

THE  
CATHOLIC SUFFRAGIST

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

VOL III, No. 6.

June 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.

**ST. BRIGID AND LIBERTY.**

BY MICHAEL O'MAHONY.

"I think it is Fontenelle who says, that women as compared with men, have got a nerve less in the brain, and one more in the heart, but it would seem as if many of us in Ireland had no hearts at all."

These hard words were written in the early 'forties by the gifted poetess known as "Mary of the Nation," whose daily speech mingled with the murmur of the Lee, and who, as Rosa Mulholland says of Sarah Atkinson, "left a mark on her time, in her own place lovely as a rose between the leaves of a book." They are so hard that it is difficult to associate them with the winsome holiness of the writer without some regard to the dreary ignorance of their duties prevailing amongst Irishwomen of the period. They were written when, untouched by the light of the new day that was breaking in Erin, and the suffering on which it broke, women of intelligence, means, and leisure, spent their days prattling of tatting, samplers, and wool-work, when although the highest ideals of Teresa, Catherine, and Angela, were being realised in the cloisters of Ireland there seemed to be little unselfishness or commonsense outside the cloister gate. Mention just then of the mere hope that some day or other a woman's desire for justice should be moulded into the form and force of law would be considered too terrible a topic for a decent drawing-room. So appalling was

the apathy which prevailed that it was not surprising to find a satirist of the time asking in a trenchant essay: "Ought women to be taught the alphabet?"

And this was not in a land where Materialism was making wide waste, or where the discords of Protestantism were overthrowing its own landmarks, but in a nation who owned for its Patroness the saint whose virginal dignity, wisdom, heroic courage, sympathy, and ardent love of human freedom have ever won from her countrymen a passionate devotion such as no other mortal woman inspired. Next to God's great Mother Irishmen have ever held St. Brigid in the most profound veneration, and it may be worth while recalling a few reasons why she still stands forth as a shining exemplar to her countrywoman in their struggle towards liberty.

St. Brigid's poise was her greatest charm. "Brigid," say the *Four Masters*, "was she who never turned her mind from the Lord for the space of one hour, but was always thinking of Him in her heart." In that heart there ever burned the flame of stainless purity, and with it a quenchless hatred of slavery. She looked out on life from her cell with the eyes of Faith, but because of her compassion no sceptred queen wielded greater power, no tender mother attracted more love and trust. The tribesmen to whom the veiled virgin was a familiar and beautiful sight,

came to her in every sorrow, need, or difficulty, and she ever responded to them in her own great-hearted way. Consulted by bishops, visited by kings and judges, she was yet so sympathetic and accessible that hunted slaves threw themselves for protection into her arms, and it is recorded of her that by her sweetness and courage she won spiritual triumphs in paths too difficult for even St. Patrick and his missionaries to enter. She truly hated slavery, and when she heard of a fellow-creature being deprived of his liberty by some tyrant, and subjected to a servile yoke for some trifling offence, she would immediately leave her cell and undertake his deliverance at all costs. She would beg or buy the slave's liberty, and failing these two means she would help the slave to escape. "With the free step of a chieftain's daughter, yet with all the sweet modesty of a Christian virgin," says one of her biographers, "she would enter the presence of a king, and say in her frank and gentle way, 'Wilt thou free this captive for me?' Probably her request would be granted, and the prince would be the richer for her blessing. But should her prayer be denied, then Brigid, who displayed in her works not only the power and charity of a saint, but the poetic and romantic imagination of a daughter of Erin, would fall back on other resources and plan an escape. Thus before the next day dawned she would know that the poor bond slave had been restored to the liberty of the sons of God."

It does not need a boundless imagination to conceive what would be her views on the present state of her sex in Ireland, and particularly her attitude towards the employers of those voteless droves of slaves designated the working women of Belfast and Dublin.

She has been humorously called the first suffragist, but this is quite untrue, as the women of Ireland in the earliest ages had the same franchise as the men, and St. Brigid more than any other woman preached the true ideal of Christian comradeship. The position occupied by women in the social state enabled her to do this in a natural and graceful way; for as their rights of property were secured to them by the Brekon code, so

also were their personal freedom and liberty of opinion respected by the custom of the country. They shared in all the educational advantages of their male relatives. In the bardic families they played their part with distinction, and even jurists taught their daughters the principles of the *Senchus Mor*.

"Woman, with the Irish," writes Dr. Sigerson, "was man's equal in position, in estate, in power, and in friendship." All students of Pagan Ireland testify to the high respect ever shown to women, and this may be taken as one of the proofs of their high morality, and, indeed, of their ready acceptance of Christianity.

