

THE  
**CATHOLIC SUFFRAGIST**

*Organ of the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society, 55, Berners Street, London, W.1.*

VOL. III., No. 11.

November 15th, 1917.

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.

**"LET NO MAN PUT ASUNDER."**

BY THE REV. FATHER W. H. KENT, O.S.C.

The present agitation for an amendment of the English Divorce Law can scarcely surprise us. For a movement in favour of such a measure has been in existence for some years past. In 1912 the advocates of this reform or extension of the Divorce Law were gratified by the appearance of the majority report of the Royal Commission, which seemed to hold out some prospect of the legislation they desired. And if the war has naturally had the effect of postponing the introduction of the measures recommended by the Commissioners, along with other measures of a controversial nature, the many sad cases that occur in time of war may seem to furnish the advocates of Divorce Law reform with a fresh mass of evidence to show the hardship caused by the present one-sided system and the necessity of devising some remedial measures. This question is one that may well seem to deserve some special consideration in these pages. For those who are working for the political and social rights of women must naturally take no small interest in any legislation on such subjects as marriage and divorce. And it may be remembered that one of the chief complaints urged against the present English Divorce Law is the very unequal treatment of men and women. Hence, we may expect to find some champions of the Suffragist cause taking an active part in the present agitation. As the Catholic Church does not sanction or countenance divorce, suffragists who are Catholics cannot advocate the proposed

reform or extension of the existing Divorce Law. But that is only a further reason why the subject should be treated in the pages of the CATHOLIC SUFFRAGIST. For this is pre-eminently one of those questions whereon the movement for reform or amelioration comes in contact with Catholic doctrine and Catholic principles, and we have to vindicate those principles and be on our guard against any danger of compromising them.

In the first place it is necessary to have a clear exposition of the Catholic teaching on the subject of divorce. For though most people are familiar with the fact that the Catholic Church is opposed to divorce, very many non-Catholics do not rightly appreciate the nature of this opposition. And even among Catholics, those who are laymen in these matters may often be labouring under some misconception; for though the Catholic doctrine on this important point is simple, clear and well defined, some confusion is almost inevitably caused by the fact that the word divorce, not only in popular parlance, but in legal and historical documents, is used in two or three different senses, and there are, moreover, some circumstances in our own history that may tend to confirm this confusion. Thus, we all know that the first rupture with Rome, which proved to be the beginning of English Protestantism, had its origin in the Pope's refusal to grant a divorce demanded by King Henry VIII., who wished to be rid of one wife and free to marry



another. The link between this matrimonial case and the change in English religion has been tersely expressed in Gray's famous couplet:

"'Twas love that taught a monarch to be wise,  
And Gospel truth first beamed in Boleyn's eyes."

In view of these facts, it might seem natural to suppose that the "divorce" desired by the King and refused by the Pope was a divorce of the kind now generally allowed in Protestant countries and denied to Catholics, that is to say a complete dissolution of a marriage tie hitherto valid and binding, in such sort that the parties are left at liberty to marry others. But, of course, it was nothing of the kind. What the king wanted was a judgment that his marriage with Catherine of Arragon had been null and void from the beginning. And where real proof of the invalidity is forthcoming, "divorces" of this kind are quite in keeping with Catholic principles. Thus, Eleanor of Aquitaine, whose marriage with Henry II. had a far-reaching influence on the whole course of English history, was the "divorced" wife of Henry's rival, the French King. Nor was it only in the first of bluff King Henry's many matrimonial cases, that the King and his advisers still proceeded on the old principle of the indissolubility of marriage. Thus, the fate of the unfortunate Catherine Howard was sealed when she refused to admit the existence of a pre-contract with another before her marriage with the King. For it was felt that, whatever subsequent offence might be proved against her, the King could not be married again if her life was spared.

