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FRANCE AND THE REPUBLIC

A RECORD OF THINGS SEEN AND LEARNED IN THE FRENCH PROVINCES DURING THE 'CENTENNIAL' YEAR 1889

By

WILLIAM HENRY HURLBERT

AUTHOR OF 'IRELAND UNDER COERCION'

WITH A MAP

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER I
IN THE PAS-DE-CALAIS

CHAPTER II
IN THE PAS-DE-CALAIS (*continued*)

CHAPTER XI
IN THE NORD

Errata

P. 24, 11 lines from top, *for* rival *read* rural.

P. 64, line 1, *for* de Royes *read* de Royer.

P. 91, line 6 from top. M. Spuller, Prefect of the Somme in 1880, was the brother of the present Minister of Foreign Affairs, not the Minister himself.

P. 96, line 5 from top, *for* Montauban *read* Montaudon.

P. 105, line 4 from bottom, *for* being *read* long.

P. 395, 3 lines from top, *for* Abbeys *read* Abbaye.

Wherever found, *for* de Fallières *read* Fallières. [Pg xxi]

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As I have not wished to swell the bulk of this book by references, and as many statements made in it concerning men and things of the first Republic may seem to my readers to need verification, I subjoin a brief list of authorities consulted by me in this connection. It is incomplete, but will be found to cover every material point concerning the epoch to which it refers.

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[Pg xxiii]

INTRODUCTION

I

This volume is neither a diary nor a narrative. To have given it either of these forms, each of which has its obvious advantages, would have extended it beyond all reasonable limits. It is simply a selection from my very full memoranda of a series of visits paid to different parts of France during the year 1889.

These visits would never have been made, had not my previous acquaintance with France and with French affairs, going back now—such as it is—to the early days of the Second Empire, given me reasonable ground to hope that I might get some touch of the actual life and opinions of the people in the places to which I went. My motive for making these visits was the fact that what it has become the fashion to call 'parliamentary government,' or, in other words, the unchecked administration of the affairs of a great people by the directly elected representatives of the people, is now formally on its trial in France. We do not live under this form of government in the United States, but as a thoughtless tendency towards this form of government has shown itself of late years even in the United States and much more strongly in Great Britain, I thought it worth [Pg xxiv] while to see it at work and form some notion of its results in France.

Republican Switzerland has carefully sought to protect herself against this form of government. The Swiss Constitution of 1874 reposes ultimately on the ancient autonomy of the Cantons. Each Canton has one representative in the Federal Executive Council. The members of this Council are elected for three years by the Federal Assembly, and from among their own number they choose the President of the Confederation, who serves for one year only—a provision probably borrowed from the first American Constitution. The Cantonal autonomy was further strengthened in 1880 by the establishment of the Federal Tribunal on lines taken from those of the American Supreme Court. There is a division of the Executive authority between the Federal Assembly and the Federal Council, which is yet to be tested by the strain of a great European war, but which has so far developed no serious domestic dangers.

The outline map which accompanies this volume will show that my visits, which began with Marseilles and the Bouches-du-Rhône, upon my return from Rome to Paris in January 1889, on the eve of the memorable election of General Boulanger as a deputy for the Seine in that month, were extended to Nancy in the east of France, to the frontiers of Belgium and the coasts of the English Channel in the north, to Rennes, Nantes, and Bordeaux in the west, and to Toulouse, Nîmes, and Arles in the south. I went nowhere without the certainty of meeting persons who could and would put me in the way of seeing what I wanted to see, and learning what I wanted to [Pg xxv] learn. I took with me everywhere the best books I could find bearing on the true documentary history of the region I was about to see, and I concerned myself in making my memoranda not only with the more or less fugitive aspects of public action and emotion at the present time, but with the past, which has so largely coloured and determined these fugitive aspects. Naturally, therefore, when I sat down to put this volume into shape, I very soon found it to be utterly out of the question for me to try to do justice to all that had interested and instructed me in every part of France which I had visited.

I have contented myself accordingly with formulating, in this Introduction, my general convictions as to the present condition and outlook of affairs in France and as to the relation which actually exists between the Third Republic, now installed in power at Paris, and the great historic France of the French people; and with submitting to my readers, in support of these convictions, a certain number of digests of my memoranda, setting forth what I saw, heard, and learned in some of the departments which I visited with most pleasure and profit.

In doing this I have written out what I found in my note-books less fully than the importance of the questions involved might warrant. But what I have written, I have written out fairly and as exactly as I could. I do not hold myself responsible for the often severe and sometimes scornful judgments pronounced by my friends in the provinces upon public men at Paris. But I had no [Pg xxvi] right to modify or withhold them. In the case of conversations held with friends, or with casual acquaintances, I have used names only where I had reason to believe that, adding weight to what was recorded, they might be used without injury or inconvenience of any kind to my interlocutors.

The sum of my conclusions is suggested in the title of this book. I speak of France as one thing, and of the Republic as another thing. I do not speak of the French Republic, for the Republic as it now exists does not seem to me to be French, and France, as I have found it, is certainly not Republican.

II

The Third French Republic, as it exists to-day, is just ten years old.

It owes its being, not to any direct action of the French people, but to the success of a Parliamentary revolution, chiefly organised by M. Gambetta. The ostensible object of this revolution was to prevent the restoration of the French Monarchy. The real object of it was to take the life of the executive authority in France. M. Gambetta fell by the way, but the evil he did lives after him.

He was one of the celebrities of an age in which celebrity has almost ceased to be a distinction. But the measure of his political capacity is given in the fact that he was an active promoter of the insurrection of September 4, 1870, in Paris against the authority of the Empress Eugénie. A more signal instance is not to be found in history of that supreme form of public stupidity which [Pg xxvii] President Lincoln stigmatised, in a memorable phrase, as the operation of 'swapping horses while crossing a stream.'

It was worse than an error or a crime, it was simply silly. The inevitable effect of it was to complete the demoralisation of the French armies, and to throw France prostrate before her conquerors. A very well-known German said to me a few years ago at Lucerne, where we were discussing the remarkable trial of Richter, the dynamiter of the Niederwald: 'Ah! we owe much to Gambetta, and Jules Favre, and Thiers, and the French Republic. They saved us from a social revolution by paralysing France. We could never have exacted of the undeposed Emperor at Wilhelmshöhe, with the Empress at Paris, the terms which those blubbering jumping-jacks were glad to accept from us on their knees.'

The imbecility of September 4, 1870, was capped by the lunacy of the Commune of Paris in 1871. This latter was more than France could bear, and a wholesome breeze of national feeling stirs in the 'murders grim and great,' by which the victorious Army of Versailles avenged the cowardly massacre of the hostages, and the destruction of the Tuileries and the Hôtel de Ville.

With what 'mandate,' and by whom conferred, M. Thiers went to Bordeaux in 1871, is a thorny question, into which I need not here enter. What he might have done for his country is, perhaps, uncertain. What he did we know. He founded a republic of which, in one of his characteristic phrases, he said that: 'it must be Conservative, or it could not be,' and this he did with the aid of [Pg xxviii] men without whose concurrence it would have been impossible, and of whom he knew perfectly well that they were fully determined the Republic should not be Conservative. He became Chief of the State, and this for a time, no doubt, he imagined would suffice to make the State Conservative.

He was supported by an Assembly in which the Monarchists of France predominated. The triumphant invasion and the imminent peril of the country had brought monarchical France into the field as one man. M. Gambetta's absurd Government of the National Defence, even in that supreme moment of danger when the Uhlans were hunting it from pillar to post, actually compelled the Princes of the House of France to fight for their country under assumed names, but it could not prevent the sons of all the historic families of France from risking their lives against the public enemy. All over France a general impulse of public confidence put the French Conservatives forward as the men in whose hands the reconstitution of the shattered nation would be safest. The popular instinct was justified by the result.

From 1871 to 1877, France was governed, under the form of a republic, by a majority of men who neither had, nor professed to have, any more confidence in the stability of a republican form of government, than Alexander Hamilton had in the working value of the American Constitution which he so largely helped to frame, and which he accepted as being the best it was possible in the circumstances to get. But they did their duty to France, as he did his duty to America. To [Pg xxix] them—first under M. Thiers, and then under the Maréchal-Duc de Magenta—France is indebted for the reconstruction of her beaten and disorganised army, for the successful liquidation of the tremendous war-indemnity imposed upon her by victorious Germany, for the re-establishment of her public credit, and for such an administration of her national finances as enabled her, in 1876, to raise a revenue of nearly a thousand millions of francs, or forty millions of pounds sterling, in excess of the revenue raised under the Empire seven years before, without friction and without undue pressure. In 1869, the Empire had raised a revenue of 1,621,390,248 francs. In 1876, the Conservative Republic raised a revenue of 2,570,505,513 francs. With this it covered all the cost of the public service, carried the charges resulting from the war and its consequences, set apart 204,000,000 francs for public works, and yet left in the Treasury a balance of 98,000,000 francs.

It is told of one of the finance ministers of the Restoration, Baron Louis, that when a deputy questioned him once about the finances, he replied, 'Do you give us good politics and I will give you good finances.' It seems to me that the budget of 1876 proves the politics of the Conservative majority in the French Parliament of that time to have been good. The Maréchal-Duc de Magenta was then president. M. Thiers had resigned his office in 1873, in consequence of a dispute with the Assembly, the true history of which may one day be edifying, and the Assembly had elected the Maréchal-Duc to fill his place.

I have been told by one of the most distinguished public men in France that, in his passionate [Pg xxx] desire to prevent the election of the Maréchal Duc, M. Thiers was bent upon promoting a movement to bring against the soldier of Magenta an accusation like that which led to the condemnation of the Maréchal Bazaine, and that he was with difficulty restrained from doing this.

Monstrous as this attempt would have been, it hardly seems more monstrous than the abortive attempt which was actually made, under the inspiration of M. Gambetta and his friends, to convict the Maréchal Duc and his ministers, 'the men of the 16th of May,' of conspiring, while in possession of the executive power, to bring about the overthrow of the Republic and the restoration of the Monarchy.

M. Gambetta and his party having formed in 1877 what is known as 'the alliance of the 363,' determined to drive the Maréchal-Duc from the Presidency, to take the control of public affairs entirely into their own hands, and to reduce the Executive to the position created for Louis XVI. by the revolutionists of the First Republic, before the atrocious plot of August 10, 1792, made an end of the monarchy and of public order altogether, and prepared the way for the massacres of September. Whether the Maréchal-Duc might not have resisted this revolutionary conspiracy to the end it is not worth while now to inquire. Suffice it that he gave way finally, and, refusing to submit to the degradation of the high post he held, accepted M. Gambetta's alternative and relinquished it.

It appears to me that the true aim of the Republicans (who had carried the elections of 1877 by persuading France that Germany would at once invade the country if the Conservatives won the day) is sufficiently attested by the fact that they chose, as the successor of the Maréchal-Duc, a public man chiefly conspicuous for the efforts he had made to secure the abolition of the Executive office! [Pg xxxi]

M. Grévy had failed to get the Presidency of the Republic suppressed when the organic law was passed in 1875. He was more successful when, on January 30, 1879, he consented to accept the Presidency. When he entered the Elysée, the executive authority went out of it. The Third French Republic, such as it now exists, was constituted on that day—the anniversary, by the way, oddly enough, of the decapitation of Charles I. of England at Whitehall.

That is the date, not 'centennial,' but 'decennial,' which ought to have been celebrated in 1889 by the Third French Republic. In his first Message, February 7, 1879, M. Grévy formally said: 'I will never resist the national will expressed by its constitutional organs.' From that moment the parliamentary majority became the Government of France.

Something very like this French parliamentary revolution of 1879 to which France is indebted for the Third Republic as it exists to-day, was attempted in the United States about ten years before.

In both instances the intent of the parliamentary revolutionists was to take the life of a Constitution without modifying its forms. The failure of the American is not less instructive than the success of the French parliamentary revolution, and as all my readers, perhaps, are not as familiar with American political history as with some other topics, I hope I may be pardoned for briefly pointing this out. [Pg xxxii]

Upon the assassination of President Lincoln in April 1865 the Vice-President, Andrew Johnson, became President. He was a Southern man, and as one of the Senators from the Southern State of Tennessee he had refused to go with his State in her secession from the Union. To this he owed his association on the Presidential ticket with Mr. Lincoln at the election in 1864. He was no more and no less opposed to slavery in the abstract than President Lincoln, of whom it is well known that he regarded his own now famous proclamation of 1863 freeing the slaves in the seceded States, as an illegal concession to the Anti-Slavery feeling of the North and of Europe, and that he spoke of it with undisguised contempt, as a 'Pope's bull against the comet.' Like Mr. Lincoln, Andrew Johnson was devoted to the Union, but he was a Constitutional Democrat in his political opinions, and the Civil War having ended in the defeat of the Confederacy, he gradually settled down to his constitutional duty, as President of the United States, towards the States which had formed the Confederacy. This earned for him the bitter hostility of the then dominant majority in both Houses of Congress, led by a man of unbridled passions and of extraordinary energy, Thaddeus Stevens, a representative from Pennsylvania, a sort of American Couthon, infirm of body but all compact of will. It was the purpose of this majority to humiliate and chastise, not to conciliate, the defeated South. Already, under President Lincoln, this purpose had [Pg xxxiii] brought the leaders of the majority more than once into collision with the Executive. Under President Johnson they forced a collision with the Veto power of the President, by two unconstitutional bills, one attainting the whole people of the South, and the other aimed at the authority of the Executive over his officers. In the policy thus developed they had the co-operation of the Secretary at War, Mr. Stanton, and during the recess of Congress in August 1867 it became apparent that with his assistance they meant to subjugate the Executive. President Johnson quickly brought matters to an issue. He first, during the recess, suspended Mr. Stanton from the War Office, putting General Grant in charge of it, and upon the reassembling of Congress in December 1867 'removed' him, and directed him to hand over his official portfolio to General Thomas, appointed to fill the place *ad interim*. Thereupon the majority of the House carried through that body a resolution of impeachment, prepared, by a committee, the necessary articles, and brought the President to trial before the Senate, constituted as a court for 'high crimes and misdemeanours.' Two of the articles of impeachment were founded upon disrespect alleged to have been publicly shown by the President to Congress. The President, by his counsel, among whom were Mr. Evarts, since then Secretary of State, and now a Senator for New York, and Mr. Stanberry, an Attorney-General of the United States, appeared before the Senate on March 13, 1868. The President asked for forty days, in which to prepare an answer. The Senate, without a division, refused this, and ordered the answer to be filed within ten days. The trial [Pg xxxiv] finally began on March 30, and, after keeping the country at fever-heat for two months, ended on

May 26, in the failure of the impeachment. Only three out of the eleven articles were voted upon. Upon each thirty-five Senators voted the President to be 'Guilty,' and nineteen Senators voted him to be 'Not guilty.' As the Constitution of the United States requires a two-thirds vote in such a trial, the Chief Justice declared the President to be acquitted, and the attempt of the Legislature to dominate the Executive was defeated. Seven of the nineteen Senators voting 'Not guilty' were of the Republican party which had impeached the President, and it will be seen that a change of one vote in the minority would have carried the day for the revolutionists. So narrow was our escape from a peril which the founders of the Constitution had foreseen, and against which they had devised all the safeguards possible in the circumstances of the United States. What, in such a case, would become of a French President?

The American President is not elected by Congress except in certain not very probable contingencies, and when the House votes for a President, it votes not by members but by delegations, each state of the Union casting one vote. The French President is elected by a convention of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, in which every member has a vote, and the result is determined by an actual majority. The Senate of the United States is entirely independent of the House. A large proportion of the members of the French Senate are elected by the Assembly, and the Chamber outnumbers the Senate by nearly two to one. What the procedure of the French Senate, sitting as a High Court on the impeachment of a President by the majority of the Chamber, would probably be, may be gathered from the recent trial by that body of General Boulanger. [Pg xxxv]

With the resignation of the Maréchal-Duc and the election of M. Grévy the Government of France, ten years ago, became what it now is—a parliamentary oligarchy, with absolutely no practical check upon its will except the recurrence every four years of the legislative elections. And as these elections are carried out under the direct control, through the prefects and the mayors, of the Minister of the Interior, himself a member of the parliamentary oligarchy, the weakness of this check might be easily inferred, had it not been demonstrated by facts during the elections of September 22 and October 6, 1889.

How secure this parliamentary oligarchy feels itself to be, when once the elections are over, appears from the absolutely cynical coolness with which the majority goes about what is called the work of 'invalidating' the election of members of the minority. Something of the sort went on in my own country during the 'Reconstruction' period which followed the Civil War, but it never assumed the systematic form now familiar in France. As practised under the Third Republic it revives the spirit of the methods by which Robespierre and the sections 'corrected the mistakes' made by the citizens of Paris in choosing representatives not amenable to the discipline of the 'sea-green incorruptible'; and as a matter of principle, leads straight on to that usurpation of all the powers of the State by a conspiracy of demagogues which followed the subsidized Parisian insurrection of August 10, 1792. [Pg xxxvi]

Such a *régime* as this sufficiently explains the phenomenon of 'Boulangism,' by which Englishmen and Americans are so much perplexed. Put any people into the machinery of a centralized administrative despotism in which the Executive is merely the instrument of a majority of the legislature, and what recourse is there left to the people but 'Boulangism'? 'Boulangism' is the instinctive, more or less deliberate and articulate, outcry of a people living under constitutional forms, but conscious that, by some hocus-pocus, the vitality has been taken out of those forms. It is the expression of the general sense of insecurity. In a country situated as France now is, it is natural that this inarticulate outcry should merge itself at first into a clamour for the revision of a Constitution which has been made a delusion and a snare; and then into a clamour for a dynasty which shall afford the nation assurance of an enduring Executive raised above the storm of party passions, and sobering the triumph of party majorities with a wholesome sense of responsibility to the nation.

There would have been no lack of 'Boulangism' in France forty years ago had M. Thiers and his legislative cabal got the better of the Prince President in the 'struggle for life' which then went on between the Place St.-Georges and the Elysée! [Pg xxxvii]

III

There are two periods, one in the history of modern England, the other in the history of the United States, which directly illuminate the history of France since the overthrow of the ancient French Monarchy in 1792.

One of these is the period of the Long Parliament in England. The other is the brief but most important interval which elapsed between the recognition of the independence of the thirteen seceded British colonies in America, at Versailles in 1783, and the first inauguration of Washington as President of the United States at New York on April 30, 1789. No Englishman or American, who is reasonably familiar with the history of either of these periods, will hastily attribute the phenomena of modern French politics to something essentially volatile and unstable in the character of the French people.

My own acquaintance, such as it is, with France—for I should be sorry to pretend to a thorough knowledge of France, or of any country not my own—goes back, as I have intimated, to the early days of the Second Empire. It has been my good fortune, at various times, to see a good deal of the social and political life of France, and I long ago learned that to talk of the character of the French people is almost as slipshod and careless as to talk of the character of the Italian people.

The French people are not the outgrowth of a common stock, like the Dutch or the Germans.

The people of Provence are as different in all essential particulars from the people of Brittany, [Pg xxxviii] the people of French Flanders from the people of Gascony, the people of Savoy from the people of Normandy, as are the people of Kent from the people of the Scottish Highlands, or the people of Yorkshire from the people of Wales. The French nation was the work, not of the French people, but of the kings of France, not less but even more truly than the Italian nation, such as we see it gradually now forming, is the work of the royal House of Savoy.

The sudden suppression of the National Executive by a parliamentary conspiracy at Paris in 1792 violently interrupted the orderly and natural making of France, just as the sudden suppression of the National Executive in 1649 after the occupation of Edinburgh by Argyll and the surrender of Colchester to Fairfax had put England at the mercy of Cromwell's 'honest' troopers, and of knavish fanatics like Hugh Peters, violently interrupted the making of Britain. It took England a century to recover her equilibrium. Between Naseby Field in 1645 and Culloden Moor in 1746 England had, except during the reign of Charles II., no better assurance of continuous domestic peace than France enjoyed first under Louis Philippe and then under the Second Empire. During those hundred years Englishmen were thought by the rest of Europe to be as excitable, as volatile, and as unstable as Frenchmen are not uncommonly thought by the rest of mankind now to be. There is a curious old Dutch print of these days in which England appears as a son of Adam in the hereditary costume, standing at gaze amid a great disorder of garments strewn upon the [Pg xxxix] floor, while a scroll displayed above him bears this legend:

I am an Englishman, and naked I stand here,
Musing in my mind what garment I shall wear.
Now I will wear this, and now I will wear that,
And now I will wear—I don't know what!

There was as much—and as little—reason thus to depict the England of the seventeenth, as there is thus to depict the France of the nineteenth century.

If there had ever been, a hundred years ago, such a thing as a French Republic, founded, as the American Republic of 1787 was founded, by the deliberate will of the people, and offering them a reasonable prospect of maintaining liberty and law, that Republic would exist to-day. That we are watching the desperate effort of a centralised parliamentary despotism at Paris in the year 1890 to maintain a 'Third Republic' is conclusive proof that this was not the case.

