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THE WEEK AT HOME.

By MAX NEF.

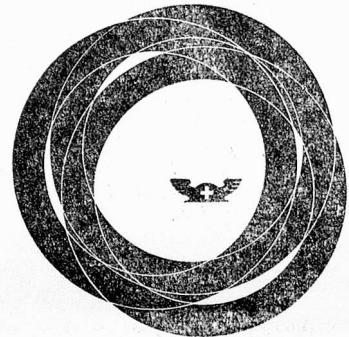
After a short, brisk voting campaign, the question as to whether women should be given the right to vote and to elect, in Federal matters in Switzerland, was recently decided. The Swiss men rejected this proposal, in a ratio of approximately two "noes" to one "aye". Participation in the voting attained slightly over 66 per cent, thus being considerably higher than usual, and already the lively way in which men and women took part in the numerous informative meetings and in the open discussions which took place prior to the voting days, showed to what an extent everyone was preoccupied with this whole business.

Now, for the present, at any rate, everything remains as it was before; nevertheless, the results of the voting are encouraging for the advocates of women's franchise, and should spur them on to continue their efforts to achieve their goal. A glance at the voting results in the various Cantons shows us a considerable variation. The most stubborn opponents of women's rights proved to be the two central Cantons, in the East of Switzerland, in which the so-called "Landesgemeinde" still exists—an ancient form of parliamentary assembly which, each year, brings all the men in these Cantons to an open-air gathering, at which all public affairs are decided upon. In these Cantons, as also in some other agrarian and Catholic Cantons, a long time will pass before there will be any more talk about the introduction of equal political rights for women. On the other hand, in those Cantons where the urban population predominates, there were a large number of votes in favour of the introduction of this innovation, more particularly in Zurich, Berne and Basle.

The situation in regard to this question is still more favourable in the three French-speaking Cantons, in West Switzerland, namely in the Cantons of Geneva, Vaud and Neuchâtel. The majority of the voters in these Cantons were in favour of women's suffrage, but this in no way altered the negative total result. The Canton of Vaud, however, has taken up a special position in this matter, for, although the women in this Canton will not be able, until further notice, to vote or take part in elections relating to Federal affairs, they will have the right to do so in so far as Cantonal matters are concerned. A Cantonal vote took place in Vaud at the same time as the Federal vote, the former being in regard to the introduction of women's suffrage on a Cantonal basis, when the majority proved to be in favour of this innovation. Thus, this will be the first Canton in Switzerland in which women will be able to vote, on the same footing as men, in all decisions affecting Cantonal matters, and it would not appear impossible that the example of the Canton of Vaud might also serve as the prime mover for other Cantons to follow in its steps. In this connection, it is only natural to think, first of all, of Geneva and Neuchâtel, which—as already mentioned—voted last Sunday in favour of equal political rights for women.

Considered as a whole, this vote and the campaign which preceded it, have shown once more that there exists a very marked difference between the political and legal conditions in Switzerland and those in other countries. Once again stress must be laid on the fact that the Swiss woman, even though she does not

possess political equality with the Swiss man, often has the opportunity to co-operate in the solution of problems relating to public life, and to take relevant decisions, very often to a greater extent than is the case in other countries. She can, for instance, when discussions on legislation are taking place in Parliament, put forward her claims through the intermediary of various women's organisations, and many a recent revision of a Law constitutes a proof of the fact that, even without the right of suffrage, Swiss women are able to obtain satisfaction for their well-founded claims. Naturally, this is no substitute for those constitutionally guaranteed political rights which have just been denied them. Nevertheless, it is a fact which makes the negative decision of the recent voting appear in a somewhat different light.



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