

FRENCH POLITICAL STABILITY AND ECONOMIC UNREST.

THE French Republic, the third of the name in less than a century, has just completed its twentieth year. It has escaped the dangers of its early childhood; it has passed successfully the trying years of growth and youth; it is now in its majority. Into political life enters a generation that has known no other form of government, that has had no share in the faults and in the lamentable end of the Second Empire. What ideas, what principles predominate among the people at the present hour? What currents of opinion are being formed? What new problems are forcing themselves upon the attention of the statesmen of France, which is so old as a nation and so young as a republic?

I will first call attention to a remarkable revival of public opinion with regard to colonial questions. Some years ago expeditions to remote places (such as Tonquin, Madagascar, etc.) were the cause of impassioned discussion. They occasioned the government the most serious embarrassment. The opposition party violently reproached it for the sacrifices of men and treasure demanded by the countries lately placed under the protection of France. According to this party, these new acquisitions cost much more than they ever brought, and as the sooner a piece of folly is mended the better, there should be no hesitation in evacuating countries that ought never to have been occupied. On this subject the radical and the monarchical press were unanimous.

To-day these arguments are almost never heard. Public opinion is reconciled to colonial enterprises; it would not permit them to be abandoned. It does justice to the clear-sightedness of the statesmen that seized the favorable moment for assuring to France new possessions outside Europe. The change seems due chiefly to the fortunate results obtained by the French protectorate in Tunis. This success, which has been rapid and is constantly growing, has made a great impression. It has given confidence. The people are asking if with equally able administrators the other countries that have recently come under the French protectorate may not also become a source of wealth and of increased power to the mother country.

Another very important and very marked change of opinion is shown in the rapid decomposition of the Royalist party, the opposition that attacked on principle even the constitution, that tried to overturn the public in order to substitute another form of government. This opposition is losing courage, breaking up and tending to disappear. A certain number of electoral districts still nominate Imperialist or Royalist deputies, but the number is decreasing constantly. The monarchical party resembles an army that is melting away day by day and will soon count fewer soldiers than officers. More than one among its officers refuse to continue a struggle that has become useless, and they will bend before the will which the country has repeatedly expressed and either renounce political life or rally openly to the republic. The past year has seen several notable examples of these, one of whom is Baron Mackau, formerly president of the *Union des Droits*, who has recognized that the suffrage of the people definitely founded the republic. In short, at the present time the constitution established in 1875 is accepted by nearly all Frenchmen—expressly by the great majority, tacitly by the greater part of the others. Before none of the governments that have succeeded in France during the past century has the opposition been thus disarmed. Each of them after a few years had to struggle against a coalition of opponents who redoubled their efforts and their audacity until they had thrown it down.

The opposite has happened in the third republic. Founded by the monarchists at a crucial period, its first years have been the most critical. It has at last attained a triumphant prosperity, and at the end of twenty years its adversaries seem to despair of destroying its vital force. This discouragement of the monarchical opposition, which since the elections of 1889 has been further accentuated, is due to the combination of a great number of circumstances, of which I shall repeat here only the principal. First, the disgrace that the Royalist party, under bad influences and poor leadership, has brought upon itself in mixing with the disreputable crowd that conducted the enterprise of General Boulanger. It has reaped from this disgraceful and unfortunate campaign only the shame of having taken part in it. The proof of its own unscrupulousness that it gave on this occasion has detached from it many of its best followers. Such an alliance could be justified only by a brilliant success. As they failed to attain this success, the alliance seems like a veritable moral suicide. What a sad end for the House of France! An underhand complicity with

dishonorable adventurers capable of any duplicity! Secondly, the French conservative party could not fail to profit in the long run by the lesson given it every day by neighboring countries. Does it not see that in Germany, for example, the Catholic minority, by force of patient energy and parliamentary cleverness, has made itself respected, even feared; that it has obtained successively the repeal of all the laws inimical to it; that it plays in the *Reichstag* an important and at times a decisive part? It is quite evident that neither of these results would have been obtained if the Catholic minority had not taken a relentless attitude and fought even the constitution of the new German empire. Does the conservative party in France display the same wisdom in depriving itself of every means of action for the pleasure of making a hopeless opposition to the constitution, whereas by accepting the constitution it could exercise a useful influence over public affairs and aspire even to direct them? Is it not better to be dubbed a Republican and have one's opinions respected than to be a Royalist-conservative and count for nothing?

In the eyes of ardent Royalists this reasoning would carry no weight; but the mere fact that it finds a large number of approvers is the best proof of the progressive and final disappearance of the monarchical idea. This idea, once very powerful in France, which consists in uniting in equal affection the reigning family and the country, in incarnating, so to speak, the nation in the sovereign, and still exists in varying degrees in England, Italy, and Germany, is so completely effaced from the mind of the French people that almost a miracle would have to take place for its regeneration. From one point of view, obligatory military service for all has exercised a profound moral influence. The youth of the country, passing under the flag, learn that political parties are of only secondary importance, that every man, whether Royalist, Imperialist, or Republican, owes equally his devotion and his blood to his country. The feelings are no longer understood of those noble *émigrés* who believed themselves Frenchmen to the finger-tips, and, nevertheless, fought in the ranks of the allies when they invaded France in 1814. To-day this seems criminal to the most devoted Royalists. This is because they, too, separate their duty to their country from their attachment to the royal family; because among them, too, the dynastic sentiment is no longer more than a shadow. This is the decisive reason among those that make monarchical restoration improbable and almost impossible: the vital spring of the monarchy, faith in a dynasty, exists no longer in

France. The democratic spirit has replaced it. What, then, is left for the conservatives if not to rally to the republic?