France—the French people, that is—- had no more to do with the overthrow of the monarchy of Louis XVI., with the fall of the monarchy of Charles X., with the collapse of the monarchy of July, or with the abolition of the Second Empire, than with the abdication of Napoleon I. at Fontainebleau.

Not one of these catastrophes was provoked by France or the French people; not one of them was ever submitted by its authors to the French people for approval.

Only two French governments during the past century can be accurately said to have been definitely branded and condemned as failures by the deliberate voice of the French people. One [Pg xl] of these was the First Republic, which after going through a series of convulsions equally grotesque and ghastly, was swept into oblivion by an overwhelming vote of the French people in response to the appeal of the first Napoleon. The other was the Second Republic, which was put upon trial by the Third Napoleon on December 10, 1851, and condemned to immediate extinction by a vote of 7,439,219 to 640,737. I am at a loss to see how it is possible to deduce from these simple facts of French history the conclusion that the French people are, and for a century have been, madly bent upon getting a Republic established in France, unless, indeed, I am to suppose that the French Republicans proceed upon the principle said to be justified by the experience of countries in which the standard of mercantile morality is not absolutely puritanical—that three successive bankruptcies will enable a really clever man to retire from business with a handsome fortune!

If it were possible, as happily it is impossible, that the American people could be afflicted with a single year of such a Republic as that which now exists in France, we would rid ourselves of it, if necessary, by seeking annexation to Canada under the crown of our common ancestors, or by inviting the exiled Dom Pedro to recross the Atlantic and accept the throne of a North American Empire, with substantial guarantees that if we should ever change our minds and put him politely on board a ship again for Europe, the cheque given to him on his departure would not be dishonoured on presentation to the national bankers! [Pg xli]

It is the penalty, I suppose, of our position in the United States, as the first and, so far, the only successful great republic of modern times, that we are expected to accept a sort of moral responsibility for all the experiments in republicanism, no matter how absurd, odious, or preposterous they may be, which it may come into the heads of people anywhere else in the world to try. I do not see why Americans who are not under some strenuous necessity of making stump speeches in or out of Congress, with an eye to some impending election, should submit to this without a protest. Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery: it does not follow that it is the most agreeable.

I do not know that Western drawing-rooms take more delight in the Japanese, who most amiably present themselves everywhere in the regulation dress-coat and white cravat of modern Christendom, than in the Chinese, who calmly and haughtily persist in wearing the ample,

stately, and comfortable garments of their own people.

The framers of the French Republican Constitution of 1875 did the United States the honour to copy incorrectly, and absolutely to misapply, certain leading features of our organic law. In order to accomplish purposes absolutely inconsistent with all American ideas of liberty and of justice, the parliamentary revolutionists who got possession of power in France in 1879 have so twisted to their own ends this French Constitution of 1875, that their government of the Third French Republic in 1890 really resembles the government of the Akhoond of Swat about as nearly as it [Pg xlii] resembles the government of the American Republic under Washington.

The parliamentary revolutionists of the Third French Republic are Republicans first and then Frenchmen. The framers of the American Republic were Americans first and then Republicans. The Republic which they framed was an experiment imposed upon the American people, not by philosophers and fanatics, but by the force of circumstances. The ablest of the men who framed it were not Republicans by theory. On the contrary, they had been born and bred under a monarchy. Under that monarchy they had enjoyed a measure of civil and religious liberty which the Third Republic certainly refuses to Frenchmen in France to-day. M. Jules Ferry and M. Constans have no lessons to give in law or in liberty to which George Washington, or John Adams, or even Thomas Jefferson, would have listened with toleration while the Crown still adorned the legislative halls of the British colonies in America. Our difficulties with the mother country began, not with the prerogative of the Crown—that gave our fathers so little trouble that one of the original thirteen States lived and prospered under a royal charter from Charles II. down to the middle of the nineteenth century—but with the encroachments of the Parliament. The roots of the affection which binds Americans to the American Republic strike deep down into the history of American freedom under the British monarchy. The forms have changed, the living substance is the same. Americans know at least as well as Englishmen what the most intelligent of French Republicans apparently have still to learn, that liberty is impossible without loyalty to something [Pg xliii] higher than self-interest and self-will.

This sufficiently explains to me a remark often cited as made to Sir Theodore Martin by General Grant during the ex-President's visit to England, to the effect that Englishmen 'live under institutions which Americans would give their ears to possess.'

General Grant neither was, nor did he pretend to be, a great statesman. But he was an American of the Americans. Four years of Civil War and eight years of Presidential power had not been thrown away upon him. He came into the Presidency as the successor of Andrew Johnson, who was made President by the bullet of an assassin, and who was impeached, as I have said, before the Senate for doing his plain constitutional duty, by an unscrupulous parliamentary cabal.

He left the Presidency, to be succeeded in it by a President who derived the more than doubtful title under which he took his seat from a Commission unknown to the Constitution, and accepted by the American people only as the alternative of political chaos and of a fresh civil war.

Through his position at the head of the American army, General Grant, as I have already mentioned, had been drawn into the contest between President Johnson and the parliamentary cabal bent on breaking down the constitutional authority of the Executive.

Going into the Presidency fresh from this drama, in 1869, General Grant went out of the Presidency in 1877, after a drama not less impressive and instructive had been enacted under his eyes, which threatened for many weeks to result in a complete failure of the machinery provided [Pg xliv] by the American Constitution for the lawful and orderly transmission of the executive authority. It did, in fact, result in the adoption by Congress of an extra-constitutional expedient, by which the orderly transmission of the executive authority was secured, but the lawful transmission of it—as I believe, and as I think I have reason to know General Grant believed—was defeated.

Whether the constitutional machinery would or would not have carried us safely through if the final strain had been put upon it, is now an academic question not here to be discussed. But the final strain was evaded by the adoption of the extra-constitutional expedient to which I refer. An Electoral Commission was created by Congress to decide by which of two sets of Presidential electors claiming to have been chosen for that purpose the Presidential vote of certain States should be cast; and it is a curious circumstance that General Grant, who had seen his executive predecessor saved from removal by a single vote in the Senate in 1869, saw his executive successor established in the White House, in 1877, by a single vote in this Electoral Commission.

It would have been strange indeed had the experience of General Grant failed to impress upon him, with at least equal force, the advantages to liberty of a hereditary executive acting as the fountain of social honour, and the disadvantages to liberty of an elective executive tending to become a distributing reservoir of political patronage.

I once had a curious talk bearing on this subject with General Grant after he had retired from the [Pg xlv] Presidency. He had dined with me to meet and discuss a matter of some importance with a Mexican friend of mine, Señor Romero, long Minister of Finance in Mexico, and now Mexican Envoy at Washington. When I next met the ex-President he reverted with great interest to something which had been incidentally said at this dinner about the experiment of empire made in Mexico by Iturbide, the general who finally broke the power of Spain in that viceroyalty, and secured its independence. I showed him certain documents which I had obtained in Mexico through the kindness of Maximilian's very able Foreign Minister, Señor Ramirez, a most accomplished bibliophile, bearing upon Iturbide's plan for making the American Mediterranean a

Mexican lake. He expected to break up the United States by asserting the right of the Mexican Empire to the mouths of the Mississippi, and the whole Spanish dominion as far as the Capes of Florida. 'It seems a mad thing now,' said the ex-President, 'but it was not so mad perhaps then,' and we went on to discuss the schemes of Burr and Wilkinson and the alleged treason of an early Tennessean senator. 'Perhaps it was not a bad thing for us,' he said, 'that the Mexicans shot their first Emperor—but was it a good thing for them?' 'I have sometimes wondered,' he added, 'what would have happened to us if Gates, or—what was at one time, as you know, quite on the cards—Benedict Arnold, instead of George Washington, had commanded the armies of the colonies successfully down to the end at Yorktown.' [Pg xlvi]

What indeed! That is a pregnant query, not hastily to be dealt with by genial after-dinner oratory about the self-governing capacity of the Anglo-Norman race—still less by Fourth of July declamations over what the leader of the Massachusetts Bar used to call the 'glittering generalities' of the American Declaration of Independence!

The experience of the Latin states of the New World throws useful side-lights upon it. Of all these states between the Rio Grande and Cape Horn, only one began and has lived out its round half-century of independence without serious civil convulsions. This is—or rather was—the Empire of Brazil, of which Dom Pedro I., of the Portuguese reigning house of Braganza, on March 25, 1824, swore to maintain the integrity and indivisibility, and to observe, and cause to be observed, the political Constitution. That oath the Emperor and his son and successor, Dom Pedro II., who took it after him in due course, seem to have conscientiously kept. It does not appear to have impressed itself as deeply upon the consciences of the military and naval officers of the present day in Brazil, all of whom, of course, must have taken it substantially on receiving their commission from the chief of the State, and it now remains to be seen what will become hereafter of the Empire.

The authors of the Brazilian Constitution fully recognised the impossibility of maintaining a constitutional government without some guarantee of the independence of the Executive. They found this guarantee not by applying checks and balances to the elective principle, but simply in [Pg xlvii] the hereditary principle, just as they found the guarantee of the independence of the judiciary in the life-tenure of the magistrates, and they introduced into their Constitution what they called a 'moderating power.' This power was lodged, by the 98th article of the Brazilian Constitution, with the Emperor—and the article thus runs: 'The moderating power is the key of the whole political organisation, and it is delegated exclusively to the Emperor, as the supreme chief of the nation and its first representative, that he may incessantly watch over the maintenance of the independence, equilibrium, and harmony of the other political powers.'

The key of the 'political organisation' of Brazil seems to have worked very well for fifty years. Now that it has been thrown away, it will be interesting to watch the results.

The question, with us in the United States, from the beginning has been whether the carefully devised provisions of oar organic Constitution of 1787 would or would not be found in practice to protect the sentiment of loyalty to a National Union as effectually against popular caprice and political intrigues as the sentiment of loyalty to a National Crown has been protected in England by the hereditary principle. The American Revolution of 1776, and the foundation of the American Republic of 1787, can never be understood without a thorough appreciation of the fact that the issues involved in the English Revolution which placed the daughter of James II. on the English throne, and in the establishment subsequently of the House of Hanover, because it was [Pg xlviii] an offshoot of the dethroned House of Stuart, were quite as intelligently discussed, and quite as thoroughly worked out, among the English in America as among the English in England. Without a thorough appreciation of this fact it is impossible to understand the conservative value to liberty in the United States, of the personal position and the personal influence of the first American President. Washington was, in truth, the uncrowned king of the new nation—'first in war, first in peace, first in the hearts of his countrymen.' What more and what less than this is there in the history of Alfred the Great?

Washington founded no dynasty, but he made the American Presidency possible, and the American President is a king with a veto, elected, not by the people directly, but by special electors, for four years, and re-eligible. We celebrate the birthday of Washington like the birthday of a king. The same instinct gave his name to the capital of his nation, and that name was found a name to conjure with when the great stress came of the Civil War in 1861. The sentiment of loyalty, developed and twined about that name and about the Union which Washington had founded, was not only the glow at the core of the Northern resistance to secession: it was the secret and the explanation of that sudden revival of the spirit of national loyalty at the South after the war was over and an end was put to the villanies of 'Reconstruction,' by which European observers of American affairs have been and still are so much puzzled. For it must be remembered that the Father of his Country was a son of the South, and that his native state, [Pg xlix] Virginia, is the oldest of the American Commonwealths, and is known as 'the Mother of Presidents.' The historic Union is as much Southern as Northern. Its existence was put in peril in 1812 by the States of the extreme North. Its integrity was shattered for a time in 1861 by the States of the South. Before it was founded, in 1787, there was no such thing as an American nation. There were thirteen independent American States which for certain purposes only had formed what was described as a 'perpetual union,' under certain Articles of Confederation. These Articles were drawn up in 1778, at a time when the event of the war with the mother country was still most uncertain, and they were never finally ratified by all the States until 1781, two years before the Peace of Versailles. Under these Articles the national affairs of the Confederacy were

controlled by the Congress of the States. No national Executive existed, not even such a nominal Executive as now exists in France. National affairs were managed during the recess of the Congress by a Committee, and this Committee could only confide the Presidency to any one member of the Committee for one year at a time out of three years. This was even worse than the elective kingship without a veto of the English Republicans of 1649. But how were the people of these thirteen independent States, each with a history, with interests, with prejudices, with sympathies of its own, to be brought together and induced to form, through a more perfect union, a nation, in the only way in which a nation can be formed, by the establishment of an independent national Executive? [Pg l]

This was the question which was met and answered only after long debates, and with infinite difficulty, by the American Constitutional Convention of 1787. It is more than probable that this convention could never have been held without the influence and the presence of George Washington, who presided over its deliberations; and it is as certain as anything human can be, that the constitution which it framed would never have been accepted by the people of the States if they had not known that the executive office created by it would be filled by him.

The political safeguards put about the American Executive by the constitution may or may not always resist such a strain as has already more than once been put upon them. The seceding States, in their constitution adopted at Montgomery in 1861, tried to strengthen these safeguards by extending the presidential term to six years, and making the President re-eligible only after an interval of six years more. But all our national experience goes to show that the more difficult it is for a mere majority of the people to make or unmake the authority which sets a final sanction upon the execution of the laws, the greater will be the safety of the public liberty and of private rights.

So true is this that every American who witnessed, at London in 1887, the Jubilee of the Queen, felt, and was glad to feel, with a natural and instinctive sympathy, the honest contagion of that magnificent outburst of the loyalty of a great and free people to the hereditary representative of their historic liberties and of their historic law. I am sure that no intelligent Englishman can have [Pg li] witnessed the tremendous outpouring of the American people into New York on April 30, 1889, to do honour there to the hundredth anniversary of the first inauguration of George Washington, without a kindred emotion.

To compare with the significance of either of these scenes that of the gigantic cosmopolitan fair dedicated at Paris in 1889 by President Carnot to the 'principles of 1789' is to exhaust the resources of the ridiculous.

IV

The antagonism which now exists between France and the Third Republic certainly did not exist between France and the ancient monarchy. The members of the États-Généraux of 1789, who were so soon permitted, by the incapacity of Louis XVI., to resolve that body into the chaotic mob which assumed the name of a National Assembly, were elected, not at all to change the fabric of the French Government, but simply to reform, in concert with the king, abuses, two-thirds of which were virtually defunct when the king took off his hat to the Three Orders at Versailles on the 5th of May, 1789, and the rest of which took a new lease of life, often under new names, from the follies and the crimes of the First Republic, after the 22nd of September, 1792. Two contemporary observers, watching the drama from very different points of view, Arthur Young and Gouverneur Morris, long ago discerned this. M. Henri Taine, and the group of conscientious historical students who, during the last quarter of a century, have been reconstructing the annals [Pg lii] of the revolutionary period, have put it beyond all doubt. The enormous majority of the French people, and even of the people of Paris, were so little infatuated with the 'principles of 1789' that they regarded the advent to power of the first Napoleon with inexpressible relief, as making an end of what Arthur Young calls, and not too sternly, a series of constitutions 'formed by conventions of rabble and sanctioned by the *sans-culottes* of the kennel.' Without fully understanding this, it is impossible to understand either the history of the Napoleons, or the present antagonism between France and the Third Republic.

Of this I am so deeply convinced that I have thought it right to interweave, when occasion offered, with my account of things as they are in France, what I believe to be the historic truth as to things as they were in France at and before the period of the Revolution. To judge the France of 1890 fairly, and forecast its future intelligently, we must thoroughly rid ourselves of the notion that the masses of the French people had anything more to do with the dethronement and the murder of Louis XVI. than the masses of the English people had to do with the dethronement and the murder of Charles I. Neither crime was perpetrated to enlarge the liberties or to protect the interests of the people. We long ago got at the truth about the great English rebellion. 'Pride's Purge,' the 'elective kingship without a veto of the 'New Model,' and the merciless mystification of Bradshaw, tell their own story. Steering to avoid the Scylla of Strafford, the luckless Parliamentarians ran the ship of State full into the Charybdis of Cromwell. [Pg liii]

It is only within very recent times that the daylight of facts has begun to dissipate the mists of the French legend of 1789. Even Republican writers of repute now disdain to concern themselves more seriously with the so-called histories of Thiers, of Mignet, and of Lamartine than with the *Chevalier de Maison-Rouge* of Alexandre Dumas and the *Charlotte Corday* of M. Ponsard.

Of course the legend dies hard—all legends do. Even the whipping of Titus Oates at the cart's tail

through London did not kill the legend of Sir Edmondsbury Godfrey and the Popish Plot. The Republicans of the Third Republic have not scrupled to set up a statue to Danton. People who might easily learn the truth still speak, and not in France only, about Robespierre and Madame Roland in terms which really justify M. Biré in anticipating a time when Raoul-Rigault maybe celebrated as a patriot and Louise Michel as a heroine. No longer ago than in 1888 certain people, perhaps relying on the fact that M. Casimir Périer, the actual owner of the château at Vizille in which the famous meeting of the Estates of Dauphiny was held in 1788, is a Republican, actually undertook to 'ring up the curtain' on the Centennial of 1789 by representing Barnave and Mounier as clamouring in 1788 for a republic at Vizille! Of all which let us say with Mr. Carlyle, 'What should Falsehood do but decease, being ripe, decompose itself, and return to the Father of it?' To whom, alas! I fear, under this inexorable law must in due time revert too many of the fuliginous word-pictures of Mr. Carlyle's own dithyrambic prose concerning the 'French Revolution'! [Pg liv]

The giants who stalked through his inflamed imagination like spectres on the Brocken, may be seen to-day in the Musée de la Révolution at Paris, shrunken to their true proportions—a dreary procession, indeed, of dreamers, madmen, quacks and felons! How can that be called a 'Great Revolution,' of which it is recorded that before it had filled the brief orbit of a decade, it had made an end of the life or of the reputation of every single man conspicuous in initiating or promoting it? The men who began the English Revolution of 1688 organised the new order to which it led. The men who began the American Revolution of 1776 organised the new nation which it called into being. This must have been as true of the French Revolution had it been really an outcome of the 'principles of 1789,' or of any principles at all. But it was nothing of the kind. It was simply a carnival of incapacities, ending naturally in an orgie of crime. It was in the order of Nature that it should deify Mirabeau in the Pantheon, only to dig up his dishonoured remains and trundle them under an unmarked stone at the meeting of four streets, that it should set Bailly on a civic throne, only to drag him forth, under a freezing sky, to his long and dismal martyrdom amid a howling mob, that it should acclaim Lafayette as the Saviour of France, only to hunt him across the frontier into an Austrian prison.

It was because France detested the Republic, and, detesting the Republic, might at any moment recall the Bourbons, that Napoleon executed the Duc d'Enghien. It was to make an end of claims older than his own upon the allegiance of a people essentially and naturally monarchical. It was a [Pg lv] crime, but it was not a squalid and foolish crime like the murder of Louis XVI. It belonged to the same category with the execution of Conradin of Hohenstaufen by Charles of Anjou—not, indeed, as to its mere atrocity, but as to its motives and its intent. It announced to the French people the advent of a new dynasty, and left them no choice but between the Republic and the Empire. An autograph letter of Carnot, the grandfather of the actual President of the Third Republic, sold the other day in Paris may be cited to illustrate this point. Carnot, like many other regicides, would gladly have made his peace with Louis XVIII. His peace with some sovereign he knew that he must make. The letter I now refer to was written after the return of the Emperor from Elba, and it could hardly have been written had Carnot not believed that France might be rallied to the Empire and to its chief, because France could not exist without a monarchy and a monarch.

The restoration of the monarchy was cordially accepted by the French people. The American friends of France celebrated it with a banquet in New York. France prospered under it. It laid the foundations of the French dominion in Africa, and thereby gave to modern France the only field of colonial expansion which can be said, down to the present time, to have enured to any real good either for French commerce or the French people. Certainly M. Ferry and the Republic have so far done nothing with Tonquin to dim the lustre of the monarchical conquest of Algiers. [Pg lvi]

On the contrary, the Republic, through its occupation of Tunis, its 'pouting policy' towards England in Egypt, and its more recent intimations of a great French Africa to be carried eastward to the Atlantic, has prepared, and is preparing, for France in the perhaps not distant future a new chapter of political accidents upon the possible gravity and extent of which prudent Frenchmen meditate with dubious satisfaction.

The sceptre passed as quietly from Louis XVIII. to Charles X. in France as from George IV. to William IV. in England. So far, indeed, as public disorder indicates public discontent, the English monarchy was in greater peril during the period between 1815 and 1830 than the French monarchy. When the Revolution of July came, no man thought seriously of asking France to accept a second trial of the Republic, and the crown was pressed upon the Duc d'Orléans, with the anxious assent of Lafayette, the friend of Washington, Mirabeau's 'Grandison-Cromwell' of the Revolution of 1789. Under the long reign of Louis Philippe France again prospered exceedingly. French art and French literature more than recovered their ancient prestige. Attempts were made to restore the elder branch of the Bourbons and to restore the dynasty of the Bonapartes. But no serious attempt was made to restore the Republic.

