

## THE PROSPECTS OF THE REPUBLIC IN FRANCE.

**I**T is affirmed on various sides that with the death of the Comte de Chambord, the greatest obstacle to the restoration of the monarchy in France has disappeared. The representative of the Legitimist party, with his antediluvian white flag and clerical traditions, which he resolutely refused to abandon, would never have been accepted as king by either the French people or the French army. Now, the House of Bourbon is very favourably represented in the person of a modern gentleman, taught by adversity, trained in exile, experienced in travel, versed in war, and devoted to the interests of the working classes, whose condition he has specially studied, ready also to reconcile the France of the future with the France of the past. Other persons who have recently visited different parts of France affirm that the situation there is far from satisfactory, and is becoming daily still less so. The Socialists, they say, are contemplating a manifestation of their power, and military authorities meditate a *coup d'état* to re-establish the monarchy. The condition of the finances is exceedingly embarrassed. Confidence has disappeared and business suffers. This state of affairs cannot be of long duration, and a change is inevitable.

Allowing full scope for exaggeration and false reports, it is nevertheless true, and this no Frenchman will deny, that the horizon has become darkened, and that confidence in the future of the Republic is not what it was three or four years ago.

I wish "objectively" and impartially to examine the causes of this situation, and the remedies proposed for its cure. Among the causes, there are, I think, two principal ones, or rather two which at once strike the minds of all thoughtful observers. The first of these is the uncertain and, at times, incomprehensible march of French par-

liamentary administration, and the second the fears aroused by the progress of Socialism. Let us begin by examining the first of these two points.

The reproaches laid against the French Chamber of Deputies are a lack of consistency as regards their resolutions; that they overthrow Ministries too frequently and thus render any really stable Government a simple impossibility; and that they have compromised the "prestige" of France among foreign nations. Graver than all this—for here the very form of government is attacked—is the accusation that France is completely isolated among nations, that she is entirely surrounded by hostile States, and that this sad and, it may be added, perilous position is attributable to the republican form of government, and to the consequent instability of her Ministries.

It is quite true that parliamentary mechanism in France is by no means perfect, and that it is very far from realizing the hopes built upon it by its partisans. But the question we should ask ourselves is this: Does this mechanism work better in other lands? and even in those countries which are cited as models, does it answer so very admirably? As the Italian Minister Bonghi said to me, "In spite of all its imperfections it is the least bad form of government that we can have." And, after all, is it quite certain that this growing weakness of Governments is in reality an evil for which there is no compensation? Is it not rather an inevitable result of the progress of democracy, which is in itself a subject for congratulation?

No doubt, all that is said about the instability of Ministries in France is true. As M. P. Leroy-Beaulieu recently remarked, the office of Minister of the Interior has been occupied since the 4th September, 1870, by twenty-three travellers, who have been decorated for six months each with the title of Minister. Between the 20th August, 1881, and August, 1882, France had four Cabinets, which gives a three or four months' existence to each. The case reminds us of the saying of M. de Lévy in one of the proverb pieces of Alfred de Musset, *Le Caprice*:—"Your Ministries are a strange sort of inns. One enters and leaves them without knowing why and wherefore. It is a procession of Marionettes." At the close of a recent sitting of the Chamber, which, after three or four contradictory votes, had ended by rejecting everything, M. Clemenceau said:—"Parliamentary government, so understood, becomes an occupation of an altogether special kind." All that is only too true; but let us see whether the case is not the same elsewhere. A little before his death, Prince Albert expressed the following opinion:—"Now the Parliamentary system is on its trial." The fact is that the Parliamentary system is everywhere undergoing a crisis. In England even, the country of its origin, it has almost ceased to work. To overcome obstructionism, it has been found necessary to resort to the most energetic measures, and will they suffice? Every year

Mr. Gladstone, whose inexhaustible activity has been spent in obtaining so few results, laments, with an eloquent sadness, the sterility of the Session. As M. de Bismarck lately observed, the golden age of Parliamentary government is over in England. It was easy to govern when there were only two parties opposed to each other, almost equal in strength, and consequently each of them thoroughly disciplined, so as not to yield to the united votes of its adversary. But now that there is a Radical party and an Irish party, neither Whigs nor Tories can retain power, if these two groups are against them. Hence the necessity of compromise and concession, and therefore a growing difficulty of governing with authority and continuity.

