

are playing solitaire; beyond them a half-dozen other Mexicans are playing cards.

Three dark houses and then a barber-shop, the only adequately lighted room in Blickenburg; beyond the barber-shop, a third palace of riotous pleasure, where a number of Mexicans are playing pool with the solemnity and deliberation of octogenarians.

Quiet, deep quiet, inconceivably deep quiet. A group on the sidewalk is conversing. I linger near to hear what scandal they are helping on its way. They are discussing the timbering of mine drifts.

There is no sign of activity until, afar off, the train which is to take me westward makes itself heard. Standing by the hotel window, I note that one man,

leaning against the wall, says something to another man, also leaning against the wall, and the second man expectorates, at long range hitting the stove.

Two men come out of the house which is marked "Billiards." Beyond that, quiet; profound quiet.

Saturday night.

Saturday night in a mining town.

A Visit to President Millerand

By RAYMOND RECOULY

ON a rainy and dismal evening I waited in a cold antechamber at the Elysée (no matter how well heated they may be, antechambers always deserve this epithet) to be admitted to the presence of the President of the Republic.

During the few minutes I waited two reminiscences of Mr. Millerand came to my mind—not of Millerand in repose, but, on the contrary, in full action.

I thought of a scene that took place in August, 1915, a few weeks before the great offensive in the Champagne district, at Pierry, a little village not far from Epernay, then the Headquarters of General Castelnau, who commanded the Armies of the Center. The Generals had met in council in order to draw up a definite plan for the offensive. Mr. Millerand, then Minister of War, presided, having come purposely from Paris with Buat, then a colonel. There were also present Pétain, Army Commander, to whom operations were intrusted; Humbert, whom I accompanied, commanding the next army which was to take part on the left wing in the battle. After a rapid *déjeuner* the chiefs set to work. Millerand listened attentively to them, one after the other, as he knows so well how to do; for, although he speaks wonderfully well, he instinctively prefers listening to speaking. He asked now and then for supplementary explanations, and summed up in two or three phrases the opinions which had been expressed. When every one had spoken, he concluded. This civilian—quite alone among military men—felt perfectly at ease in their midst. They understood him and he understood them.

When the council was over, while we rushed at a mad rate towards Nettancourt, our headquarters, Humbert gave me in a few words his opinion of Millerand. He said: "I have met a good many politicians. I do not know one other who inspires me with such confidence. He is a chief!"