The Revolution of 1848 took even Paris by surprise. The Republic which emerged from it filled France with consternation, and opened the way at once for the restoration of the Empire. On December 10, 1851, the French people made the Prince-President Dictator, by a vote the significance of which will be only inadequately appreciated if we fail to remember that the [Pg lvii] millions who cast it were by no means sure that, by putting the sword of France again into the hands of a Napoleon, they would not provoke the perils of a great European war. France did not court these perils, but she preferred them to the risks of a republic.

I spent many months in France at that time, and to me, remembering what I then saw and heard

among all sorts and conditions of men, not in the departments only but in Paris itself, the persistency with which the leaders of the present Republican party have set themselves, ever since they came definitely into power with M. Grévy in 1879, to reviving all the most odious traditions of the earlier Republican experiments, and to re-identifying the Republic with all that the respectable masses of the French people most hate and dread, has seemed from the first, and now seems, little short of judicial madness.

It did not surprise me, therefore, in 1885, to find the banner of the monarchy frankly unfurled by M. Lambert de Ste.-Croix and scores of other Conservatives, as they then called themselves, at the legislative elections of that year. It did surprise me, however, to see the strength of the support which they instantly received throughout the country. For I believe the masses of the French people to be at heart monarchical, less from any sentiment of loyalty at all either to the race of their ancient kings or to the imperial dynasty, than because the experience of the last century, to which, as I think very unwisely, the Republican Government has appealed in what I cannot but call its rigmarole about the 'Centennial of 1789,' has led them to associate with the [Pg lviii] idea of a republic the ideas of instability and of anarchy, and with the idea of a monarchy the ideas of stability and of order. Now the Government of the Third Republic, first under M. Thiers and then under the Maréchal-Duc of Magenta, was so conducted from 1871 to 1877 as to shake this association.

Under it Frenchmen had seen that a Republic might actually exist in France for seven years without disturbing social order, interfering with freedom of conscience, attacking the religion of the country, or wasting its substance.

There were 'wars and rumours of wars' in the air in 1876. It was very loudly whispered that Germany, alarmed by the rapid advances of France towards a complete recovery of her national strength, meant suddenly and savagely to strike at her; and that, unless the essentially national and military Government of the Maréchal-Duc was replaced by a Government which would divert the resources of France largely into industrial, commercial, and colonial adventures, a new invasion might at any moment be feared. It ought to have been obvious that a Government which held in its hand a balance of 98,000,000 francs was much less likely to be wantonly attacked than a Government which meant to outrun its revenue. With a declared balance of 98,000,000 francs to the good, France might raise at the shortest notice 2,000,000,000 francs in a war loan. The balance of the Maréchal-Duc's Government was in fact a war-treasure, and a war-treasure of that magnitude was a tolerably effectual guarantee of peace. This ought, I say, to have been obvious; [Pg lix] but it is the triumph of demagogic skill to prevent a great people from seeing as a mass what is perfectly plain to every man of them taken alone. Under the stress of a war-panic the French people, whose dread and dislike of republics in general had been lulled, as I have shown, into repose by seven years of a Conservative Republican rule, were led into granting the untested Republic of Gambetta the credit fairly earned by the tested Republic of Macmahon and of Thiers.

M. Grévy, thought the incarnation of thrift, of peace at any price, and of commercial development, was elected President in 1879. M. Léon Say, a man of wealth and of business, from whom more circumspection might have been expected, lent himself, as Minister of the Finances, in combination with the rather visionary M. de Freycinet, to a grand scheme devised by M. Gambetta 'in a single night,' like Aladdin's Palace, for spending indefinite millions of money upon docks, railways and ports all over France, wherever there was a seat in the Chamber to be kept or won. The 'true Republicans,' as they call themselves, must be kept in power, the Republicans who hold it to be their mission—no, not their mission, for that word smacks of a Deity—but their proud prerogative, to rid France and the world of the Christian religion, to abolish all forms of worship and of monarchy from off the face of the earth, and generally to fashion the felicity of mankind, in and out of France, after their own mind. They went to work without delay. Having made the Executive, in the person of M. Grévy, a puppet, they began at once, in 1879, to pour out [Pg lx] the money of the taxpayers like water, for what we know in the United States as 'purposes of political irrigation'; to 'purge' the public service, in all its branches, from the highest to the lowest, of all men not ready to swear allegiance to their creed; to create new posts and to fill them with the dependents and parasites of the Republican party chiefs.

The balance of 98,291,105 fr. 28 c. (to be exact!) with which the Republic of Thiers and Macmahon had closed the year 1876, rapidly vanished.

On April 20, 1878, M. Léon Say announced to the Chamber of Deputies that he expected the country to spend for 1879 a sum of 3,173,820,114 francs, and to meet this expenditure with an estimated income of 2,698,622,014 francs!

In 1876 the expenditure of France had reached 2,680,146,977 francs, and the income of France had reached 2,778,438,082 fr. 66 c. Two years had sufficed to reverse the situation, and to convert an excess of receipts over expenditure under the Government of the Maréchal-Duc, amounting to more than 98,000,000 francs, into an excess of expenditure over receipts under his 'truly Republican' successor amounting to 475,148,100 francs!

From that moment to this the Third Republic has been steadily expending for France year after year at least five hundred millions of francs, or twenty millions of pounds sterling, more than it has been able to collect from the French people in the way of normal revenue. The exact amount of this monstrous deficiency it is not easy to state with precision. So distinguished an economist [Pg lxi] as M. Leroy-Beaulieu, a Republican of the moderate type, puts it at the sum I have stated, of five hundred millions a year for ten years. At the elections of last year the Carnot Government ordered, or encouraged, the Prefect of the Hérault, M. Pointu-Norès, to oppose openly and

energetically the election of M. Leroy-Beaulieu as a deputy for the district of Lodève in that department. Why? M. Leroy-Beaulieu is one of the few really able and distinguished Frenchmen, known beyond the limits of France, who may be regarded as sincere believers in the possibility of founding a substantial and orderly French Republic. But M. Leroy-Beaulieu, when he sees a deficiency in the public accounts, calls it a deficiency, and lifts up his voice in warning against a policy which accepts an annual deficiency of five hundred millions of francs as natural, normal, and to be expected in the administration of a great Republic.

Therefore, the presence of M. Leroy-Beaulieu in the Chamber of Deputies is a thing to be prevented at any price. The 'Republicans' of the Hérault this year tried to prevent it not only by treating 'informal' ballots thrown for him as invalid, and accepting 'informal' ballots thrown against him as valid, but, as the report of a Committee of the Chamber admits, by 'irregularities' which in other countries would be described in harsher terms.

Yet the majority of the new Chamber has postponed action upon this report of its own Committee till after the recess, and M. Leroy-Beaulieu is not yet allowed to occupy the seat which the voters of Lodève undoubtedly chose him to fill. [Pg lxii]

If we accept M. Leroy-Beaulieu's estimate of the average annual deficiency in the French budget as correct, it is clear that the 'true Republicans' have mulcted France since 1879 in the round sum of five milliards of francs—or, in other words, of a second German War Indemnity!

But a banker of eminence, thoroughly familiar with the French finances, tells me that M. Leroy-Beaulieu has underestimated the amount. He puts it himself at an annual average for the past decade of 700,000,000 francs. Thanks to the device adopted, I am sorry to say, by M. Léon Say, in 1879, of transferring to what is called the 'extraordinary budget' of each year numerous items which should properly find a place in the 'ordinary budget' of each year, it is not very easy to get at a precise and definite basis for estimating the real amount of these annual deficiencies.

M. Amagat, a Republican deputy for the Department of the Cantal, who has distinguished himself and earned the hostility of the Carnot Government by his cool and methodical treatment of these financial matters, denounces this device as 'deplorable,' and as keeping alive the most strange 'illusions' among well-meaning French Republicans about the real condition of the national finances.

Precisely! But the device was adopted expressly to keep alive these 'illusions,' in order that the 'illusions' might keep alive the politicians who adopted the device. [Pg lxiii]

It served M. Léon Say, who knew better, in 1879. It serves M. Rouvier, who, perhaps, does not know better, in 1890. The new Chamber met on November 12, 1889. A fortnight had hardly passed when M. Rouvier, as Minister of the Finances, the 'Minister of ill-omen' as M. Amagat calls him, rose in his place and, without a blush, affirmed that the budget for 1889 showed an excess of receipts over expenditure of 'forty millions of francs!' This bold statement was promptly telegraphed from Paris, by the correspondents of the foreign press in that city, to the four corners of the globe. What did it mean? It meant simply this: that, thanks to the financial success of the Government investment of the public money in a grand raree show at Paris, called a 'Universal Exposition,' such an excess of income over outlay appeared in what is called the 'ordinary budget.' As to the 'extraordinary' budget—oh! that is quite another matter.

It is as if an English householder should divide his yearly accounts into 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary' accounts, putting under the 'ordinary' accounts his cab and railway fares, his club expenses, his transactions on the turf, and his ventures at Monte Carlo, but remitting to the 'extraordinary' accounts such unconsidered trifles as house-rent, domestic expenses, the bills of tailors and milliners, and taxes, local and imperial. For 1879, for example, M. Léon Say, as Finance Minister, gave in his 'ordinary' budget at 2,714,672,014 francs, which showed a reduction of 78,705,790 francs from the 'ordinary' budget of 1878; but with this cheerful statement M. Léon Say gave in also his 'extraordinary' budget at 460,674,566 francs, the whole of which rather important sum was to be raised, not out of the revenue, but by a loan! [Pg lxiv]

This system has been carried on ever since 1877, when the 'true Republicans' got possession of the legislature, two years before they put M. Grévy into the Elysée as President.

On July 22, 1882, M. Daynaud, an authority on questions of finance, summed up the results in a speech delivered in the Chamber of Deputies. The Government in 1877 spent, in round numbers, 3,177,000,000 francs. In 1883 it spent 4,040,000,000 francs. All this without including what are called 'supplementary credits.' So that, putting these aside, it appears from the speech of M. Daynaud that, in seven years, between 1877 and 1883, the 'true Republicans' subjected the people of France to an increase of no less than 863,000,000 francs in their annual public expenditure.

Meanwhile these same 'true Republicans,' who were thus adding hundreds of millions yearly to the public debt, struck hundreds of thousands out of the lawful income of the clergy of France. They ordered the dispersion by Executive decrees, and 'if necessary by military force,' of all religious orders and communities not 'authorised' by the Government. They drove nuns and Sisters of Charity, with violence and insult, out of their abodes. They expelled the religious nurses from the hospitals and the priests from the prisons and the almshouses. They 'laicised' the schools of France, throwing every symbol of religion—in many cases literally—into the street, forbidding, literally, the name of God to be mentioned within the walls of a school, and striking out every allusion to the Christian faith from the text-books supplied at the cost of the Christian [Pg lxv]

parents of France to their children in the schools supported out of taxes paid by themselves.

It is simply impossible to overstate the virulence and the violence of this official Republican war against religion which began under the Waddington Ministry almost as soon as it took possession of the government in 1879. It was formally opened under the leadership of M. Ferry. M. Ferry is admitted to be the ideal statesman of the Opportunist Republicans now in power. To him M. Carnot owes his Presidency of the Republic. In March 1879 M. Jules Ferry asked the Republican majority of the House to pass a law concerning the 'higher education,' in the draft of which he had inserted a clause ever since famous as 'Article 7,' depriving any Frenchman who might be a member of any religious corporation 'not recognised by the State' of the right to teach. This 'Article 7' was a revival of an amendment offered to but not carried by the Legislative Assembly of the Second Republic in 1849. The principle of it is as old as the Emperor Julian, who forbade Christians to teach in the schools of the Empire.

M. Ferry's law was intended to repeal a previous law adopted in 1875, and which had not been then three years in operation. By the Law of July 12, 1875, the Republic of Thiers and Macmahon had modified, in the interest of liberty, the monopoly of higher education in France enjoyed by the State. It was an essentially wise, liberal, and 'progressive' law. But the Republicans of [Pg lxvi] Gambetta could not endure it, for it gave the Christians of France the right to provide for the higher education of their children in their own way; so it must be abolished.

It was abolished; and though the Senate, making a partial stand for law and for the equal rights of French citizens, struck out 'Article 7,' M. Ferry and his friends, who controlled the President, caused him to issue an Executive decree, to which I have already referred, breaking up the religious orders aimed at in 'Article 7.' This was in 1880. In 1882 the Chamber adopted a law proposed by M. Paul Bert, confirming to the State the monopoly of secondary education; and to-day we see M. Clémenceau, the avowed enemy of M. Jules Ferry and of the Opportunists, shaking hands with them in public, after the elections of 1889, on this one question of deadly hostility to all religion in the educational establishments of France. At a banquet given on December 3 by certain anti-Boulangist students in Paris to the Government deputies for the Seine, M. Clémenceau declared himself in favour of 'the union of all Republicans'—upon what lines and to what end?—'To prepare the Grand Social Revolution and make war upon the theocratic spirit which seeks to reduce the human mind to slavery!'

In other words, the Third Republic is to combine the Socialism of 1848 with the Atheism of 1793, the National workshops with the worship of Reason, and to join hands, I suppose, with the extemporised 'Republic of Brazil' in a grand propaganda which shall secure the abolition, not [Pg lxvii] only of all the thrones in Europe, but of all the altars in America. If language means anything and facts have any force, this is the inevitable programme of the French Republic of 1890, and this is the entertainment to which the Christian nations of the New World and the Old were invited at Paris in the great 'centennial' year 1889.

Believing this to be the inevitable programme of the Republic, as represented by the Government of President Grévy so long ago as 1880, I was yet surprised, as 1 have said, to see the strength of the protest recorded against it by the voters of France at the Legislative elections in 1885, because the Republic of Thiers and Macmahon had made, and deservedly, so much progress in the confidence of the French people, that I had hardly expected to see the essentially conservative heart of France startled, even by three or four years' experience of the Government of M. Grévy, into an adequate sense of the perils into which these successors of the Maréchal-Duc were leading the country.

'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush' is an essentially French proverb. Seven years of peace, liberty, and financial prosperity under the Conservative Republic should have gone far, I thought, to convince the average French peasant that he might, after all, be safe under a republic. Doubtless this impression of mine was not wholly unfounded. Yet, in spite of this important check upon the headway of the reaction against Republicanism provoked by the fanaticism and the financial extravagance of the Government of President Grévy—and in spite, too, of the open official pressure put upon the voters of France by the then Minister of the [Pg lxviii] Interior, M. Allain-Targé, who issued a circular commanding all the prefects in France to stand 'neutral' between Republican candidates of all shades, but to exert themselves for the defeat of all 'reactionary' candidates; in spite of all this, the elections of October and November 1885 sent up about two hundred monarchical members, whose seats could by no trick or device be stolen from them, to the Chamber of Deputies, and pitted a popular vote of 3,608,578 declared enemies of the existing Republic against a popular vote of 4,377,063 citizens anxious to maintain or willing to submit to it.

From that time to the present day the Government of the Third French Republic has been standing on the defensive. It has steadily lost ground, with every passing year, in the confidence and respect of the French people. The financial scandals, amid which President Grévy and his son-in-law, M. Wilson, disappeared and President Carnot was 'invented,' simply revealed a condition of things inherent in the very nature of the political organisation of France under the parliamentary revolutionists who came into power in 1879.

The Third French Republic, such as these men have made it, is condemned, hopelessly and irretrievably condemned, by its creed to be a government of persecution and by its machinery to be a government of corruption. There is no escape for it.

It has made the Government of France—not the Administration, but the form, the constitution of the Government—a party question, and it has organised the party which insists that France shall [Pg lxix] be a Republic, openly and avowedly upon the maxim of Danton that 'to the victors belong the spoils.' What has come of this maxim in the United States, where the form and constitution of the Republic are accepted by all political parties, and the administration of the Government alone is a party question, I need not say.

There are 'black points' even on the horizon of the American Republic, as all Americans know. But there is no point blacker than this, as to which, however, it is possible with us that good men of all political parties may act together in the future as they have acted together in the past for Civil Service Reform. But what is possible with us is not possible with the party of the Republic in France. For, by making the Republic a republic of religious persecution, the Republicans of the Republic of Gambetta, Jules Ferry, Carnot, and Clémenceau have made it necessarily a republic of political proscription, and political proscription inevitably means political corruption.

If any man needs to learn this, let him study the story of the establishment of the Protestant Succession in England by Walpole, and the story of the overthrow of the United States Bank by President Jackson, in America. He may think the Protestant Succession in England, and the overthrow of the United States Bank in America, worth the price paid for each. But he will learn at least what the price was.

It will not be the fault of the Carnot Government—certainly not of the most energetic member of that Government, M. Constans, Minister of the Interior—if the French people fail to learn this. [Pg lxx]

A very much higher price will have to be paid for the extirpation of religion out of France, and the education of the French people into what M. Jules Ferry fantastically supposes to be 'Herbert Spencer's' gospel, identifying duty with self-indulgence!

The late Chamber, doubtless having the then impending elections in view, voted to abolish the Secret Service Fund of the Ministry of the Interior. It was a Platonic vote, referring only to the Budget of 1890, nor did it take effect. But on December 14, 1889, M. Constans, having made the re-establishment of this fund a cabinet question, got up in the Chamber and boldly declared that he wanted a Secret Service Fund of 1,600,000 fr., or about 64,000*l.* sterling; that he did not care what the Right thought about such a fund; that he meant to use it to 'combat conspiracies against the Republic,' and that he expected the majority to give it to him as a mark of their personal confidence.

That the War Office, in a country like France, should need a Secret Service Fund, is intelligible. It is intelligible that a Secret Service Fund should be legitimately required, perhaps, by the Foreign Office of a country like France. But why should a Secret Service Fund of more than 60,000*l.* sterling be required by the Home Secretary of a French Republic which is supposed to be 'a government of the people, by the people, for the people'?

I have an impression, which it will require evidence to remove, that no such Secret Service Fund as this is at the disposal of the Chancellor of the German Empire; and I find the whole expense of [Pg lxxi] the Home Office of the monarchy of Great Britain set down at less than half the amount which, after a brief debate, the Republicans of the new Chamber in France, by a majority of a hundred votes, quietly put under the control of the French Home Secretary, to show their 'confidence' in the excellent man to whose unhesitating manipulation, through his prefects, of the votes cast in September and October last, so many of them are universally believed in France to be really indebted for their seats!

In the year 1889 the British budget shows an outlay on the Home Office of 29,963*l.*

More than this, the 'Secret Service Fund' voted out of the pockets of the taxpayers of France into the strong box of the Minister of the Interior, considerably exceeds the cost of the British Treasury Office! In 1888 the British budget gave the First Lord of the Treasury, to cover the expenses of that great and important department of the British monarchical government, 60,222*l.*, or nearly 4,000*l.* less than the Republicans of the Third French Republic have generously put at the disposal of M. Constans to 'combat conspiracies' against the life of a Republic of which in the same breath we are asked to believe that it has just been acclaimed with enthusiasm by the masses of the French people, as the fixed, final, and permanent government of their deliberate choice!

At this rate it will actually cost the taxpayers of Republican France more than two-thirds as much merely to keep the Republic from being suddenly done to death some fine day between breakfast and dinner, as it costs the taxpayers of Great Britain to keep up the state and dignity of the [Pg lxxii] British sovereign from year to year! The total annual amount, I find, of the Civil List of Great Britain annually voted to the Queen, of the annual grants to other members of the Royal Family, and of the Viceroyalty of Ireland is 557,000*l.* Of this amount the Hereditary Revenues, surrendered to the nation, cover 464,000*l.* This leaves an annual charge upon the taxpayers of 93,000*l.* sterling, or only 29,000*l.* more than the sum deliberately voted by the Republican Chamber at Paris into the hands of M. Constans to be by him used in 'combating conspiracies' against the Republic!—or, in other words and in plain English, in making things comfortable for his political friends, and uncomfortable for his political enemies!

And this, observe, is a mere supplementary adjunct to the budget of this energetic and admirable minister, that budget having been fixed by the late Chamber for 1890 at 61,291,256 francs—or, in round numbers, 2,451,650*l.* sterling—of which handsome amount 13,059,570 francs, or 522,383*l.* sterling, being the outlay on the Central Administration and the préfectures, must be added to the 1,200,000 francs, or 48,000*l.* sterling, of the Presidential salary and allowances, in order to give us a basis for a fair approximate comparison of the cost to republican France of her executive President and prefects with the cost to monarchical Great Britain of her executive Sovereign, lords-lieutenant, and Viceroy of Ireland. Stated in round numbers, the result appears to be that for their republican President and their eighty-three republican prefects, the taxpayers [Pg lxxiii] of France pay annually out of their own pockets 570,383*l.* against 93,000*l.* paid annually out of their own pockets by the taxpayers of Great Britain for their monarchical sovereign, eighty-six lords-lieutenant, a Viceroy of Ireland, and thirty-two lieutenants of the Irish counties. From the point of view of the taxpayers, this would seem to lend some colour to Lord Beaconsfield's contention, that economy is to be found on the side of the system which rewards certain kinds of public service by 'public distinction conferred by the fountain of honour.'