In Italy the instability of Cabinets is not less than in France. An interpellation, an order of the day, and a Ministerial crisis—such is the *résumé* of parliamentary life across the Alps. As, except the Republicans, who are very few in number, there are no parties separated the one from the other by principles; the different groups form and unform themselves under the influence of municipal or provincial interests, or of personal rivalries. The Cabinet is therefore never sure of retaining a majority long. This vicious operation of Parliamentary government is more marked still in Greece and Spain. In Germany there is as yet only a representative system in appearance. The Chamber deliberates, debates sometimes with much eloquence, and votes; but, in reality, it is the Chancellor, supported by the army, who governs.

In Denmark, a Conservative Ministry remains in office in spite of a democratic majority in Parliament. In Norway, discord reigns between the Parliament and the Crown, and there probably the indictment of the Ministry will lead to a crisis, the issue of which is doubtful, but which may at all events be dreaded. Holland furnishes us with the most decisive example in support of my theory. It is a country better prepared than any for parliamentary administration. Liberty is there more ancient than in any of the modern States. When England was still wholly at the mercy of her sovereigns, the United Provinces of Holland practised perfect self-government. Communal autonomy was absolute. Each province, each town, was an independent republic. The Dutch, then, in their origin, their blood, their worship, and their history possess all the elements, all the antecedents, adapted to make a representative administration work well in their land. Nevertheless, a short sketch of the vicissitudes of their Ministries and their frequent changes, will show how little right the French have to complain, comparatively speaking. In twelve years there have been thirteen changes of Cabinet and Ministerial crises.\*

\* *Changes of Ministries and of Ministers in the Netherlands between the years 1871 and 1883.*

I. THORBECKE CABINET, from January 3, 1871, to July 6, 1872. Changes in Government Departments:—Two in the War Office, where three Ministers held office successively, the first from January 4 to January 28, 1871; the

All contemporary political history proves that the representative system is not conducive to a stable and powerful Government, save in very exceptional circumstances, which are frequently attended with very serious disadvantages. Must we then return to despotism? By no means; for we see everywhere the social misery it produces; but, as I have already stated, it may be questioned whether this weakening of Governments be not the inevitable result of democratic evolution, and if this be the case, whether on the whole, it be not rather an advantage than an evil. This opinion has always been defended by the most logical of our contemporary economists with as much depth of reasoning as good sense. The nations of the present day must learn to live and to develop outside and independently of their Governments. I have shown that Ministerial changes and Cabinet crises are constant in Holland. At every moment there is stoppage of the political machinery. For months together there is no Government. It is true, the nation is rather humiliated at this state of things, but the advance of economic progress is not in the least impeded thereby. In Switzerland, in nearly all the cantons, local authority and even the Federal Government is losing its power, and playing a less important part in the life of

second from January 23 to December 23, 1871; and the third from December 23, 1871, to July 6, 1872.

- II. Cabinet Crisis from May 23 to July 6, 1872.
- III. THE GEERTSEMA CABINET, from July 6, 1872, to August 27, 1874. Changes in the Government Departments:—One in the War Office, where two Ministers succeeded each other, one from July 6, 1872, to September 15, 1873, and another from September 15, 1873, to April 29, 1875. The second of these became a member of the next Cabinet formed.
- IV. Cabinet Crisis from June 22 to August 27, 1874.
- V. THE HEEMSKERK CABINET. Changes in Government Departments:—One in the Colonial Office, the first Minister holding office there from August 27, 1874, to September 11, 1876, and being then replaced by another who held office until November 3, 1877. Three changes in the War Office, where the four successive Ministers held office respectively:—First, from October 6, 1873, to April 29, 1875; second, from April 29, 1875, to January 1, 1876; third, from January 1, 1876, to September 11, 1876; and fourth, from September 11, 1876, to November 3, 1877.
- VI. Intermediate Crisis from June to September, 1876, not terminated at the fall of the Cabinet.
- VII. Cabinet Crisis from September 28 to November 3, 1877.
- VIII. KAPPEYNE CABINET, from November 3, 1877, to August 20, 1879. Changes in Government Departments:—One in the Colonial Office; the holder of this post died on February 21, 1879; and one in the War Office, where first Minister died in 1878.
- IX. Cabinet Crisis from June 19 to August 20, 1879.
- X. VAN LYNDEN VAN SANDENBERG CABINET, August 20, 1879. Changes in Government Departments:—One in the Home Office, two Ministers holding office respectively: the first from August 20, 1879, to February 10, 1882, the second from February 10, 1882. Two in the Colonial Office. The first Minister, who held the office from August 20, 1879, to September 1, 1882, being succeeded by one who retained the post until February 23, 1883. One change also in the Financial Department, the two Ministers there successively holding office from August 20, 1879, to June 13, 1881, and from this date to May, 1882. One change in the Foreign Office, the first Minister holding his post from August 20, 1879, to September 15, 1881, the second from September 15, 1881, to May 9, 1882.
- XI. Intermediate crisis terminated by the reconstitution of the Cabinet from May 9, 1882, to the middle of August, 1882.
- XII. Cabinet Crisis lasting from February 26, 1883, to April, 23, 1883.
- XIII. A new HEEMSKERK CABINET entered office the 23rd April last (1883.)