Little wonder that with her titles of honour in the Church she also had her titles of love in the household. "Our own Bride" was the endearing allusion to her in the tongue of bard and chief. Her name was carried out on the tides of every ocean, and wherever the Irish diffused the light of the Gospel, churches rose to her honour in every clime from Fleet Street to Florida. Heroic men chose her for their protector, and when the dauntless Scot rushed into battle his cry was "St. Bride for the Douglas!"

Surely what she was to Scot, and Pict, and Angle, the "Mary of the Gael" will be to the women of her own race in their hopeful fight for freedom. Could they on their side find a more radiant model for imitation? Her light is still shining. Her purity prospers in the Irish heart. Her tender compassion is never absent. The seed she has sown was not scattered on marble. Her niche is in the temple, her name is at the hearth. May it not be hoped that the memory of her courage, wisdom and dignity may be a further inspiration to Irishwomen in the call for full restoration of their ancient rights?

#### THE IRISH CONVENTION.

The Joint Committee of Irish Suffrage Societies has sent a resolution to the Prime Minister asking that Irish Suffrage Societies be represented at the Convention on the same basis as other organised interests.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS.

The Electoral Reform Bill, now entitled the Representation of the People Bill, has passed its second reading. That does not mean that the victory, if a compromise can be called a victory, is won. If the Bill passes safely through the House of Commons, the women franchise clauses may still be thrown out by the House of Lords, unless the Government make them an integral part of the Bill. It is said that five million married, and one million unmarried women will be enfranchised. The clauses are as follows:—

A woman shall be entitled to be registered as a Parliamentary elector for a constituency (other than a University constituency) if she has attained the age of thirty years, and is entitled to be registered as a Local Government elector in respect of land or premises in that constituency, or is the wife of a husband entitled to be so registered.

A woman shall be entitled to be registered as a Parliamentary elector for a University constituency if she has attained the age of thirty years, and would be entitled to be so registered if she were a man.

A woman shall be entitled to be registered as a Local Government elector for any Local Government electoral area where she would be entitled to be so registered if she were a man. Provided that a husband and wife shall not both be qualified as Local Government electors in respect of the same property.

\* \* \* \*

We ask the prayers of all our members for Miss Aungier, who died recently in Ireland. Many of us have lost a personal friend, and the Society a zealous and devoted member. Miss Aungier was one of our first members, and assisted in advertising the Society at the Newcastle Congress. She was always ready to lend her drawing-room for meetings, to poster parade, to distribute handbills, and made herself responsible for introducing the *Catholic Suffragist* into the libraries of Ireland. At our request Holy Mass was offered for the repose of her soul at the Carmelites on the 19th May, the church she attended when in London.

\* \* \* \*

A correspondent writes from America telling us of a suffrage "pilgrimage" to Cardinal Gibbons organised by the St. Catherine's Welfare Association. The pilgrims were exceedingly pleased with their

reception. Even though they did not entirely succeed in converting his Eminence, he seems to have been greatly impressed by the type of woman who demand the vote.

\* \* \* \*

We have received from the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene full particulars of the Brentford case, to which we alluded last month. One of the women, a young wife, was kept from her baby, whom she is feeding at the breast, from Tuesday morning till late on the Thursday night, that is till the Solomons responsible for the outrage committed on the persons of these young women had been assured by the prison doctor that she was not suffering from venereal disease. It is to be hoped all Women's Societies will continue to harry the Government until means are found to impress on Magistrates some idea of the dignity of their station.

\* \* \* \*

Judge Neil, the pioneer of Mothers' Pensions in America, is on a visit to this country, and has been explaining the system to members of the House of Lords. It is greatly to be hoped that a similar system will be established in the United Kingdom. The matter is indeed urgent, already we hear of schemes for extending Orphan Homes to take in children of three, who have been rendered fatherless by the war. To tear young children from their mothers is neither charity nor common sense. If public funds are raised, they must be utilised in pensioning the mother to enable her to bring up her children. The State having taken the fathers, are the children also to be deprived of their mothers, and the latter of both husband and children? To put the question on a lower plane it is a waste of public funds to place young children in institutions while their mothers are there to care for them. But the appeal to humanity should be stronger—it is inhuman both to the mother and the child.

\* \* \* \*

The Rev. Prior Higgins promises us his article on what the Church has done for Woman next month.

## THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETY.

Office: 55, BERNERS STREET, LONDON, W., 1.

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## THE CATHOLIC SUFFRAGIST.

Monthly, post free, 1s. 6d. per annum.