The threadbare witticism about the Bourbons of 1815, who had learned nothing and forgotten nothing, may well be furbished up for the benefit of the Republicans who now control the Third French Republic. However true it may, or may not, have been of the Comte de Provence and the Comte d'Artois, Henri IV., who was certainly a Bourbon of the Bourbons, had a quick wit at learning, and upon occasion also a neat knack of forgetting. He thought Paris well worth a mass, heard the mass, and got Paris.

It was not necessary for the Republicans of the Third Republic, after the formidable lesson which France read them at the elections in 1885, to hear mass themselves. They were perfectly free to persist and to perish in their unbelief, and, like the hero of Sir Alfred Lyall's 'Land of Regrets,'

'Get damned in their commonplace way.'

All that Christian France asked of them in 1885 was that they would leave their fellow-citizens as free to hear mass as they themselves were free not to hear it. They had only to let the religion of [Pg lxxiv] the French people alone, to respect the consciences and the civil liberty of their countrymen, and the tides that were rising against them, and the Republic because of them, must inevitably have begun to subside.

The hostility between the Church and the Republic in France is absolutely, in its origin, one-sided. The Church is no more necessarily hostile to the Republic as a Republic in France, than it is to the Republic as a Republic in the United States or in Chile, or in Catholic Switzerland. The Church can be made hostile to a Republic by persecution and attack just as it can he made hostile in the same way to a monarchy. Neither Philippe le Bel nor Henry the Eighth was much of a Republican.

But the Republicans of the Third Republic, in 1885, would learn nothing and forget nothing. They met the protest of millions of voters in France with a renewed virulence of Anti-Catholic and of Anti-Christian legislation, with an increased public expenditure, and with fresh political proscriptions.

Their purpose and their programme were succinctly and clearly summed up in the explicit declaration of M. Brisson, one of the most conspicuous leaders of the Republican party, that 'the Republic should be established in France, if necessary, by arms!'

What is the difference in principle between such a declaration as this and the attempt of the third Napoleon to establish an empire in Mexico by arms? In the one case we have a proselytising, atheistic Republic bent on abolishing the religion of an unquestionable majority of the French [Pg lxxv] people; in the other, we have a proselytising emperor bent on organizing empire in Mexico. In the light of the doctrine that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, the one undertaking is as monstrous as the other. The undertaking of the Emperor failed disastrously in Mexico; I do not believe, and for many reasons, that the undertaking of the Republic will succeed in France.

One, and the chief of these reasons, is, that I believe the hold of the Christian religion upon the body of the French people to be stronger, and not weaker, than it was before the propaganda of atheism began. In some of the chapters of this volume evidence, I think, will be found to show this. Under the plan which I have adopted in constructing the book, I have not attempted to marshal and co-ordinate the evidence. I have simply presented it, where it presented itself, either in conversations had by me at one or another place with persons qualified, as I thought, to speak with some authority, or in observations made by me in passing through one or another region. It was a part of my plan too, as I have said, to register, under the general heading of one or another department, not only what struck me most while visiting that department in the way of things seen or heard there, but also such conversations bearing on general subjects as I there had, and such notes as I there made from the books bearing on French history, which I took with me wherever I went. As this book is not a treatise but a record, as it is not intended to maintain a preconceived thesis, but simply to indicate the grounds on which I have myself come to certain [Pg lxxvi] conclusions and convictions, I thought the method I have adopted the fairest, both to my readers and to myself, that I could pursue.

VI

But as the point I have now touched, of the religious condition of France, is a specially grave and important point, I must ask my readers to pause with me upon it for a moment here in this Introduction. I am especially moved to do this because I have reason to think that very serious and very extraordinary delusions on this point exist outside of France, and especially in England. This is not unnatural when we remember that nine foreigners in ten take their impressions of France as a nation, not only from the current journalism and literature of Paris alone, but from a very limited range of the current literature and journalism even of Paris. Most Americans certainly, and I am inclined to think most Englishmen, who visit Paris, and see and know a good deal of Paris, are really in a condition of penumbral darkness as to the true social, religious, and intellectual life of the vast majority of the population even of Paris. We see the Paris of the boulevards, the Champs-Elysées, the first nights at the theatres, the restaurants, and the fashionable shops; the *Tout Paris* of the gossips of the press, representing, possibly, one per cent. of the population of the French capital! Of the domestic, busy, permanent Paris, which keeps the French capital alive from year to year and from generation to generation—the Paris of industry [Pg lxxvii] and of commerce, of the churches, of the charities, of the schools, of the convents—how much do we see? There are a number of prosperous foreign colonies living in London now, most of whose leading members maintain business or social relations, more or less active, with one or another section of the English population of the great British metropolis. Perhaps, if we could get a plain, unvarnished account from some member of one of these colonies, of England and English life as they appear to him and to his compatriots, Englishmen might be as much confounded as I have known very intelligent and well-informed Frenchmen to be, by the notions of French life and of the condition of the French people, really and seriously entertained, not by casual foreign tourists, but by highly educated foreigners who really wished to know the truth.

Not long after the Legislative Elections of 1885, the results of which astonished public men in England at the time as much almost as they did the satellites of the Government in Paris, I met at the house of a friend in London a very eminent English public man, whose name I do not feel quite at liberty to mention, but who is certainly regarded by great numbers of Englishmen as an authority without appeal, not only in regard to questions of English domestic policy, but in regard to European affairs in general. In the course of a general conversation—there were ten or twelve well-known people in the company—this distinguished public man expressed to me his great surprise at the importance which I 'seemed to attach to the religious sentiment in France.' [Pg lxxviii]

I assured him that I not only 'seemed' to attach, but did in fact attach very serious importance to it, and I ventured to ask him why this should 'surprise' him.

To this he replied textually—for I noted down the remark afterwards that evening—that he was 'under the impression that the religious sentiment was dead in France!'

'May I ask,' I replied, 'what can possibly have given you such an impression as this?'

'Oh, many things,' he answered with great emphasis, 'but particularly a statement which I saw in a statistical work of much authority, not very long ago, to the effect that there are in France *five millions of professed atheists*!'

All who heard this amazing assertion were, I think, as completely taken aback by it as I was. Courtesy required that I should beg the distinguished man who made it to give me, if he could, the title of the work in which he had found it. This he promptly replied that he was at the moment unable to do. He, however, very nearly asphyxiated a very quiet and well-bred young Frenchman attached to the French Embassy in London, who was present, by appealing to him on the subject. 'No, no!' exclaimed the alarmed *attaché*, 'I dare say there is such a book, no doubt—no doubt—but I have never heard of it.'

I have never been able to find this valuable work. When I do find it I shall institute a careful inquiry into the reasons which could have led five millions of French persons, or about one-seventh of the whole population of France, to take the pains to register themselves as 'atheists.' [Pg lxxix] Presumably they must all have been adults, as the declaration, on such a subject, of infants, would scarcely, I take it, be collected, even by M. Jules Ferry, as evidence of the success of his great scheme for 'laicising' religion out of France.

Meanwhile, I find it set down in the usual statistical authorities accessible in 1884, that out of the 36,102,021 inhabitants of France, 35,387,703 registered themselves, or were registered, as Catholics, 580,707 as Protestants, 40,439 as Israelites, and 81,951 as 'not professing any form of religion.'

Yet I suppose that, if the eminent public man who saw, as in a vision, these five millions of registered atheists marching to the assault of Christianity in France were to announce their existence as a fact to a large public meeting in some great English provincial city to-morrow, we should have leaders in some of the English journals a day or two afterwards prognosticating the immediately impending downfall of all religion in France. Our modern democracies on both sides of the Atlantic have made such rapid and remarkable progress of late years in the art of forming opinions, that if Isaac Taylor could come back to the earth he left, not so very long ago, he would hardly, I think, recognise the planet.

The fashion of taking it for granted that the whole world is fast going over to the gospel of ganglia and bathybius, of *vox populi et præterea nihil*, is not confined to the 'fanatics of impiety' in France. I have heard it seriously stated in a London drawing-room by another public man of repute within the last year, that he believed 'Mr. John Bright and Mr. Gladstone were the last two [Pg lxxx]

men who would ever cite the Christian Scriptures as an authority in the House of Commons.'

The uncommonly good English of the Christian Scriptures may perhaps constitute an objection to their free use in addressing popular political assemblies. But, admitting this, I hesitate to accept the statement. That it should have been made however, and made by a man of more than ordinary ability, is perhaps a thing to be noted.

But I revert to France.

As the time drew near for the Legislative elections of 1889, the Republicans in power began to perceive that their methods had not been crowned with absolute success. The awkward corner caused by the enforced resignation of President Grévy had indeed been turned, because the Constitution of the Third Republic provides for the election of the President by the Assembly. But it is one thing to play a successful comedy in the Assembly with the help of what in America is called 'the cohesive power of the public plunder,' and quite another thing to get a satisfactory Chamber of Deputies re-elected by the people of France after four years of irritating and exasperating misrule. Much was expected from the dazzling effect upon the popular mind of the Universal Exposition at Paris—so much, indeed, that I have had the obvious incongruity of selecting for the celebration of the French Revolution by a French Republic the centennial of a year in which no French Republic existed, accounted for to me by a French Republican on the express ground that the legislative elections were fixed for 1889! There may have been some truth in this. For nothing could be more preposterous than the pretext alleged for the selection by the French Government. [Pg lxxxi]

This or that thing which occurred at a particular time in a particular year may reasonably be made the occasion of a centennial or a semi-centennial celebration. But how is anybody to fix and celebrate the 'centennial' of a set of notions called 'the principles of 1789'?

In the United States we have celebrated the 'Centennial' of the Declaration of Independence, and the Centennial of the first Inauguration of the first President.

Did the French Government intend to invite the monarchies of Europe to celebrate the destruction by a mob of the Bastille on July 14, 1789? Hardly, I suppose! Or the Convocation of the States-General at Versailles on May 5, 1789? Certainly not—for the States-General were convoked, not under the 'principles of 1789,' but in conformity with an ancient usage and custom of the French monarchy.

What are the 'principles of 1789'?

And why should anybody in or out of France celebrate them?

If by 'the principles of 1789' we are to understand the principles of modern constitutional government—and I know no other intelligible interpretation of the phrase—there is certainly no reason why anybody out of France should particularly concern himself with celebrating the adoption of these principles in France any more than with celebrating the adoption of them in England, or the United States, or Germany, or Spain, or Italy. The principles of modern constitutional government were certainly not intelligently adopted, and certainly not loyally carried out in France, by any of the governments which tumbled over one another in rapid succession in that distracted country between 1789 and 1815. Have they been intelligently adopted and loyally carried out in that distracted country to-day? That is a question, I think, not hastily to be answered! [Pg lxxxii]

To ask the people of England, of the United States, of Germany, of Spain, of Italy, to unite in celebrating the principles of modern constitutional government, under the name of the 'principles of 1789,' at Paris, as if the world were indebted to Paris or to France for the discovery, and the promulgation, and the adoption of those principles, was really a piece of presumption which might have been pardoned to the fatuity of the Abbé Sieyès a hundred years ago, but was hardly to have been expected from educated Frenchmen in the year 1889.

This was stated, with great good sense and commendable courtesy towards the French Government responsible for the absurdity, by the Italian Premier, Signor Crispi, in the Chamber of Deputies at Borne, on June 25, 1887.

In reply to an interpellation of Signor Cavalotti, addressed to the then Foreign Minister of Italy, Signor Depretis, as to the intentions of the Italian Government with regard to the Universal Exposition of 1889 at Paris, Signor Crispi, then Minister of the Interior, made a striking speech (Signor Depretis being then ill of the disease of which he eventually died), in which he lucidly and forcibly gave the reasons of the Italian Government for declining to take any official part in the matter. He plainly intimated his conviction (which is the conviction, by the way, of a great many sensible people not premiers of Italy) that the business of Universal Expositions has been possibly overdone. But, without dwelling upon that point, he went on to show that it would be foolish for Italy to isolate herself from the other great powers by taking an official part in this particular 'Universal Exposition.' To the plea of Signor Cavalotti that liberated Italy ought to unite with France to celebrate 'the principles of 1789,' Signor Crispi thus replied; 'I agree with the honourable member that we are sons of 1789. But I must remind him that 1789 was preceded by the glorious English Revolution, and by the great American Revolution, in both of which had been manifested and established the principles which have subsequently prevailed throughout the world.' [Pg lxxxiii]

Whether the treatment of the Sovereign Pontiff at Rome by the government of United Italy, since 1871, has been entirely consistent with the principles of the 'glorious English Revolution,' or of the 'great American. Revolution,' I need not now consider. But that all the living political doctrines of which intelligent Frenchmen mean to speak when they talk about the 'principles of 1789' are the American political doctrines of 1776, and the English political doctrines of 1688, admits of no question. As to this, Signor Crispi was absolutely right, and it is creditable to him, as an Italian statesman and an Italian patriot, that he should have thus early and publicly declined [Pg lxxxiv] to attach the liberty and the independence of Italy as a bob to the tail of an electioneering Exposition kite at Paris in 1889. To France and to the French Republics—first, second, and third—Italy owes a good deal less than nothing. To two rulers of France, both of them of Italian blood, the first and third Napoleon, she owes a great deal. But her chief political creditor, and her greatest statesman, Cavour, drew his political doctrines, not from the muddy French pool of the 'principles of 1789,' but from the original fountains of 1776 and 1688. Had Cavour been living in 1887, to answer the interpellation of Signor Cavalotti, he might, perhaps, have defined more sharply than it was given to Signor Crispi to do, the real relations between the French Revolution of 1789 and the national developments of modern Italy. Had the French Revolution of 1789 been left to exhaust itself within the limits of France, it would probably have ended—as the friends of the misguided Duc d'Orléans almost from the first expected to see it end—in the substitution of a comparatively capable for a positively incapable French king upon a constitutional French throne. In that event it would have interested Europe and the world no less, and no more, than the Fronde or the religious wars which came to a close with the coronation of Henry of Navarre. It was the fear of this, unquestionably, which drove the conspirators of the Gironde into forcing a foreign war upon their unfortunate country. The legend of Republican France marching as one man to the Rhine to liberate enslaved Europe has much less foundation in fact than the legend of Itsatsou and the horn of Roland. It is a pity to disturb historical fables which have flowered into [Pg lxxxv] immortal verse, but really there was not the slightest occasion, so far as Europe was concerned, for France in 1790 to 'stamp her strong foot and swear she would be free.' M. de Bourgoing's admirable diplomatic history of those days makes this quite clear. No power in Europe objected to her being as free as she liked. On the contrary, England, even in 1792, was both ready and anxious to recognise the insane French republic of that day, and to see the French royal family sent away to Naples or to Madrid.

Pitt was too far-sighted a statesman not to be well aware that the commerce and the colonies of such a French republic were the natural prizes of English common sense and English enterprise. Nor was Austria indisposed to see the House of Bourbon, which had successfully disputed the supremacy of Europe with the Hapsburgs, humiliated and cast down.

The French Revolution became Titanic only when it ceased to be a Revolution and ceased to be French. The magnificent stanzas of Barbier tell the true story of the riderless steed re-bitted, re-bridled, and mounted by the Italian master of mankind, the Cæsar for whom the eagle-eyed Catherine of Russia had so quietly waited and looked when the helpless and hopeless orgie of 1789 began. The Past from which he emerged, the Future which he evoked, both loom larger than human in the shadow of that colossal figure. What a silly tinkle, as of pastoral bells in some Rousseau's *Devin du Village*, have the 'principles of 1789,' when the stage rings again with the stern accents of the conqueror, hectoring the senators of the free and imperial city of Augsburg, [Pg lxxxvi] for example, on his way to Wagram and to victory twenty years afterwards!

'Your bankers are the channel through which the gold of the eternal enemy of the Continent finds its way to Austria. I have made up my mind that I will give you to some king. To whom I have not yet settled. I will attend to that when I come back from Vienna.'

And, as the faithful record of the *Drei Mohren* tells us, 'Messieurs the senators withdrew, much mortified, and not at all pleased.'

Nevertheless, when the conqueror kept his word, and having made a king of Bavaria to give them to, gave them to the king of Bavaria, Messieurs the senators, with a suppleness and a docility which would have done credit to Debry (who after proposing, as a republican, to organise 1,200 'tyrannicides' and murder all the kings and emperors of the earth, begged Napoleon to make him a baron), made haste to come and prostrate themselves before the new Bavarian Majesty and to protest that until the fortunate day of his arrival to reign over them they had never known what real happiness was.

If there is one thing more certain than another in human history, it is that but for the English Revolution of 1688 and the American Revolution of 1776 the world in general would know and care to-day very little more about the French 'principles of 1789,' and the French Revolution, and the First French Republic, than the world in general knows or cares to-day about the wars in the Cevennes or the long conflict between the Armagnacs and the Bourguignons. [Pg lxxxvii]

Napoleon crumpled up the 'principles of 1789' and the Revolution and the Republic in his iron hand, and flung them all together into a corner. He meant that France and the world should think of other things. In 1810 Paganel, who, having been a 'patriot' of the Convention, had naturally become a liveried servant of the Emperor and King, thought he might venture to compose a 'Historical Essay on the French Revolution.' He dedicated it to the Imperial Chancellor of the Legion of Honour, and he wound up his preface with these words: 'And thus at last we see without astonishment, after this long series of errors, misfortunes, and crimes, the Republic disappear, and France implore the Supreme Being to vouchsafe to her the one great and potent genius who in these difficult circumstances was able to lift her up, to defend her, and to govern

her!' The heart of Louis XVIII. would have been touched by the grateful humility of this repentant wretch. But the Emperor simply kicked him downstairs. He forbade the book to be published. The whole edition was put under lock and key, and never saw the light till liberty came back to France, with the white nag and the Bourbon lilies, in 1815. Surely here is a fact worth noting!

Had this first history of the French Revolution, written as Paganel, a member of the Revolutionary Convention, wrote it, been published under the First Republic, the author would infallibly have been sent to the guillotine. Writing it under the First Empire he was merely snubbed, despite his fulsome adulation of the Emperor. His book was finally given to the world under the restored historic monarchy in 1818! [Pg lxxxviii]

In 1811, Chateaubriand, having been elected to succeed Marie-Joseph Chéniér, the brother of the republican poet André, murdered by the First Republic, as a member of the Institute, prepared a speech on the Convention, to be read before that august body. Napoleon heard of it and, without troubling himself to look at it, forbade it to be delivered. 'It is well for M. de Chateaubriand,' he said, 'that it was suppressed. If he had read it before the Institute, I would have flung him into the bottom of a dungeon, and left him there the rest of his natural life!'

Napoleon knew the First Republic thoroughly. He had measured all its men, and all its records were in his hand. He could not get into or out of his carriage without treading on some incorruptible 'patriot' prostrate between its wheels with a petition for a préfecture, a title or a pension. The crimes and follies of the First Republic had made France and the world sick of its name. Its true story was a tale of shame and humiliation, not fit to be dragged out into the blaze of the glory of Imperial France.

The First Republic was the deadly enemy both of liberty and of law. The conduct of its first envoy to the United States would have justified Washington in locking him up. When a stop was put to his mischievous impertinences, he preferred exile in America to the chance of the guillotine at Paris, and his name died out, I believe, curiously enough, with one of the chief instruments of the notorious Tweed Ring in New York.

The first shots fired in anger under the American flag after the peace of 1783 were fired against cruisers of the French Republic captured in the West Indies by American men-of-war, to put an [Pg lxxxix] end to the ignorant and insolent attempt of what called itself a government at Paris to issue letters of marque on American soil against English commerce.

So grateful was France to the Emperor for restoring the reign of law, that she never troubled herself about liberty, and but for the indomitable defence of constitutional liberty and national independence which England maintained, often single-handed, from the rupture of the peace of Amiens to the victory of Waterloo, the very names of the chief actors in the odious and ridiculous dramas of the Revolution would have long since faded, as Napoleon intended they should fade, out of the memory of the masses of mankind.

VII

How little confidence the Government of the Third Republic really felt in the efficacy of the 'principles of 1789,' and of the 'Centennial Exposition,' to save it at the polls in 1889 from the natural consequences of its intolerance and its corruption, was instructively shown by the absolute panic into which it was thrown by the election at Paris of General Boulanger on January 27. Here, at the very threshold of the great electoral year, rose the spectre of the 'man on horseback'!

Certainly General Boulanger was not Napoleon Bonaparte. The Government, which had itself put General Boulanger on horseback, knew the strength and the weakness of the man himself. But it was the legend, not the man, they dreaded. If the French people, or even if Paris, really believed [Pg xc] in the legend of Boulanger—and this tremendous vote of January 27 looked very much like it—it mattered little what the real value of the man might be, the legend would make him master of France. That would mean for the Third Republic the fate of the First Republic and of the Second, and for the men who had identified it with their own fanaticism and folly, and greed, and incapacity, a long farewell to all their greatness!