the nation. The *referendum*, which is coming into more and more general use, not only for taxation but also for ordinary legislation, places the direction of affairs in the hands of the people themselves; and the Conservatives frequently benefit the most from this arrangement, as was recently proved in the question of school inspection, which the Radical party wished to transfer to the central power. In the United States the activity of Congress has very much decreased. Venality is not unknown there, hand-to-hand fights are frequent, and even the revolver is at times brought into requisition, and is considered by the Americans a necessary possession for a politician. But ask the man who has the lowest opinion of the members of the United States Government if he feels in the slightest uneasy as to the future of the great Republic; he will be at a loss to understand your question.

I am well aware that the situation is not the same in France, where centralization is excessive, and where too many offices are assigned to the State. But the remedy for this is not a monarchy, but a reduction in the list of services required of the Government. Minds in France are still haunted by the memories of former political administrations. They think of the great Ministers of the past, of Richelieu and Colbert, or of great members of parliament such as Thiers and Guizot, of fine oratorical disputes, as during the period of the Restoration and under Louis Philippe, and certainly the present Chamber cannot bear a moment's comparison with this grand past. But it must not be forgotten that great Ministers carry out a grand policy, and that this does not make a people's happiness. In a democracy, if the people learnt to conduct their own affairs, they would not be less prosperous, and they would be freer and better educated. Let France but try to imitate the Government of Switzerland and of the United States, without regretting that of Louis XIV., and she will have no cause to repent of so doing.

But, it is objected, is it not evident that the Republic has compromised "prestige" of France abroad and that she stands now alone?

"Influence" and "prestige" are hollow and dangerous words, for they lead to international rivalries and to war. What ought to be the aim of all policy and of all government? To make the people legislated for as happy, as enlightened, as moral as possible. Does "prestige" attain this end? Not at all, for "prestige" is obtained by military glory which costs very dear in every way. Should a man's aim in life be to make a grand figure in the world and to be feared, rather than to care for his family and procure for them comforts, education for his children, and moral and intellectual enjoyment? I cannot comprehend such enlightened men as M. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu and M. Gabriel Charmes urging their country respectively to colonial annexation and to the complications of the

Eastern Question. You are anxious for foreign influence. Very well; but so are England, Germany, Austria, Russia and Italy, and as all desire that their individual influence should preponderate, there is constant risk of conflicts, and to what end? The interest generally invoked is that of trade, but neither Switzerland nor Belgium possesses this influence which you wish to acquire for your country; they have not a single gun-boat on either the Lake of Geneva or the Scheldt, and yet is not the East and the whole world open to them for their exports? Why? Precisely because, having no navy to maintain and no colonies, taxation is less heavy, and they can produce at a cheaper rate. Representative administration, even with a monarchy, is a bad system of government for colonies, because it is not sufficiently consistent. Proofs of this abound. M. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu writes yearly several excellent articles in the *Economiste Français*, and in the *Journal des Débats*, in which he shows up the bad government of the French colonies, principally of Algeria. In England and Holland the same complaint is made with regard to India and the Dutch Indies. When I affirmed this, I was answered that it was nevertheless administration such as this that had made British India what it now is. But this is quite a mistake. The East India Company, with its traditions authoritative and autocratic managing body, made the Indian Empire, and when the Crown took possession of it, Stuart Mill predicted it would one day regret having done so.