Besides being thus used to denote a legal decision, that a marriage was null and void from the beginning, the word divorce is also employed for a very different purpose, i.e., to denote a legal separation, "a mensa et thoro," where the marriage tie is still in full force and neither party is free to marry again in the lifetime of the other. This was the only divorce open in the case of Henry and Catherine Howard, when there was no evidence to upset the original validity of their union. But the divorce with which we are now concerned in this discussion on Divorce Law Reform is neither more nor less than the

legal dissolution of a marriage originally valid, and this a dissolution so complete that the parties are now free to be married to others without let or hindrance. And on this matter, speaking of Christian marriages which have not been confined to the contract and ceremony, it is the teaching of Holy Church that the marriage bond is absolutely indissoluble and that this kind of divorce is, therefore, altogether excluded.

While different views have prevailed in Eastern Churches, and possibly in some other lands that came for a time under Eastern influences, the Roman Pontiffs have ever been steadfast and resolute in maintaining this doctrine of the absolute indissolubility of marriage. And it may be of interest to observe that their attitude on this important question supplies a valuable argument in support of Papal authority, an argument which has somehow escaped the attention of Catholic apologists. For those who do not admit its divine or apostolic origin, the Papal authority must appear to be the result of usurpation. That power, we are told, has grown by gradual encroachments, and the Popes, in the course of ages, have increased their claims in order to strengthen and consolidate their position. But the course pursued by the Popes in this matter of marriage and divorce cannot in any wise be reconciled with this theory. If, as our opponents say, they have gradually increased their claims, to gratify their ambition and extend their power, they would surely long since have arrogated to themselves the right to dissolve the bond of marriage. Had they claimed this right and reserved it to themselves, it would have stood them in good stead on many occasions when they wished to win the support or protection of powerful sovereigns. Yet from the first they have resolutely refused to claim this prerogative and have braved many a danger in resisting mighty princes who sought to break the bond of marriage.

Of course, there are cases in which a Pope may refuse to do something which is within his power because he does not deem it expedient, as when, for example, one Pope refused to dispense the Cardinal King of Portugal from the law of clerical celibacy, and another made the same refusal in the case of Talleyrand.

(Continued on page 94).

## NOTES AND COMENTS.

The Representation of the People Bill progresses slowly, but it progresses. The difficulty over Irish Redistribution will cause some delay, but the general feeling seems to be that the Government realise the urgency of getting the Bill through, and are in earnest over it. That Ireland should be definitely included is matter for rejoicing.

We are glad that Mr. Dickinson came forward with an amendment to the suggested rule that women should make a declaration that they had attained "voting age." Mr. Dickinson's amendment provides that men should do likewise. These perpetual distinctions between men and women can cause nothing but keen irritation.

\* \* \* \*

The Government, having expressed their willingness to accept an amendment giving votes to married women for Local Government elections, provided there is sufficient public support, every effort is being made to show that such support does indeed exist.

\* \* \* \*

Members are asked to pray for the repose of the soul of Mrs. Archibald Dunn, a member of the C.W.S.S., who took a great interest in the welfare of the Society. The "Tablet," in its obituary notice, speaks of her as "a worker among the poor, who brought a spiritual grace to every day's service for others, as did her beauty to the discharge of her social pleasures and duties. A convert to the Church, she brought to it the unexhausted freshness of her fine feelings for whatever things are lovely and of good report. Though she was nothing if not practical and executive in her religion, she found time for discursive reading, and three books of her own bear witness to her observation as a traveller, "The World's Highway," "Sunny Memories of an Indian Winter," and "The Land of the Rosary," the latter a record of her own impressions in the Holy Land."

