

## Our Contributors.

A POINT NOT DISCUSSED BY THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

BY KNOWNIAN.

Most of the people of this country have heard that the House of Commons is considering a Franchise Bill. They have given it a good deal of consideration. They sat up all night considering it. They discussed it for fifty-three hours continuously and then took a rest and began again. The discussion was exhaustive. That is to say, it exhausted the members. In the first scene the ladies were in the foreground, but they were disposed of quite soon, and Big Bear, Poundmaker, the Revising Barrister, and other distinguished persons came to the front. Though not very long the debate on giving votes to the ladies was fairly good. There was one point, however, in this connection, which the members did not touch. It is a tender, delicate point for members to handle. In fact they could scarcely be expected to handle it. It is not likely they ever will handle it to any great extent. If discussed at all it must be discussed by the Press. That is the reason why this Contributor says something by way of supplement to the discussion of the Franchise Bill. The point in question is the effect that giving votes to women would be likely to have in

### ELEVATING THE CHARACTER OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT.

Abstract reasoning on this point is not of much use. The best way to come to a correct conclusion is to ascertain the effect of Female Franchise in other places. The territory of Wyoming is not Canada, but it is sufficiently like Canada to make the comparison fair. Women have had votes in Wyoming for sixteen years, a period quite long enough to test the effect of their franchise. A writer in one of the leading religious papers of the Union, published some valuable testimony, showing that one invariable result which follows from giving the women votes is that much better men are chosen for public positions. The women persistently refuse to vote for an immoral or dishonest man on party grounds. We give a few extracts from the article and ask our readers to notice how they ring on the point. The Governor of Wyoming says:

Our women consider much more carefully than our men the character of candidates, and both political parties have found themselves obliged to nominate their best men in order to obtain the support of the women.

"He is a politician," shouts some unscrupulous partisan, "and he compliments the ladies in order to get their votes." Now don't go too fast. Don't judge everybody by yourself. Governors of territories are appointed by the President and, therefore, don't need votes to put them in office. This Governor, who is presumably good authority, declares that one effect of giving women votes is that both parties are compelled to put clean candidates in the field. Women will not vote for a besmirched, immoral man. That alone is worth millions.

Another prominent man closely connected with the Governor says:

If a bad man is nominated, the women quietly scratch his name from their tickets, and he is defeated. They have done this so often that now the politicians look a man's character through and through pretty thoroughly before they nominate him. It puts both parties "on their trumps"; they knew they must nominate respectable men or they are beaten in advance.

Well done! That is the right way to purify the political atmosphere. Hear another witness. The Speaker of the House of Representatives of Wyoming says:

I came to the Territory in the fall of 1871, with the strongest possible prejudice against woman suffrage. But now I frankly acknowledge that under all my observations it has worked well and been productive of much good in our territory, and no evil that I am able to discern. The women use the ballot with more independence and discrimination in regard to the qualifications of candidates than men do. If the ballot in the hand of woman compels political parties to place their best men in nomination, this, in and of itself, is a sufficient reason for sustaining woman suffrage.

Yes, it is *one* reason, whether a sufficient one or not. There are some reasons why it might be better that women should not have votes, but if giving them the franchise compels political parties to put their best men in nomination, that certainly is a great point gained. But hear what one of the judges of Wyoming says:

Our women are making themselves felt at the polls, as they do everywhere else in society, by a quiet but effectual discountenancing of the bad, and a helping hand for the good and the true. We are all beginning to feel and appreciate their power, and the direction in which it is sure to be exerted. It will not be long before our caucuses and our candidates understand that the nomination of a leech, a gambler, or a drunkard means defeat; and that a man who expects to be elected to any office in Wyoming Territory must have a good private character and a clean record.

A system that drives debauchees, gamblers and drunkards out of public life, and brings men of good private character and a clean record to the front, is just the thing greatly needed in more places than Wyoming. A superintendent of schools gives this testimony:

If a candidate is not correct in character, the entire female vote is against him, irrespective of party. This fact renders it a necessity for each party to nominate good men, or their defeat is a foregone conclusion.

And a gentleman of prominent position confirms the foregoing facts in this way:

Though men would, for the sake of party, vote for immoral men, their wives refused to do so, often voting for the opposing candidate, and their husbands commended them for doing it.

The testimony thus given will not be seriously questioned by many except by the debauchees, gamblers and drunkards that the women would drive out of Parliament at the first chance. The fact that the character of our public men would be greatly improved by giving the franchise to women, is not the whole question, but it is a very important point in the question. A good many people, not by any means radical or fanatical, think this fact alone more than outweighs all the arguments against a Female Franchise.

### STATE CHURCHES IN SWITZERLAND.

#### BAD INFLUENCE ON PASTORS AND PEOPLE.

On a former occasion I stated the result of my observation and enquiry regarding the effect of Radical legislation upon the constitution and order of the National Church in the canton of Neuchâtel, one of the three French-speaking cantons of Switzerland. I showed how the attempt on the part of the rabble—here synonymous with Radical—to reduce the clergy to the condition of civil servants, bound to execute the orders of their paymasters, led to the secession from the National Church of a considerable number of the best pastors and people, and the formation of a church independent of the State, thereby making three Synodical Churches in the canton—the National, the Independent, and the Free Church. I shall now give an account—very general, of course—of the present state of matters in the churches of the other two cantons—Geneva and Vaud, which is not without interest to students of church history.

