

## THIERS AND THE FRENCH MONARCHY.\*

The deep-seated and far-reaching influence which Adolphe Thiers, statesman and historian, exercised on the reigns of the three successive kings of post-Napoleonic France is the theme of the researches of Professor Allison in his book, "Thiers and the French Monarchy." Even during the reign of Louis XVIII the young Thiers, though insisting on the overthrow of "Legitimacy," the doctrine which declared the right of the Bourbons to rule under the same conditions and with the same authority as the Bourbons had always ruled, uniformly advocated Constitutional Monarchy, and in his "History of the French Revolution" he openly proclaimed his views.

In the troublous times of Charles X Thiers consistently described his ideal of "representative monarchy" through the medium of the columns of the *National*, the newly established Opposition newspaper, of which he was the chief editor, and it was in the offices of this paper that the first organised protest against the existing Government was made. It was the daring enthusiasm of Thiers that swept the meeting which eventually drafted the Orleanist proclamation, "compromising Louis Philippe without consulting him."

Thiers, as Secretary-General of Finance, as Minister of the Interior and finally as President of the Council, held a powerful sway over the "Bourgeois King," whose confidence and personal friendship he at first fully received, but who later distrusted his President's foreign policy, and on two occasions caused him to lose office through his obdurate refusal to adopt it. Had Louis Philippe consented to follow the counsel of Thiers, when signs of the approaching storm which was to overthrow them both appeared on the horizon, the catastrophe of February, 1848, might have been averted; but in his own words: "Called, when all was lost I came . . . and I carried away with me only pain and sorrow."

The thread of Thiers's personal history is traced through the web of political and social events, and a very definite impression is gathered of the inexhaustible energy and extraordinary versatility of the man of whom Lamartine remarked: "There is enough saltpetre in that little man to blow up ten Governments." Lawyer, journalist, historian, politician and art connoisseur in turn, the little bourgeois who began life in material poverty at Marseilles, studied in quiet obscurity at Aix-en-Provence, and made his debut in Paris in a fourth-floor room of a small and mean hotel in a dark and dirty street, rose by the force of his own personality to hold the very reins of Government in his hands.

An account by an eye-witness of Thiers's distress after the abdication of Louis Philippe gives a pathetic impression of the temporary overthrow of the little man's dominating will-power: "During the whole journey . . . M. Thiers seemed almost out of his senses, gesticulating, sobbing, uttering incoherent phrases." The reader feels relieved to know that "the years covered by this book are only the preparation for the great career and the glory that he achieved in 1870."

\* "Thiers and the French Monarchy (1797-1848)." By John S. M. Allison. 18s. (Constable.)



Daumier's Cartoon of Thiers.  
The Young Statesman.

From "Thiers and the French Monarchy, 1797-1848." By John S. M. Allison (Constable.)

Those who have read with appreciation this thoughtful and carefully documented account of "Thiers and the French Monarchy" will await with eager anticipation the completion of his history in "Thiers and the Second Empire," which Professor Allison promises shall follow in due time.

E. BROWNING.

## ONE COMING FROM CALVARY.\*

Why does the modern man like to write about the genus old lady? One sees very well why old ladies should like to write about young men, even, with temerity, entering those realms where angels fear to tread—the worlds of sport. Of such was she who wrote "while all rowed fast, stroke rowed fastest of all." Young manhood means vitality, joy. It is a law that all things lean outwards, reach upwards to life and light. But why should young manhood occupy itself with those frail, etiolated lives, those denizens of the shut rooms "facing south," such as Mr. Sitwell so perfectly describes, furnished with feeding-cups, medicine bottles, and surgical devices; stuffy, often spiritually effete? Is it pity or is it—far more subtle—hatred? Why do so many of those who, in the last war, "died daily," write like this? Did they, perhaps, on numb winter mornings with grisly death on either hand and no hope of a to-morrow, think of old ladies sitting by warm fires, knitting? Did they feel an injustice in this, that they must die for these dames who had already enjoyed life for treble their own span, who did nothing, just sitting by fires in their multitudes, waiting to be died for? Not old ladies only; young ladies also, and others, millions of them, all sending their young men to Moloch—their beautiful young men, radiant, bannered with the dawn.

Now, while in Mr. Walpole pity predominates, I think that Mr. Sitwell's book is touched with a kind of unconscious hatred. He is so glad (and so excusably glad!) when Miss Waddington, with her shawls and her "typically English breakfast," goes to glory in the bombardment. And all the old ladies in bath chairs "like giant blackbeetles": the aquarium-like hotel where "crawl sideways crustacean

\* "Before the Bombardment." By Osbert Sitwell. 7s. 6d. (Duckworth.)

and armoured spinsters"; the lady with "as many breasts as Diana of the Ephesians"; the cosmopolitan lady who wishes to find "a little *ventre-à-terre* in London"—all are etched in vitriol. And that souging of the tempest afar, presaging, from the steel-grey ocean, the end; how the author revels in it! With what relief could he write of this seaside town as he writes in his fine passage (page 122) about Pompeii—"Closed for the Winter." He makes one feel that this carnivorous, drunken, fox-hunting portion of this crowd, hypocritical, secretly obscene, is like the people of Sodom. His considered judgment is icy, terrible. We must remember, when we shiver under this savage irony, that the author and others like him are recently come from Calvary, and that the vinegar they proffer there is surely this vision of life as a bleak irony, a cruel and obscene jest...

