to maternity leave in the event of confinement.

It was held that the question of equal pay was outside the terms of reference of Committee F. but the staff side placed on record its view that equal pay between men and women employed in the same Class or Grade is the logical accompaniment of a "fair field and no favour" and of "aggregation."

St. Joan's Alliance has always stood for and will continue to demand equality of pay and opportunity, and in so far as Committee F. recommends this principle, so far so good. But, inevitably perhaps (for the committee was working within limits and widely divergent points of view had to be reconciled), their recommendations do not satisfy feminists. Above all, when will it be generally realised that

it rests with the woman to decide whether or not she shall give up her career on marriage?

It is the Government which sets the standard for employers all over the country and should they consent to follow to its logical conclusion the recommendation of the Royal Commission—"a fair field and no favour"—we might reasonably look for an improvement in the position of all women employees.

CHRISTINE SPENDER.

Leonora de Alberti
Month's Mind

A Requiem Mass (Month's Mind) for Miss Leonora de Alberti, Founder and Editor of the "Catholic Citizen," was said at the beautiful little Church of St. Peter and St. Edward, Palace Street, Westminster, on April 26th at 11 a.m. A large congregation was present including many members of St. Joan's Alliance and representatives of other societies, in addition to relatives and personal friends.

The Mass was said by the Right Rev. Monsignor Canon Hall, a member of St. Joan's Alliance. The music which was sung by boys from the Westminster Cathedral Choir School was beautiful as was the serene devotion of the four boys who served the Mass, the cross-bearer being Francis Bell, younger son of Mrs. Laughton Bell, Miss de Alberti's niece.

In his short address Canon Hall first spoke of the "sublime sacrifice of the Mass," saying that as Christians we all recognise in this same Sacrifice the one Sacrament ordained by our Master Himself and to that extent at least we are one. St. Augustine says:

'O Sacramentum mysterium—
 Mystery of piety,
 Symbol of unity,
 Symbol of Charity.'

We believe we may hasten the time of beatitude of the soul departed this life, for when we offer sacrifice we both help the soul and honour the memory of the departed who lived and died in a state of charity and the grace of God and may expect the Promised Land. 'I have fought the good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the Faith.' Another benefit is that of consolation to ourselves and this is emphasized in the Gospel and Preface of the Mass for the Dead.

We believe in Life Everlasting and in the glorious resurrection of the body on the Last Day.

Besides the Committee and many members of St. Joan's Alliance the following Societies sent representatives: the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, the Open Door International, the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene, the British Commonwealth League, the Council for the Representation of Women in the League of Nations, the London and National Society for Women's Service (Library Committee), the National Council for Equal Citizenship, the Open Door Council, the Six Point Group, the Women's Auxiliary Service and the Women's Freedom League.

Among those present were Miss de Alberti's sisters Miss Amalia de Alberti and Lady Laughton, her nieces Mrs. Laughton Mathews and Mrs. Leonora Nesbitt, her cousin Mrs. Riches, Mrs. Cavendish Bentinck, Mr. Wilfrid Meynell, Mrs. Olivia Sowerby and friends and colleagues from the British Museum and the Public Record Office.

UKRAINIAN WOMEN'S CONGRESS

Ukrainian women are celebrating the 50th anniversary of their Alliance "So jug Ukrainok" by a Congress to be held in Stanislawow from the 23rd to 27th June. The Congress will be attended by delegates representing Ukrainian women from the territories now under Polish, Rumanian and Czechoslovakian rule and by other Ukrainian women from all over the world. Its objects are to honour the founder of the Alliance, Natalie Kobrynska, the pioneer Ukrainian feminist, to review the past and outline the work of the future. The Ukrainian women are anxious to prove that they are an able and progressive part of the woman's movement. All classes of women, peasant and professional, are represented in their organisation which collaborates with the women's professional and co-operative societies. The President of the Board is Mrs. Milena Rudnyeka, well known at the congresses of the I.W.S.A., and among other prominent members is Mrs. Szeparowyecz, our co-religionist whom we had the pleasure of meeting in Paris at the I.W.S.A. Congress in 1926. We send the Ukrainian women our greetings, and our good wishes for the success of their coming congress.

Reviews

St. Thérèse: The New Omen. An abridgement by a Poor Clare of Bullingham of a Spiritual Renascence by Henri Petitot, O.P. Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1s. 6d.

The Secret of the Little Flower. By Henri Ghéon. Sheed & Ward, 7s. 6d.