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

## MAINTAINING THE INDUSTRIES AND EXPORT TRADE OF THE NATION.

Men have for so long been telling one another that women were incapable of doing this, that, and the other kind of work, that some have at last come to believe it. For the benefit of these the War Office not long ago issued a manual entitled "Women's War Work," explaining how women are maintaining the industries and export trade of the nation, and appealing to employers to lay aside prejudice. It was mainly intended for the information of military representatives and tribunals, and I do not suppose it is known to many of our readers. We are told in the preface that: "It is considered that a more widespread knowledge of the success which has been obtained by women in nearly all branches of men's work is most desirable, and will lead to the release of large numbers of men to the Colours who have hitherto been considered indispensable." In an introductory note the Adjutant-General to the Forces explains that the book is intended, not only to indicate that women have shown themselves capable of successfully replacing the stronger sex in practically every calling, but is offered also as a tribute to their effective contribution to the Empire in its hour of need. It is not claimed, we are told, that the book contains by any

means a complete synopsis of all work in which women can relieve men, who are required to fight actively for their country; they are merely published as a guide for Recruiting Officers, Military Representatives, and Members of Tribunals, whose untiring efforts must be devoted to amplify and extend the scope of woman's usefulness, by which alone our country can hope to emerge victorious from a struggle without parallel in her long and glorious history. The book contains numerous illustrations of women in male attire employed in every kind of work they were supposed to be unable to do. To those who have never doubted of the powers of women the book is a little humorous, a little pathetic, and on the whole gratifying. But we need a counterpart to it. Some man—to be properly a tit-for-tat it should be a man—used to women's brain work, should draw up a pamphlet recording the various ways in which educated and experienced professional women could release men, say in the higher ranks of the Civil Service, the pamphlet should be distributed among the heads of the various Government departments—it might aptly be called: "Physician heal thyself."

L. DE ALBERTI.

## NATIONAL BABY WEEK.

A correspondent writes calling our attention to the leaflet issued in connection with the National Baby Week.

You will notice, she says, that after a list of the misdeeds of the poor mother, that it is stated that the object of the National Baby Week is to combat certain evils leading to Infant Mortality, "but above all, that of IGNORANCE, which is the chief and head of all these contributory causes."

Presumably the ignorance of the poor mothers is intended—at any rate the impression is created that what is needed chiefly is the instruction of such mothers in the rearing of infants.

As the National Baby Week is under distinguished patronage, and as the statements may be held by the general public to be authoritative, I wish to point out that Sir Arthur Newsholme, Chief Medical Officer to the Local Government Board, does *not* hold that ignorance can be held to be chiefly responsible for a high rate of Infant Mortality, for he says in a recent Report on Child Mortality: "Maternal ignorance is sometimes regarded as a chief factor in the causation of excessive child mortality. It is a comfortable doctrine for the well-to-do person to adopt, and it goes far to relieve his conscience in the contemplation of excessive suffering and mortality among the poor."

"There is little reason to believe that the average ignorance in matters of health of the working-class mother is much greater than that of mothers in other classes of society. Furthermore, it would appear that working-class mothers give their infants the supremely important initial start of breast-feeding in a large proportion of cases than do the mothers in other stations of life. But the ignorance of the working-class mother is dangerous because it is associated with relative social helplessness."

*Social helplessness* is, I believe, the key to the suffering and disease in the families of the poor. I wish this had been brought forward more in Baby Week—the whole question of Public Health is so intimately connected with political and economic conditions that it is

misleading to suppose that preaching hygiene to the poor is going to create healthy conditions.

## LONDON AND BRANCHES.

Office, 55, Berners Street, London, W.1. Hours, 3.30—5.30; Saturdays, 10.30—12.30. Library vols., 2d. per vol. Holy Mass will be offered for the Intentions of the Society, that is for Peace and for all killed in the war, at St. Patrick's, Soho, on Sunday, July 1st. A meeting will be held at the Office, 55, Berners Street, on Thursday, June 28th, 4.30—5.30, when Mrs. Walter Roch will speak on what women will be enfranchised under the Bill. Discussion to follow.

We co-operated with the Women's Freedom League in a meeting at the Central Hall, Westminster, on May 15th, to demand the withdrawal of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, until women are enfranchised.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH.—Hon. Sec., Miss Cooper, M.A., Seaford House, Great Crosby, Liverpool. A social was held at 18, Colquitt Street, on May 14th, at which there was a good attendance. Miss O'Callaghan had kindly consented to be a member of the Committee in place of Miss Lenn, who has gone to France to do rescue work.

