

THE
CATHOLIC SUFFRAGIST

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

VOL. III., No. 8.

August 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.

WHAT THE CHURCH HAS DONE FOR WOMAN.

BY PRIOR GILBERT HIGGINS, C.R.L.

Between Christ and the Church, writes Fr. Martindale, S.J., there exists a union of exceptional reality. The meaning of "Christ" is lost if with the historic Jesus be not conjoined the Church. This acute remark of the learned author of "The New Testament" (C.T.S.) should be borne in mind by all that study the question of woman's emancipation. The labours which this revolution demanded were first borne by our Divine Redeemer alone and afterwards in co-operation with his mystical Body, the Church. The Church identifies herself with her Bridegroom's uplifting work in behalf of woman, by recording it in her Sacred Books, for we must never forget that it is to the Church we owe the New Testament, the inspired Charter of Woman's vital rights.

For a clearer understanding of the services rendered by Catholicity to woman it is necessary to recall to mind the degrading oppression under which she groaned in pre-Christian times and which is her lot even to-day in non-Christian lands.

Everywhere in antiquity you will discover woman in a state of contemptuous inferiority. Not content with a degree of physical superiority, man, who should have used that natural gift in a paternal and chivalrous spirit, endeavoured to sink woman still lower. Pre-eminence in strength developed into unlimited tyranny, and his God-given helpmate was reduced to the condition of a slave and drudge without rights or consideration. Where gentleness or deference or generosity was dis-

played by man it was too frequently with one view alone, as Mary Wollstonecroft puts it, "to render us more alluring objects for the moment. Women, on the other hand, intoxicated by the adoration which men, under the influence of their senses, paid them, were content to be mere toys for the amusement of their fickle admirers."

Up to the present day woman's position has remained practically the same degraded one in China, Japan and India. And let those whose notion of civilization does not include the element of Christianity bear in mind that these Asiatic countries can boast a high civilization more ancient than that of any European people.

The Hebrews held that marriage was a woman's sole calling in life, and in fact the only justification of her existence. The same narrow and disparaging view obtained an entrance into the Koran. Outside the wedded state, which, according to Mohammedans, is the obligatory condition of every woman, she has neither value nor importance. The conception of wedlock as an intimate union creating one moral person and a durable interest in two hearts, has always been foreign to Mohammedanism.

It is the glory of the teaching of Christ and the Church to have been the first in the field to proclaim the essential rights of woman. It was the first, says the Catholic Encyclopædia, that "brought freedom to the female sex wherever this teaching was seriously taken as the guide of life."

The Incarnate Son of God restored monogamy—the original, life-long marriage—raised it to the dignity of a sacrament of the New Law while He revealed the hitherto undreamt of nobility of freely chosen virginity. Filled with the spirit of his Master, St. Paul preached the most complete personal equality between regenerated man and woman. "For as many of you as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ . . . there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus."

In this passage we have a principle which has ever guided the Church in her battle against human passions, the inveterate enemies of woman's honour and happiness.

"The Christian indissoluble, sacramental marriage, in which the husband is to copy in respect to the wife the love of Christ for the Church (Eph. v. 25) was steadily defended for the benefit of the woman against the lawlessness of the ruling class. On this point the great Church Doctor, St. Jerome, presents the same conception of ethics in contrast to heathen immorality in words that have become classic: 'The laws of the emperor are to one effect, those of Christ to another . . . in the former the restraints upon impurity are left loose for men . . . among us Christians, on the contrary, the belief is, What is not permitted to women is also forbidden to men, and the same service (that of God) is also judged by the same standard.' The admiring exclamation of the heathen: 'What women there are among the Christians!' is the most eloquent testimony to the power of Christianity."—Catholic Encycl. art. Woman.

All classes of women experienced the beneficial result of the Apostolic teaching and the female sex was placed in an independence of man unthought of before. The unmarried woman counted for something. She acquired value and rank. (Cath. Encycl.) Her true independence was assured by the immediate personal relations which Baptism set up between her soul and her Maker—an independence denied in Milton's characteristically un-Christian line,

"He for God only, she for God in him."