But it is also added, in tones rendered indignant by wounded patriotic feeling, I think needlessly so, "the Republic has let England take Egypt." I persist in believing that M. de Freycinet acted most wisely in this matter. Can it be believed that the English are very delighted with the thankless mission of governing Egypt? Ask Mr. Gladstone or any other member of the Liberal party? It is a certain fact that the English would retire to-morrow, if by so doing they did not expose the country to anarchy, and consequently imperil the safety of the Canal, which is a French and European as well as English interest, and also endanger peace in the East by leaving a vacuum which others more self-interested might rush in to fill. If France had been a monarchy at the present time, is there a single French statesman who, with the example of the Austro-Prussian *condominium* in Schleswig-Holstein, which led direct to Sadowa, before him, would have dared to counsel his country to a joint occupation of Egypt? Would not the previsions of Lord Granville, who said that such policy would inevitably lead to conflicts between the two countries, be already realized? Let us suppose things to be at their worst: that the English are obliged to remain in Egypt. Could not Frenchmen trade as well at Alexandria and Cairo as if the country belonged to France and even better, and with fewer administrative impediments, if we may believe what M. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu

tells us of Algeria? Those who understand the *true* state of European affairs, are of opinion that the Republic has acted both wisely and prudently in refusing to occupy Egypt in common with England, and that she would do well to continue to pursue the same course of conduct.

It is incontestable that wherever, in place of two distinctly separated parties like those of England in former times, and those of Belgium to-day, there are divers and shifting parties as in France, the instability of the Ministries is a serious obstacle to the good administration of foreign affairs, and that obstacle is greatest under a republican *régime*. If equal in merit, an extra-parliamentary Minister, maintained in power for a long course of years, ought to excel a stop-gap Ministry which a parliamentary coalition calls into being to-day, and a chance vote overturns to-morrow. The former, without in the least being either a Richelieu or a Bismarck, would know by long practical experience the personnel of the Sovereigns and Cabinets of Europe. Without genius at all, experience is enough to teach him what each of them desires, what wires must be pulled, what he can venture, and what he ought to fear. From retaining his position he is able to engage in operations that involve long periods for their evolution, to pursue designs slowly, to take advantage successively of the faults of his adversaries so as to produce situations from which he can profit, or which may be essential to secure alliances he needs. From whence comes the Minister of Foreign Affairs whom an unstable parliamentary régime calls to pilot his country through the numerous rocks of contemporary politics? He is raised suddenly and without preparation from very different occupations—from ancient literature, like M. Barthelemy Saint-Hilaire; from Greek and Roman antiquities, like M. Waddington; from journalism, like M. Challemeil-Lacour; from railways, like M. de Freycinet. And this savant, this litterateur, is transformed into a diplomatist, and obliged to hold his own on the chessboard of Europe, with old players who know all the moves thoroughly. How can he fail to make mistakes every moment? How is he to check the often contradictory indications that reach him? How can he escape being the dupe of preconceived ideas or of the ideas of other people? He is beaten in advance. And even if he were to conceive a wise and able policy, it would be impossible for him to put it into execution in the short time he is suffered to retain the portfolio. Presently, some Ministerial crisis or another would carry him away, and another would succeed him as little prepared as he was for the functions he has to perform. Under these conditions serious alliances, or even the conduct of a continuous negotiation, is impossible. What foreign Power can disclose its views or enter upon any fundamental engagement with a Minister who may fall a little afterwards, and who can never reply with authority?

The conduct of foreign affairs becomes more difficult when

the Members of Parliament get into the habit, as they are more and more doing in England and France, of incessantly controlling the resolutions of the Cabinet. There is no purpose for which a parliament is more unfitted. The mass of the members know nothing of foreign politics, and the state of the facts cannot be disclosed to them. They are guided by their prejudices, or the influence of the newspapers they are in the habit of reading. A parliament is a mob that obeys the impulses of the moment, or, sometimes, perhaps, the persuasions of eloquence. It is thus absolutely incapable of continuity in its plans, and in the conduct which is indispensable in foreign affairs.

