

Our Illustration.

Miss Florence Baggart, whose portrait we publish, is, by this time, familiar to a large number of our readers. Her breadth of view, her knowledge of the varying conditions of other countries, her clear, forceful speaking, make her welcome wherever she goes. To the Temperance workers of this colony she is a most valuable re-inforcement at a critical time, and every effort should be made to gain for her an audience worthy of her talents. The writer first heard her in London, some eight years ago. Miss Baggart felt it her duty to question the action of a prominent worker, and the writer could not but admire her quiet courage and admirable self control during a trying episode.

We hope that Miss Baggart's visit will be as pleasant to her as it is valuable to us.

Government by the People.

THE ELECTIVE EXECUTIVE, INITIATIVE, AND REFERENDUM.

The Progressive Liberal Association, Christchurch, recently invited delegates from the Canterbury Women's Institute, Women's Political Association, the Christian Socialists' Union, the Trades and Labour Council, the Socialist Party, the School of Brotherhood, and the Socialist Church to a conference on the Elective Executive and Initiative and Referendum. Several meetings were held, and the following report was finally adopted:—

The method of selecting members of the Executive Government in our colony, as in all the self-governing British communities, is one which was first introduced in England more than 200 years ago. It was then, doubtless, an immense advance on the system which it superseded, where the Ministers were responsible, not to Parliament or the electors, but to the Sovereign only. Since this early period there has been a steady growth of political freedom and political thought throughout the English-speaking world, so that now the old-time comparatively democratic institution has become an isolated remnant of

A By-gone Political System.

With the extended political franchise we enjoy in New Zealand, it is absurd to be hampered by a piece of political

machinery designed so long ago, and when the great mass of the people had no political rights.

Our Ministers now are supposed to be responsible to Parliament for their administrative actions, but, in reality, the constitutional powers which they hold give them the power to dictate to Parliament. Under existing laws the Executive is appointed by the Governor, who, when occasion arises, summons to his aid the leader of the more influential party in the House of Representatives. This man, consenting to fill the office of Prime Minister, selects certain members of Parliament who will work under his command, and are likely to secure the support of a majority in the House of Representatives. The several portfolios are divided among these men, who constitute the Ministry. The people can then bring about a change of Ministry only by returning, at a general election, a majority of members of the House of Representatives opposed to the existing Government. Under this arrangement the Ministry is placed in a superior position in the government of the country to Parliament itself, for Parliament must act in accord with the wishes of the Ministry, except at the peril of a dissolution. The fact of Parliament being thus dominated by the Ministry, and the Ministry, in its turn, being dominated by one man, the Premier, brings our would-be Democratic Government dangerously near to a despotism.

To obviate these evils of the present system, a proposal has been made that Parliament, as the general governing body of the people, shall directly elect the Executive Government. By this means the Executive would be brought under the control of Parliament and into closer touch with the

Will of the People.

This is no extravagant innovation, for the principle is identical with that which guides modern societies in electing their officers. The thanks of the colony are due to Major Steward for the persistence with which he has brought forward, during recent sessions, a proposal to effect reform in this direction. In his Bill he proposes that a referendum shall be taken on general election day on the question, "Shall the Executive Government be elected directly by Parliament?" This Conference heartily approves of this proposal, but feels compelled to urge the following as essential features in an Act to

accomplish the complete emancipation of Parliament from the dictation of the Ministry of the day, and to give the country the benefit of the best administrative skill it possesses:—

1. That every elector shall be deemed qualified for election as a member of the Executive.

2. That Ministers for the various portfolios be separately elected annually by members of Parliament.

3. That the Ministers elect from among themselves a chairman, who shall be Premier of the colony.

4. That no Premier shall hold office for two consecutive years.

5. That any member of Parliament who may be elected to the Executive shall, *ipso facto*, cease to be a member of Parliament.

6. Vacancies caused by the election of members to the Ministry shall be filled by the electors of the district which they represented returning other representatives to Parliament.

INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM.

The principle of true Democracy requires that the people shall be able not only to veto but also to initiate and enact legislation. Among progressive people there is a growing conviction that this can be safely and effectively done by the adoption of the "Initiative" and "Referendum." By the "Initiative" we mean the right of any elector to introduce such legislation as seems to him or her desirable. The "Referendum" is the right of the people to have legislation referred to them for their

Acceptance or Rejection.

These principles have obtained in various Swiss cantons for many centuries, and were adopted by the general Government of Switzerland in 1874, with results which have been most eminently satisfactory. Of all European countries Switzerland stands foremost for cautious and at the same time progressive legislation. In modified forms these measures have also been in operation in a number of the American States, and have been so beneficial that there is an increasing demand that they shall be applied to all legislation, both of a local and of a national character.

In this colony, the principle of the Initiative and Referendum has been admitted in the Rating on Unimproved Values Act and in the Act for the Control of the Liquor Traffic. This conference is desirous that the same prin-