#### THE NATIONAL CHURCH OF GENEVA

continues to exist, according to one account, because it offers to Freethinkers, Rationalists, etc., an institution, supported by public funds, in which anything may be preached—the Gospel, Rousseau's deism, or the denial of the supernatural. This arises chiefly from the fact that the clergy are chosen by the voters of the parish irrespective of their moral or religious character. In fact the same influences are brought to bear in the selection of a pastor as in that of members of the cantonal government, or of the municipality; and, from the class of men who for many years have ruled the canton, it is easy to understand the nature of these influences. Still, of the sixteen pastors in the town, seven only are avowed Rationalists, and of the seventeen in the country, only four. The worst of it is that as there are two or more pastors for each church, those who attend the several diets may be obliged at one time to listen to doctrines the very opposite to those taught at another time, so that the effect on many minds must be complete indifference to what is said, or what is more common, the majority cease to attend church services altogether. And this which is found the usual result, is made the subject of complaint on the part of the clergy, as if it were wholly the fault of the people, and in no way attributable to the clergy themselves.

Secessions from the National Church began to take place as early as 1815, during the revival which took place in Geneva in that and the following years. But the

#### EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH,

properly so called, dates only from 1848, when Christians of different tendencies united in asserting the

truth, entirely free from the trammels of the State. This body is administered by a Presbytery or Council of Elders—twenty in number, four of whom are pastors who preach, while the others take part in the instruction of the people, according to the measure of the gifts they possess. From the force of circumstances, church government, in connection with the Free Church, is rather Congregational than Presbyterian. It is only in the town of Geneva that this branch of the Church has made any progress. There are three chapels very fairly attended. But a considerable amount of mission work is carried on outside the churches amongst the poor, and in many ways good service is rendered to Christian truth by members of this Church, in a city where infidelity and errors of all kinds abound, where more than half the population is Roman Catholic—a city in which many disreputable men and women of various nationalities congregate, and in which every species of immorality prevails—and all this largely due to the position Geneva occupies as regards other countries, and as respects the other cantons of Switzerland. The very existence here of a Free Evangelical Church serves to affirm the need there is for a positive faith, and for union among Christians in the confession of their faith.

As a relief to this rather dark picture, let me now give a brief account of other Christian agencies which are at work amongst this singularly mixed population; and here I must add that all these agencies contain many members—lay and clerical—both of the National and the Free Church.

#### I.—THE EVANGELICAL SOCIETY OF GENEVA

was founded in 1831, its special object being the evangelization of France, certain portions of which had been prepared for the work on which the Society was about to enter by the labours of two men of immense energy and devotedness—Felix Neff and J. F. Vernier—whom God had taken from obscurity and made the pioneers of a great and blessed revival. Neff was a Genevese who had been converted in 1818, while serving as a soldier in the Swiss army, and who joined the band of Christians who at that early day had been aroused by the preaching of Robert Haldane, of Scotland, to invade as a "true salvation army" the adjoining districts of France, inhabited by the scattered descendants of the old Huguenots, at that time in a state of spiritual death. Vernier was a native of the Doubs, and was converted while attending the institute at Glay, founded in 1822 for the purpose of preparing evangelical teachers for Home Mission work—a service which it still continues to perform. For forty years Vernier laboured with burning zeal and heroic perseverance to arouse to spiritual life his fellow countrymen in the departments of the Drôme and the Isère. During thirty-five of these years he was in the service of this Society, which from the beginning had three branches of labour, viz.: (1) a school of theology; (2) colportage of Bibles and religious books; (3) evangelization. In carrying out its aim—the advancement of the Kingdom of God—it has always held fast the Apostolic doctrines taught by the Reformers of the sixteenth century, and these principles it has ever sought to make known by all its agencies. This society has never connected itself with any special denomination of the Christian Church, but has kept a strictly *ecclesiastical neutrality*; constituted upon the broadest basis, it extends its aid to all the churches alike.

#### (1) - ITS THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

puts its services at the command of all who maintain the foundations of the faith, and who desire pastors thoroughly instructed in evangelical truth. Young men on finishing their studies in this school are perfectly free to seek ordination according to the forms of any church—National or Free—which best meets their convictions and their needs.

This theological school, it is true, comes into competition with five other establishments, more or less analogous, in the three French-speaking cantons. There are three Faculties in connection with the National Church—one in each canton—and two theological academies in connection with the Free Church—one at Lausanne and one at Neuchâtel. In theory every one here is of opinion that this is *trop de richesses*; but in practice, it is found to be a difficult matter to diminish the number, a state of things with which Canadian Presbyterians can sympathize at present.

When the question of reduction is raised, arguments are advanced to prove that Neuchâtel should possess