As for the eventual results, what mattered these to them?

The Universal Exposition might collapse, or it might be opened by General Boulanger on his black horse, instead of President Carnot in his landau. What did that signify? But it signified much that the men who had invented President Carnot were not likely to make part of the *cortège* of General Boulanger.

It is no exaggeration to say that from January 27, 1889, the Government of the Third French Republic was openly and visibly given up by night and by day to one great purpose alone—and that purpose was, not to glorify the 'principles of 1789,' not to celebrate the Republic—the grand statue of the Triumph of the Republic, destined to be set up with great pomp in the sight of the assembled human race, was actually left to be cast in plaster of Paris, no functionary caring to waste a sou on putting it into perennial bronze or enduring marble—no! the great dominant, unconcealed purpose of all the leaders of the Republic was, in some way—no matter how, by hook or by crook—to conjure that spectre of the First Consulate, riding about, awful and [Pg xci] imminent, on the black horse of General Boulanger!

Perhaps the high-water mark of this quite unparalleled and most instructive panic was the appearance, towards the end of the last parliamentary session, of M. Jules Ferry, the author of the odious 'Article 7,' the man who after hesitating—to his credit be it said—originally to propose that ministers of religion should be absolutely forbidden to teach the children of France in her public schools, at last succumbed to the vehemence of Paul Bert, the Condorcet of this modern persecution, and became the acknowledged leader of the war against Liberty and Religion—in the tribune of the Deputies, there to urge, and indeed to implore, the Conservative members to make peace with the persecutors, and save them from the peril of Boulanger!

The scene of that day in the Chamber of Deputies was not one to be forgotten. The aspect and the accents of the Republican leader were at times absolutely pathetic with the pathos of unaffected terror. It was difficult to believe, whilst listening to him, that he could really have 'five millions of professed atheists' at his back, encouraging him to extirpate Christianity, root and branch, out of the land of France!

Not less striking, in quite another sense, was the grim and stony silence with which the appeal of the Republican leader was received by the Right, representing, as the Third Republic has chosen to make the Right represent, the Religion, and with the Religion the Liberty, of France.

It reminded me, I am sorry to say, of the way in which a naturally amiable and considerate householder might be expected to listen to the arguments of an adroit and accomplished burglar showing cause why he should be locked into the plate-closet to protect him from the police. [Pg xcii]

M. Jules Ferry's offer was to suspend the application to certain religious bodies of the interdict fulminated against them by himself and the Republican Government. At last he paused, evidently oppressed by the steady, unresponsive gaze of his hearers.

Then the silence was broken!

'Do you speak for the Government?' called out a fiery deputy of the Right.

M. Jules Ferry hesitated a moment and then replied, 'No! I speak for myself; but there are many who think as I do!'

'You!' came back the hot response. 'You! bah!—you are nothing!'

The real response came later, on September 22, when, in his own town of St.-Dié, the chief of the Opportunists, despite all the efforts of the prefect of the department and of the local authorities to carry him through, was beaten by a Monarchist. Obviously M. Ferry had heard how things looked from his committee at St.-Dié when he made his fruitless appeal to the Eight in the Chamber!

Finding that nothing was to be expected from any cajolery of the Right, or any transactions with the outraged and awakened Christianity of France, the Government at last gave up the control of the impending elections unreservedly into the hands of M. Constans of Toulouse, of whom I have already spoken. To him, as Minister of the Interior, all the machinery of politics was abandoned. [Pg xciii] Every prefect in France became an electoral agent to do his bidding.

For the first time too, I believe, even in French administrative history, all the employees of the post-offices and the telegraph offices were transferred from the control of the Director of Posts and Telegraphs to the direct control of the Minister of the Interior.

Under his control they still remain, and it is now proposed to attach these services permanently to the Ministry which manages the elections. Can anybody fail to see what this means?

At the suggestion of M. Constans, too, the Government resolved to attack the spectre. It determined to drive General Boulanger out of France. It is not easy to feel much sympathy with General Boulanger, who while Minister of War put into execution against the Comte de Paris and his family a most iniquitous decree, exiling them—for no other cause than the fact that they come of the family which made France a nation—from their country and their homes. But the proceedings which the Government of President Carnot took against General Boulanger were of such a character that the Procureur de la République, who was first directed to carry them out, withdrew from his post. Before they could be consummated by the arrest of General Boulanger, he suddenly left France. Into the subsequent action of the Senate, constituted as a 'High Court of Justice' to try him, I need not here enter.

Suffice it that after a canvass organized in this fashion and in this spirit, and prosecuted by the Government with remorseless energy, the elections held on September 22 and October 6 have [Pg xciv] left the relative strength of the Government and of the Opposition in the new Chamber substantially what it was in the Chamber of 1885. This, in the circumstances, can only be described, in the language of one of the ablest Republican journalists in Paris, M. Jules Dietz of the *Journal des Débats*, as 'an escape from a disaster.'

The repulse of the assailants at the Redan did not save Sebastopol for the Russians. The margin of the proclaimed majorities by which many of the Government members of the new Chamber were returned, is so very small as to suggest of itself the pressure, in a very practical and concrete form, of the hand of authority on the returns at the polls. In twenty cases these majorities ranged from 6 to 200 votes.

In one case, in the Seine Inférieure, the details of which were given to me by persons of the

highest character, with perfect liberty to use their names, the Government member was declared by the prefect, after two adjournments of the counting, to have been returned by a majority of 173 votes on a total poll, which proved upon examination to very considerably exceed the total number of voters registered in the district!

But, taking the general return of the votes cast at these elections as authentic, it is perfectly plain that the Monarchical party in France is stronger to-day than it was in 1885, and that the Republican party is weaker in France to-day than it was in 1885.

In 1885 the strength of the two parties stood as follows:—

[Pg xcv]

Republicans of all shades	4,377,063
Conservatives and Monarchists	3,608,578
Republican majority	768,485

In 1889 the strength of the two parties stands as follows:—

Conservative Monarchists	3,144,978
Boulangists	629,955
	3,774,933
Opportunist Republicans	2,980,540
Radicals	981,809
Socialists	90,593
	4,052,542
Republican majority	277,609

Here at once we see a falling off in the Republican majority, between 1885 and 1889, of no less than 490,876 votes. This is certainly significant enough when we remember that in 1885 the Monarchists did not everywhere and openly attack the Republic as a form of government, while in 1889 the issue was admitted on both sides to involve the existence of the Republic as a form of government.

But this is not all.

When we compare the total of the votes cast in 1885 and 1889, we find a diminution of no fewer than 788,821 votes. If this proves anything, it proves that the voters of France care very much less about the stability of the Republic in 1889 than they did in 1885. And this farther appears from the further fact that the falling off in the total of votes cast affected the Republican vote of 1889 much more seriously than it affected the Monarchical vote. Indeed it did not affect the [Pg xcvi] Monarchical vote at all. On the contrary, while there was a positive falling off from the Republican vote of 324,521 between 1885 and 1889, there was a positive increase of the Monarchical vote, between 1885 and 1889, of 166,355.

How is it possible to weigh the meaning of these figures fairly without seeing that a form of government which exists in France only in virtue of a majority which a change of 140,000 votes in a total poll of 7,827,475 would have turned into a minority, can hardly be said to rest upon as firm a basis, for example, as that of the Third Empire, with its plebiscitary majority of seven millions in 1870 responding to its majority of seven millions in 1852?

Take away from the narrow Republican majority of 1889 the public functionaries, high and low, now counted in France by tens of thousands, with all who depend upon and are connected with them; give to the ballot in France the sanctity, freedom, and security which it has in England; compel the public authorities in France to abstain, as they are compelled in England to abstain, from direct interference with the exercise by the voters of the right of suffrage, and the evidence is overwhelming which goes to show that the Third Republic would be voted into limbo to-morrow!

VIII

To say this is to say that the Third Republic does not exist in France by the will of the French people; and this I believe to be absolutely true. The Third Republic exists by virtue of the control [Pg xcvii] which its partisans have acquired of the administrative machinery of the Government, or, in other words, by virtue of political corruption and intimidation. So great has been the multiplication of functionaries great and small under the Third Republic, that it is not easy to get at an accurate estimate of their numbers. The best information I have been able to obtain leads me to believe that, exclusive of the military and naval forces, not less than two hundred thousand adult French citizens now draw their subsistence from the public treasury. This represents a population of at least a million of souls, so that we have nearly one in thirty of the inhabitants of France subjected

to a direct or indirect pecuniary pressure from the central authorities at Paris. So openly is this pressure exerted under the Third Republic, that the Government of M. Carnot did not hesitate, during the Universal Exposition, and not long before the Legislative Elections began, to bring up no fewer than some thirteen thousand of the mayors of France to Paris at the public expense. There they were entertained—still at the public expense—with a sumptuous hospitality, which proves that, however orthodox the Republican Atheism may be of M. Constans, the Minister of the Interior, he has not yet struck the blessed St. Julian out of his calendar, at least when he is spending the money of the French taxpayers on his guests.

If I may believe what I afterwards heard in more than one provincial town, these worthy mayors (every one of whom, let me observe, exercises a direct personal and official authority over the [Pg xcviii] elections) carried back to his astonished and envious fellow-citizens tales of Arabian, Tunisian, Algerian, and Annamite nights at the Exposition, and on the Champs-Elysées, to which no pen but that of Diderot or of the younger Crébillon could do adequate justice. 'I do not believe the Sultan,' said a clever and amusing lady to me at Toulouse, 'threw open the doors of Paradise so wide to the German Kaiser, at Constantinople, as did our more than liberal M. Constans to the married Mayors of France at Paris!'

On the other hand, at Honfleur, in the Calvados, it came to my knowledge that the local authorities, on the morning of the first Legislative Elections, brought over from another port on the Norman coast, a number of sailors, residents of Honfleur, and entitled to vote there, but absent in the pursuit of their calling. These honest Jack Tars came to Honfleur by the railway, in a kind of brigade, accompanied by a Government agent, who marched them up to the polls, and, having seen their votes safely deposited for the Government candidate, gave each man his return ticket for the next day, and set them all free to spend the interval in the bosom of their astonished and, I hope, delighted families.

From the point of view of the domestic peace of France, this proceeding was perhaps less reprehensible than the Belshazzar's Feast of M. Constans and the thirteen thousand mayors. But from the point of view of the relations between the Third Republic and the deliberate independent electoral will of France, I think it must be admitted that they are, as the people say [Pg xcix] in the Western States of America, 'very much of a muchness!'

I ought to add that in France the mayors of the chief towns (or *chefs-lieux*), the arrondissements, and the cantons are nominated by the Government at Paris. The mayors of the communes which owe their corporate freedom to the monarchy are elected, but the Third Republic has taken from them the control of their local taxation for purposes of the highest local interest. I should say also that all the sailors in France are obliged to be inscribed upon lists kept and controlled by the maritime prefects for the Ministry of the Marine, so that their whereabouts may be known or ascertainable at all times.

Americans who understand the institutions of their own country find the true measure of the fitness of a people for self-government in their respect for the authority of a lawful Executive. The fatal mistake has been made by the Third as it was by the First French Republic of confounding respect for a lawful Executive with submission to an Executive controlled by a majority of the Legislature. The fact that the power of the public purse, in a constitutional government, is necessarily confided to the Legislature, makes this mistake fatal—fatal at once to the liberty of the taxpayers who supply the public purse, and of whom the members of the Legislature are simply the agents and trustees, and to the efficiency and integrity of the Executive. I see with much interest, while the sheets of this book are going through the press in London, that this very grave point emerges from a brief correspondence published in the English newspapers between [Pg c] the Chancellor of the British Exchequer, Mr. Goschen, and Lord Lewisham. Lord Lewisham, acting, it would appear, on behalf of a number of English Civil Servants, wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer concerning certain complaints of these servants, embodied in a memorial. In his reply, the Chancellor of the Exchequer alludes to an intimation which seems to have been made by the authors of this memorial of their intention to put a kind of pressure upon the Minister of the Crown through the House of Commons. Upon this Mr. Goschen observes: 'the memorialists should be reminded that their reference to an appeal to their representatives in Parliament, involving, as it would seem, a personal parliamentary canvass to determine the relations between the State and its employés, contemplates a course of action not only injurious to the public interests, but opposed to the best traditions of the Civil Service.'

What the English Chancellor of the Exchequer here most wisely and properly condemns as a mischief a-brewing, has become the *jus et norma* of 'the relations between the State and its employés' in France under the Third Republic.

The persons charged to execute and enforce the laws in France have come, under the Third Republic, from the President downwards throughout the Civil Service, to regard themselves, and to be regarded by the people, as the mere servants and instruments of the persons deputed by the people to consider what the laws shall be, and to adjust the public taxation to the necessities [Pg ci] of the public service. The result necessarily is that the majority of the French Chamber of Deputies under the Third Republic has visibly become an irresponsible oligarchy of a kind most dangerous to liberty and the public weal.

By calling themselves, as they do, the 'party of the appeal to the people,' the French Imperialists show their doubtless well-founded conviction that the masses of the French people are essentially monarchical in their ideas as to the best tenure by which the Executive authority can be held. To believe this, is to believe that the masses of the French people are essentially lovers of order, not

of disorder; that they instinctively put the executive above the legislative function in their conceptions of a political hierarchy, and therefore that they are essentially fitted for self-government. In this I am sure the Imperialists are right. But, unfortunately for them, the centralised administrative machinery of government in France by which the French people are now and have for a century past been prevented from governing themselves, though not indeed of Imperial origin, was so developed and perfected by the genius of the first Napoleon as to become identified in a sense with the Napoleonic dynasty.

It is a great misfortune of the French people that all great changes in their political system, no matter how promoted or in what spirit, must be wrought out within the vicious circle of this centralized administrative machinery. The initiative in liberating France from this centralized administrative machinery can only come from within the vicious circle itself. An independent [Pg cii] Executive of France made Chief of the State by the popular will, and protected, as the Executive of Great Britain is protected, in the interest of liberty and of the people, by the hereditary principle, might take this initiative and begin the great work of so distributing throughout France the administrative responsibilities and powers now concentrated at Paris as to make the French people for the first time really their own masters.

Certainly no executive holding power by any tenure less independent and secure can ever effect this. That a real basis exists upon which this great work might be carried out in the local life, traditions, ideas and sympathies by which the widely different populations of what used to be known as the different provinces of the Kingdom of France are united among themselves and discriminated from one another, many able and well-informed Frenchmen believe. One of the most hasty and mischievous things done by the infatuated political tinkers of 1790 was to cut and carve up France into arbitrary political departments for the express purpose of disintegrating and destroying those ancient social and political organisms.

This purpose has not been effectually accomplished. What has been accomplished is to superpose upon the ancient organic France another arbitrary and administrative France. This latter arbitrary and administrative France controlled by a legislative oligarchy, which first makes and then uses the French Executive for its own purposes, it is which now calls itself the Third French Republic. [Pg ciii]

The traits and the tendencies as well as the origin of the Third Republic can be thoroughly studied at Paris. Without Paris the Third Republic never could have existed. It exists now in virtue of the political machinery of which Paris is the centre. That it could not withstand for a day any severe shock given to that machinery was confessed, as I have said, by its own government in the abject panic which followed the victory of General Boulanger at the polls of the capital on January 27, 1889.

The traits and the tendencies of France, on the contrary, must be studied in the provinces. There was always more wit than wisdom in the famous saying of Heine—that to talk about the opinion of the provinces in France was like talking about the opinion of a man's legs—the head being the seat of thought, and Paris being the head. But the saying was uttered during the reign of Louis Philippe, and long before the establishment of universal suffrage by the Second Empire. With universal suffrage and with the development during the past twenty years of the railway and of the telegraphic system throughout France, the importance of the provinces relatively to Paris has greatly and steadily increased. While steam and electricity have, of course, increased the strength of the pressure which an aggressive oligarchy controlling the centralised administrative machinery of the Government at Paris can put upon the opinions and the interests of France, they have also, it must be remembered, increased the power of France to resist and to resent that pressure. They have established return currents, the force of which grows visibly greater every [Pg civ] year. The great provincial towns and cities of France, for example, are ceasing to be dependent, as they formerly were, upon the press of Paris for their news and views of which passes in the capital.

There are no such journals yet in any of the French provinces as the powerful newspapers which are to be found throughout the United Kingdom; but there is a steady and very notable growth in the circulation of the more important local journals, and the telegraph brings them the news of the day from Paris long before the Parisian papers can reach their readers. The development of these influences has been checked, and is still checked, by the official control at Paris of the telegraphic system, and it is worth noting here that, just before the legislative elections, the Minister of the Interior, to whom the control of the post office and of the telegraphs had been transferred, caused the telephone offices throughout France to be taken possession of by the officials of the Government, though the negotiations with the private companies owning the telephones for the purchase of them were still incomplete, and though the private owners formally protested against the act.

But though the Government may check and retard, it cannot prevent the development of these influences. France, such as I have found it, full of activity, full of energy, leavened with a genuine leaven of religious faith, irritated by a persistent mockery of the forms of liberty into prizing and demanding the realities of liberty, must grow steadily stronger. The Republic condemned to a [Pg cv] policy of persecution and of financial profligacy must grow steadily weaker.

Instead of trying to develop France, or letting France develop herself into a republic, the partisans of a Republic have invented successive republics, each more grotesque and uncomfortable than its predecessor, and insisted on cramming France into them. So far the republics have gone to pieces and France has survived. So intense is her vitality, so tough

appears to me to be the old traditional fibre in many parts of the French body politic, that before the great chapter of the *Gesta Dei per Francos* can be safely assumed to be finally closed, a good many more milliards will have to be spent on that State Establishment of Irreligion and Disestablishment of God which the 'true Republicans' of the Third Republic call 'laicisation.' Long before those milliards can be raised and spent, the Third Republic will come to the bottom I believe, if not of the purse, certainly of the patience, of the French people.

It is already admitted on all hands that so slight a thing as the reappearance of General Boulanger at Paris on September 21, 1889, would have completely reversed the general result of the elections of the next day. The birthday of the First Republic would have been celebrated by the funeral of the Third. The failure of General Boulanger then to reappear may have made an end of General Boulanger, but it certainly did not establish the Republic.

On the contrary, here as we see is the Minister of the Interior, who knows the situation better than any of his colleagues, invalidating election after election in the Chamber of Deputies, and [Pg cvi] beginning the work of financial reform by demanding an enormous Secret Service Fund to protect the Republic against conspirators!

Sooner or later this tragi-comedy must end. It concerns Europe and the world that it should end sooner rather than later, and that it should end with a pacific restoration of France to her proper place in the family of European States. Surely the most imperious necessity of the immediate future in Europe is a general disarmament. No French Republic can possibly propose or accept such a disarmament. No French Empire even could easily propose or accept such a disarmament. For the Republic and the Empire are jointly though not equally responsible for the humiliations and the disasters of the great Franco-German War. The historic French monarchy, restored through a revision of the existing Constitution by the deliberate will of the French people, might propose such a disarmament with a moral certainty that it would be accepted. Would not England necessarily stand by France in such a proposal? And is it not clear that the refusal of Central Europe to accept such a disarmament so proposed and supported would make that alliance with the Russian Empire, which is impossible to a French republic, both easy and natural with a French monarchy?

I should have visited France to small purpose if I could suppose that such considerations as this will much affect the masses of the French people. Their present Minister of Public Instruction, M. Fallières, gave his measure of their average enlightenment on such points when he actually [Pg cvii] called upon the electors of the Lot-et-Garonne in September to vote against M. Cornelis Henry de Witt because a monarchical restoration would 'be followed by a revival of the *droits des Seigneurs*, and—by a Cossack invasion!'

But there are many men in France alive to such considerations as this, and these men have many ways of reaching and influencing the political action of the masses of their countrymen.

Such men see the vital relations of the diplomatic position of France to the grave domestic question of the public expenses. It is difficult to ascertain the actual cost of the military establishment of France on its present footing of an armed peace. But French officers of rank assure me that France is now keeping under arms at least 550,000 men, or more than one in seven of her adult male population available for national defence. 'We have more men under arms than Germany,' said a French general to me at Marseilles, 'which is absurd, because the German army for fighting purposes, in case of any sudden trouble with us, includes the armies of Austria, Hungary and Italy—so Germany saves money on her peace footing which we idly expend on ours.' What this officer did not say to me has been said by many other well-informed Frenchmen, that the recent military legislation of the parliamentary majority is demoralising this great military force and threatens its efficiency. The prominent position taken in the new Chamber since it assembled by M. Raynal, a Radical member for the Gironde who held the portfolio of Public Works under M. Gambetta in 1880 and again under M. Jules Ferry, is not of good omen for the [Pg cviii] army. It was M. Raynal who brought about the fall of General Gresley as Minister of War by an 'interpellation,' founded on the refusal of the War Minister to remove an officer of the Territorial Army because he was a monarchist. And now M. Raynal appears with a project for more effectually establishing the domination of the parliamentary majority by giving it the right to adjourn once a week for six successive weeks, all debates on any 'interpellation' to which the Government may object on 'grounds of public policy!'