In a monarchy this inconvenience of the parliamentary *régime* is mitigated by the direct intervention of the Sovereign. He represents the spirit of continuity. Other Sovereigns can come to an understanding with him directly; they have confidence in his discretion, and they know that they will find him there again to-morrow. There is no doubt that most of the great diplomatic combinations of our time have been arranged between Sovereigns and negotiating Ministers, independently of parliaments. The president of a republic, whatever be the personal esteem in which he is held, can never play the same rôle. For he only occupies power temporarily, and his successor might, perhaps, be of different or even opposite views. Thus the Emperor of Russia would never dream of treating about any important affair directly with M. Grévy, who might presently return into private life. It may be taken as demonstrated, then, that parliamentary government, by its very constitution, and above all in a republic, is incapable of conducting foreign affairs well, because it lacks everything that is necessary for doing so—traditions, information, considered plans, and, above all, what nothing can make up for, the spirit of continuity.

If wisdom enjoins one not to do what one does ill, it follows that the French Republic would do well to abstain from interfering in high foreign politics. Far from thinking it a disadvantage to France, I believe it would be a great blessing for the French people if it frankly adopted a policy of absolute neutrality. Friend of all, and ally of none—such ought to be the motto of modern democracies. Diplomatic combinations, alliances and counter-alliances, never bring anything to nations but the curse of financial and military burdens, and at the end of the account war itself. Suppose France to succeed under republican institutions in maintaining order and liberty, in securing to every citizen education, the franchise, and well-being, is not that all it could desire at home? And as for abroad, its influence would grow in the exact measure of the progress it was able to accomplish by means of democracy.

But, it is said, "is not the isolation of France and the Triple Alliance a fact, and a very sad fact, to be imputed solely to the

Republic?" Not at all. The present understanding between Germany, Austria, and Italy was probably made with a view of opposing an eventual Restoration in France, and not with any hostile intentions towards the Republic. The official papers in Germany said as much, and in so doing expressed the opinions of their Government, which opinions are attributable to the existing situation itself, as I will endeavour to prove. We must not forget that Bismarck dismissed Count Arnim because this diplomatist wished to use his influence in favour of the restoration of a monarchy in France.

If we may judge from the reigns of our two model kings in Belgium, Leopold I. and Leopold II., the Orleans Princes would probably make admirable constitutional Sovereigns; for they are well-educated, hard-workers, formed by adversity, brave types of honesty and loyalty, absolutely devoted to their country, without other ambition than to be of service to it. In addition to this, the partisans of a monarchy think that the latter would find allies more easily than the Republic. But to seek for allies under existing circumstances is to prepare a war. And, besides, a restoration in France would be necessarily clerical, whatever might be the personal inclinations of the Sovereign. It is quite impossible to dissimulate the fact that the opposition to such a king would be far stronger than that which occasioned the fall of Charles X., of Louis Philippe, and of Napoleon III. Democratic instincts, ideas, and customs have prodigiously strengthened since then. The Republic, having peacefully existed for a space of fourteen or fifteen years, has taken deep root in the land: a great proportion of the army would certainly continue Republican. The restored Sovereign would, therefore, have to seek the support of what is most permanent, reliable, and really capable of devotedness in the Conservative party—that is to say, of the Clericals and the Church. I am well aware that the representatives of this party in France do not possess the power they do in Belgium, in Ireland, or in the Catholic provinces of Germany; but they have faith, and are active and enterprising. The clergy is the last traditional institution existing amongst all the ruins of the great past, and a considerable proportion of the French population—nearly the entire aristocracy, the majority of the upper middle classes, and nearly all the women in every class—would accept their watchword from the priest. The support of the clergy would be the only chance of any restoration proving lasting, opposed as it would be by many and desperate enemies leagued together to effect its downfall. There can be then no doubt on the subject: any Restoration in France must of necessity be clerical; and against this Germany and Italy would at once offer armed resistance, while the Governments of Spain, Switzerland, Belgium, and England, all upholders of Liberalism, would be no less really hostile, though probably more platonically so.