Of criticism there is little. The redundancy on page 300, from page 13, seems unnecessary, and the quotation from Moore is incorrect. It should be "her young hero," not "her dear hero." The book is packed with wit, humour and subtlety, and, though liking some of the author's poetry extremely, I had not realised his reserves of intensity until I read his prose.

MARY WEBB.  
(MRS. H. B. L. WEBB.)

### SOLDIERS AND STATESMEN.\*

Sir William Robertson's two volumes may be regarded as a collection of sermons, erudite, dogmatic and profound, preached on three texts, as follows: "I do not think that the British Constitution as at present worked is a good fighting machine." "We will never get an agreement of this kind with Ministers. They have too many axes to grind." And "We had a theory of the war which seemed crude and comfortable. Our idea was that British statesmen had done everything conceivable to lose the war for the past two or three years, and that if ever they relaxed their efforts we would surely win." The first of these sayings was made by the then Prime Minister (the late Marquis of Salisbury just after Black Week in 1899; it is quoted very early in "Soldiers and Statesmen" and, it may be added, is a text which has been thoroughly expounded by Sir Frederick Maurice recently in his "Governments and War." The second text is an extract—and a typical one—from a letter from Sir William Robertson to Sir Douglas Haig at the time of the *Nivelle affaire*. The third is from a source not strictly canonical, but at any rate a good working apocrypha; it appears in a work published last month by a New Zealand officer. The sentiment was certainly shared by the bulk of Overseas officers and by very many of their British comrades as well.

With what loss of power the machine of State was working is clear from a survey of conditions at the end of 1914. The Secretary of State for War was aiming at decisive results on the Western Front. The First Lord of the Admiralty was advocating the seizure of the Dardanelles and Constantinople. The Secretary of State for India and the Indian Government were conducting a campaign in Mesopotamia. The Secretary of State for the Colonies was concerned with operations in various parts of Africa. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was pressing upon his various colleagues the strategical advantages to be gained by transferring the main military efforts from the Western Front to the Balkan Peninsula and Syria. Well might Sir William Robertson declare that "a more deplorable state of affairs can surely never have existed in the conduct of any war."

This appalling state of things made a profound impression upon Sir William Robertson, although at the moment he was not in a position directly affected by it. The change came, however, when he was Chief of the General Staff and Mr. Lloyd George was Prime Minister,

\* "Soldiers and Statesmen, 1914-1918." By Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson, Bart., G.C.B., G.C.M.G., K.C.V.O., D.S.O. (Cassells.)

and the memories of the futile loss of power caused by the ill-fated Dardanelles campaign still remained. The inception, progress and termination of the Gallipoli gamble are dealt with at length in the first volume, and although we may regret the space devoted to reopening a controversy long settled by the report of the Dardanelles Commission, the subject is of interest as revealing the origin of that intense suspicion and dislike with which Sir William viewed projects put forward by statesmen—as they are called in the title, degenerating however sometimes to mere "politicians" in the text—and as showing the *causa causans* of that intensely anti-Eastern bias of the Chief of the General Staff.

This was the rift which disturbed the harmony which should have existed between the head of the State and the head of the army. Sir William Robertson was a fanatical Westerner; Mr. Lloyd George was a confirmed Easterner. The latter was ever seeking a "way round"; looking for outlying props which might be knocked away from under the enemy; and inclined, it must be added, to flirting with the dangerous heresy that war can be made on the cheap. On the other hand Sir William Robertson accepted as an article of his military religion that the Western was the decisive front. The main body of the enemy was there to be found and, instead of searching for unstable and subsidiary props, Sir William was determined to undermine and destroy the main pillar by which the enemy superstructure was supported. Casualties terrible in number would necessarily ensue, but the price would have to be paid without flinching. Such in a few words were the summarised philosophies of the two leading men in England from 1916 till the last crisis of the war. Where two men, each of strong personality, a combative disposition and holding diametrically opposite views, are fated to have to work in concert, it is clear that one or the other must give way. Sir William Robertson found that he could not conscientiously continue to hold his high office unless the Prime Minister would conform to his views, and, as this solution was rejected, the Chief of the Staff resigned.

The reluctance of Mr. Lloyd George and the statesmen generally to see eye to eye with Sir William was due to the fact that for nearly four years millions of men had been poured into France, and a decisive result seemed as far off as ever. With the introduction of the tank however, in 1916, the possibility of a break through on the Western Front had sensibly increased, and the arguments of the Westerners could now be pitched in a more assertive key. The almost complete lack of appreciation of this new arm which is apparent in Sir William Robertson's volumes is a confession that this new factor was overlooked. This is the most curious feature of a book which has many curious things.

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### THE BLACK DEATH.\*

To the student of English history, the phrase "the Black Death" suggests that visitation of the fourteenth century which decimated the population and had such far-reaching economic effects that their influence is hardly exhausted. That no such limited interpretation of the words is adopted by Mr. Nohl is clear from every chapter of his book, and from the fact that he includes among celebrated victims personages so far apart as the Emperor Lothar and Cornelius Jansen, who died in 1138 and 1638 respectively. The volume indeed is not a survey of any particular plague, but of many plagues. Even so its value as a scientific record is somewhat lessened by its avoidance of the economic reactions of plagues, and by its acceptance of Defoe's narrative of the London epidemic of 1665 as a serious contribution to history.

Within its limitations, the compilation brings together much curious information, the effect of which is heightened

\* "The Black Death." Compiled by Johannes Nohl from contemporary sources. Translated by C. H. Clarke. 12s. 6d. (Allen & Unwin.)