## ASSOCIATION FOR MORAL AND SOCIAL HYGIENE.

In view of recent action with regard to women charged with moral offences in many of the Courts, the above Association is forming a rota of women to attend Police Courts and report on the various cases. The plan was outlined at a Conference, held on June 5th. We shall be glad if any of our members can help in this good work which has been carried on in certain provincial towns and in Ireland by other bodies of women, with great success. Will those who can spare any time communicate with the Secretary of the A.M.S.H., at 19, Tothill Street, S.W.1.

## JUMBLE SALE.

Miss Whately wishes to thank all those who helped to make the Jumble Sale a success by gifts and by selling on the day. The following very kindly sent money or goods:—Mrs. Anderson, Lady Constance Lytton, Mrs. Garner, Miss Bellasis, Miss M. E. James, Miss Joseph, Mrs. Clarke, Miss Quinlan, Mrs. Marston, Miss McManus, Miss St. John, Mrs. Blair Black, Miss N. Blackledge, Mrs. More Nisbett, Mrs. Springett, Mrs. Gurney, Miss Charles, Miss Northcote, Manchester Branch, Mrs. de Zaro, Mrs. Grafton, Miss Gadsby, Miss Jeffery, Miss de Alberti, the Misses Brady, Miss Bain, Mrs. R. P. Whately, the Misses Whately, Mrs. Roch.

Many thanks are also due to those who lent the Hall, and to Mrs. Hallenborg and Miss Colelough, who, though not members, gave up so much of their time in helping to price the goods. Over £15 was realized by the Sale.

## OFFICE RENT FUND.

List of Subscribers held over until next month. More donations urgently needed.

B. GADSBY.

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

## WHITEWASH.

It is a good and a wholesome sign of the times that De Brioux's striking play, "Damaged Goods," is being given nightly at St. Martin's Theatre. It preaches a powerful and eloquent, if painful, sermon to the crowds who throng to see it. If anyone should go there in a spirit of mere idle curiosity, he or she will come away with food for much serious reflection. For here the usual British cloak of whitewash has been torn from the gaunt and ghastly figure of the Social Evil, and the story of lust and its punishment unfolds itself in all its hideous nakedness to appall the ignorant and to convict the sinner. Particularly convincing is the last act where the father of the erring husband interviews the specialist on venereal disease in his hospital. Here the absurdity and humbug of condemning the disease as shameful, while countenancing the sin which was its forerunner and its cause, is powerfully shown up; also the monstrous injustice of permitting the innocent to suffer for the guilty by a crusade of hypocritical silence. Here, too, typical victims of lust come forward, unmasked, to tell their sordid or pitiful histories. Stripped of all glamour, the full horror of prostitution is displayed in its real and dreadful form, which is the only light in which such things should be represented on the stage. "Damaged Goods," though it contains more plain speaking than any other play ever written, could never be accused of stimulating passion. On the contrary, it is bound to awaken horror, disgust, and fear of the unbridled flesh; and it is an amazing reflection that, for years, such a splendid sermon against vice should have been placed under the ban of the censor in this country.

When the Social Evil is dressed up prettily and transformed into a subject of mirth and gaiety, the censor has nothing to say against it. Insinuation and indecency may flaunt themselves unchecked if there is no plain speaking; but, if the ugly side of sin be shown, and if a spade be called a spade in vigorous condemnation of it, down comes his hammer for fear the sensitive feelings of the public should be outraged! Plenty of whitewash is the

essential thing; you may do what you like if only you won't talk about it.

However, in the case of "Damaged Goods," we are thankful to find, at last, the triumph of truth over humbug; and it is to be fervently hoped that the sanctioning of this play may be the beginning of a wholesomer epoch in which the work of the social reformer may be less of an uphill task.

It is encouraging to note that this turning of the tide of public opinion in favour of outspokenness as against the Crusade of Silence may be traced directly to the Women's Movement. It is one of the first fruits of that hard and bitter struggle, now so nearly crowned with success, and it augurs well for future reforms specially dear to women.

Upon the prevailing masculinity in every social sphere, some of the greatest evils known to mankind have been hinged. Preachers and teachers have so hammered into women that meekness and modesty are pre-eminently necessary for them to cultivate, that, from excess of these virtues in one sex and complete neglect of them in the other, such ulcers on the face of Society as The Crusade of Silence and the White Slave Traffic have arisen. Nurtured in ignorance under the misnomer of innocence, women have endured for hundreds of years, a thousand physical and moral ills which they might not only have avoided but helped to prevent, had they not been cruelly blinded by the system of false education chosen for them by men.