It is curious that in two books which treat of the "Little Flower" in such different ways both should bring very much to the fore certain conclusions about Saint Thérèse and her doctrine of the "little way." M. Ghéon's book is an attempt to make the saint more real to us by stripping off the sentiment in which she has been garbed and showing us the human person in her strivings after holiness. "The New Omen" tries to show us the significance of her life and doctrine to the present age. Both books insist that she is essentially a saint whose example is fitted to the needs of quite ordinary people of the present day. We are shown how in her life and in her dying the saint was one with her own doctrine and how this childlike way of trustfulness demanded of her qualities of holiness and heroism equal to those of a St. Joan, who was indeed her ideal. Her life was a paradox at once austere and tender, the keynote simplicity, but a simplicity far transcending simpleness. Longing to gain souls she yet retired to Carmel, feeling the hidden life was demanded of her rather than the active apostolate. And crowning paradox, she has been proclaimed the "saint of the Missions." The key to the mystery of her great influence is the burning and all-embracing love for Our Blessed Lord and for souls in Him which glows throughout her life—a love which in emptying her of self humbled her to the "littleness" which is true greatness. C. S.

"Let him who loves Germany criticise us," challenged Adolf Hitler, and the gauge has been picked up by a group of brilliant German women, whose love of their country none dare question. Irmgard Reichenau has collected six articles—short but trenchant—by Sophie Rögge-Borner, Dr. Lenore Klühn, Sophie Philipps, Yella Erdmann, Dr. Margarete Kurlbaum-Siebert and Irmgard Reichenau, all women of proved capacity, into a little volume of 60 pages, published by Adolf Klein of Leipzig under the title: "*Deutsche Frauen an Adolf Hitler*" (German Women to Adolf Hitler). The writers assure the Leader of their loyalty to the national movement and full of

confidence and trust they pour their fears for their country into, what they believe to be, his sympathetic ear, certain that he will hear and understand. They deplore the dismissal of women from high official positions and point out the dangers of the present system of State Education. They are not blinded by the term "Woman Leaders," for they know well that the woman who is subordinate to men superiors is no leader, since she has to bend her will to men's ideas and is no partner in responsibility for Germany's future. One's spirits rise in reading their burning words, for while there are women brave enough at the present time to publish their views so frankly, no amount of "Gleichschaltung" will be able to stifle the Feminist Movement in Nazi Germany.

F. E. G.

ANNUAL MEETING: ASSOCIATION FOR MORAL AND SOCIAL HYGIENE

The Association for Moral and Social Hygiene celebrated the completion of its 63rd year of work on April 23rd. The Viscount Astor presided and paid a fine tribute to its work at home and abroad and said that much of the progress throughout the world in abolishing *maisons tolérées* and traffic in women was due to the Association which never hesitated when principle was involved. Miss Pillidge described the work of the A.M.S.H. branches in the Indian State of Mysore. New ideas are flooding into India; why not the idea of the equal moral standard? The positive ideals of hygiene, both moral and social, were taking root and much work was being done on the medical and legal aspects as well as the educational. Lord Balfour of Burleigh also spoke of the remarkable work of the Association, attributing to its long and often unpopular work the final victory throughout the British Crown Colonies, which had at last enabled our Government to appear at Geneva with clean hands in regard to the traffic in women. The social and medical results of closing the vice areas had been entirely good; public health and public order were improved and criminal secret societies which formerly flourished on the prostitution underworld had been broken up. Josephine Butler, idealist, had proved right when the experts and men of the world had been wrong; "Every day that passes now only proves how right she was."

Mrs. Laughton Mathews made an appeal for funds for the A.M.S.H. and said she was proud to do so seeing the work the Association had

done and was doing. Miss Alison Neilans gave a brief summary of the work in 1933 and urged the need for maintaining a society which was entirely independent of official grants and could say what it thought when matters of principle were in question, regardless of official policy. A vote of thanks to the chairman and speakers was moved by Dr. Jane Walker, C.H., and Mr. Rowntree Gillett.

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Miss de Alberti's Memorial Fund has reached the sum of £22 13s. 6d. The fund will remain open for the present in order to give an opportunity to those abroad to subscribe to it if they wish.

HON. TREASURER'S NOTE

Would all members who have not yet sent in their annual subscriptions to the Alliance and the Catholic Citizen kindly do so as soon as possible?

We should also like to remind readers that the barrow sales have been resumed and that we are greatly in want of articles of any sort for sale. Please send anything you have, no matter how old, to the Office, 55 Berners St., where it will be most thankfully received.

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