While the costly army of France is at the mercy of legislation under such conditions, the navy of France is managed, as appears from a drastic report presented some time ago by M. Gerville-Réache, an able Republican deputy from Guadeloupe, with at least as much regard to politics as to economy. M. Gerville-Réache showed that contracts were given out so recklessly that a supply of canned provisions, for example, had been laid in at Cherbourg sufficient for five years! At other stations supplies of all kinds were bought at prices ranging far above the market rates, and circulars were produced in which successive Ministers of Marine had ordered the commandants at different naval stations to 'expend every sou in their possession' on no matter what, 'before the expiration of the fiscal year, as any excess remaining in their hands would not only be lost to the Ministry by being ordered back into the Treasury, but would allow opportunities for impugning the forecast and judgment of the ministers!' Under such a system it is not surprising that Admiral [Pg cix] Krantz, one of the best naval administrators France possesses, should have been forced to withdraw from the Tirard Government to satisfy a political Under-Secretary, M. Etienne.

Is it possible that in the actual condition of France and of Europe such a system as this should last?

If France drifts or is driven into a great European war, one of two things would seem to be inevitable. If the French armies are victorious, the general who commands them and restores the military prestige of France will be the master of the government and of the country. If the French armies are defeated, the Government will disappear in a whirlwind of national rage and despair. 'In that event,' said a Republican Senator to me, 'in that event—which I will not contemplate—the princes of the House of France would be recalled instantly and by acclamation; we should have nothing left but that or anarchy.'

But putting aside the crisis of a great war, what other alternatives present themselves as the possible issues in peace of the system now dominant at Paris?

Of what weight or avail in the policy of the parliamentary oligarchy which calls itself the Third Republic are the counsels of men like M. Léon Renault, M. Jules Simon, M. Ribot, M. Léon Say, who have tried in vain to constitute in France the Conservative Republic of M. Thiers? M. Léon Say left his seat in the Senate before the recent elections and presented himself in the Pyrenees as a candidate for the Chamber, with the well-understood expectation of finding himself eventually put into the presidency of that body. This was to be a guarantee of the Conservative Republic! [Pg cx]

Who actually fills that most important post?

M. Floquet, who first distinguished himself under the Empire by publicly insulting the Emperor of Russia in the Palais de Justice during the visit of that potentate to Paris, and who resigned his seat as a deputy for the Seine in March 1871 to share 'the perils and sufferings,' as he put it, of his constituents, the Communards of Paris! For this M. Floquet was arrested at Biarritz and locked up at Paris till the end of the year 1871.

How can France hope to find liberty within her own borders, or peace with honour abroad, under the domination of such men?

On December 19, 1888, during a discussion of the budget of 1890 in the French Senate, M. Challemel-Lacour, a Republican of the Republicans, who actually allowed the red flag to be hoisted instead of the tricolour on the Hôtel de Ville of Lyons while he was prefect of the Rhône, and who represented the Republic for a time as Ambassador in London, made a remarkable speech, in which he warned his colleagues of the fate which they were preparing for the Republic. He is one of the three Senators of the Bouches-du-Rhône, and one of the four Vice-Presidents of a body now controlled by the Government, and therefore virtually by the majority of the Chamber of Deputies. He is more than this. An elaborate speech of his, delivered in the Assembly on September 4, 1874, in which he denied the 'right to teach' as threatening the 'moral unity of France,' was the signal of the deliberate war against all religion afterwards proclaimed by M. Gambetta, and since prosecuted by M. Jules Ferry. Out of that speech grew the policy of the Third Republic. Yet what did he say in 1888? He plainly declared his belief that the policy of the Government was driving the Republic headlong to its ruin. He spoke as a Republican, passionately reaffirming his faith in the Republic, and his desire to see it solidly founded in France. 'I conjure you, therefore,' he said, 'to take order, that the Republic may once more become the reign of law; that all may be protected in their persons, in their property, in their faith, not only against disorder in the streets, but against moral disorder, moral anarchy, defamation, calumny, against the fury of an unbridled, uncontrolled, irresponsible press. It is time to arrest the threatening ruin which must affect the humblest lives, if our sad fate be to witness the catastrophe of liberty!' [Pg cxi]

M. Challemel-Lacour is an orator. The Senate was shaken and roused by his earnest appeal. A motion was made that his speech be ordered to be printed and posted on the walls of Paris. But the night came, and with the night the pressure of the powers indicted by the speech, and so no more was heard of it, and the budget of 1890 was voted by the outgoing Chamber, and the incoming Chamber has re-established in it a Secret Service Fund of 1,600,000 francs for the Minister of the Interior—and the work of 'invalidating' the elections of troublesome deputies goes merrily on, and in the remote valleys and hills of France poor village curates are mulcted of half their humble stipends for the offence of calling upon their parishioners to vote for the candidates who do not attack their religion. [Pg cxii]

From this intolerable position there are two obvious ways of escape. One is the familiar Parisian way of the barricades. That way is not likely to be tried in the interest of liberty or of law. The other is the way which France sought to adopt in the recent elections, of a deliberate Revision of the Constitution, now hopelessly perverted into the instrument of a parliamentary oligarchy. The actual Government has just prevented a Revision in the interest of a Republican Dictator, which after all must have been more or less a leap in the dark out of a window.

As between the only available window and the only available doorway of a dwelling in flames, it is intelligible that an emotional inmate, with the smell of the fire on his garments, should make for the window. But, the window being barred, what should restrain him from walking rationally out of the doorway? Any one of a dozen possible emergencies may compel a Revision of the Constitution—and any Revision of the Constitution now must mean either a Radical revolution, or a restoration of the hereditary Executive. Either of these would be a doorway; for France would know whither either of these must lead. M. Thiers, it is said by persons who ought to be well informed, might have led France thus out of a doorway in 1871, and into a restoration of the Monarchy. M. Thiers was an exceedingly able man, but it is hard to see how he could then have

gone about to achieve this result. France in 1871 was still a conquered country occupied by the German armies. The Third Napoleon and his son were both then living. The Comte de Chambord was then in the strength of his years. The Comte de Paris had not then taken the steps which he afterwards took with so much wisdom and moral courage, to make an end of the rupture between Henri V. and the House of Orléans. [Pg cxiii]

The situation now is materially changed. The Imperialists are divided between Jerome the father and Victor the son. The Royalists are united. The France of Henri IV. and of Charles X. is represented to-day by the grandson of Louis Philippe. The *vox Dei* and the *vox Populi* meet in him as they met in the Prince of Orange when England, forty years after the criminal catastrophe of 1649, was driven by the flight of James II. into seating William and Mary, the grandson and the granddaughter of Charles I., upon the abdicated throne.

How can an independent Executive ever be restored in France excepting in the person of Philippe VII.? Had the Revolution of 1830 never occurred he would now by the ancient law of succession be King of France and Navarre. Had the Revolution of 1848 never occurred he would now be King of the French under the Charter. If the era of revolutions is ever to be closed in France, must it not be by an Executive who shall be at once King of France and King of the French—King of France, as representing the historic growth into greatness and unity of the French nation; King of the French, as representing the personal liberties and the private rights of every citizen of the French commonwealth? [Pg 1]

FRANCE AND THE REPUBLIC

CHAPTER I

IN THE PAS-DE-CALAIS

Calais

The men who, in 1790, brought about the formal division of France into departments, no doubt thereby facilitated the ephemeral transformation, in September 1792, of the ancient French monarchy into a French republic, 'one and indivisible.' But they also put their improvised republic thereby at the mercy of the marvellous Italian who blew its flimsy framework into shreds with his cannon in October 1795.

In working out what George Sand calls 'the great practical joke' of the First Consulate, and the formidable reality of the Empire, Napoleon found, ready-fashioned to his hand and undamaged by the republican tinkers, a system of administration essentially despotic. This system did for him what Charlemagne did for himself when he got rid of the tribal dukes of the Merovingian epoch, and, as Gneist and Sir Robert Morier have shown, gathered into his own control the four unities which make up the unity of the State—the military, the police, the judiciary, and the finances. The counts of Charlemagne, removable at his pleasure, with no root in their *comitatus* save his sovereign will, were the true prototypes of the modern French prefect. If the old provinces of France, which had a local life, organisation, and spirit of their own, had been taken as the units of government in 1790, the monarchy perhaps might hardly have been abolished in 1792 by a Convention so headlong and tumultuous that for one day it actually forgot, after abolishing the monarchy, to establish any government in its place. [Pg 2]

But if a republic had been founded through the action of the provinces of France, it would probably have been harder for Napoleon to make an end of it, than it was for Charlemagne to dispense with the recognition of local rights to which the Merovingian kings had submitted in the appointment of their hereditary *subreguli*, from among the local magnates of the shires. This, it seems to me, may be inferred from the fact, admitted on all hands in France, that the departments remain to-day what they were at first—mere administrative divisions which have taken no hold on the feelings and sympathies of the people, while the 'local patriotism' of the provinces is still a vivid reality.

Frenchmen are still Gascons and Provençals, Bretons and Normans, Burgundians and Picards, and no country in the world is richer than France in local histories and chronicles. But so late as 1877 the local history of the Department of the Pas-de-Calais, in which I am now writing, could be described as 'unique in France,' and this local history is really a history, not of the department at all, but of the two important and interesting provinces of which it consists—Artois, namely, and the Boulonnais—each of which still preserves, after nearly a century, its own distinctive character in the physiognomy of the people, in their habits, their turn of mind, and their traditions. The attempt to fuse them into a new political entity has completely failed. No more has, apparently,

come of it, locally, than would have come of an attempt to fuse Massachusetts and Rhode Island into a Department of Martha's Vineyard, or Kent and Sussex into a Department of New Haven. Possibly even less. For Artois and the Boulonnais never passed definitely under the French crown until the middle of the seventeenth century. Even Calais, after the Duke of Guise had wrested it from England, was conquered for Spain by the Archduke Albert, and a smiling little agricultural commune alone now commemorates, in its name of Thérouanne, the once great and flourishing episcopal capital of Morinia in which Clodion began the French monarchy, and which was mercilessly razed to the ground and abolished from off the face of the earth, little more than three hundred years ago, by the victorious emperor Charles the Fifth. [Pg 3]

Of this artificial department Calais is neither the chief town nor capital. It has scarcely a third of the population of Boulogne, and not much more than half the population of Arras, which is the seat of the préfecture; and though it is by no means so dreary and uninteresting a place as the casual traveller, seeing only the landing-pier, and the new station, which bears the name of the heroic Eustache de St.-Pierre, is apt to take it to be, it cannot compare, in point of beauty and interest, either with Boulogne or with Arras. But as the French head of the great historic ferry between England and the Continent, and as the seat of sundry thriving factories, it is both a busy and prosperous town. I found its streets swarming with people and its houses a flutter of flags and banners, when I came to it on June 3, 1889, to see the 'inauguration,' by President Carnot, of the works on which the French Government has been spending millions of francs during the past decade, with an eye to deepening and enlarging the harbour. The weather was magnificent. [Pg 4] Several men-of-war of the Channel squadron lay off the port. Excursion steamers came in from England, bringing members of Parliament and miscellaneous British subjects, of the sort once indignantly denounced to me by the little old verger of a Midland cathedral as 'them terrible trippers.' The active and good-natured railway porters at the station were worn out with throngs of travellers pouring in from all the country round about. There was much animation everywhere, but nowhere any enthusiasm, though Calais, I suppose, must be a republican town, as at the election of a deputy, held here in 1886, the Government candidate, M. Camescasse, received 5,196 votes against 2,233 given to his Conservative opponent, M. Labitte. I am told, too, there is a good deal of Socialism among the factory workmen; and I can see that the place is full of *cabarets* and *débits*, flowing not only with light beer and sour wine, but with spirits of a sort to make the consumers more clamorous about the rights than solicitous about the duties of man.

I heard, in the course of the day, that at some points in his progress, the President was received with cries of 'Vive Boulanger!' but nothing of this sort passed under my own observation. What most struck me was that his presence appeared to be not an event at all, but merely an incident of a general holiday. Nor did the people seem to care much about the real event of the day, the 'inauguration' of the perfected port. Perhaps they knew that the port is not yet perfected. Those of them who went down to the pier at least knew, this—for a steamer of no very great size, the St.-André, I believe, trying to come in, grounded on the sand, and lay there thumping herself heavily for I know not how long. I heard this mishap described with much glee by a group of Boulonnais in the main street. 'Ah bah!' said one of them exultingly, 'they may spend what they like, Calais will never be Boulogne!' [Pg 5]

I breakfasted with a friend who lives much on a property he has in Picardy, and who came down to Calais to meet me. When I first knew him, years ago, he was a republican of the type of Cavaignac and a bitter enemy of the Empire, some of his kinsfolk in the Gironde having been ill-treated during the persecution which raged against the republicans and the royalists alike, in and around Bordeaux, after the *coup d'état* of the Prince President. Of later years he has been growing indifferent to public affairs, and is now, I think, simply a pessimist, whom nothing but a foreign invasion of France is likely to rouse into activity again.

'What is the matter with the people here?' I asked him. 'Are they Boulangists, or do they simply dislike Carnot?'

'No!' he replied, 'I don't think they care much about Boulanger, and why should they dislike Carnot? There is nothing in him to like or to dislike. He is not a personality. He is only a functionary, and Frenchmen care nothing about functionaries. They know that this is an electoral job, and they care nothing about it, one way or the other.'

'But I saw an inscription on a banner in one of the streets,' I said, 'to this effect: "Calais always faithful to the Carnots!" Does that mean that the Carnots are of this country?'

'Not at all! The grandfather of Carnot was born in Burgundy somewhere. He married a young lady of St.-Omer, and in that way came to be sent by the Pas-de-Calais to the "Legislative" and the Convention. The inscription is amusing though,' he added, 'for, like these other inscriptions reciting the names of Lazare Carnot, and Hippolyte Carnot, and Sadi Carnot, it shows how hard [Pg 6] some people are trying to work the President up into a personality. They want to make him out the heir of a dynasty—Carnot III.!'

'That is not a very republican way of looking at a President,' I observed.

'Possibly not, but it is a very French way of looking at one! We should be the most monarchical people in Europe if we were not the most anarchical. Give a public man a legend and a grandfather, and he can go a long way with us. I don't know that the grandfather will do without the legend, even when, as in this case, the grandfather has a legend of his own.'

'Is that legend of grandfather Carnot very strong in this region?' I asked.

'Neither in this region nor anywhere else,' he replied. 'I think it is very foolish of the managers in Paris to provoke comparisons by sending a political bagman to Germany to bring back the ashes of Papa Victory, as the Prince de Joinville brought back the dead Emperor from St. Helena. Carnot I., after all, was simply a good war minister, who loomed into greatness only in comparison with the rogue Pache and the phenomenal booby Bouchotte who preceded him. He was certainly no better than his successor Pétiet, and it was Pétiet, not he, who finally "organised victory" by sending Moreau to the Rhine, and Bonaparte to Italy. Napoleon, who knew them both, made Pétiet governor of Lombardy, and chose him, not Carnot, to organise the great camp at Boulogne. When Pétiet died, not long after Austerlitz, Napoleon gave him a much grander funeral in the Pantheon than can be got up now for the grandfather of Carnot. Most people have forgotten Pétiet, and it is a blunder to remind them of him. But this is a government of blunderers. See what trouble the Ferrys and the Freycinets are taking to unmake the legend [Pg 7] Clémenceau made for Boulanger! Do what they may, that black horse is worth more to Boulanger to-day than Carnot's grandfather ever will be to Carnot III.'

'But has Carnot III. no value of his own? Has he not shown more firmness than people expected of him when this Boulangist business began?'

'Carnot III. is simply the firm-name of Ferry and De Freycinet. I am not fond of the scurrilities of Rochefort, as you know, but he sometimes hits the nail on the head very hard, as he did when, on the day after that comedy of the presidential election, he said "the fact that a man, if you ask him to dinner, will not put your spoons into his pocket is not a sufficient reason for making him president of a republic." Only,' he added reflectively, 'that was not quite their reason for making him president. It was that they thought he would let other people pocket the spoons.'

This reminded me of what used to be said of Secretary Seward by his enemies, that he was 'honest enough himself, but cared nothing about honesty in other people.'

'I don't mean that exactly,' said my friend. 'What I mean is, that Carnot III. is not clever enough to know whether the people around him are or are not honest. His grandfather was. Carnot I. would have cut a great figure in our present Senate, and in the party of the "sick at heart"—the respectable gentlemen, I mean, who are always consenting, under the stress of some "reason of State," to vote for one or another piece of rascality, though it makes them "sick at heart" to do so. Carnot I. voted in this way for the murder of Louis XVI., and he takes pains to tell us that all his colleagues in the Convention who voted for it did so in dread of the mob in the galleries. Just in the same way he was sharp enough to join Napoleon during the Hundred Days, because he saw [Pg 8] that his best chance of saving his own head and staying in France was to keep out the Bourbons. This Carnot III. is, I dare say, more honest and less calculating—for he is certainly more dull—than his grandfather. Perhaps he may turn out to be the Louis XVI. of the Republic.'

How much has actually been spent on the works here to make Calais a great seaport, it is not easy to ascertain; but the lowest estimates stated to me seem to be quite out of proportion with the results actually achieved.

My conversation on this point with my friend from Picardy is worth recording.

'Ten years ago,' he said, 'the amount to be spent on Calais was set down at eleven millions of francs. I feel quite sure that at least twice this sum has been actually spent here since the work began in 1881.'

'Why do you feel sure of this?'

'Because twice the first estimate has been avowedly spent everywhere in France on the whole scheme. Calais alone figures this year in the budget for sixteen millions and a half! You were in France, were you not, in 1880, and you must surely remember the songs that used to be sung in the streets:—

"C'est Léon Say, c'est Freycinet,
C'est Freycinet, c'est Léon Say."

'These two men, both of them men of business, both financiers (though the "white mouse"[1] is a bit of a visionary) and both men of ability, deliberately adopted, in 1879, after a single conversation with Gambetta, a scheme improvised by him, who was neither a man of business nor a financier, but a declamatory Bohemian, for keeping up the war expenditure by committing [Pg 9] France to the creation of a complete "commercial outfit."

'The Republicans won the elections in 1877 by frightening France into a belief that a Conservative victory at the polls would be followed by a new German invasion. I am not sure, mind you, that this was an idle scare. For under the Conservative administration of our affairs we had cleared off in six years' time the frightful burdens imposed upon us by the war, by the senseless Parisian revolution of 1870, and by the Communist insurrection of 1871; and it is likely enough that Bismarck may have made up his mind to attack us if he saw us persist in a sane and sensible public policy. Be that as it may, Gambetta, Léon Say, and Freycinet, between them, did his work for him by plunging the country back into the financial morass from which the Conservatives had rescued it. They carried the new chamber with them into Gambetta's scheme for doing systematically and successfully what had been clumsily attempted in the Ateliers Nationaux of 1848. France was to be made a republic by spending nearly the amount of the German War indemnity on the construction of railways, canals, and ports all over the country. The sum stated in the outset was four thousand five hundred millions of francs—rather a pretty

penny you must see!'

'I remember it,' I replied, 'and I remember thinking, when the scheme was first developed, that the adoption of it was a wonderful evidence of the financial vigour and vitality of France.'

'Thank you,' he replied rather bitterly. 'It was just such a proof of vigour and vitality that Dr. Sangrado used to get from his patients with his lancet. It was a great political manœuvre, no doubt, and it commended itself to all the hungry politicians in France so promptly and so warmly, [Pg 10] that within three years' time, in 1882, M. Tirard, who was then Finance Minister, and who is now on the box of the Carnot coach, had to admit that the expenditure then contemplated in carrying out this great idea could not possibly fall short of nine thousand one hundred and fifty millions of francs! This, observe, was seven years ago. To-day it has swelled, at the least, into eleven and perhaps to twelve thousand millions of francs. Why not? Gambetta, Léon Say, and Freycinet proclaimed the millennium of civil engineers and local candidates. What becomes of equality and fraternity if the smallest hamlet in the recesses of the Jura is not as much entitled to a local railway at the public expense as the largest port on the Bay of Biscay? Once let it be understood that the Government means to spend ten thousand millions on public works, and all the voters are ready to believe the Government has found the philosopher's stone. Nobody but the tax-gatherer will ever make them understand where the money comes from. And between the tax-gatherer and the taxpayer, a truly clever finance minister can always interpose successfully, for a certain length of time, the anodyne banker with a new form of public loan! We are the sharpest and thriftiest people alive in private affairs, and in public matters the most absolute fly-gobblers in the whole world!'