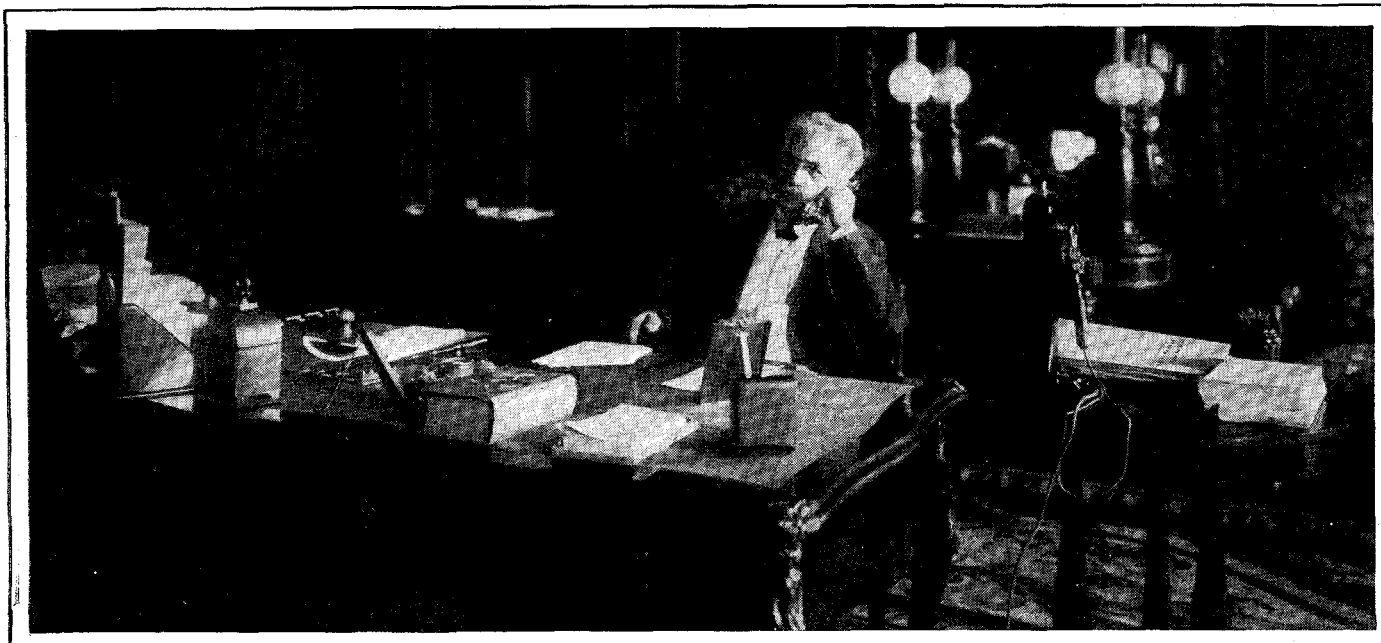
The second scene took place during the summer of 1920, at the Spa Conference. Mr. Millerand, then President of the Council, had invited some people to *déjeuner* on July 14, in the magnificent villa hidden among gardens which housed the French delegation. Marshal Foch was there; a few minutes before I had seen him on the terrace, affectionately taking the arm of his old comrade, Marshal Wilson, saying, with a smile: "Well, *mon cher*, after having made war together, here we are to talk over coal!"—for all the discussions referred to coal. General Weygand, François Marsal (Minister of Finances), Le Trocquer (Minister of Public Works), Philippe Berthelot, and three or four guests were also present. At dessert Mr. Millerand arose; thickset, robust, in his steady voice he expressed in a few clear, comprehensive phrases the impressions which each of us had gathered. Those were the last days of a laborious conference, when, for the first time in the presence of Germans, the French and English theories and interests had clashed. Mr. Millerand defended ours as energetically and as eagerly as he could. Towards the end, rather than come to a rupture, he threw ballast overboard and compromised. Some people did not fail to blame him for this. They were wrong, very wrong; for at that time Lloyd George was all-powerful. Now, had we broken with England when Lloyd George had complete power, the rupture would have been final. It would have been disastrous to both countries. When the rupture did come, on our part it certainly had been too long delayed; it could have, and it ought to have, taken place one year earlier. It would then probably have involved the fall of Lloyd George, who had already lost prestige owing to his mistakes and the folly of his Russian and Oriental policy. But at that time, during the summer of 1920, there could have been no question of his downfall.

THE usher, wearing the chain of office round his neck, came to open the door. Following him, I crossed the two salons, where the officers attached to the Elysée stand, and then I was once more in the presence of the President. With his white, luxuriant, and very thick hair, his black bushy and bristly eyebrows, thick mustache, the relaxed face of a fighter in repose, the eyes sparkling behind glasses, short neck and square shoulders, I know few men who give such an impression of massive strength, of imperturbable calm, masterly authority, and *sang-froid*. This man of sixty-four, who has followed infallible rules of hygiene for a long time, over whom the years slip away without leaving any trace, looks as if he were sheltered from any fatigue and also from any agitation.

I spoke to him at once about his speech at Evreux and the profound sensation it had caused in the country. It may be said that there is no subject which he has more at heart. Adjusting his eye-glass, regarding his questioner right in the face, without any beating about the bush or precautions, he went straight to the heart of the question.

It would be unwise in the highest degree to repeat exactly what he said to me during the half-hour I spent with him. Some of his remarks, even the greater part, could be repeated without any inconvenience; certain others would have to be softened, while a small number of them ought to and will remain strictly confidential.

But there can be no harm done—on the contrary, it will be profitable—if we dwell upon the imperious reasons which have impelled the President to make this speech six months before the general elections. When he pronounced his opinions thus publicly, he did so deliberately, because he wished to spread among the public and propagate among the people—now while there is still time—certain ideas which should serve as a thesis or



Photograph by Henri Manuel, Paris

President Millerand at his desk

as a basis for the coming electoral discussions.

What are the ideas on which the President insists? What is meant exactly by the "reform of the Constitution," which he advocates with so much frankness and courage?

Why does he estimate that this reform is absolutely necessary, and how, in his opinion, could it be put into operation? By going over his previous speeches, his public declarations at the time of his election, his message and interviews with all those who approached him, it will be easy to reply to these questions. Nothing could be more interesting or more useful than to reply to them at this moment.