(a) Widows received consideration at the hands of the Church from the very first. To them She gave assistance in their poverty, for them She begged alms and ordered bishops to

make provision. To regularize the relief her compassion would bring them She even instituted a board of officers, called deacons, whom She made her almoners. Widows of proved virtue, under the title of deaconesses, were admitted into her service and assigned charges of importance.

(b) In the eyes of the Virgin Church the maiden who renounces marriage from a religious motive holds a place of singular pre-eminence. Christianity gives her precedence of the married, and the step which the world condemns as selfish, retrogressive and calculated to narrow the sphere of a woman's empire and usefulness has enlarged the circle of her motherly influence upon society. The esteem of virginity set forth in Gospel and Epistle, and proclaimed by the Church, is the true emancipation of woman in the literal sense.

We have seen how pious widows laboured as Apostolic assistants in the early Church. In the course of time, says the Catholic Encyclopædia, female orders assumed this work which is carried on most successfully in the foreign mission field. Permanent success in missionary countries cannot be attained without the help of virgins consecrated to God. At the end of the nineteenth century some 52,000 sisters, among whom were 10,000 native women, worked in the missions for heathens.

(c) The holy estate of matrimony is the divinely appointed vocation of the vast majority of the female sex. Recognizing this incontrovertible fact, the Church has hallowed and protected marriage with wise regulations that make for the dignity and the safeguarding of the bride. Thus a young woman may not be forced to marry against her will; a man may have but one wife, who must enjoy his undivided affection until death intervenes. Not content with laying down these essential conditions of conjugal felicity, the Church shows how these conditions can be fulfilled. She teaches the married couple that with prayer and the Sacraments, chastity, which pagans and materialists consider unnatural and ridiculous, is not only possible, but comparatively easy. Read the ceremonies and prayers of a Nuptial Mass if you would gather some idea of the lofty position woman has attained under the Christian dispensation.

(Continued on page 67).

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

We call the attention of our readers to the report in another column of the meeting on Mothers' Pensions, convened by the Women's International League, and supported by a number of women's societies, including the C.W.S.S., when Judge Neil gave an account of the success of Mothers' Pensions in America. Mrs. V. M. Crawford has kindly promised to deal with this subject next month, and will explain how the system might be established in England and the advantages which would result from it.

* * * *

The Government having promised a deputation from philanthropic societies that they would proceed with the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, the Women's Freedom League requested the Home Secretary to receive a deputation from the societies of women, who demand that the Bill be postponed till women are enfranchised. The deputation, including a representative from the C.W.S.S., was to have been received by the Home Secretary on Friday, July 27th, but as the Bill has been postponed till the autumn, the deputation has also been postponed.

* * * *

The handling of the Bill has aroused much suspicion among women, and it is felt that members of the House of Commons will treat such a Bill very differently when they are directly responsible to women. Clause III., even as amended by the Lord Advocate, will meet with keen opposition, and Clause V., dealing with the communication of venereal disease, is not likely to be applied to any one but prostitutes, who do not carry infection into the home. The Association of Social and Moral Hygiene is strongly opposed to both these clauses, and will demand the total withdrawal of the Bill if they are proceeded with, but would support the rest of the Bill.

* * * *

That inveterate anti-suffragist, G. K. Chesterton, consoles himself and the readers of the "Illustrated London News" (July 7th) for the victory of Woman Suffrage in the House of Commons by suggesting that the vote is now conceded as being of no further value, and that it is much as though the Salic Law were to be repealed in France now there is no crown. We do not think things are quite as bad as that, though during these days many

cherished liberties have been destroyed. We think, with Sir John Simon, that the historian will mark as a significant fact that, after three years of this disastrous war, the Representation of the People Bill passed through the House of Commons with great majorities. It will stand as a monument proclaiming to future generations that the English people were fully conscious of their loss of liberty and were determined to reconquer and safeguard it on the return of peace.

(Continued from page 66).