\* \* \* \*

We owe our best thanks to the member of our Liverpool Branch, who, at great personal inconvenience, went to Preston, Oct. 27th and 28th, to sell the "Catholic Suffragist" out-

side the meetings convened by the Catholic Social Guild. In spite of many obstacles she had a remarkably good sale. There is perhaps no greater service members can render to the Society than that of selling the paper at Catholic meetings. There are still sections of our fellow Catholics to whom, after all, our paper is mainly addressed, who have a very hazy idea of our aims and views. There is no better way of enlightening them than by introducing the paper to them. Some think that once the Francise Bill is safely on the Statute Book our work is done; we have to make them realise that when that is happily accomplished the work of suffragists begins. We hope many members will come forward this month, so that the Rev. Father Kent's article on the important subject of Divorce, which is being so widely discussed at present, may be well circulated.

\* \* \* \*

Catholic Suffragists read with pleasure in the "Catholic Times" that His Grace the Archbishop of Liverpool welcomed the coming enfranchisement of women.

\* \* \* \*

We call the attention of our members to the notice of the Christmas Sale, which appears in another column. This being one of the very few opportunities we have had this year of raising funds, we hope each one will send gifts or money for our stall.

\* \* \* \*

In a recent issue of the "Daily News," Dr. Marion Phillips dealt with the "Food Difficulties," and the sufferings and hardships which high prices and scarcity bring upon the poor. Sugar, margarine and tea queues are in full swing, and we need little imagination to realise what that means to the already over-burdened working woman. "Is it to be wondered at," she asks, "that the revolutionary ferment amongst working women seethes with a heat never known before." Dr. Phillips feels that there should be priority of distribution to working-class areas, and that communal kitchens should be established.



## THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETY.

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Hon. Editor . . . . . MISS LEONORA de ALBERTI.  
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Signed articles do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Society.

## INDUSTRIAL UNREST.

In these days of stress and upheaval, almost anything that saves time is welcomed, but even at present short cuts to knowledge are not always unmixed blessings. For instance, the majority of the citizens of England must have contented themselves with reading the summary of the various reports on Industrial Unrest, presented by Mr. Barnes to the House of Commons, and by neglecting to read the reports at length they will have missed a very great deal. For there is much to be learned from them, even though some of the grievances arising out of war conditions—such as the leaving certificate, the dilution of labour, the fear of industrial compulsion—have been, or are being, settled.

In view of the unwarranted slanders on women made during the past three years, I confess I read with particular interest, though they are of minor importance, the various paragraphs dealing with the objections of men to liquor restrictions. We read that in some districts men refused to work overtime in order to get refreshment on their way home; that the restrictions are a source of great irritation, and are disliked as an interference with liberty. There is one mention of women—it is to the effect that they decidedly approve of the hours of restriction.

We should have liked fuller details of the conditions of women's work and wages. Mr. Barnes gives as one cause of unrest the "inconsiderate treatment of women, whose wages are sometimes as low as 13s." A bald phrase,

but what horrors it conjures up! Again, we are told, in the report on the N.W. area, that the chief causes of complaint among women seem to be that promises to give "the same rate of pay as men for the same work, and to give them the minimum wage which they are entitled to, have not been carried out." Or again, in the report of the West Midlands, that: "All agree that women's work has been extremely successful. The men are still suspicious of women's work, partly because it is an innovation and partly because they feel that it will reduce rates. We are satisfied that in some instances the employment of women is used to reduce rates." Are any measures being taken to prevent that? We know that the Government scarcely sets a good example in its payment of women; and professional women and others who have refused to work at a low salary and are continuing their ordinary work, are doing a better service to their country than those who, from a mistaken idea of patriotism, have cut down wages.

One has gathered from many quarters that Welfare Workers have not met with unqualified success, and this general rumour is confirmed by the Commissioners. It is said that the proceedings of the welfare superintendents are in many cases inquisitorial, personal, and unduly interfering. The idea that it is the special mission of the well-to-do classes to pry into the private business of the workers, dies hard, but the sooner it is respectably buried the better.