MR. MILLERAND often says: "If it is my duty not to belong to any clique or party, I am still perfectly entitled to serve a policy."

He has always adhered to a policy mainly composed of Liberalism, if we take this word in its fullest sense. When, barely twenty-five years old, he presented himself at the General Council—this is a souvenir which he likes to recall—he boldly adopted the "Radical-Liberal" badge. It must be said that since then this badge has not encountered fortune of any kind. The two words protest against being coupled together. They were, in fact, divorced long ago in order that each one could follow its own road.

The point on which the President insists most energetically is the uselessness—much more than that, the danger—of recommencing the old quarrels regarding religion, disputes which no man of sense could wish to revive. He says:

"We are not going to return to our¹

¹ Literally, "to our vomit."

painful scenes of the past. We really have something else to do for the moment."

Any attempt to revive the quarrels concerning Church and State, to discuss once more (it would be absurd to do so) the question of our Embassy at the Vatican, would, I am quite sure, find in Mr. Millerand a vigorous and determined adversary. I may say, incidentally, that by this attitude he would render his country a great service.

Why does the President insist upon the necessity of revising the Constitution?

In his opinion, Ministerial instability is an evil—an extremely grave evil—from which our parliamentary system suffers. Any politician who has lived in Parliament (Mr. Millerand entered the Chamber some thirty-five years ago), provided he is as sincere as the President, could but corroborate this statement. There are indisputable drawbacks to this instability, the deplorable consequences of which are only too visible. Any continued action is rendered impossible, not only in policy, but, which is perhaps still worse, in administration. Now, for nations as for individuals, success is chiefly derived from perseverance, from continued efforts. If you ask any one who has succeeded brilliantly in life, taking at random the most varied professions, provided he is a clairvoyant observer and sincere, you will always receive the same answer.

It is true that some people may raise the objection that certain Ministries of the Third Republic lasted rather long—two or three years. The President would reply, without a moment's hesitation, that this argument is worth nothing, ab-

solutely nothing. However solid it may appear to be, no Ministry is *sure* of lasting. Certainty regarding the morrow is absolutely forbidden to it, and it is just this uncertainty which forms the worst of the evils. How can Ministers settle down to serious and lasting work when they may be overthrown from one day to the other by no matter whom, for any reason, about the most futile question?

If we study carefully each of the Ministerial crises which have occurred under our present régime (unfortunately, there were very many of them), we will find that certain of them were caused by questions of policy and doctrine, but many by simple questions put forward by members. When a Ministry has lasted rather long, all members who aspire at replacing it—and they are legion—use all kinds of weapons to provoke the ardently desired fall. What do they risk? If they fail once or twice, they start again a third time. Sooner or later they succeed. That game is perfectly free from danger for them and cannot be profitless.

As President Millerand says, "At every throw one gains!"

If one does not gain at every throw, at least one is certain not to lose. Now it would be quite different if the would-be Ministerial candidates knew that by overthrowing the Cabinet they risked parliamentary dissolution and fresh elections. They and the entire Chamber would then hesitate before running such a risk. The fear of facing their electors—perhaps not being re-elected—would act as a beneficial brake and would doubtless calm those impatient and turbulent ambitions. The Ministry would be sure of remaining in power far longer. It would not have to dread daily

ambushes and snares, laid by adversaries moved to do so only by the desire to belong to the next Ministry.

The President often points out that of all countries possessing a parliamentary system France is the only one in which a régime of this kind is in force; in which the executive powers appear to be absolutely disarmed before Parliament, are subjected to all its caprices, without any counter-weight, are sapped at the base—ephemeral, vacillating—consequently are without any real force and without authority.

In Switzerland the Federal Council has never been overthrown. In the United States the President is master. The Ministers are appointed by him. Parliament cannot do anything against him. In England any Ministerial change is almost always followed by dissolution.

Why is France the only country to practice a system with such evident drawbacks? The countries mentioned above are all as profoundly democratic as France. Real democracy has nothing to do with this affair. On the contrary, it demands in an absolute and imperious manner that the executive, legislative, and legal powers be clearly divided.

Now, owing to this weakness and collapse of executive power in France, for a long time Parliament has not ceased to usurp its privileges. Mr. Millerand insisted on this point very strongly in his famous Ba-ta-Clan speech, before the last elections.

