

Sept. 15th, 1893.]

shires. The fundamental laws which had been in power during the Swedish dominion were confirmed for the Grand Duchy, hence the Emperor of Russia is the Grand Duke of Finland. The government consists of four Estates—the Nobility, the Clergy, the Burgoesses and the Peasants, all of which, with the exception of the Nobility and a few of the Clergy, are elected as representatives of the people. The Diet meets every third year in Helsingfors, and an election takes place before each Diet. The Governor-General and the Senate exercise the highest power of government, and they, as well as all government officials, must be Finnish by birth.

Sixty-eight per cent. of the people of Finland belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Religion, which is upheld by the State as the National Church. About 40,000 belong to the Greek Orthodox Confession, and there are some small Methodist and Baptist congregations; dissenters since 1889 being held under many restrictions.

In culture Finland "has brought civilization further north than any other nation." Its character and its patriotism have been shaped by the ever present danger of being assailed by powerful neighbors. The general culture is of the same democratic character as that in the Scandinavian countries.

The system of public instruction is making rapid progress. The expenses of primary education are divided between the State and the Communes; those of the higher generally the State alone. In Helsingfors is a university (founded in 1640) maintained by the State, including four faculties. "About 2,000 students (56 women) are entered."

Finland's commerce with other countries is carried on partly by railway, but principally by sea. Great efforts have been made to keep the ice frozen. This railways of Finland run further north than those of any other country, and have a considerable length in proportion to the number of inhabitants.

Coming down to our immediate subject, "Women and Women's Work," we find the status of women under the law and according to custom very fully given. Finnish wives in the past, like those of other nations, were in a great measure in subjection to their husbands, and were held as their wards; and unmarried women, whatever their age, were regarded as minors, and could inherit property only when there were no male heirs.

In the middle of the thirteenth century, Finnish (and Swedish) women were awarded the right to inherit one-third part of the property left by their parents. "For this improvement," says the record, "our women were indebted to Birger Jarl, the great Swedish legislator and statesman, who wears an honored name in our history." This improvement, however, had many exceptions, and to the women always fell "the crook in the lot."

In 1734, a further advance in the legal status of women was made; the law decreed that the sons and daughters of commoners living in the same household should share equally in property left by the parents, but daughters of the nobility and landowners were not included in the law. A foot note remarks that "During the present century the position of married women has been greatly improved. In 1868

a new Act was passed concerning the separation of goods: in 1878 (July 27) new regulations were made concerning married women's right to a share in the property; and finally, in 1889, another Act concerning separation of goods and marriage settlements—all these to the advantage of women."

The question of the property of a married couple is at present arranged on the general principle that all property is owned jointly by husband and wife; of the personal estate, goods and chattels, each is entitled to equal shares; if landed property in town, or of that in the country, which is acquired after marriage, each owns half. This is called the "marriage right."

There are certain exceptions covering what is regarded as separate property of husband and wife, all of which look towards justice to both parties. The value of the whole legislation is, however, greatly depreciated by the still remaining law that makes a wife a ward of her husband. "As soon as the ceremony has been performed the husband is the natural guardian of his wife, is responsible for her, and manages their property." This clause prevents married women from managing the property, which according to law, is their own. The husband may manage and even spend according to his pleasure, not only his wife's legal share in the common property, but also her special belongings. Only where landed property is concerned, the consent of the wife to its disposal becomes necessary.

"In consequence of this guardianship of the husband, it not seldom happens that, even when it was the wife who brought the money into the house, the husband is considered the sole and rightful owner of it, and that whatever she receives for the housekeeping expenses is considered almost a gift."

The abuses of the law giving the guardianship of the wife to the husband, have of late years attracted the attention of the legislators. There already exist several exceptions to the guardianship.

Of greater importance to women is, however, the recent law which settles "That married women are entitled to manage whatever they earn by means of their work." This paragraph in the statutes of 1889 relates only to those marriages which have been contracted since the 1st January, 1890, when the law came into force.

As might be supposed, this reform concerns chiefly the wives of workmen. Thanks to this law, no husband can, as was formerly the case, draw his wife's wages from her employer. "The idea of man being the absolute master of the house," remarks our record, "is deeply rooted in the popular mind, therefore it will probably be some time before the new law will be everywhere known and acted upon; but it is sure in time to be a blessing to many a home"—a very pertinent comment on the attitude of some of our legislators who insist that the people should first formulate and ask for reforms, and then the legislators act, because otherwise laws will not be supported, overlooking the fact that the great mass of the people have neither the leisure nor the knowledge to enable them to consider carefully the great issues involved in human progress, and, as a rule, are tied down willingly by the bonds of use and custom, particularly where use and custom minister to their own personal power or authority, as in the cases of the relation of wives and husbands, masters and servants.

In the matter of ante-nuptial agreements in Finland, much advance has been made in favour of women legally, but use and prejudice continue to obviate their usefulness in a great degree. On this head the record speaks thus: "In the statutes of 1889, the law on ante-nuptial marriage agreements was altered to the advantage of the wife. By means of ante-nuptial agreements a woman may now not only retain as her special property whatever she possessed before marriage, and whatever she may after marriage have inherited, received as a gift, or legacy; but she may also reserve for herself the right of taking charge of and managing her own property and the income thereof (It is to be observed that such agreement does not cover any joint property of husband and wife, neither of land, money in a bank, nor goods and chattels, even though these may have come into the joint estate with the wife.) Women have not, however, often secured themselves by this new law. The reasons are not common to Finnish women only. They are thus stated: "Women generally feel as if by requiring previous agreements they showed lack of confidence in their future husbands. Secondly: Many women are still ignorant of this law and therefore neglect profiting by it. Thirdly: Women often lack the courage of so doing because the making of such agreements requires several official forms. The contracts must be made in writing, must be prepared before the marriage ceremony, and the documents be ready to be shown to the clergyman who is to perform the ceremony, and whose duty it is to sign these documents, which must be, moreover, signed by two other witnesses.

Within a certain time the documents must further be delivered to a court of justice and certified. It is not to be wondered at that all these forms and ceremonies are disagreeable to the woman about to be married. Especially must this be so when we further consider that in the majority of cases, at least at present, the young woman will be conscious of, at any rate, an overt disapprobation of her action on the part of members of the two families or others whose ideas are governed by precedent. "But even the strictest settlements," it is further remarked "are not enough to completely protect the financial position of the wife. On account of his wardship, an unscrupulous husband is still able to get at the property exclusively settled on his wife;" the law of 1889 says that "in case a husband, without the consent of his wife, wastes or pawns the capital or personal property settled on her, she, when granted separation of goods, has the same right as his other creditors, who sue for the recovery of their loan."

The relations between the Finnish husband and wife are decided entirely by the husband; his opinion is law in every question concerning the children; the place of the family abode; their education and future career are for his decision, and from it, however distasteful, the wife and mother has no appeal.

The law of divorce in Finland seems to be well considered and based on just grounds, except in so far as that the equal guilt of the sexes is not legally acknowledged. Adultery, proof of which must be absolute both as to time, place and person, frees the innocent party from the marriage bond. Adultery, after the betrothal, but before the marriage, committed with some one else, frees the innocent party, on his or her demand. But if