We are told that it "seems to be an opinion among working women that the Welfare Workers are not always drawn from a class that really understands the needs and habits of the girls whose interests they are appointed to safeguard." Unless the right kind of women are chosen for these posts, women who understand that there should be no question of patronage in the matter, the whole experiment is doomed to failure. But nothing in the findings of the Commissions is more important than the light they throw on some of the horrors of overcrowding. We have heard much of late about the declining birth-rate, let those who are interested in that problem study the details of overcrowding in Barrow, given in the Supplementary Report of the North-Western area. Here is one item: "Father and mother and eight children, two of whom, a boy and a girl, were over 17 years of age. All living in one room. The mother was confined of the ninth child in this same room." We read of expectant mothers turned away from lodging after lodging, of a woman giving birth to a child in a room shared by her husband, one child and a man lodger. Surely, for any crimes which may result from these revolting conditions, there will be a wide "sharing out of guilt" at the Day of Reckoning.

It is impossible in a brief article to comment on the numerous points of interest which the Commissioners bring forward, and I have naturally dwelt on those which concern women, but our members should get the reports from the C.W.S.S. Library and study the question for themselves. There is a tendency at present to forget pre-war days and to speak as though industrial unrest were one of the difficulties born of these troubled times. The Commissioners are under no such illusion, they remind us that industrial unrest is not a new thing, for many years discontent existed among skilled and unskilled workers alike. In the words of an experienced clergyman, the Rev. Canon Green, who has lived and worked for twenty-five years among the poorer class of workers in the East End of London, in Leeds and in Salford: "They do not see why their hours should be so long, and their wages so small, their lives so dull and colourless, and their opportunities of reasonable rest and recreation so few." "Can we wonder," he asks, that with growing education and intelli-

gence the workers of England are beginning to contrast their lot with that of the rich and to ask whether so great inequalities are necessary?"

And the majority of suffragists at least will agree, I think, with the point of view of the Commissioners for the West Midlands, that such unrest is a sign of a vigorous and growing community.

L. DE ALBERTI.

## LONDON AND BRANCHES.

Office: 55, Berners Street, London, W.1. Hours, 3.30—5.30. Saturdays, 10.30—12.30. Other times by appointment. Library volumes 2d. per week.

Holy Mass will be offered for the intentions of the Society at St. Patrick's, Soho, at 10.30 on Sunday, December 2nd.

Our member, Miss Rochford, is one of the first women to be appointed inspector of the National Mutual Life Association Society. Women are wanted as representatives and agents, and suitable candidates should apply to Miss Rochford, for whole or part time. It is an entirely new opening for women, and the prospects are very good.

## CHRISTMAS SALE.

Tickets for the above sale, organized by the United Suffragists, may be had from the C.W.S.S. Office. 6d. if bought before Dec. 8th. Admission on the day, 8d., from 3—6; and free from 6—9.

The sale will be held at the Central Hall, Westminster, on Saturday, December 8th, 3—9, and will be opened by Lady Cowdray.

Will members please send their gifts for our stall to the C.W.S.S. Office before December 6th.

## LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT BRANCH.

Hon. Sec., Miss E. O'Callaghan, 4, Onslow Road, Fairfield, Liverpool. A very successful whist drive was held on October 26th, at which there was a good attendance. Three new members and two associates joined.

A resolution from the Branch, urging the Government to extend the municipal vote to married women on their husband's qualification was forwarded to the Home Secretary.

## BRIGHTON AND DISTRICT BRANCH.

The Branch forwarded to the Home Secretary a resolution urging the Government to extend the Local Government Franchise to the wives of men on the Register.



(Continued from page 90).

But the dissolution of the marriage bond is in another category. It is not that the Pope will not, but that he cannot dissolve it. The Catholic doctrine on this point is clearly stated by Pope Pius VII., in his answer to the petition for the dissolution of Prince Jerome Bonaparte's American marriage. "Your Majesty must see," says the Pope, in his letter to Napoleon, "that on the information we have hitherto received of this fact, it is out of our power to pass the judgment of nullity." And again, "Were we to usurp a power that we do not possess, we should render ourselves guilty of the most abominable abuse of our sacred ministry before the tribunal of God and before the whole Church. Your Majesty even, in his justness, would not desire us to pronounce a judgment contrary to the testimony of our conscience, and the invariable principles of the Church." (Cf. Artaud de Montor, "The Lives and Times of the Roman Pontiffs," English Translation, New York, 1866, vol. II., p. 611.) And thus we have the significant paradox that the Sovereign Pontiff disclaims the possession of a power which every petty Protestant legislature and provincial divorce court arrogates to itself.

