

the character of the men who have held the office. Presidents like Grévy, Loubet and Fallières have voluntarily effaced themselves and allowed parliament to govern the country. Occasionally, presidents like Casimir-Perier have entered office with a somewhat exalted conception of their obligations and responsibilities, but their efforts to play a real rôle in the government of the country have signally failed, and some of them have resigned in disgust. Casimir Perier resigned because he was unwilling to play the rôle of valet to the parliament; Grévy was forced to resign because of a family scandal. Thiers and MacMahon were practically forced to retire because of the hostility of parliament. These precedents have clearly established the principle that although the term of the president is fixed by the constitution, he holds in fact at the will of parliament, in short, that the office is a mere dependency of the legislature, which insists on exercising itself the real governing authority.

Many thinking Frenchmen regret that the presidential office has been reduced to such insignificant proportions and they would like to see the chief of state play a rôle like that played by the American executive, and among these Mr. Leyret is one, but not even a strong man like Poincaré can raise the office above its present level unless the whole attitude of the parliament toward the presidency is changed. So long as it insists on governing as well as legislating, the President must remain as he has long been, a mere master of ceremonies, a "chaser of rabbits," an *ombre décharnée d'un roi fainéant*.

JAMES W. GARNER.

*The Political Philosophy of Burke.* By JOHN MACCUNN. (New York: Longmans Green and Company; London: Edward Arnold, 1913. Pp. 272.)

This book represents the second attempt in recent years to reduce Burke's political philosophy to a system and to put it into coherent form so as to enable one to form an estimate of his theories as a whole. Graham's essay on Burke in his *English Political Philosophy* (third edition, 1911) is less systematic in its method of treatment than the book under review, though in some ways it is a more brilliant and informing analysis of the theories of the great Whig orator. Graham analyzed in chronological order each of Burke's more important political speeches, pamphlets and essays, described their setting and criticised somewhat severely his ultra conservative and reactionary doctrines. MacCunn follows a different method and adopts a somewhat eulogistic attitude

toward the teachings of his master. He arranges Burke's theories according to topics and introduces more system into his method of treatment.

It is not an easy task to summarize Burke's political ideas, because with the exception of his *Reflections on the French Revolution*, he never wrote a systematic treatise. His political theories are found in pamphlets, speeches and letters scattered through a long series of years; the views which he set forth in some of them are not always easy to reconcile with those expressed in others, and his attitude is more often that of a polemist than a philosopher. Indeed, Burke never claimed to be a political philosopher in the ordinary sense of the term; he was first of all a statesman and a political orator, and he had a profound contempt for theories and for theorists, yet, as Mr. MacCunn remarks, he was in a sense one of the greatest of philosophers. He had studied Aristotle, Locke and Montesquieu, not to mention lesser political writers, and in every speech, pamphlet or treatise which he gave to the world, we find abundant proof of his wide range of reading, and not the least in history and politics. He thought profoundly on many political questions and he clothed his ideas in language characterized by a style and literary charm rarely equalled. No man ever discussed politics with so much eloquence and penetration or went so deeply to the root of the matter with which he dealt. He rarely discussed a bill or an administrative measure, however trivial, in which he did not go back to first principles, raise it above the level of ordinary questions and lift it into the realm of great ideas. Consequently, notwithstanding his denunciation of theorists, he was himself a philosopher, although, to be sure, "a philosopher in action" rather than a "refining speculatist" of the kind he distrusted. A study of his writings shows that the theorists against whom his polemics were chiefly directed were the abstract philosophers of France, those "architects of ruin" who had "laid the axe on the root of property" and who justified their acts by a "sort of digest of anarchy called the rights of man." He admitted that theories and philosophies have their use for he once said, "I do not vilify theory and speculation, no, because that would be to vilify reason itself." With the French philosophy that attributed the foundation of society to compact, that regarded the state as a mere partnership, that taught the doctrine that men surrender certain of their rights upon entering civil society, he had no patience, and it was the subject of some of his most bitter denunciations. His hostility to constitutional reform, his repudiation of the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people, his attack upon the principle of majority rule, his defense of aristocracy and of established

churches, his hatred of direct democracy, his plea for the independence of the representative as over against his constituency, and his theory of the Whig trusteeship, sum up the political theories with which Burke's name is most closely associated. Reactionary in his sympathies, entertaining an almost superstitious reverence for the past, believing that the constitution was an "entailed inheritance" upon which the people had no right to lay their hands, and with no faith in the possibility of political progress, his ideal was in the past rather than in the future.

Mr. MacCunn's analysis of Burke's philosophy is marked, as I have said, by a coldly judicial attitude. Unlike Graham, he rarely criticises and sometimes apologizes and defends. Burke's chief fault he finds to have been in his lack of an ideal. He was a political genius of the first order, and no one had it in him to give his country such a comprehensive and satisfying political ideal, but here he failed. The reader cannot but wonder, says MacCunn "how much of the strife and bitterness of the nineteenth century might have been averted if this master in politics had given the reins to his imagination as freely and sympathetically in looking forward as in looking backwards to ancestors, but it was not in that path that he was to work."

JAMES W. GARNER.

*How France is Governed.* By RAYMOND POINCARÉ. Translated by Bernard Miall. (New York: McBride, Nast and Company, 1914. Pp. 376.)

It is a difficult task for a man active in political life to describe the milieu in which he lives, moves and has his being. Such a man is apt to take for granted a degree of knowledge on the part of his readers which they do not possess, or to say things which are of interest to himself alone. But the president of the French Republic has avoided these difficulties in his new book, which is an admirable account of the essential features of the French government and well-proportioned to the needs of the average intelligent reader. M. Poincaré's literary gifts have stood him in good stead, as clarity of thought and felicity of expression are apparent on every page. His point of view—whenever he betrays one—is that of an old-fashioned Liberal. But so well flavored with French lucidity is his Liberalism that at times it appears almost like Radicalism.

The introductory chapter consists of a short discussion on civic rights and duties; then follow chapters on the commune, department, state,