Thus, in place of the ancient monarchical law, a constitutional law is being formed, always conservative, but none the less republican as well, and professing to respect the existing constitution. This constitutional law gives grave anxiety to the vigilant Republicans in power. How will they receive these recruits? It is quite out of their power to repulse them openly after proclaiming for years that the republic is open to all. It would be difficult, as well as imprudent, to shut out those that have at last decided to enter. On the other hand, to receive them without mistrust is perhaps equivalent to throwing open the door to an enemy that tries to worm himself in by guile after being convinced that he cannot enter by force. Shall they dispossess old servants of the Republican party to make place for these neophytes, who must be regarded with suspicion, even if they are sincere? Evidently not. These new converts, in the first place, shall have to give pledges and arm themselves with patience. It is only in heaven that the word of the evangelist is verified: "The last shall be first and the first shall be last." If the opposition, in rallying to the republic, wishes to convince public opinion of its sincerity, it ought to be extremely modest in its pretensions and prudent in its movements. New conditions need new men.

In a word, there is a delicate transition here, the more delicate because in it is involved a question of religious politics. So long as a restoration of the monarchy has seemed possible, the Catholic clergy have not concealed the direction of their sympathies. The Republican government has had to declare more than once with Gambetta that "clericalism is our enemy." The Catholic Church, on its side, complains of being persecuted. It regards the scholastic and military laws as machines specially directed against itself. But we must remember that in a late and very bitter conflict, perhaps more bitter than the preceding conflicts, the government found an altogether unexpected ally, the Pope. On those bishops that opposed the civil authority with extraordinary haughtiness and obstinacy, Leo counselled, then commanded, then imposed silence. The more the bishops have tried to interpret otherwise his counsels, the more his counsels have taken the form of precise and pressing injunctions; so that at last the bishops, obliged to submit or openly to disobey, have had, much to their disgust, to give up resistance. And the pope has not only put an end to this irritating conflict, but he has also missed no

occasion of recommending to the faithful the sincere acceptance of the form of government which the popular will has established in France. He has thus made a conspicuous separation of the cause of the Catholic religion from the cause of the monarchy. Henceforth a good Catholic, in France, can be without scruple a Republican in fact and in name.

An ally of this magnitude is always a little embarrassing, especially when he presents himself uninvited. The Republicans regard Leo as a very politic pope, a man of superior intelligence, and one who by the breadth of his mind and by his understanding of the social conditions of modern times makes a strong contrast with his predecessor, Pius IX. But the majority observe with some disquietude his friendly attitude toward the republic. So much graciousness puts them on the defensive. They feel that the rabid enemies of the existing government, by suddenly transforming themselves into its supporters, can be more dangerous in the ranks of the majority than in the ranks of the opposition, and that, above all, if they should become the strongest faction in this majority a formidable eruption would forthwith break out, sweeping away the work of the past twenty years. The Republicans, therefore, are disposed to see in this sudden conversion, not so much a sincere adhesion to the republic, as a clever move against which they must guard. Then, too, the intervention of the pope in the home policy of France gives them serious worry. Is there no danger in an authority that can be exercised over a large number of electors? It can let loose a tempest just as it can calm one. Leo is very old. Who will guarantee that his successor will not follow an entirely different line of conduct? Now, a pope hostile to the Republican government would perhaps find his counsel followed with as much ardor, at least by the higher clergy, as the ill-will encountered by Leo XIII. At the present time this quarter is tranquil, but it may well hold in store for the future more than a painful surprise.

In the region of economics there is a manifestation of the beginnings of a still, but an already perceptible, reaction against protection, which has been dominant in the commercial policy of France for three years. Its victory has been complete. It was planned with great forethought. The agricultural and industrial interests that needed protection, instructed by long and hard experience, had learned to consider themselves united in interest. They joined forces and formed a kind of indissoluble combination. Together they attained what each demanded. But they have perhaps abused their advantage. Many

violent complaints have been heard. The interests that need free trade are in turn suffering and are disturbed. Although the two Chambers are actually protected (the Senate, at least, as much as the Chamber of Deputies), they will nevertheless be obliged to yield a point if public opinion becomes more pressing. It is possible that public opinion has been influenced by the defeat just sustained by the partisans of high protection and of the McKinley bill in the United States. A return to the policy of free trade is not to be thought of; that is, it is at least unlikely so long as a complete trial of the new tariff has not been made. But we have reason to believe that protection will be obliged, as the saying is, to water its wine.