Such is the Catholic doctrine on the subject of divorce. The marriage of heathens may be dissolved in the special case mentioned by St. Paul (I. Corinthians, VII. 15). And in some rare cases a Christian marriage which has not gone beyond the contract and the ceremony may be dissolved by religious profession. But the union of the wife and husband who have become two in one flesh can only be dissolved by death.

It is not our purpose to enter into an historical or theological discussion of this doctrine. But it may not be amiss to say a word on some of the moral and social difficulties urged by the advocates of Divorce Law Reform. We must needs feel some natural sympathy with all who suffer hardship or injustice, and recognize that there is something wrong in laws which operate unequally and discriminate unfairly between rich and poor, or between men and women. And we should be glad to do away with all laws which give the rich a real advantage denied to their poorer brethren, or lend any sanction to the

iniquitous double code of morality. But, after all, there is more than one way of removing the inequality. And before we extend to all classes what is now the privilege of one, it might be well to make sure that it is a real benefit to those who possess it. We all condemn the old pagan laws which divided society into freemen and slaves and denied to the unhappy slaves the common rights of men and brothers. Were such laws in force to-day we should surely strive to get them abrogated. But this would not necessarily imply the removal of all the restrictions and prohibitions imposed on the slaves. For in fact a purer morality and juster laws have removed some of these invidious distinctions by extending the prohibition to all alike. Thus, the laws of Solon prohibited slaves from practising the gross vice which was corrupting Greek society. The removal of the restriction would have been no benefit to the slaves. And it would have been well if the prohibition could have been extended to all classes.

Doubtless, divorce is something very different from such criminal and vicious practices. It is a legal form of relief introduced by well-meaning legislators as a remedy for grave social evils. But in these matters, as well as in medicine, men are often deluded with remedies which are no remedies and do far more harm than good to those who use them. And if we look deeper into the matter and seek out the root of the evil, and consider the welfare of the whole people, as well as the sufferings of individual men and women, we may find that divorce is really one of these fallacious remedies which can do little to remove the wrongs it is designed to redress and in the end opens the way to more widespread evils.

When we dwell on the harm done to society by divorce, we are sometimes told that this censure owes its origin to priestly prejudice and mystic superstition. If only for this reason it may not be amiss to cite the emphatic testimony of one who was in no wise subject to any such influences, a keen-sighted observer, who was so shocked by the scandals of English divorce courts that he turned for relief to the pure Catholic doctrine of indissolubility. "When one looks, for instance," says Matthew Arnold, "at the English Divorce Court,—an institution which perhaps has its

practical conveniences, but which in the ideal sphere is so hideous; an institution which neither makes divorce impossible nor makes it decent, which allows a man to get rid of his wife, or a wife of her husband, but which makes them drag one another first, for the public edification, through a mire of unutterable infamy,—when one looks at this charming institution, I say, with its crowded benches, its newspaper reports, and its money compensations, this institution on which the gross unregenerate British Philistine has indeed stamped an image of himself, one may be permitted to find the marriage theory of Catholicism refreshing and elevating." (Essay on the "Function of Criticism at the Present Time," Essays in Criticism, First Series, 2nd Edition, pp. 32-3.)

It may be said that these scandals are not the necessary outcome of divorce as such, and that by some happier and more decent method of administering the law the evils of which the critic complains might, in some measure, be avoided. But, though some of the more glaring evils may be removed or mitigated, it will be found, on closer examination, that not only is divorce a fallacious remedy, but, however wisely it may be administered and safeguarded, it cannot but tend to increase the grave social evil against which it is directed.

