

Union. The authors of the Bill foresee that there will always be causes in operation which will disincline a certain number of workmen to take this step. Eccentricity, dislike of dictation, the belief that they can do better for themselves alone than in a Society, these and similar motives will, if they are allowed to work freely, be strong enough to divide workmen into unionists and non-unionists. Consequently, they must not be allowed to work freely. The cause of Unionism is too sacred to be left to chance, to the degree of success it may attain in inducing men to become unionists of their own free will. They must have some effectual pressure applied to them; and what pressure can be so effectual as the knowledge that no employer will be allowed to take on non-unionists, if unionists refuse to work except on extravagant conditions? Legislation conceived in this spirit is not likely to stop short at making a non-unionist's position disadvantageous; it will probably go on to make it impossible. From prohibiting the employment of non-unionists in the case of a dispute between employer and workman, it is an easy step to prohibiting it altogether. On the theory which has found favour with the French Chamber, the worst assault that can be committed against liberty of association is to decline to associate, and the most effectual way of preventing such assaults is to make applications for work unlawful, except when made by members of a Union. Thus the new French legislation will be quite as injurious to workmen, supposing them not to be unionists, as it can be to employers.

As the Bill has to come before the Chamber again, and, if carried there, has to be dealt with by the Senate, it is possible that it will not pass after all. It seems unlikely, however, that the Chamber, after going so far in the direction of concession to the workmen, will now draw back, and the Senate, though it will be more disposed to side with the employers, may not be willing to take on itself the invidious task of doing them justice. The vote of the Chamber is probably due to the same sense of alarm as that which prompted the German Emperor to take up the Labour Question. The proletariat is a source of vague terror alike to Sovereigns and Legislatures. But the German Emperor seems to have grasped what the French Chamber has not,—that concession is only safe when it rests on defined principles, and is protected by adequate resolution. The French Deputies will have to learn this before they are quit of the labour difficulty, but as yet their education is all to come.

WOMEN AND POLITICS.

WE learn from the *Pull Mall Gazette* of Monday, that Mr. W. T. Stead "has made a munificent offer to Newnham College. He proposes to give a scholarship of £100 per annum for the next three years, the object of the scholarship being "to promote an interest in present-day history and politics among women, as a counterpoise to the somewhat exclusive attention to the history of the past which the ancient Universities tend to encourage;" and the competitors for this prize, we learn, are probably to be occupied in preparing an essay "on the progress of the world during the past year." There will be plenty of them, we have no doubt. The progress of the world during the past year, or any other period, is exactly the kind of subject on which young people are ready to form an opinion; and to earn £300 by expressing their view, instead of grinding away at dictionary and grammar, will indeed be a prospect quickening lively gratitude to the author of this scheme. Nevertheless, it is one that will, we should think, fill many warm friends of the education of women with dismay; and for our own part, we should have deprecated it with equal urgency, whether we considered its influence on women, on politics, or on general education. The girls who strive for this £300 will be clever and energetic; and they will spend the most valuable time of their life chiefly in reading newspapers, or books that help one to understand newspapers. The newspaper world is engrossing, the day is limited, study is not recreation, and the spectacle of the present is always a formidable rival to the study of the past. To set up an artificial stimulus for this preference in the intellectual world, to give the noisy appeals of the passing hour any help in catching the attention of the young, and to make the three priceless years at a University the opportunity for giving such a bias, seems to us almost on a par with a scheme for getting young people to drink wine or read novels; and that Newnham should lend itself

to such a scheme is a deplorable abdication of duty on the part of an institution taking a prominent position in the movement for female education.