It is clear that the ally of the restored Bourbon Monarchy would, as in 1828, be Russia. Hence, mistrust on the part of Austria, for what compensation can France offer Russia other than in the East, where Austria's, and more especially Hungary's, safety would be endangered? It follows, therefore, that any understanding Germany, Austria, and Italy, may have come to in view of a possible Restoration in France is simply in the interest of their own preservation. It must be remembered also that as the Republic is supported by the most restless portion of the French population, a policy of peace may be pursued with safety by a Republican Government, whereas a prince needing "prestige" would be forced to seek it in military prowess, even though he ran more risks than Napoleon III. in so doing. The only security for the retention of his crown would be the maintenance of a permanent *état de siège*. All Frenchmen who do not place the interests of Rome above those of their country, must realize the folly of wishing to establish a Government the inevitable result of which would be to place France in either open or concealed hostility to the whole of Europe, Russia perhaps alone excepted, with a prospect of war at a very early date.

Let us now consider what are the realities of the Socialist dangers. These can only become real through the fears of wild imaginations or by the social crisis inseparable from a Restoration or from war. The Red Spectre will not be other than a spectre, unless despotism be resorted to as a protection against it, as in 1852.

I am among the first to admit the truth recognized by the Emperor William of Germany, by King Humbert, and such Ministers as Gladstone and Bismarck, that our social condition wants radical reform; but in a country where six millions of families have a share in the landed property, and other three millions, besides these, own personal property, there is no chance of a collectivist revolution succeeding. The only circumstance which could lead to such a revolution would be an attempt at a *coup d'état*, and this, it is true, might be productive of the most fearful consequences. Any such attempt would be desperately resisted by all who are attached to the Republic: by the bourgeois classes and the populace, and there would be in all probability a split in the ranks of the army. If this occurred, Nihilism, taking advantage of the general chaos and confusion, and armed with petroleum and dynamite, could set fire to Paris and other large cities far more systematically and effectually than in 1871.

No Government can so well resist revolutionary Socialism as the Republic. The citizen Brousse, a partisan of anarchical revolution, sustains this argument with great force and foresight. He says:—

"As our aim is to destroy the State, we ought not to wish for a Republic which sets the State on the same solid footing as in Switzerland and the

United States. The best form of government for us is that which is the most easily overthrown—that is to say, a Legitimist Monarchy. We maintain, and we base our opinions on the researches of sociological science, that a Conservative Republican Government, as now established in France on the ruins of Radicalism, is calculated to bind together, in a firm alliance, all the elements of the middle classes, to the detriment of the lower orders, while a return to the Government of past ages would perpetuate divisions, engender strife, and thus open to us a revolutionary era."

Nothing could be more true than these statements. Socialism alone, unsupported by the middle classes, need not be dreaded, but if a *coup d'état* were to take place, or reverses were to be experienced in a foreign war, the anarchists would at once be ready to take advantage of the collapse of power.

To be brief, in so far as a foreigner can judge of the situation, I do not think there is any immediate danger for France, save those created by vivid imaginations and by desires for change. The Republic, in spite of the imperfections of parliamentary administration, which are, moreover, to be found even in lands where liberty is an ancient tradition, is the government the best calculated to assure that country's interior and exterior safety. Terrible crises would have to be gone through before the Monarchy could be restored, and such a restoration would bring neither to France nor to the rest of Europe that security which all are so anxious for. The French electors seem to understand this, for the votes show that Republican candidates are becoming more and more popular. The greatest danger now menacing France arises from her foreign policy, which, it must be confessed, is not distinguished by the wisdom and foresight demanded by the present critical situation of Europe. M. Renan recently said to me: "Do not trouble about our home affairs; we can go on for many years as we are; but any imprudence or mistake now made by our Government might involve us suddenly in a foreign war, and then France, and Europe in general, would be launched into unknown and most formidable difficulties and dangers." All this is still the secret of destiny, but it is quite certain that those who are anxious for the restoration of the Monarchy are desirous of an event which would be as prejudicial to the happiness of France as to the interests of general peace and civilization.

Wisdom, prudence, the true spirit of conservatism, dictate the maintenance of republican institutions. It must be borne in mind that an unknown force overrules the situation of all Continental States, the will of the army. Its opinions and its bayonets may, one day, be the means of deciding between the republic and the monarchy.

EMILE DE LAVELEYE.