Nothing, however, in the opinion even of non-Catholics, has so changed man's aspect towards woman as the devotion which the Church has always paid to the Immaculate Mother of God. The doctrine of woman's native dignity and equality with man was new and unpleasing to the dominant and intransigent sex. To make it gradually acceptable, to emphasize and firmly establish it, Catholicism exhibited to the world her ideal woman,—a pattern for all others—the Blessed Virgin, "Our tainted nature's solitary boast."

By her continual presentation of Mary's unique graces, exalted virtues and singular charm, the Church leaves men to infer that if they formerly looked on woman with contempt because of the first Eve, they should now look on woman with the greatest respect because of the second Eve. How can a Christian man despise woman when he thinks of God's holy Mother? How can he insult his sister when his religion teaches him that the Creator has conferred greater honours on a woman than have ever been conferred on a man? How shall he betray a woman when he reflects that, through the instrumentality of a woman, all the blessings of the Redemption have come to us. Finally, how his reverence for woman must increase when by the light of faith he sees Mary standing nearest to the throne of God and of the Lamb and amongst all creatures possessing the greatest influence with the Almighty?

When a woman seriously weighs what Christianity has done for her, when she counts the blessings which Catholicism has poured into her lap, the honours with which it has adorned her, she will perhaps say of the Church what Solomon said of Wisdom: "I knew not that she was the mother of all these things."

THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETY.

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

Hon. Editor MISS LEONORA de ALBERTI.
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A SERMON WITH OMISSIONS.

Londoners have been faced of late on all sides with an advertisement of a film, said to be a great moral lesson, and produced with the approval of the National Council of Public Morals. Where are my children? is flaunted at us in tubes, clubs and public places. The film purports to deal with the causes and effects of the declining Birth-rate. In point of fact it deals with the evasion of motherhood by smart society ladies, by means of an illegal operation, and it deals with nothing else. The tale is of a noble-hearted man, Richard Walton, Public Prosecutor, whose greatest grief in life is the childlessness of his charming wife. The scene opens with the wife greeting him with a dog in her arms, in contrast to his sister, who runs on with her husband and nurse bearing their eugenic child, she having made a eugenic marriage. Throughout the play we are given the impression of noble-hearted husbands craving for paternity, of wicked wives cheating them of this crowning joy of marriage. Ever and anon during the performance a picture is thrown on the screen, representing the portals of eternity, which open, showing countless little souls waiting to come to earth, but as they come forward the portals close down on them, the inference being that they have been closed by the wicked women, who will not bear the children. The climax of the play comes when the young inexperienced daughter of the housekeeper, seduced by Mrs. Walton's brother, is also dispatched to the quack and dies. The Public Prosecutor, in bringing the quack to book, discovers among

his accounts the name of his own wife and those of her friends. He returns home, where his wife is entertaining her women friends, and drives them out of his house, declaring that he knows how they have been evading motherhood, and that they are worse than the poor dead girl, who sinned chiefly through ignorance. He confronts them with their names in the book he carries, and having driven them out turns to his wife. Her penance is to be haunted to the end of her days with the poignant unspoken reproach: "Where are my children?"

The producers have the effrontery to tell us in the booklet that: "To cure an evil we must look it in the face." This is not looking an evil in the face; it is a misrepresentation of facts. For but a very small proportion of women would be guilty of the particularly heinous crime dealt with in this play, and it can have but a negligible effect upon the birth-rate.

I could wish that the many distinguished men who have given their blessing to this film could be induced to read the Report of the Royal Commission on Venereal Disease, for I cannot think that they have done so. In that report they will read the pitiful tale of thousands and tens of thousands of wives made barren through being infected by their husbands, or still worse, condemned to give birth to blind and maimed or still born children. Let them study that report, and they will realise that if the cry: "Where are my children?" goes up to heaven, it is a cry which comes from wives to husbands, rather

than from husbands to wives. By all means let us face the evils by which we are surrounded, but let us face them fairly and squarely. We do not ask that the sins of women be condoned, but we do demand that the time dishonoured custom of laying all evil on the shoulders of women, be once and for all abandoned. Eve is no longer willing to be made a scapegoat for the sins of men. Let preachers and moralists take note of the change.

