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WOMEN OF SEVEN NATIONS

(continued from previous page)

GREEK

A MAN explained the position of Greek women, for Mrs. Garland, wife of the Consul, does not speak English freely, and Mr. Garland spoke for her. "In Greece," he explained, "a woman's first duty is to preserve her honour, her next to look after her home." Greek women do not, in general, go out to work; it is duty of the brother to support his sisters, of the husband to support his wife. Very poor girls from the Islands may take jobs on the mainland sometimes, but as soon as possible the brothers contrive to bring them home again. Women attend to all that concerns the home—sewing, cooking, gardening and so on—and the men attend to everything else in the community. Of recent years, some modern women have begun to work in shops. But though the women don't go out to work, they are still able to earn money—they sew for neighbours, they make lace, weave sheets and blankets, paint, do tapestry, make carpets—but everything they do, they do at home. They may go out to fit their clients, then they come home again to sew. They are world-famed for their needlework. "A Greek man," said Mr. Garland, "doesn't want to marry a girl who has been out to work. She has no esteem."

As far as education is concerned, the lot of the girls is the same as that of the boys, though girls seldom go further than high school. Of course a few go to universities and take up a professional life. But Greek women have no standing in political life, nor do they interfere in the social life of the community.

"The sexes are not encouraged to mix. Girls have their entertainments, boys have theirs. If they should need to meet, then a chaperon must be present. If a young woman should be seen out with a young man, she would be classed as a bad girl."

"How do girls meet their husbands then?" we asked him.

"By introductions in their own circles. The parents arrange the marriages, but they never force them. Girls are, as a rule, prepared to be guided by their parents, and marriages are usually successful. Divorce is almost unknown in our country."

BELGIAN

THE Belgian Consul gave us a bulletin on Women of Belgium, which seems to suggest that they have had equal privileges with men for 600 years. The Flemish poet Jacob van Maerlant (he died about 1300), came to the following conclusions (according to this bulletin): "By nature women are good. They are like wine and fire. If you take too much wine or if you come too close to the fire, you're bound to hurt yourself." Van Maerlant's influence on other writers and poets was so strong that one would scarcely find an unkind word about womanhood in the Flemish authors from then on. In the 16th century foreigners marvelled that Belgian women were allowed to do business exactly like men, and that in most of the households they used to run the finances, and did very well at it, too. The strength of their position in the household can be felt very clearly by looking at the family portraits of the Renaissance. Invariably husband and wife face the onlooker on the same level. The children stand between them or play in front of them. A little bit in the background, but dominating the scene by her sheer youthful loveliness, stands the housemaid, carrying fruit and flowers: an unconscious challenge to the ageing wife who calmly and with perfect poise, ignores it. . . .

"The most outstanding praise that has been given the Belgian women—aside from the usual compliments about their beauty, their complexion, and their eyes—is praise of their courage and their thriftiness. All the authors agree on the fact that the Belgian women know how to make both ends meet, and when their enthusiasm is, at a peak, they declare: "As far as their character is concerned, they are able to behave and act like men.""

* * *

RUSSIAN

LAST of all we saw a young Russian woman, who told us that women in the U.S.S.R. have complete equality in every sphere of life, and the practical opportunities to use this equality. "While there is undoubtedly a strong admiration of Soviet women among the Allied peoples, one cannot help noticing the prevailing impression that because Soviet women work in heavy industry, occupy high executive positions, and are guerillas and snipers in this war, they must be manlike. Actually, it is only because tenderness, pity, and womanliness are so highly developed in Soviet women, that they are able to kill men in war. A lonely woman on a distant farm must kill a gangster who threatens the life of her children if she is to save them, and in the same way a Soviet woman knows that if she loves the children and wants them to have a happy life, she must destroy those who kill and torture these children. Don't think, when you hear about a Soviet woman sniper and guerilla, that she is a strange masculine creature. She is probably a warm, living human being—a woman in whom love and tenderness were so absorbing that they gave her endurance and strength to destroy the enemy, in the name of life and happiness of those she loves."

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right from the first



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