"The evil has developed to such a point," he said, "that it seems absolutely legitimate and normal for a Deputy to control all the nominations in his constituency and for posts to be always filled by candidates of the representative of the constituency, according to his wishes. It is a detestable system. The responsibility of the executive power—which should, theoretically, choose and appoint—disappears fatally when, instead of having free choice, it is bound to ratify wishes that have been whispered, sometimes in the form of a hidden threat."

Mr. Millerand added: "Tyranny may be defined as the reunion of all powers under one and the same head, whether of man or of an Assembly."

All dictatorial power is detestable, whether wielded by a Parliament or by one man.

In order to find a remedy for this evil, it is absolutely necessary to strengthen the authority of the President of the Republic and of the Ministry in relation to the Parliament. At the present time the President of the Republic certainly possesses the power to dissolve Parliament. But this is a purely theoretical and delusive power, because the Chamber can be dissolved only by consent of the Sen-

ate; this makes any dissolution almost impossible—it has never even been attempted.

The Constitution of 1875 was built up soon after the fall of the Empire and the defeat due to its incapacity; therefore the men who legislated were still under the obsession of the nightmare of Cæsarism. They had an instinctive dread of a dictator's *coup d'état*. This fact explains their work.

To-day this fear no longer exists; their reasons have lost all their strength.

IN order for a President to have some authority over the Chambers his mandate should not depend exclusively on them, as at present. When the time comes for electing the head of the state, a certain number of other electors, delegates of the General Councils, representatives of large associations—of masters, workmen, of intellectual or artistic workers—should and could be added to the National Assembly.

The constitutional reforms of which Mr. Millerand is the very ardent partisan consist of greater authority for the President, owing to his election and the power to dissolve Parliament: to be granted to him without any restrictions, but to be exercised only once, when he considered that a Ministry had been overthrown without any reason. Mr. Millerand would like (this was stated in his Ba-ta-Clan speech) the Senate to contain, in addition to the Senators elected under the present system, certain representatives of professional associations, of chambers of commerce, syndicates, of masters and men, rural and urban syndicates, the General Confederation of Labor, universities, academies.

"I am convinced," he said, "that if the corporate element entered therein, it would have the happiest effect on the working of public affairs."

He has had these ideas for a long time, and has great faith in them. In his Ba-ta-Clan speech he developed them fully, and stated them again when appointed President of the Council. On the eve of his election as President of the Republic, on September 21, 1920, in a note officially communicated to the press, he stated his programme manifesto:

"I defined," he said, "in my speech of November 7, 1919, the policy of social progress, order, work, and union which is characterized externally by the integral application of the Treaty of Versailles and the defense of the principles on which it is based, in accordance with our Allies; and internally by maintaining the organic laws of the Republic, the restoration and development of all our economic force, decentralization, and, at the proper time, the improvement of our

constitutional laws, which experience has shown to be necessary."

The Deputies and Senators who voted for him, therefore, were very well aware of his intentions. Mr. Millerand has not been a traitor to them. He repeated these declarations in his message to Parliament. Why should people be astonished, therefore, because he wished to repeat them once more before the great electoral consultation, which will take place next year? The only people who can be surprised are those who do not know of his courage and loyalty—qualities of a man who is infinitely less inclined by nature to turn round an obstacle than to rush at it boldly.

The President of the Republic, in complete accord with the President of the Council, considered it was not only his right but his duty to draw the attention of future electors to the necessity for those essential reforms on which the future of our country so largely depends.