L. DE ALBERTI.

JUDGE NEIL AT THE CENTRAL HALL.

It was a happy inspiration on the part of the promoters of Baby Week to invite Judge Neil to expound his system of Mothers' Pensions in connection with the week's functions, and it was an equally happy inspiration to confide the organization of the meeting to the Women's International League. For surely the subject is one which appeals to women of all nations. The great audience on July 5th listened with unbroken attention to Judge Neil's tale of how he established Mothers' Pensions in America.

Before that time the Juvenile Courts had the right to take the children of destitute mothers and place them in homes. All over the country, said the Judge, countless big buildings might be seen, where thousands of children were being brought up in ignorance of their mothers.

In 1911 Judge Neil went to the Juvenile Court to see how the process worked. He described the first case which came up, that of a widow with five children whose health had broken down under the strain of doing the double work of father and mother. Judge Neil watched the agony written on the mother's face while the Court was deciding on the fate of her children, one to be sent here, another there, and so on. Turning to the Judge he said: "Why don't you hire that woman to look after her own children, instead of paying institutions." His colleague replied that the law would not allow it. Then the law shall be changed, said Judge Neil, and he has changed it in thirty States.

Mr. Smillie, President of the Miners' Federation, who had travelled from Glasgow to attend the meeting, promised that organized labour would fight for Mothers' Pensions; and Mrs. Pethick Lawrence, from the chair, said that was the best news he could have brought the meeting.

Mr. George Bernard Shaw, who gave his blessing to the scheme, said that he would like to have been as frank about this country as Judge Neil had been about the States, but it was not all fit for publication. As Mr. Smillie had said, if the widow with five children had come before our Courts, she might, after much humiliation, have obtained 2/6 for each child and 3/6 for herself. But we sometimes did better than that, for had they chanced to be illegitimate we should have priced the children at 5/- per head. He thought the Judge should make a note of that, it was a curious reflection on the morality of this country. Both Mr. Smillie and Mr. Shaw made merry over the spectacle of the Judge walking up to the Bar of the House, explaining his scheme, and getting a Bill passed. It took years in England to get a reform taken up. But Miss Maude Royden, who followed, was more optimistic, for, as she said, there would presently be six million new voters to whom Mothers' Pensions would mean something. It would be a glorious thing to celebrate Women's Enfranchisement with a Scheme for Mothers' Pensions. And the great audience

agreed, and passed, with two dissentients, a resolution in support of the scheme.

LONDON NEWS.

Office, 55, Berners Street, W.1, is closed for the holidays. It will re-open on September 24th. Correspondence attended to as usual. We hope any members who are in town will attend Mass at St. Patrick's, Soho, at 10-30, on September 2nd, which will be offered for our intentions.

OFFICE MEETING.

On Thursday, July 12th, Miss Fedden, lately returned from Salonica, kindly gave our members an account of her experiences as a V.A.D. The Medical Director of the Salonica Force, being a great believer in good food for the sick and wounded, Miss Fedden went out last August with two colleagues to start a Red Cross Kitchen. The lecturer had much to tell her audience about the history and sacred traditions of Salonica, its churches and public buildings. She spoke, too, of the courage and endurance of our men stationed there, and of the difficulties and hardships of that inhospitable land. She had also some amusing anecdotes to recount, such as the story of the Lascar who persisted in calling one of the trio the "All Highest," because, as it was ultimately discovered, she wore a frilly and be-ribboned boudoir cap when going to the bathroom, which he took for a sign of royal blood. Miss Whately moved a vote of thanks to the lecturer and appealed to the members to come forward to help with paperselling, the best work to be done for the Society at present.

BRITISH DOMINIONS WOMAN SUFFRAGE UNION.

To the Editor of THE CATHOLIC SUFFRAGIST.