A double standard of morality has been tried and has failed disastrously, and it is the special duty of women to insist upon an equal purity for both sexes, such as is set forth in the teaching of the Catholic Church. One potent means to this end would be the suppression of all revues and musical comedies which have for their indirect objective the stimulation of men's passions. How can we expect our boys to grow up pure under the existing conditions of society? Our daughters are guarded and watched over from their cradles, and are so hedged round by excellent precautions that it is very difficult for a girl in the upper class to go astray; but the

moment our sons leave school we surround them with the most staggering temptations, so that we cannot feel surprised if they succumb to them. To begin with, when a young man goes out into the world he is expected, as a matter of course, to drink wine, or whisky and soda, which is quite unnecessary for any young person. He is then taken to see plays and variety shows which, with few exceptions, harp everlastingly on the well-worn theme of sex-attraction. Under present conditions the astonishing thing is that the percentage of young men who go astray is not considerably higher than it is.

A resolute campaign should be launched without delay against these so-called "Revues," upon which the censor never thinks it necessary to drop. It is high time that the sons of our Empire, and the daughters too, should be protected from the perpetual endeavour to set forth deadly sin as an amusing and harmless pastime. Revues where the dresses are indecent, where the songs bristle with unclean double-entendres, where woman is openly flaunted as nothing else than the minister to man's desire should be rigorously banished from all places of entertainment.

In the Middle Ages the stage was one of the most popular and powerful teachers. The Church wisely discovered its potency over the hearts of men and used it for the greater glory of God. In modern times like ours the staging of a play like "Damaged Goods" must impress people with the value of the dramatic art as a widespread influence for social reform. As Satan said of Job: "All that a man hath will he give for his life," and if men and women will not keep straight for higher reasons the fear of human suffering and disease may act as a restraining force. For this reason we welcome all such teaching plays as "Damaged Goods," and wish it a long run.

IVEIGH CLYDE.

## REVIEW.

A series of lectures delivered last year at the Interdenominational Summer School, Swanick, has been issued in book form, under the title, "The Hope of Society" (Bell, 3s.

net.), edited by Miss Lucy Gardner. The first lecture, by the Bishop of Oxford, gives the title to the book. The Bishop is hopeful for the future, he sees a weakening of the great interests arrayed against social reformers, a strengthening of the driving powers necessary to carry reforms. He sees a new readiness for service, a new openness of mind, a new turning of the forces of reform along the channels which are real and vital.

Mr. Clutton Brock, in a fascinating article on "Austerity, Art and Joy," convinces us that the loss of superfluous wealth will be a joyous gain, provided that we burn down Bond Street with all its vulgar ostentation, and turn in contemplation and understanding to the lilies of the field, and practise austerity from a sense of beauty, not from a sense of duty. Those of us who have no wealth to lose, can always console ourselves with the thought that we cannot lose it, and perhaps less fettered by conventions and the chains of competitive finery, we may easier learn the lesson of the lilies of the field.

Miss Margaret Bondfield deals with the position of women in Industry; Mrs. Pethick Lawrence gives her view of the new outlook of the Woman's Movement. Mrs. Lawrence sees in the international aspect of the woman's movement and in the release of the mind and soul of womanhood into the social consciousness of humanity the ultimate redemption of the world from the curse and destruction of war.

Other essays by experts deal with trade unionism, agricultural development, the land question, industry, and finance. But in spite of the sum of wisdom contained in its two hundred odd pages the reviewer lays down the book with the feeling that perhaps the greatest hope for Society lies in the fact that Catholic and Baptist, Anglican and Nonconformist, Presbyterian, Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist can meet together in concord and harmony, not seeking to accentuate differences, but rather seeking points of unity, if by that unity in so far as it is possible, they may sow in the minds and hearts of peoples and Governments the great principles of Christianity, and help to establish on earth the Kingdom of the Master Whom all are endeavouring to serve.

L. DE A.

**THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETY,**

55, Berners Street, Oxford Street, W.

**A SMALL MEETING**

will be held at the above address

On **THURSDAY, June 28th,**  
4-30 to 5-30 p.m.

**Speaker - Mrs. Walter Roch.**

**Subject—"What Women will have the Vote under the 'Representation of the People Bill'?"—DISCUSSION.**

R.S.V.P., The Secretary, as space is limited.

**THE WOMEN'S FREEDOM LEAGUE.**

**PUBLIC MEETINGS**

**THE MINERVA CAFE,**

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June 27th—Mrs. Nevinson on "The Present State of our Cause."

Chair—MRS. DESPARD.

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