I tried to console my friend by informing him that this particular kind of political financiering is not unknown in my own country. The scheme of Gambetta appears to me to be simply a development, on a grand scale, of the 'log-rolling principle,' on which, year after year, a measure known as the 'Rivers and Harbours Bill' is engineered, with more or less friction, through the Congress of the United States. It is regularly and diplomatically fought over between the two [Pg 11] houses until an agreement about it is come to between the opposing forces, described by a recent American writer as 'the plutocracy at one end and the mobocracy at the other end' of our national legislature. In short, it has now become an 'institution,' and like other institutions it has its legendary hero, in a western legislator who is reputed to have re-elected himself for a number of years by 'putting through' successive appropriations for the 'improvement' of a stream which rose in an inaccessible mountain and emptied itself into an unfathomable swamp.

'That is very well,' said my friend gravely, 'very well indeed, but you have to do this thing every year, while Gambetta and Léon Say and De Freycinet committed France to it once for all and irremediably. And on what scale do you do this sort of thing?'

I was forced to own that, upon this point, Washington so far lags shamefully in the rear of Paris. Our grandest 'log-rolling' in finance is, to the colossal operations of Gambetta, Léon Say, and De Freycinet, as is the ordinary iron lamp-post of New York to the Eiffel Tower.

The 'Rivers and Harbours Bill,' in 1886, was only saved after a desperate struggle at the very end of the session, by a compromise over an 'ancient and fish-like' canal job in the North-West, the original promoter of which, long since passed beyond the hope, if not beyond the desire of hydraulic improvements, audaciously baptized it with the name of Father Hennepin, one of the glories of France in the New World. And yet the amount involved in the Bill did not exceed fourteen million dollars, or a beggarly seventy million francs.

'At that rate,' said my friend, 'it would take your great country more than a century to match what we have covered in ten years. And yet you are thought an enterprising people, and, what is [Pg 12] more to the point, your treasury shows an annual surplus, while ours shows an annual deficit; and you have nearly twice our population, have you not, and more than ten times our area of territory?

'If I were to "improve" the roads and ponds on my property on the principle on which France has been "improving" her railway systems and her ports, I should bring up in bankruptcy. Where else can the country bring up? Nothing, so far, has saved us but the woollen stocking of the peasants. Come to my place in Picardy, and I will show you a dozen old fellows who go about dressed in blouses—who work like day-labourers—no! much better and harder than day-labourers now do. They will never tell you what they are thinking about; they will never tell me, though we are the best of friends; but you will see what they are—close at a bargain, shrewd, devoted to their farms and families. Well, they live on a third—yes, some of them on a quarter—of their incomes; they know just where every penny they have spent on the ground for twenty years has gone, and just what it has brought back to them, and every man of them can put his hand, if need be, on ten, twenty, thirty, forty thousand francs. That is the woollen stocking. But the most beautiful woman in the world can only give what she has. The woollen stocking holds no more than it holds. You can find the bottom of it if you keep on long enough—and then? And mark you, if I tell the shrewdest of these old fellows that the Government is spending ten thousand millions of francs on building railways from nowhere to nowhere, and digging ports in quicksands, what will he do? He will begin to think it is very hard that he can't get a railway built or a port dug. Do you wonder I am a pessimist?' [Pg 13]

'But if this is the way in which they look at things, why do they clamour for Boulanger?'

'They don't clamour for Boulanger. That is to say the peasants, the rural people. It is in the towns

—here in Calais, for example, at Boulogne, at Amiens—that they clamour for Boulanger. In the towns they read all manner of trash and listen to all manner of lies. You can get up a legend in the French towns for anybody or anything as easily to-day as in the middle ages—perhaps more easily. Look at this legend of Boulanger. It is a real legend to-day. You may be sure of that, and that is the real danger of it. The people who are fighting against it to-day are the people who made it. They wanted, they could not get on without, a great man. Ferry went to pieces, as you know, in 1885. Tonkin and the dead Courbet killed him. So they invented Boulanger. They made him War Minister. They put him on his black horse. They let him drive out the princes. Look at those five men seated there in front of that café. They are doubtless decent well-to-do shopkeepers, master mechanics—no matter what—I will wager you that of these five men, three believe Boulanger to be the first soldier of France, and that two of them believe the Government has driven him into exile to prevent the Germans from declaring war! That is enough to make them Boulangists.'

'Then they want war with Germany?'

'Yes, in this part of France I think they do. But the legend is just as effective where they do not want war with Germany. Last year I was in the country of Grévy, not far from Mont-sous-Vaudrey. There the peasants dread nothing so much as another war. They want peace there at any price. Well, then, a very shrewd old farmer told me he wanted to see Boulanger made Chief of the State. Why? Why because, as he said, Boulanger is the first general in Europe, and the [Pg 14] Germans know it, and they go in fear of him; so that if Boulanger is made Chief of the State, they will think twice before they attack us! What do you say to that?'

'Is it not extraordinary,' I replied, 'that this legend, as you truly call it, should have been created so easily about a general who has no battle to show for it; not even a Montenotte, much less an Arcola or a Lodi?'

'What legend had Bonaparte when Barras put him at the head of the home army, and Pétiet sent him to Italy? He did not command at Toulon, and his one victory had been to blow the marshalled blackguards and lunatics of Paris into the Seine, as Mandat might and would have done on that dismal August 10, but for that hypocritical scoundrel Pétion. And didn't the authorities arrest Bonaparte after Toulon; and was he not struck from the active roll of general officers in France for refusing a command in La Vendée? So far as the army goes, there is better stuff for a legend to-day in Boulanger than there was in Bonaparte when he went to Italy.

'But observe that the Government made a legend of Boulanger, not for military but for political purposes. They were shut down to him. If they could have used M. de Lesseps, and if the Panama Canal had been a success, Lesseps would have served their purpose better than Boulanger. Without a "great Frenchman," I tell you the republic is impossible. Are they not trying to make a "great Frenchman" now of Carnot? If this could be done, if it were possible to make a "great Frenchman" of Carnot, I should not object. But it is absurd. And so for me, whatever the electors may do in September, the republic is hopeless. They made Boulanger to save it; now they are trying to unmake Boulanger to save it. It is childish, it is silly, it will not do! If they succeed in [Pg 15] unmaking their legend of Boulanger, where are they? Not even where they were when they began to make it. On the contrary! They have made it perfectly plain that the republic is a parachute which falls without a balloon. Where are they to find the balloon? The Exposition has given the parachute a lift. The visit of the Prince of Wales gave it a lift. The Shah, if he comes, will give it a lift—not much—but a lift. But all these are expedients of a moment. All these will not give the republic a "great Frenchman."'

'All this,' I said, 'seems to bring us back to what you said this morning, that if you were not the most anarchical you would be the most monarchical people in Europe.'

'Precisely! and it is the plain truth. The republic was possible with MacMahon, for after all he was a personality. It was possible with Thiers, for though he was a little rascal and the greatest literary liar of the century except Victor Hugo, he was a personality, and a very positive personality. It might have been possible with Gambetta, for he too was a personality, odious and flatulent if you like, but still a personality. It was not possible with Grévy. It is not possible with Carnot.

'Let the elections go as they may, you will see that I am right. I wash my hands of it all. But when I think of it I see on the wall *Finis Galliæ*! For while I despair of the republic, I have no hope of a monarchy. Nothing but a personality can carry on the republic—and nothing but a personality can restore the monarchy.

'The friends of the poor little Prince Imperial understood this when they consented to let him go off to South Africa. If he had been in the hands of an English general of common sense, or of an [Pg 16] English captain of common courage, he would no doubt have come back safe and sound. And in that case the odds are that we should be living to-day under the Third Empire instead of the Third Republic.

'As it is, the Empire, between the significance of Plon-Plon, and the insignificance of Prince Victor, is like the Republic between Ferry, the Tonkinese, and Carnot, who ought to spell his name *Carton*!'

'But how is it with the royalists?'

'Ah! their only "personality" known to the people—and that is the value of a personality in France

—is the Duc d'Aumale—and who knows whether the Duc d'Aumale is a royalist? I have no doubt—absolutely no doubt,' he said with some emphasis, 'that Say and De Freycinet to-morrow would gladly join forces with the Conservatives to make the Duc d'Aumale president if the Conservatives would agree to it, and if the Duc would accept the place; for that would give the Republic a new lease of life in the first place, and in the second place it would utterly disintegrate the royalists, both white and blue. If the Duc is not a "great Frenchman" in the electoral sense of the phrase, he is the most creditably conspicuous of living Frenchmen, which is something.'

'More so than his nephew the Comte de Paris?'

'Yes, certainly, in the popular mind. Personally, I do not think he would make either so good a president of a republic, or so good a king as the Comte de Paris, whose manifesto I think shows him to be a man of clear and sound constitutional ideas, but the French people do not know him. It was a blunder, by the way, in my opinion,' he added after a moment, 'of Boulanger to expel the Comte de Paris. His exile and his action in exile have made him better known in France than he [Pg 17] would have been, had he been left to live quietly at Eu and in Paris. Furthermore, what sort of a republic is it in which a family of princes cannot live without tempting the whole population to make one of them king? The expulsion of the princes belongs to the same category of political idiocies with the *pacte de famine*. Either the Republic is a reality accepted by the French people, or it is a sham imposed upon them by a party. If it is a reality, the princes are simply French citizens, as much entitled to live in France under the protection of the laws as if they were peasants. From this there is no escape logically or morally, and the men who voted for such an edict are neither good Republicans nor good Frenchmen. From the moment it was enacted and executed, the Republic ceased to be a national government. It was a *coup d'état* and not a legal act, and every legislator who voted for it committed perjury at least as distinctly as the author of the *coup d'état* of 1851. Could such a law possibly have been passed in your republic?'

'Certainly not,' I said. 'In fact, the people of many American States are free to treat with all possible public and private distinction a personage who not only was elected to a position which may be called princely, but who actually exercised for several years a greater authority over millions of American citizens than has belonged to any French king since Louis XVI., and, exercising it, waged war against the United States. But was there no pretence of constitutional authority for the passage of this law which you so strongly denounce?'

'Certainly not. There was no shadow of a legal pretext for passing it. It is, I think, the worst and also the silliest instance in our recent history of an appeal to that argument of rogues and tyrants [Pg 18] called *salus populi*, as to which I am of the opinion of Louis Blanc, that the "safety" of no nation under heaven "is worth the sacrifice of a single principle of common justice."

'It was a blow struck in broad daylight at the personal rights of every French citizen; just as the removal of the princes from the army was a blow struck in broad daylight at the property rights of every French officer. That it was possible for a Government to strike these blows in cold blood, with no popular excitement instigating them, and with no public resentment following them, should show you, I think, how absurd it is to talk of the French people as a republican people. Any Government in power at Paris may be as arbitrary as it likes, but it must not be stupid. The expulsion of the princes was a crime against liberty; it was as arbitrary an act as the issue of a *lettre de cachet*. But it was also very stupid. It was stupid of the Government because it put them for a time under the thumb of Boulanger. It was stupid of Boulanger, because it put the Comte de Paris at once on a pedestal and forced him before France and Europe into the position of a saviour of society, for whom all the conservative forces of French society must henceforth inevitably work. Whatever becomes of Boulanger in the next elections, he has condemned the Opportunists irretrievably either to hew wood for the Socialists or to carry water for the Monarchists. And with them he has condemned himself. Wait and see if I am not right.

'Come and see me in Picardy. You will find more royalist farmers than I could have believed possible six years ago. If the Comte de Chambord had not kept the Legitimist country gentlemen so much apart as a caste from the peasants, there would be nothing easier than to sweep the country with a monarchist propaganda. It was the royalist peasantry who brought about the great [Pg 19] emigration in 1789, long before the Terror, by burning and pillaging the châteaux all over France under orders from Paris, which they believed to be orders from the king. What puzzles them now is the notion lurking down in the bottom of their minds that the restoration of the monarchy will somehow put the country gentlemen over them, and this has much to do with making them, not republicans, but imperialists. As to the republic the overthrow of Grévy had a very bad effect upon the peasants and the farmers in my part of the country, and I believe it had everywhere.'

'Was M. Grévy, then, popular with them?'

'No, it was not that at all. It was the feeling that the Republic meant changes and uncertainty. A farmer—a fair specimen of this class in my country—expressed this to me in his own fashion only the other day. I asked him if he was coming to see the President here at Calais. "What is the use of that?" he said, "it is money out of pocket, and for what? Who knows how long he will be President? There was Grévy. Here is Boulanger. All that can do no good. With these short leases what can be done for the land?" There you have it. In Picardy and in Artois the people have long memories about the land. All these countries, as you know, were fought over again and again. There were so many wars that people got out of the way of making long leases, and the land suffered accordingly. In the last century these provinces, now so well and so richly cultivated, were in a very bad way through this. With leases of three, six, nine years, the farmers naturally took as few risks as possible in the way of improving the land. They were always making up the

waste caused by the previous tenant, or shy of investing for the benefit of the next tenant. Towards the end of the century, and before the Revolution, small holdings began to increase, and [Pg 20] the English fashion of long leases came in, and the agriculture improved accordingly. So you see why our farmers tend to monarchy from the point of view of long leases and land ownership, just as these sailors and fishermen here in the Boulonnais tend to it from the point of view of seamanship. You will make republicans of them when you get them to let the forecastle elect the cook captain. That will not be to-morrow nor, I think, next week.'

I left Calais late at night for Boulogne, my friend going into Picardy, where I promised to join him later on. There was an immense crowd at the station, and I could not help admiring the good nature and cheery civility of the porters. The sub-officials in silver lace were not so admirable, but then they were only strutting about and objecting to things. The honest fellows who were getting twice as many passengers into a train as the train could possibly take, and helping bewildered provincials to find out where they really wanted to go, were, I thought, miraculously amiable and intelligent.

At the last moment, just as we were moving off, a lively Parisian journalist tumbled into our compartment with his despatch-box and his portmanteau. He was in the full evening dress in which he had been parading about all day with the Presidential party; his white cravat was loose and awry, and the grey dust of the Calais streets and piers lay thick upon his glossy bottines; but he was in the best of spirits, for he had caught the train and would now reach Paris in the morning.

'But the President is going on to Boulogne, is he not?' I asked.

'Oh, yes! but what of that? It will be just what it was to-day, and I know what he is going to say. He will leave Boulogne early in the afternoon, and we shall have it all, an excellent account. It's [Pg 21] not worth while to waste the time on Boulogne.'

He had been with the President ever since the party left Paris, and thought the progression the whole, a success. 'Not at Calais,' that he admitted. There had certainly been no great enthusiasm at Calais. He did not think there had been any cries for Boulanger, but there was no emotion. This he explained by telling me that the people had not been properly '*stylé*.' 'In these cases, you know,' he said with the air of a connoisseur in enthusiasm, 'you must have a certain subtle *stylage*.'

The word was new to me, but not so the thing. For I presently found that by a 'subtle *stylage*' of the people, my companion only meant what in America is known as 'working up a boom,' when the welfare of the Union requires that a President, or a presidential candidate, should perambulate a certain number of 'doubtful' States, or, in the picturesque language of the days of Andrew Johnson, go 'swinging round the circle.' If I am not misinformed, an analogous operation is occasionally performed in England, when some popular idol finds it worth his while to make an unpremeditated political tour.

'The thing was better done at Lens,' said my fellow-traveller. 'Do you know Lens? They are all miners there, you know—very curious people. I suppose they were glad to come up from under the ground and look at us. Some of the women, too, were pretty—really very pretty. It was all very well arranged. There is a good manager there, M. ——. He made way, you know, in 1886, for Camescasse, to oblige the Government. The President gave him the Cross. It had a very good effect. At Bapaume, too, the President did a good thing. He decorated —— there, who had so [Pg 22] much trouble with the Christian Brothers.'

'For having trouble with the Christian Brothers?' I could not help asking.

'No! but the courts decided against him, and that was a misfortune. The President put it right by decorating him, for it is evident that he meant to do his duty, and a Government must stand by its friends. Do you know Bapaume? It is a pretty place—all factories. It was there, you know, that Faidherbe beat the Germans. A very pretty place.' [Pg 23]

CHAPTER II

IN THE PAS-DE-CALAIS—*continued*

BOULOGNE

Boulogne now, as in the days of Arthur Young, is surrounded with bright and pleasant villas and country houses, though many of the châteaux which Young was so much surprised to find inhabited by country gentlemen attending to their duties and living on their estates have disappeared.

It is not only a larger and a more lively place than Calais; it is a more picturesque and a more interesting place. The old walls and ramparts of the upper town make such a striking contrast with the modern streets and squares of the lower town as reminds one vaguely of Quebec, the Channel coming into the landscape like the St. Lawrence. As at Quebec, too, the two civilisations of France and of England meet without mingling; and at Boulogne, as at Quebec, the French

type, if not the stronger of the two, certainly proves itself to be the subtler, and decides the local physiognomy.

I spent an hour at Boulogne, with a friend who now fills an important ecclesiastical position in one of the provinces of Central France, and who was passing a few weeks on the Channel for his health. He is one of the few French churchmen I personally know who heartily agree with Cardinal Manning in thinking that the abolition of the Concordat would greatly strengthen the [Pg 24] Church in France, even if it involved a further serious sacrifice of the proprietary rights of the clergy. 'The way in which the people have come forward to the support of the congreganist schools against, the oppressive measures adopted in the law of 1886,' he said, 'confirms my old conviction, that a complete separation of the Church from the State in France, whatever its effect might be upon the State, would strengthen the Church.'

He cited a number of instances within his own knowledge in which rural communes had established, and were carrying on, at the direct expense of the local farmers and residents, free or congreganist schools, while, of course, at the same time they were paying taxes for the lay public schools to which they would not send their children. 'And this in spite,' he said, 'of the ingenious devices with which the law of 1886 bristles for making the establishment of free and Christian schools difficult and expensive. For example, to begin with, the legislature actually tried to prevent us from calling our schools free schools, though as schools supported by the free subscriptions of the people they were distinctly "free" schools, as distinguished from the schools established by the law at the expense of the taxpayers. We were gravely informed that it was an act of war to call a free school free! In this same petty and childish spirit the congregations are called "associations" in the text of the law. When a free school is to be opened, the teacher who is to have charge of it must run the gauntlet of a series of public officers, all of them, if they are on good terms with the Government, presumably hostile to him as a Christian. He begins with the mayor of the Commune, who may object to his opening the school in the place he has chosen, on grounds of "good morals or of hygiene." Then he must go through with the Prefect of the [Pg 25] Department, the Academic Inspector, and the Procureur of the Republic.'

'That is to say,' I asked, 'the law officer of the department? Why should he be brought into the business?'

'Why, indeed,' replied my friend. 'You must ask M. Ferry or M. Clémenceau. He can stir up the Academic Inspector to make some objection to the opening of the free school, if the Academic Inspector does not find and make an objection himself. If no objections are made within a month the school may be opened. If objections are made they must be made before the Council of the Department within a month. If the Council support the objections, the teacher must appeal from the decision to the Academic Inspector within ten days, and the Inspector must submit this appeal to the Superior Council of Public Instruction at the next ensuing session of that body. Now the Superior Council only meets twice a year, and as the appeal, according to the law, is only required to be heard "with the least possible delay," you will see that nothing can be easier than for the Academic Inspector and the Procureur between them to keep a decision in the air for months, or for a year, or even longer, and pending the appeal the school cannot be opened.

'As for the departmental councils, which are first to consider the objections made to the opening of the school, they no longer include, as they did under the Empire, representatives of the Catholic clergy, the Protestant sects, and the Israelites. All of these are struck out of the councils by this law of 1886, though fully ninety-nine hundredths of all the taxes paid to support the machinery, not only of public education but of the State, are paid by the Catholics, Protestants, [Pg 26] and Israelites. Nor are the councils any longer allowed to elect their own vice-presidents. The prefect, a government *employé*, presides over the councils. The Academic Inspector, another government *employé*, is officially the president; four councillors-general, elected by the whole body of the council-general of the department, sit on the Departments of Primary Instruction Council, as do also the director or directors of the Normal Schools of Public Teachers, and four teachers, two male and two female, to be elected by the whole body of lay public school teachers of both sexes in the department, all of them paid *employés* of the Government; and finally, two inspectors of public primary education nominated by the Minister of Public Instruction. So, as you see, out of a council consisting of fourteen members, ten are paid servants of the Government, directly concerned to discourage the development of the Christian schools. If questions and disputes between the lay public schools and the free Christian schools came before this council, one lay and one congreganist teacher may be admitted to join the council. But the wise and just provision of the earlier law, that two or more magistrates of the highest repute should be members of these councils, has been deliberately struck out of this aggressive law of 1886.

'Is it possible,' he said, 'to mistake either the spirit or the object of such a law?

'What gives me confidence and hope is the unquestionable effect which the law has had upon the religious life of France. It has aroused and stimulated it to more vigour and energy than I have seen it show for years past. If only the Church in France were to-day as free from any official connection with the State as it is in your country, I believe we should see such a revival of [Pg 27] Catholic faith as has not been known in Europe for centuries.