The reaction against protection would at once become more rapid if, as many think, it led to an increase in the price of the necessaries of life. In this event public opinion would not long endure an economic system unfavorable to the welfare of the poorer classes. There is at the present time a popular impression that the misery of the poor is a social injustice: to lessen it if one can is a duty, to aggravate it would in any case be a crime. Can this be called socialism? No, if this word is taken in its rigid acceptation. However, there is no denying that socialism attracts more and more the interest of the public. People are saying that the relations of capital and labor are not what they ought to be, that there must be some change in the method of distribution of wealth in order to make it more just. The demand that misery be diminished by better social organization, that the most shocking inequalities be corrected, at least to a certain degree, by the intervention of the state—this is certainly a socialistic idea, and it has of late made great progress in France. We have socialists of all kinds—"possibilists," "collectionists," "Christian socialists," without counting all those that have no clear views and feel simply a general sympathy with the masses and their claims against capital.

But as soon as they have to go beyond vague generalities and propose something positive and precise, the difficulties begin. On the one hand, many people lean toward a sentimental socialism so long as this does not menace their revenue; but they make a complete change of attitude as soon as their purse has to suffer. On the other hand, the socialists are far from being in accord among themselves: not only their discussion of principles, but, above all, their personal quarrels paralyze their action and rob them of nearly all their power, principally at the time of elections. The masses have not had political training, and it is often their ill-fortune to give their confidence to un-

worthy leaders. However, in spite of its drawbacks, the workingmen's party is making progress and appears destined still to do something if it avoid all compromise, however slight, with the anarchists.

Lack of space prevents me from characterizing here the new tendencies that are now manifesting themselves in art and literature, particularly in the novel, which seems to be turning from the excess of brutal naturalism without losing the advantages of realistic exactitude. But I cannot close this article without recalling the memory of Ernest Renan, whose death has been a great blight upon the literature of the year just closing. Renan was undoubtedly the foremost of the French prose-writers of this century and one of the foremost in the rich literary history of France. We may dispute the value of his learning, the solidity of his historical work, the profundity of his philosophical thought; nevertheless we cannot forget that he was one of the first in France to assimilate the results of German biblical criticism and to render accessible to the great public the doctrines of Hegel and Schopenhauer. But whatever judgment posterity may pass upon him in this regard, two facts are undeniable: first, the extraordinary influence that Renan has exercised upon the minds of his generation, which, like him, divided between diverse tendencies and preoccupied with being sincere with themselves, have tried to preserve religious sentiment without faith.

Then his incomparable charm as a writer! With him, art attains to that supreme degree of perfection where it is no longer perceived. His natural and exquisite style seems to flow from a spring: its harmony is as unobtrusive as scholarly. His prose, with its gentle and smiling irony, is winged, like Plato's. Renan has had this privilege of the greatest writers: his word has been able to reach every one. He filled the vast expanse between the heights of philosophical and historical science and the jaded curiosity of the ordinary reader. This professor of Hebrew at the College of France, this decipherer of Semitic inscriptions, this assiduous contributor to the "*Journal Asiatique*," could also give the most exquisite treat to lovers of literary style when it pleased him to refresh himself with a philosophical fantasy, or when he consented to write his recollections of his childhood and youth. France still possesses thinkers and writers, but no writer with both his largeness and his subtlety of thought; no thinker whose words have the seductive magic of Renan and who knows like him how to touch the heart.

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GERMAN SOCIALISM AND LITERARY STERILITY.

IN 1791 appeared a little book called "Ideas for Defining the Limits of the Activity of the State," by a youthful philosopher who afterward became one of the prominent statesmen of his age, Wilhelm von Humboldt. In opposition to the antique doctrine, which absolutely sacrifices the individual to the state, the author regards the state as a necessary evil, which, in the interests of personal liberty, must be confined to the narrowest limits. According to him, its only justifiable task is to provide for external and internal safety, and he denies its right of meddling with other questions of general or individual welfare, because such interference tends to suppress personal initiative and to constrain the citizens into a uniformity degrading to character. This theory, an anticipation of the views of the most radical wing of the later Manchester school, was a revolt against the prevailing German system of paternal government, which meddled with the smallest details of private life. The Prussian Code (*Landrecht*) of that time, for instance, prescribed that every healthy mother was in duty bound to suckle her child herself.

But Humboldt's theory, in itself influenced by Rousseau's doctrines, was untenable and afterward gave way to the exactly opposite one of Hegel. Hegel regarded the state as the realization of the moral idea, which thinks and knows itself and executes what it knows and wills; consequently the state is a reasonable being in itself and the principal duty of the individual is to be a member of it. In practice the system prevailing in Germany till 1848 was that of a well-meaning, honest, and intelligent bureaucracy, which, particularly in Prussia, realized great progress, but left little room to individual activity in public life. The battle then was about the constitution, the respective rights of the Crown and the Chambers, the individual rights of citizens, while at the same time the power of the ubiquitous bureaucracy remained unshaken. It was only during the time of reaction which followed this period that some eminent lawyers, particularly Gneist and Bucher, showed by their studies that the gist of Anglo-Saxon liberty lay not in the parliamentary