And first it may be remarked that the advocates of divorce are strangely sanguine in their estimate of its value as a remedy. It seems to be assumed that as a general rule those who suffer from the effects of conjugal unfaithfulness or cruelty will all find a haven in some happier union, if only they can be set free. But even among those who know nothing of Catholic dogma and sacramental theology, there must be many innocent sufferers whose faith has been given irrevocably, and who have no heart for any other union, while many may have no opportunity of availing themselves of their liberty to make a fresh contract with another party. And others, again, may find their second marriage as bad as that which has been dissolved in the courts.

For our part we have no wish to over-state the evil effects that follow from the introduction of divorce laws. There is, indeed, no need of exaggeration. And it must be remembered that the effect of such facilities for loosening the bonds of marriage—and of

society—are happily checked and counter-acted by the force of natural affection, and a sense of honor, and the influence of religion. Hence, even in lands where the most lax divorce laws prevail, by far the greater number of marriage unions remain unbroken.

None the less, it remains true that the necessary and logical effect of divorce laws is to make the marriage union a conditional and terminable contract, instead of a lasting union that can only be dissolved by death. And all the while the one sure remedy for the social evils, the one safeguard against the increase of unhappy marriages and of those sad cases brought before us by the agitators for reform is to promote and strengthen a deeper sense of the mutual duty of life-long faithfulness and unbroken union. Now that the natural contract of marriage has been made a Sacrament of the new law and a symbol and vehicle of spiritual grace, there are further doctrinal and mystical reasons for its indissolubility. But apart from and before these reasons, the primary ground of indissolubility is inherent in the natural contract itself. For the children who are the offspring of the union have need of the care and love of both parents, and belong to both alike and both alike belong to them. For this reason, if for no other, it is natural and necessary that the union should be lasting and indissoluble. And therefore it is rightly made with a most solemn pledge of life-long love and faithfulness—and fidelity to the spoken word is the bond of human society.

#### IRISH CATHOLIC WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION.

A Meeting will be held at the new Office, 23, Kildare Street, on Monday, November 5th, at 8 p.m., when the Rev. T. Finlay, S.J., will speak on "Food Shops." Members may bring friends.

The I.C.W.S.A. is represented on the Reception Committee for Judge Neil.

During the Summer the I.C.W.S.A. has co-operated with the Joint Suffrage Committee in urging the inclusion of Ireland in the Representation of the People Bill. It has also been represented on deputations to the Local Government Board concerning the Milk Supply, and has joined with the Irishwomen's Reform League in asking for the appointment of women on the Food Committees.

Lady Moloney and Mrs. Pearde Beaufort will speak at future meetings. Notice of date will be sent later.

M. GWYNN, Hon. Sec.

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 Lighter Side of Officialdom." Miss Amy E. Otter. Chairman: The  
 Rev. A. E. de Cetto.

Wed., 28th Nov., 8 p.m.—"Engineering for Women." The Hon. Lady  
 Parsons. Chairman: Mr. John Cameron Grant.

Wed., 5th Dec., 7-15 p.m.—**HOUSE DINNER** (for Diners only). "Singing  
 to Soldiers in France." Miss Effie Mann. Chairman: Sgt. John  
 Simpson.

Wed. 12th Dec., 8 p.m. "The Work of the Women Patrols." Major E.  
 H. T. Parsons, Chief Constable, Metropolitan Police. Chairman:  
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Nov. 21. Speaker: Mrs. Despard.  
 Chairman: Miss Margaret Hodge.

Nov. 28. Speaker: Mr. J. J. Mallon, on "The State as  
 Merchant."  
 Miss Nina Boyle.  
 Chairman: Mrs. E. M. N. Clark.

For particulars as to speakers, &c., see **THE VOTE.**  
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