Dear Miss de Alberti,—The Executive Committee of the B.D.U.S.U. has just taken the first steps in preparation of the 3rd Biennial Conference of the Union, to be held in London in June, 1918. A call has been sent to the leaders of all women's societies in the Dominions overseas, requesting them to send suggestions and resolutions, and to arrange for the representation of their society. A notice has also been sent to 84 of the chief overseas newspapers. I shall keep you fully informed of further proceedings, but in the present state of the mails replies from the more distant Dominions will take quite five months. May I take this opportunity of recalling the invaluable help you gave us in 1916. The recent rapid extension of the franchise in Canada should greatly increase the value of the Conference in 1918. If, as now seems certain, Great Britain gives the suffrage to women, South Africa will surely follow. We may indeed open our Conference with a Jubilate on the victory which has united the hands of the women of the Empire.

Yours sincerely,
HARRIET NEWCOMB, Hon. Sec.

GROOVES.

"Live as on a mountain."

—*Marcus Aurelius.*

The rapidity of certain growths in nature is astounding, but for insidious grasp and multiplied power there is nothing to surpass the baneful production of grooves in the habits of life—in the outlook and daily customs of the mind and their binding effect on all that is spontaneous in our nature.

Some will say that my view of the matter is too severe and serious, but (if I may say so), want of thought on the subject engenders this love of shallow, light-glancing at what is really such an evil in social and intellectual life. It must be granted that of late years the War has lifted the world out of such a possibility as being strangled in the ruts of complacent vegetation, but the wholesale turpitude of a nation is not our present subject of attack or discussion. Rather it is the particular cases of growing habits and the narrowing of desires, the almost apparent forgetfulness or ignorance of any other pathway converging with or departing from the little one we have chosen on our signpost. Grooves are certainly of two kinds—the helpful, right-seeing ones most essential for the pursuit of the real and the ideal. Method and rule are the saviours of conduct and thought, to depart from which would inevitably frustrate all our good, as the train-loads of cargo would be upset if the trucks were derailed.

The grooves of Faith and Religion, the grooves of Morality and Hygiene, the grooves of ordered daily life—these are the very foundations of our conduct, and the struggle to be free of them, the rupture from them, has results so dire and dread, and so obvious, that their mention is not necessary. We are to think over the other kind of grooves—self-made, custom-hardened and, what is more dangerous than anything—often idealised by those who have drifted into them (warped, as it were, in men's minds), to such an extent that they become absolute *shrines* wherein they offer their exotic lives. Obviously there are some grooves so harmless and diverting, as to cause us to smile and pass on; but these are really more resembling caprice or cranks or eccentricities. It is only when the map of a man's life is trenched with grooves that the seriousness is claimed—pity engendered by the waste of thought and beauty—the loss of multiplied opportunity of wider flight and greater attainment by hundreds of lives that,

like the flowers of the field, all wither away before we see them. There are some people one knows who walk on day by day, doing the same things, thinking the same thoughts, and each night they go to rest and never think of reviewing the possibility of to-morrow being better employed. They have no desire outside their little horizon. Even when opportunity comes to see further of the world or to embrace other deeper thought, the mind has become too cased up to care for that travel or to absorb a new idea. There is a pathos about this which is quite inevitable, for the endeavour to lift themselves from these grooves is entirely absent. The custom breeds desire, and so the daily repetition becomes almost a manacle. What does groove mean? The word is from the German *grube*, a pit, and that very derivation embraces the awful signification of drifting into the life-smothering enclosures of grooves. The Country, the State, the Dynasty, the world of Art and Literature—all can be tainted and ruined by the ruts and grooves of *status quo*. The dictum "because a thing is, so it should always be," is not a clarion of good for any time or place or society.

There are grooves of temper, grooves of conduct, grooves of outlook on others, grooves of introspection. Grooves breed selfishness, for the groovy characters are of necessity bound to influence those around them, and often literal suffering is entailed—dreariness, boredom and that airless congestion which paralyses the forces of fresher life.