There is, no doubt, a great deal of valuable information to be got out of our best newspapers, using the last epithet in a very broad sense. But there will be a great deal less, if the people who write newspapers have spent their youth in reading them. And the future of those young people is an even larger subject of concern than the influence of the small proportion who will succeed in getting anybody to read their articles. Any interest, we gladly allow, is better than none. But there will always be enough political interest in the world, and we cannot say the same of any other interest. If we want to keep a plot of fertile soil for any kind of knowledge that demands study, let us beware how we sow that seed there. The actual increase in the number of female politicians is a fact on which those may be agreed who can find very little else to agree about in politics or elsewhere; and from Mr. Stead's point of view, he is probably right in wishing to increase it. It will, we believe, largely reinforce the side that he has espoused, and we incline to think that his object in making it may be a desire to demonstrate (against the ordinary notion) that the principles of democracy have nothing to fear from female influence. Those who feel any hesitation in swelling the triumph of democracy, would do well to consider whether he is not here on safe ground. That women are naturally Conservative, does not appear to us by any means an unquestionable inference even from women's influence in the past,—the history of the French Revolution, for instance, would seem to tell the other way. No doubt there is some reason for the ordinary belief. When Goethe put into the mouth of a woman the sentence, "Nach Freiheit strebt der Mann, die Frau nach Sitte," he presented a view that both falls in with much experience, and suffers very little distortion in being shortly expressed as a belief that women are Conservatives. *Sitte*, however we translate it—"order," we suppose, would be the best rendering here—is not a quality that flourishes in the air of revolution; and Freedom, though in some sense the desire of everybody, is not the characteristic desire of one who feels strongly, what almost every woman has felt at some time, the desire to merge her own life in that of another person. But opposites are neighbours, and the most natural movement in the human mind is that of inversion. By the very fact that women know this impulse, they know its dangers. They are made aware by painful experience that subjection needs always in the ruler some spark of the divine, and that the allegiance which can be safely given in its entirety only to God, is often a cruel weight to lay on erring man. The experience of the wife teaches her that power may find its victim in its agent; the experience of the mother shows her another possible victim. To protect the weak is not to emancipate the weak from wise control; but in the blind workings of mistaken activity, the one action constantly passes into the other; and they whose sympathies tend invariably to the weaker side, can certainly not be reckoned as friends of order. These are not arguments against a scheme for training up a set of female journalists, or against any one who agrees with its author; on the contrary, they show, as far as they go, that his offer is a wise one from his point of view. But surely they should give pause to all who think, as many do, besides those who would call themselves Conservatives, that what politics needs at this moment is a larger infusion of virile influence,—an influence that women, indeed, are better fitted to *appreciate* than men are, but that they can only appreciate so far as they distrust what is most characteristic of themselves.

We look on the present duty resting upon everybody, men and women alike, who can exert any sort of influence, to occupy themselves with politics, as a necessity no less deplorable than it is unquestionable. When an influential party is urging on a change that is vast and irrevocable, it behoves all who think it also disastrous to exert themselves in every possible way to help their country to avoid it, one of those ways being the endeavour to rouse political interest where it does not already exist. But we lament such a necessity, and especially we lament it in the case of women. It seems to us almost like the necessary setting aside of all peaceful occupations in the case of an invasion; an event hardly more exceptional than the present state of things. Women have their own special

qualifications for approaching the life of their country. We look on Miss Kate Norgate's "Angevin Kings," for instance, as a brilliant example of the way in which an interest in personal life may light up the study of the past, and make us feel, after reading a book, almost as if we had visited a gallery. We contemplate the possibility that such a power as hers, or anything like it, should be pressed into the service of politics, as we should have contemplated the possibility of Reynolds having to earn his bread as a sign-painter, or Beethoven as the leader of a band. This would be much the smallest evil of such a scheme as Mr. Stead's; but we cite it here, because we believe that most people would accept this result as the possible price of such a stimulus to journalism as this, and that it is one which all without exception would deplore.

AGRICULTURAL CO-OPERATION IN FRANCE.

WE have heard a great deal during the last few years of the remarkable success which has attended a co-operative movement among French agriculturists, resulting in the formation of a great number of what are termed *syndicats agricoles*. A literal translation of the name would convey a wrong impression, as the *syndicats* are much more nearly akin to our wholesale purchasing and retail distributing Co-operative Associations, than to the speculative combinations of capitalists which are styled "syndicates" in this country and in the United States. But they are rapidly developing into combinations of Co-operative Associations for the sale of their own products, as well as the resale of what they purchase, Chambers of Agriculture, and Trade-Unions, and they are beginning to use their power politically for the protection and advancement of the interests of their members. The most complete account of the origin, constitution, objects, and operation of these Associations yet published in the English language has recently been issued by the American Department of Agriculture, and it is to this account that we are indebted for a great deal of the information about them which we are about to place before our readers. Previous to 1884, the French laws in relation to the right of association were severely restrictive. The formation of trade associations as well as of assemblies of more than twenty persons without previous authorisation was prohibited, and it was not until the measure providing for liberty to establish Syndicates had been repeatedly discussed during two or three years, that the demands of its promoters were conceded by the French Legislature. That Bill, passed on March 21st, 1884, empowered persons of the same or related occupations or trades to unite in associations without previous permission from the authorities, under prescribed conditions. One of these conditions might have been expected to keep the operation of the new bodies within a narrow scope, as their exclusive object was prescribed as "the study and defence of their economic interests, industrial, commercial, and agricultural;" but this article in the new law was intended, as explained by the Minister of the Interior in a circular sent to the Prefects of Departments, "to be interpreted in a very wide sense,"—and it certainly has been so interpreted. Most of the real limitations are of a formal character, such as the necessity of depositing copies of the constitution of each Association, and lists of its officials, at the Mayoralty of the place in which it is established, and at the Prefecture of the Seine in Paris. There is one restriction, however, of considerable importance, as it stands in the way of one form of co-operative production, though we have not heard that it has been yet felt as an inconvenience. The Syndicates are allowed to acquire only so much real estate as may be necessary for their business, meetings, libraries, and places for the instruction of the members in their respective callings. They are empowered to employ or invest funds derived from assessments, to establish funds for the aid of their members, including superannuation allowances, and to organise and carry on bureaux of information as to the supply of labour and the demand for it.