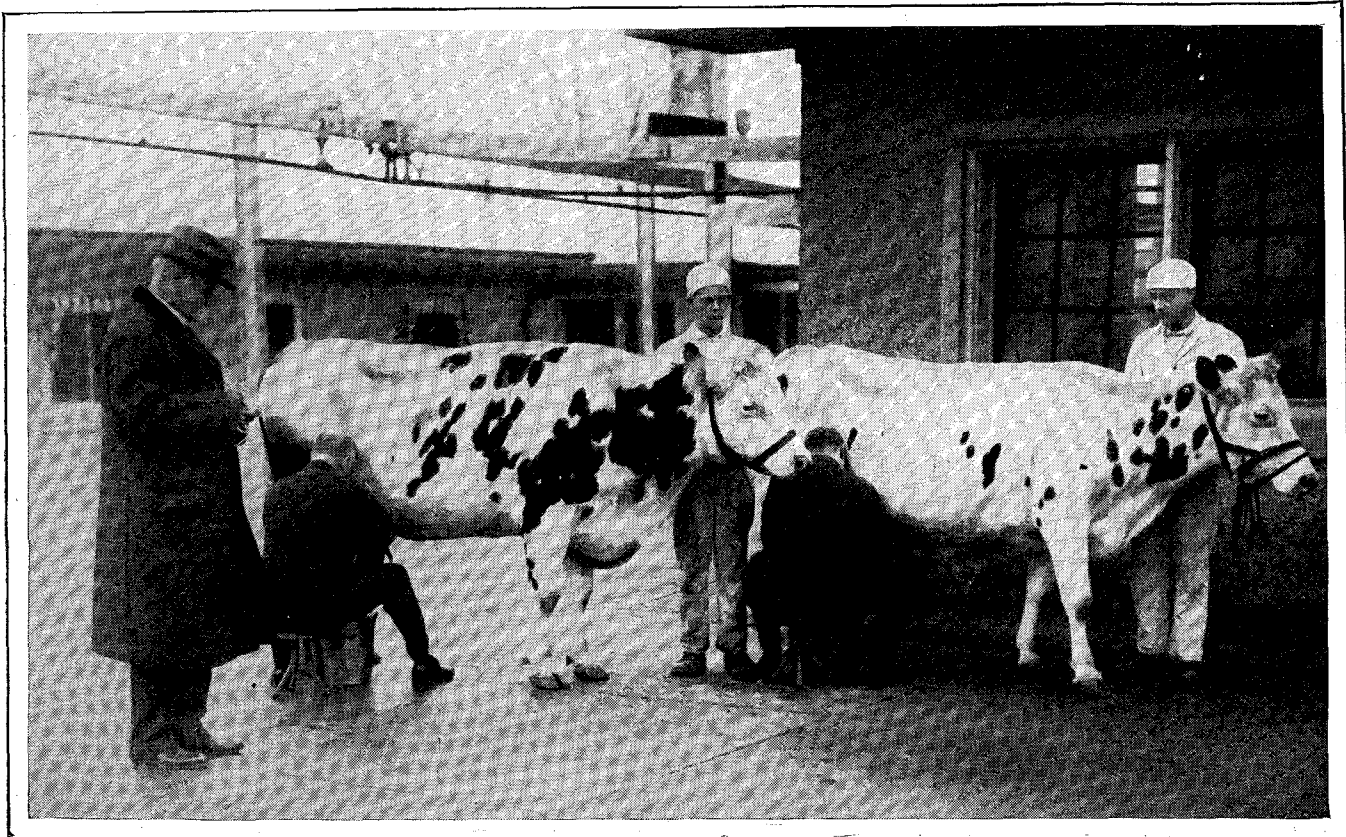
These words appear to have caused a certain emotion among the advanced elements of the Radical party, who have interpreted them to be a kind of challenge addressed to them, a rallying-cry to the national bloc. When the Evreux speech is read attentively, it is very quickly seen that this interpretation is absolutely abusive.

In the eyes of Mr. Millerand, this reform of the Constitution should be, and could be, carried out by the next Legislature in the calmest manner, without having to dread any disturbances, commotion, or still less an upheaval. This revision has been very wrongly magnified until a mountain has been made of it. Upon reflection, this fear seems quite childish. Why should a Constitution voted by human beings (consequently liable to error) under determined circumstances and for determined reasons not be slightly modified by their successors, especially when the original circumstances and reasons no longer exist? Why should said Constitution be considered an absolutely intangible dogma?

The Constitution voted in 1875 was modified a few years later for the first time. This took place without any difficulty. It was sufficient for the Government, in agreement with the majority in Parliament, to state exactly its requirements for an agenda and a very precise plan to be issued. Apart from that, great care was taken not to mislead the Assembly.

When we think of the very serious problems which the next Chamber will have to solve, we cannot help seeing that the President is right, and that it is absolutely necessary to reform the Constitution in order to strengthen considerably the executive power.

It Interested Everybody but the Cows



(C) Keystone

Senator Magnus Johnson, "Dirt Farmer," Loses in Milking Contest to Secretary Wallace

Left to right: General Tasker H. Bliss, referee; Henry C. Wallace, Secretary of Agriculture;
Magnus Johnson, Senator from Minnesota

Secretary Wallace Wins

Senator Johnson (left) gazes mournfully at the bottom of his three-gallon pail, which contained, according to the report, half a pint of milk less than that of the joyful Secretary whose triumph over the "dirt farmer" is happily expressed in this fortunate snapshot



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