Of course there are the sweet, harmless grooves which are formed in the lives of workers, grooves one respects and considers. For instance, the student who lives among his books and papers, his MSS. and hieroglyphs, one expects and finds that quite naturally time and the hour weave little habits of order and routine, and very fine and enduring they are, but then we realise that great work and beautiful growths come hourly to view, and, perhaps without those grooves the student's work would not be done. Here one must distinguish between different grooves. There is such a thing as mental grooves; these bar the doors and shut the windows against the wider view, the fresher air—and in some cases the doors seem jammed and the windows hermetically sealed, so rooted are the baneful pre-

judices, so somnolent the ideas that the vampire of vegetation looms in the near distance and the fate of a man is sealed. Effort dies and the desire of effort has evaporated, and so a living death in some cases becomes the end of what should be a perpetual spring. Each man's life is a growth he is bound to develop, to water and tend,—to watch and prune and endlessly improve, and not only this,—for God expects others to be influenced and for a wider range than any human thought can travel; and if these grooves and ruts of life impede that, we may well fear, for did He not say: "Let there be light?"

The frequent paralysis in family life used to be proverbial, but a great deal of that is over and past for ever, we hope, after the universal and obviously needful energy now engendered by the War. The former waste of life was alarming—at any rate in the retrospect one shuns its consideration.

Is there anything more abhorrent than inertia in itself and in its poison roots and creeping ills? That inertia was in the beginning but a product of grooves and custom's prejudice. It has an insidious growth and a silent one, and, like a person coming down a ladder, each thud is a drop lower and lower, till the ground is reached and the groove is cut out for a man to lounge in, to doze, to dream—not the dream of El Dorado he is trying during the day to attain, but the dull semi-nap of noon-heat stupidity.

In the measure of your groove's depth, so will be your enforced awaking from it. I have known groove-makers so shocked out of their grooves by an enforced upheaval from outside, that one might expect a volcano had been in eruption near them, and their lives were the poor little rolling cinders. I am not speaking too strongly—it is pathetic and pitiful the way a thing "that does not matter" gets warped into colossal proportions, and what should be the effect of a fly resting on their nose is made a power of gravitation.

Have you ever noticed that expression on the face of a groove-dweller, when a pop-gun goes off in his life? It is colossal wonder and conviction that the world is out of gear! It is really very funny were it not so sad.

Have you ever realised the suffering of a man, by force of circumstance, or his subjection to authority, being placed in a life of grooves—perhaps he is meant by God to do great things in the mental and religious life of souls—he is cooped down in the ruts of the

narrow lanes like the veriest dray-horse dragging the heifers to market, when he knows he should be coursing with the swift motion God gave him over the hills and plains?

I remember a passage in Mrs. Oliphant's "Life," in which she speaks of her brother Willie, who, through financial troubles, had to leave the little Scotch village where he was Minister and come home to live a life of enforced idleness and novel-reading, and she says, so piteously, "and most horrible of all, he got to content himself with that life." I think these words express so truly the hideousness of vegetation and the horror of it to one whose life was ardour and work. It is a dire dread—to some—like the hug of a heavy sloth-bear, whilst to others it is a slumber-song of the lotus-eaters, and the victims heed not the siren of Schiller.

"Ich locke den Schlafer, ich zieh ihn herein."

Not till

"Da spülen die Wasser ihm um die Brust."

Oh, the pity of it. Let us keep from the grooves and ruts that work like riven chains.

We all remember dear people who have done great things and left a folded beauty behind them, but who, when age began to knock at the door and *trouble* was the epithet they gave to all the little worries,—when sickness and weariness conquered their formerly impregnable fortress, their of old inextinguishable light—how they gradually drifted into grooves and blinded alleys—to the *laissez-aller*, *laissez-faire*, and, like the lovely water-lilies, which were so perfect in full growth with their white cups on the water, they become at last just a drifting leaf on the stream, and away they follow the current whithersoever it listeth, growing no more, but just drifting till the effete life is laid to rest before its work was done. Some will say grooves are meant for human lives, and fit in to each, we all have our pigeon-holes in the workshop of life. Yes, but sometimes the documents exceed the capacity of the hole; do we tear up our documents or leave the hole? Mental, spiritual, valetudinarian grooves, all are to be shunned and avoided. I think Chesterton puts the root of the evil, and the glory of the other life by these two splendid dicta:

"Stick to the man who looks out of the window and tries to understand the world.

"Keep clear of the man who looks in at the window and tries to understand you."

EDITH PEARSON.

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