The early advocates of the new law, it is said, had chiefly in mind the organisation of the working men of France upon some such model as that of our Trade-Unions; but agriculture was included in the occupations to which the Bill applied, and it was soon seen that the representatives of that industry were not likely to be surpassed by those

of any other interest in their eagerness to avail themselves of the advantages of co-operation. The farmers, and particularly the small cultivators, had long been victimised by extortionate and dishonest dealers in seeds, fertilisers, and other commodities. Indeed, it was the feeling excited by such practices which led to the establishment of the first Agricultural Syndicate. In 1883, the frauds in relation to fertilisers had become so flagrant and common, that a few leading agriculturists instituted prosecutions against traders in the Department of Loir-et-Cher, and obtained a number of convictions. After that, the departmental Professor of Agriculture, M. Tanviray, undertook a searching investigation of the system of frauds, and convened several conferences with a view to its prevention. At a meeting held on July 7th, 1883, in anticipation of the early passing of the Syndicates Bill, he submitted a plan for an Association to be called the "*Syndicat des Agriculteurs de Loir-et-Cher*," the objects of which were to be the substitution of wholesale for retail purchases, the reduction of the cost of transportation by concentrating orders so as to obtain truck-loads by rail, the procuring of fertilisers of guaranteed quality at reduced prices, and the acquisition of certain advantages in respect of payments. The Syndicate was formed as soon as the law allowed, and proved immediately successful. M. Lecouteux, one of the leading agricultural writers of France, on the occasion of the presentation of a gold medal to M. Tanviray by the French National Society of Agriculture, said of the starting of the first *syndicat agricole*:—"The orders for fertilisers became so numerous, the competition between dealers aspiring to the honour of supplying the united body of customers resulted in such advantageous offers, each member of the Syndicate became such an apostle of mutuality and solidarity, that M. Tanviray was soon deluged with letters from all parts of France, requesting information as to the details of the organisation." So speedily and extensively was the example of Loir-et-Cher followed, that a recent official inquiry showed that up to some date of last autumn, 557 Agricultural Syndicates, out of a total of 2,322 of the various classes, had been formed. The Associations, moreover, have grown in membership as well as in number. One which had 730 members in 1884, had 3,600 in October, 1889; the membership of another had risen from 300 to 6,000; and that of a third had increased from 442 to 7,500. A further development of the movement was combinations of Syndicates, of which several are now in existence. We notice in the current number of the *Journal d'Agriculture Pratique* a report of a meeting of the Society of French Agriculturists, under whose auspices a combination known as "*L'Union des Syndicats*" has been organised. At that meeting it was stated that 370 of these Associations, consisting of about 380,000 members, had been affiliated to this Union. The business done by the 370 Syndicates referred to, it was further stated, was to the value of a hundred and fifty million to a hundred and eighty million francs; but it is not clear whether this means the volume of business for one year, or for the three years during which the Union has been in existence. Another Union of Syndicates has a capital of five million francs, and there are some smaller combinations of the same kind. But if the Syndicates have found it necessary to combine in order to increase their power, they have also found it advantageous to subdivide. Thus, several of the large departmental syndicates have communal branch syndicates, which are found greatly conducive to the stirring-up of local interest and to the intercourse of members at local meetings. The cost of membership is very small,—usually only two to three francs a year, and only one franc in some cases. This cheapness of operation is only secured by the zeal and generosity of the officials, most of whom give their services gratuitously. Expenses, however, are necessarily incurred in the analysis of manures and feeding-stuffs, the examination of seeds, the publication of scales of standard purity for various commodities, and the considerable clerical work of the business. As to the advantages secured by the Agricultural Syndicates to their members, there is no doubt that they are very great. The American Department of Agriculture cites some striking examples of the lowering of prices secured by several of the Associations, the estimates of saving ranging from 10 to 30 per cent. It is to be borne in mind, too, that the old high prices were frequently paid for nearly worthless articles, whereas approximate purity in quality and efficiency in manufacture are now effectually secured.