

Universal Suffrage in Austria

The most remarkable political movement in Europe at the present moment is the fight in Austria-Hungary for Universal Suffrage. The accompanying article and photographs have just been received from a Canadian in Vienna.

AN associated press despatch of December 1st states that the Lower House of Parliament at Vienna had passed the second and third reading of the new universal suffrage bill. This grants an equal franchise to every male Austrian over twenty-four years of age who is able to read and write. Heretofore the voting power rested on property alone.

The fight over this bill has lasted one year, says the despatch, but of course the agitation is of long standing. In the history of Socialism in Palgrave's "Dictionary of Political Economy," it is recorded that, at the Labour Congress of March, 1894, a resolution demanding universal suffrage and recommending a general strike in the event of its refusal was passed by 66 against 42 votes. Hence this agitation has lasted at least twelve years. Austrians are now likely to enjoy what Canada has enjoyed for half a century.

The significance of the movement is that it may stem the tide of disruption. For years it has been predicted that when the present Emperor passed away, Austria and Hungary would separate. In the German Confederation, formed in 1815, Austria was the leading state and president. In 1866 came the war between Austria and Prussia, now almost forgotten, which ended in Austria's defeat and a new North German Confederation from which she was excluded. Since then Austria has devoted herself to the task of amalgamating the various nationalities of South-East Europe under her hegemony. Hungary, however, has been ruled by the Austrian monarchs for two hundred and fifty years. If the new movement will tend to peace, good-will and nationalism, Austria-Hungary may see happier days.

The Editor.

AUSTRIA'S LEADING CITY.

SITUATED as the Austrian capital is, in about the centre of Europe, surrounded by Russia, Germany, France, Switzerland, Italy, Turkey, Bulgaria and Servia, it may readily be imagined how cosmopolitan that centre is. Then the Austrian Empire comprises the peoples of fifteen different races, including Turks, Italians, Slavacs, Hungarians, Poles, Croats, Slavs, Galatians, Jews, Russians, Germans and others who now call themselves Austrians. All these people speak different languages, dress in their own peculiar costumes, have habits and customs quite at variance with one another, and, while the great majority are Catholics, a large proportion profess the Greek, Mohammedan or Jewish Creed and all are permitted to worship at any shrine they please. The language in common use in Austria proper is German, and in Hungary Magyar, but in all the places of business, hotels and cafes, besides French and English the employees are expected to speak ten or twelve other languages. The Emperor is said to speak fluently, besides the languages named, twenty-four others which he is constantly employing when receiving deputations from various parts of his vast empire.

Vienna is a city of about two million inhabitants and was founded fourteen years after Christ by the Romans. It is beautifully situated in a valley on both sides of the Danube and surrounded by well wooded heights on the west. The beautiful city has been the storm centre of European politics for many centuries and has been the scene of several stirring events in the world's history. In the Emperor's palace in the heart of the city may be seen, preserved as he left them, the rooms occupied by Napoleon during his six weeks' visit after the battle of Austerlitz, and also the room in which his son the King of Rome died.

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of modern

Vienna is her architecture. In no other city in the world may one see such spacious, beautiful and substantial buildings. There is not only one or a dozen, but hundreds. Every public building, whether it be the Parliament House, Post Office, City Hall, Railway Station, Royal Opera, Court Theatre, Votive Church, New Hospital, or Military Barracks, are all things of beauty and work of the highest art which challenge the admiration and wonder of every visitor. The cost of these buildings, the private palaces, stock exchanges, and private dwellings was something enormous. The Court Theatre built only sixteen years ago cost over eight million dollars. The result is rents in Vienna are very high and the cost of living, as compared with other capitals, much in excess. This fact, however, does not deter foreigners from flocking here in winter in thousands to study music and medicine. The City Clerk informed me it was estimated from the police returns there were at least one hundred thousand foreigners resident in the city during the winter months, chiefly Japanese, Chinese, French, Germans, English and American.

The display of wealth in Vienna is something stupendous. Ladies attend the operas and theatres, concert halls and cafes loaded with jewels and dresses which rival those of Paris. The Russian nobles, who at present find their usually cold climate too warm, may be seen daily driving splendid equipages in the Prater, while the restaurants are crowded with people who seem to have no other business in life than to spend money. The shops, which for fashion and elegance, rival London or Paris, afford every opportunity for those who desire high priced articles to lighten the weight of their purses, while the theatrical attractions, though comparatively cheap because of their numbers, afford another avenue through which money may be quickly dissipated. No one requires to go to Monte Carlo to gamble. There are horse races daily within twenty minutes street car ride from the heart of the city, the Government conducts a weekly lottery, the police another, while card playing, roulette and other games of chance are openly conducted in almost every block of the inner city.

After its manufacturing, the most important source of wealth to the city is the revenue its citizens derive from foreigners who come to study instrumental music or as patients or students who come to receive treatment or attend lectures or clinics at the various hospitals. The surgical standard of Vienna is, I am informed by foreign medical men, higher than anywhere else, and as a consequence surgeons from all parts of the world flock here for post graduate courses. At the General Hospital, which is close to the central part of the city, there are over twenty-eight hundred patient segregated according to the nature of their trouble.

The street life of the city is very interesting. In the parks and gardens one meets nurse girls pushing their carriages dressed in the fantastic costume of their native provinces, and in the thoroughfares it is a common sight to see a man hitched with a big dog to a cart, going his rounds delivering laundry, bread or wood. The streets are too wide for our methods of street watering, so men have to lay the dust with hose, which not only serves this purpose but also washes the streets thoroughly.

The cafes form an important factor in the lives of all Europeans. All who can afford it spend from one to three hours daily in these resorts which are legion. Those of Vienna differ from those of Paris only in that, instead of music they provide daily and illustrated papers from all lands without extra charge, so that a man from Tokyo or a visitor from Montreal may read his native paper while he sips his coffee, tea or chocolate, and, having finished, call for the Century Magazine, The London Illustrated News, or the Cairo Sphinx.

C. T. L.