'Do you remember,' he went on, 'how Ferry went to Rome after his expulsion from power? Yes? And doubtless you know what efforts he made there at that time to bring about a subterranean understanding between himself and the Vatican?'

'He is the only one of these Opportunists who really has a head on his shoulders, and you will find that he is under no illusions as to the possibility of any working alliance between the Opportunists and the Radicals which can save the former from going to the wall, like the Girondins in 1793.

'Perhaps,' he said, laughingly, 'we may live to see M. Ferry doing penance in a white sheet, with a candle in his hand, on the way to a seat in a monarchical Cabinet! Though I am no politician, yet —mark my words!—this republic has been so mismanaged that now it cannot live without the Radicals—and it cannot live with them!

'As for the Church; if you want to see what life and energy it is showing in its work, come and see me in the autumn. I will show you in the Limousin one of the establishments of the Congregation of the Holy Cross, or you can go into Mayenne and see twelve or fifteen of them. Or you ought to go to Ruille-sur-la-Loire, to see the modest cradle of this great congregation, which now, from its mother-house at Neuilly, is sending out Catholic life and faith all over the world, and the pulse of which is beating higher in France to-day than at any time since that true and simple servant of God, Dujarié, took it upon himself, from his obscure little parsonage, to begin the restoration of the Church from the crash of the Terror and the calamities of the First Empire.' [Pg 28]

'How many years ago was it,' I asked, 'when this Congregation began its work in the United States?'

'Not quite fifty years ago,' he replied, 'and, as you know, its schools are flourishing in all parts of your Union, from the University (in Indiana) of Our Lady of the Lake, to New Orleans and New Jersey, and from Wisconsin to Texas. It numbers its pupils, too, by thousands here at home in France.

'I ask you to join me in the Limousin because I hope to be there in October, and then I can show you at Limoges what I am sure you would like to see—one of our best cathedrals, and some beautiful old glass in St.-Michel and St.-Pierre, not to mention the enamels still hidden away here and there in certain houses I wot of!'

St.-Omer

Two of the most interesting places in the Pas-de-Calais are St.-Omer, once a name of terror to the worthy Englishmen who went in constant fear of the Pope and wooden shoes, and Aire-sur-la-Lys, which now embraces within its communal limits all that remains to-day of the once famous and important city of Thérouanne, the ancient capital of Morinia, and for thirty years the episcopal seat of the great Swiss bishop, St.-Omer, who made North-Eastern Gaul Christian in the seventh century.

St.-Omer still preserves a certain grave and austere physiognomy, half-Spanish and half-scholastic; and it is easy for the imagination to people its quiet streets with the English and Irish students who frequented its collegiate halls from the days of Guy Faux to the days of Daniel O'Connell. But its importance is now military, not theological. M. Pierre de la Gorce, the accomplished historian of the Revolution of 1848, who lived here seven years as a magistrate, and who still resides here because he finds in the place 'a still air of delightful studies' congenial [Pg 29] to his tastes and favourable to his historical labours, told me, in the course of a most interesting afternoon which I passed here with him, that the town is full of families living here on their incomes; and in going about the streets I was struck with the general air of quiet and unobtrusive well-being which marks the people. In his position as a magistrate, M. de la Gorce had the best possible opportunities for gauging the moral character of the inhabitants, and he assured me that during the whole period of his residence in St.-Omer, extending now over twelve or thirteen years, he has never known more than one serious domestic scandal to disturb the even tenour of its social life. Of how many towns of twenty thousand inhabitants could the same thing be truly said in England or the United States? During all these years, too, M. de la Gorce tells me, only two cases of alleged misconduct on the part of priests have occurred in St.-Omer, and in one of these cases the allegation was proved malignant and unfounded. Politically, St.-Omer seems to be strongly Republican. In 1886 it gave the Government candidate a majority of 1,281 votes on a total of 6,623, whereas in Boulogne at the same election the Republicans were beaten in the southern division, and carried the whole city by only a majority of 1,331 votes out of a total of 8,233.

What I heard in St.-Omer of the officers stationed there was particularly interesting. There is a large garrison, and the greatest pains are taken by the officers not only with the military discipline, but with the schooling and general conduct of the troops. My own observation leads me to think this true, not of St.-Omer only, but of all the considerable garrison towns which I have visited in France during the past six or seven years. The old type of swashbuckling, absinthe-tippling, rakehelly French officer of whom, during the last years of the Empire, one saw [Pg 30] and heard so much, seems to have passed away into history and literature. However it may be with the 'gaiter-buttons' in the next great war, I do not believe the staff of the next invading army will have much to teach the French officers of to-day, either about the principles of scientific warfare or about the topography of France.

I am inclined to think that there are more French officers in St.-Omer alone to-day who can read and understand German than there were in all France in 1870. The *morale* and carriage of the soldiers, too, are distinctly higher. The calling of men of all ranks and conditions under the colours has necessarily raised the moral and social level of the rank and file as well as of the

officers; and it is quite certain that the army holds a higher place in the estimation of the better classes in France than it used to hold. M. de la Gorce cited to me several instances, here at St.-Omer, of young ladies of excellent family, three of them at least considerable heiresses, who have married young officers of merit solely because they were officers of merit, and who have gladly turned their backs on the flutter and glitter of fashionable Paris to share the quiet, unpretending quarters, and take a sympathetic interest in the serious military career of their husbands in this rather out-of-the-way garrison town.

I do not find M. de la Gorce sanguine as to any early solution of the political problems with which France is still wrestling after a hundred years. He makes no secret of his conviction that nothing but a return to the constitutional monarchy can give the country lasting peace at home, or real influence abroad. But his impression seems to be that time alone can bring this about. He would have the royalists unfurl their banner, go into the elections with a plain declaration of their [Pg 31] political creed, and await the progress of events. He cited, as a proof of the wisdom of this policy, the steady advance made by the Republicans after a mere handful of them came into the imperial legislature. They grew from five to thirty, simply because they stood firmly on their own principles, while the majority were disturbed and uncertain. The principle of the hereditary constitutional monarchy, he thought, should be plainly affirmed and presented to the French people, as their only real safeguard against the incessant disturbance and displacement of the executive machinery which results from the election of an executive chief.

'Let this be affirmed and presented,' said M. de la Gorce,' by a number—no matter how small it may be at first—of sincere and resolute men, and every successive shock and catastrophe will bring more and more support to them from all classes in France.'

M. de la Gorce is of the opinion that the laicisation of the schools, whatever may be said of the motives and intent of those who have promoted it, has had a good effect on the congreganist schools, by stimulating the teachers and directors to make greater efforts for the improvement of their methods and their general machinery of instruction. This is quite in accord with the views of my friend whom I met at Boulogne—and indeed it is in the nature of things.

The way in which the laicisation is carried out by the subaltern authorities seems to be admirably calculated also to inflame the religious zeal of the people. A very intelligent and liberal ecclesiastic, living here, tells me that, while M. Ferry is professing in the Chamber his great anxiety to co-operate with the Conservatives in modifying the decrees of 1791, in regard to religious associations, and talking about a more liberal treatment of the clergy and the Christian [Pg 32] free schools, the local functionaries here, in Artois, lose no opportunity of irritating and annoying the Christian population. In the village of Moislains near Péronne, for example, he tells me the funeral took place the other day of the Abbé Sallier, for many years the curé of that parish; a man so much respected and beloved by the whole community that, notwithstanding an express request made by him in his will, that no discourse might be pronounced at his interment, and that it might be made as simple as possible, the people insisted on escorting the remains to the cemetery in a long procession headed by the mayor, the municipal council, and all the notabilities of the country round about. Naturally the people wished that their children, most of whom had been baptized by the abbé, might join in this procession; to prevent which an express order was issued by the school authorities, that the children should not be allowed to leave the school for that purpose. It is difficult to see how a petty persecution of this sort can be expected to promote the 'religious peace' about which M. Ferry perorates at Paris. The rural Artesians, my friend tells me, resent these proceedings very bitterly, and show their feelings in the most practical fashion, by subscribing freely to carry on the religious primary schools, and refusing to let their children attend the lay schools, which are kept up by the Government out of the taxes paid by themselves. This, with a thrifty and rather parsimonious population, like that which increases and multiplies so steadily in Artois, is a most significant fact.

The Marist Brethren, who have their headquarter at the Ecole de Notre Dame in Albert, a town of some 4,000 inhabitants, about half-way between Arras and Amiens, are carrying on these religious schools most successfully. Albert itself is a very curious and interesting place. There are [Pg 33] remains here of Roman fortifications which show that it was a point of importance under the Empire, and subterranean excavations of a most remarkable character, one of them extending for more than two miles. Down to the time of Henry IV. Albert was known as Ancre. Concini, the Florentine favourite of Mary de' Medici, bought the lordship of Ancre with the title of marquis. With the help of his clever Florentine wife, Leonora Galigai, he completely subjugated the queen and her weak son, Louis XIII.; and, without so much as drawing his sword in battle, made himself a marshal of France, How all this led him on to his ruin I need not recite. He was stabbed to death in the precincts of the Louvre by Vitry; his wife, arraigned as a sorceress, was strangled and burned; and their unfortunate little son was degraded. The marquisate and lordship of Ancre were bought, oddly enough, by another and very different Florentine race, the Alberti, who had come into France and established themselves in the Venaissin a hundred years before. So intense was the general hatred of the Concinis, that, upon acquiring Ancre, the Alberti unbaptized the place and gave it their own French name of Albert, which is still most honourably borne by their representatives, the ducal houses of Luynes and of Chaulnes. It is common enough in France, as it is in England, to find the names of families perpetuated in conjunction with those of places once their property—Kingston-Lacy, Stanton-Harcourt, Bagot's Bromley, Melton Mowbray are English cases in point. But this displacement of an old territorial designation by a family name is unusual. Some thing like it has taken place in our own times and in a remote south-western corner of France, where the people of Arles-les-Bains changed the name of their pleasant little [Pg 34]

town of orange groves and olives to Amélie, to commemorate their respect and affection for the excellent queen of Louis Philippe.

There are factories at Albert; and a modern church is building there, not to the unmixed delight of architects and archæologists. But my concern now is with the work of the Marist Brothers who have made Albert their headquarters.

This work is carried on with the direct and active co-operation of the people. At one little hamlet, for example, called, I think, Brébières, nearly a hundred children now attend the Marist school, whose parents pay for each child a subscription of three francs a month. There, not long ago, it was found that in one poor family of peasants a family council had been called to raise this modest sum in order that one of the children now of an age to attend the school might be sent to it. The two elder children settled the question by insisting that they would give up their own daily ration of milk to meet the expense.

Will France be a nobler and stronger country when the priests who train the children of her peasantry into this spirit are driven out of the land?

This is the real question which must be met and answered by the advocates of compulsory lay education in the public schools.

The next step to be taken in the 'laicisation' of the schools has been already revealed in the famous 'Article 7' of M. Ferry. M. Ferry is the true, though more or less occult, head of the present Administration in France. 'M. Ferry,' said a caustic French Radical to me in Paris, 'ought to be the mask of M. Carnot. Nature gave him a Carnival nose for that purpose. Everything is topsy-turvy now in France, and so M. Carnot is the mask of M. Ferry. But the nose will come through before long.' [Pg 35]

Many years ago the public conscience of Philadelphia, then as now one of the most Protestant of American Protestant cities, was scandalised by the will of a French merchant, Stephen Girard; who, after acquiring a large fortune in that city, left it to found a college, within the precincts of which no minister of religion was, on any pretext whatever, to be allowed to appear. The stupid bigotry of this ignorant millionaire was the high-water mark of French Republican liberality during the dismal orgie of the First Republic. It is still the high-water mark of French Republican liberality under the Third Republic. The dream and desire of M. Ferry and his friends are to prohibit ministers of religion from taking any part whatever in the education of the French people. Already the municipal council of Paris has undertaken to 'bowdlerise' the literature of the world in order to prevent the minds of the young from being perverted by coming into contact with the name of God. These good butchers and bakers and candlestick-makers of the Seine really believe, like certain more academical persons of higher social pretensions in England and America, that the ineffable simpletons and scoundrels who for three or four years during the last decade of the last century made ducks and drakes at Paris of the public fortune and the private rights of the French people, were inspired harbingers of a new era. Outside of France it may be hard to suppose this possible, but nothing can be more certain than that the educational legislation of France since 1882 has been aimed steadily and directly at the abolition, not of Christianity alone, but of all religion.

It is curious to see the common school system of New England, which in the beginning was the device of a theocracy bent on usurping the authority of parents over their children, taken up after more than two hundred years, and readjusted to the purposes of a set of men whom the Puritans would have unhesitatingly whipped to death at the cart's tail as blasphemers. [Pg 36]

Only the other day, in the Chamber, an ardent Republican member, M. Pichon, made a speech in which he openly avowed the object of laicising the schools to be the destruction of religion. 'Between you, the Catholics,' he exclaimed, 'and us, who are Republicans, there is a great abyss. The interests of the Church are incompatible with those of the Republican Government.' That the Republicans in the Assembly should have applauded this declaration is rather astonishing, since it was in substance an admission that the interests of the 'Republican Government' are inconsistent with those of an admittedly immense majority of the French people. But they did applaud it, and not long before M. Pichon made the speech a solid Republican vote of 232 members had been recorded for the suppression of the French Embassy to the Vatican. Is it surprising that the Catholics of France should be asking themselves all over the country whether it is possible for them to accept the Republic without abjuring their religion?

The 'abyss' of which M. Pichon speaks has been dug, not by the Church, but by the theorists who have expelled the Sisters of Charity from the hospitals and the chaplains from the prisons of France, who refuse to the poor the right to pray in the almshouses, and who throw the crucifix out of school-houses which are maintained by the money of Catholic taxpayers. As between M. Pichon and M. Ferry and their fellow-conspirators on one side of this abyss, and the Marist Brethren and the little children of France on the other side of it, the history of the world hardly encourages the belief that it is the Marist Brethren and the little children who will finally be engulfed! [Pg 37]

It is a notable proof of the hold which Catholic ideas have upon the people in this part of France, that notwithstanding a marked tendency to emigration among the peasantry of the Boulonnais and of Artois, the population has steadily increased through the excess of births over deaths. This is not true of France as a whole. On the contrary, while the deaths in France in 1888 were 837,857, against an annual average of 847,968 from 1884 to 1887, the births diminished from an

annual average of 937,090 between 1881 and 1884 to 882,639 in 1888, leaving the small excess of 44,772 over the deaths. Of these only 33,458 were of French parentage! In Artois and the Boulonnais, the population is more dense than in any other part of France, excepting the metropolitan regions. While France, as a whole, in 1881, gave an average of seventy inhabitants to the square kilomètre, which is the precise proportion in Bavaria—the arrondissement of Béthune in the coal-mining country of Artois (fed by an exceptional immigration from Belgium) gave 173 to the square kilomètre, which exceeds the proportion in any division of the German Empire except Saxony, Lübeck, Bremen, and Hamburg.

The Department of the Pas-de-Calais, as a whole, gave 117 inhabitants to the square kilomètre, which is the precise proportion in Saxe-Altenburg, and exceeds by five the proportion in the British Islands taken as a whole. In the arrondissement of St.-Omer the rate of increase by natural growth some years ago outran that of the older sea-board States of the American Union.

This phenomenon cannot be explained by the improvidence of the Artesians, for they are admittedly remarkable, even in France, for their frugality and their forecasting habit of mind. A [Pg 38] friend of mine, who lives near St.-Omer, is probably right when he attributes it to their strong domestic tastes and habits, and to the influence over them of their religion. He says they are 'fanatics of the family.' Certainly in the cottages the children seem to have things all their own way, almost as much as in America. 'The Artesian parents,' my friend tells me, 'make their children the objects of their lives.' In the rural regions there is not much immorality. Concubinage, which is by no means uncommon in the towns, is exceedingly uncommon in the country of Artois.

The agricultural Artesian wishes to be the recognised head of his house, hates to have things at loose ends, and habitually makes his wife a consulting partner in all his affairs. Even when he is not particularly devout he likes to be on good terms with, his curate, and has very positive ideas as to what is decent and becoming. 'In short,' said my friend, 'he is an ideal husbandman in every sense of that English word, for which we have no equivalent. The assize records show that offences against public morality are almost wholly confined to the towns in Artois, and it is a notable fact that these particular offences are much more frequently committed by persons who can read and write than by the illiterate.'

My friend seemed to be startled when I told him that this 'notable fact' appeared to me to be quite in accordance with the nature of things, as set forth in the sound old maxim cited by the Apostle, that 'evil communications corrupt good manners.' So long as thirty years ago, the American Census showed that in the six New England States, in which the proportion of illiterate native Americans to the native white population was 1 to 312, the proportion to the native white [Pg 39] population of native white criminals was 1 to 1,084; whereas, in the six southern States of Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, Georgia, and the two Carolinas, the proportion of native white illiterates being 1 to 12 of the native white population, the proportion of native white criminals to the native white population was only 1 to 6,670. Mr. Montgomery of California, Assistant-Attorney-General of the United States in the Administration of President Cleveland, working on the lines of inquiry suggested by such facts as these, did not hesitate, two years ago, to assert that 'the boasted New England public school system, as now by law established throughout the length and breadth of the American Republic, is a poisonous fountain fraught with the seeds of human misery and moral death.' He cites the official statistics given by a New England professor, Mr. Royce, to prove that 'there is hardly a state or country in the civilised world, where atrocious and flagrant crimes are so common as in educated Massachusetts,' and he shows that the alarming and unquestionable increase of crime in the United States cannot be attributed, as it too often is, to the 'foreign element in American society, the criminal rate of which has remained the same or even lessened, while the native criminals increased during 1860-1870, from 10,143 to 24,173.' During that decade the total population of the United States increased from 31,443,321 to 38,567,617. Deducting 2,466,752 for the increase by immigration, we have a general increase of 4,657,538 in the native American population, or of less than 15 per cent, against an increase of about 140 per cent. in the number of native white criminals! It is no part of my present purpose to discuss Mr. Montgomery's contention. But it seems to me to deserve grave consideration in connection with the adventure to which the French Republican Government has [Pg 40] committed itself, of suddenly substituting for the religious and parental system of education in France, a French modification, in the interest of unbelief, of that American public school system which, as Mr. Montgomery maintains, rests upon the principle 'that the whole people must be educated to a certain degree at the public expense, irrespectively of any social distinctions.'

I have already said that St.-Omer appears to be in its politics decidedly Republican. An odd illustration of this I found in a hot local controversy waging there over the setting up of a statue in one of the public squares, to commemorate the courage and patriotism of a local heroine, Jacqueline Robins. This statue, which, as a work of art is not unworthy to be compared with the statue of Jeanne Hachette at Beauvais, was set up, with much ceremony, in 1884 (I believe the State paid for it), and stands upon a pedestal, with an inscription setting forth how Jacqueline Robins, in the year 1710, saved the besieged city of St.-Omer by going off herself with a train of boats down the Aa to Dunkirk, and bringing back the provisions and munitions of war necessary for the defence of the city.

As the city of St.-Omer was certainly not besieged in 1710, this inscription naturally excited the critical indignation of the local antiquaries, and on July 27, 1885, an exceedingly clear and conclusive report on the subject was laid before the Society of Antiquaries of Morinia, a body which has done good service to the cause of history in Northern France. From this report it

plainly appears that St.-Omer was not besieged at all in 1710. Prince Eugene, who marched into Artois with the Duke of Marlborough in that year in pursuit of Villars, wished to attack St.-Omer after the fall of Douai and Béthune, but the States-General of Holland would not hear of it; and [Pg 41] the gallant defence made of Aire-sur-la-Lys by the Marquis de Goesbriant kept the allies at bay so late in the year that no attempt upon St.-Omer could be made. The local chronicles rejoice over this escape, particularly, because they say the Duke of Marlborough had vowed special vengeance against the city, its authorities having refused to oblige him by getting out of the English Jesuits' College and sending him certain papers which the Duchess of Hamilton (the wife of the brilliant duke who was killed in Hyde Park by Lord Mohun and General Macartney) desired him to procure for her use in a law suit against 'Lord Bromley.'[2] St.-Omer, then, not having been besieged in 1710, why should a statue be set up in honour of an Audomaraise dame for delivering it? On this point the Report of the Society of Antiquaries throws a sufficient and interesting light. It seems that there really lived in St.-Omer in 1710 a certain dame Jacqueline Isabelle Robins, obviously a woman of mark and force, since she carried on a number of thriving industries, and among them the management, under a contract, of the boats between St.-Omer, Calais, and Dunkirk. Napoleon would have thought her much superior to Madame de Staël, for before she was forty years old she had married three husbands, and surrounded herself with six or seven [Pg 42] flourishing olive branches. She was constantly in the law courts fighting for her rights, not against private persons only, but against the 'mayor and échevins of the city of St.-Omer.' Though St.-Omer, as I have said, was not besieged by the allies, it was constantly occupied by the troops of his Most Christian Majesty, who gave the magistrates and the people almost as much trouble as if they had been enemies, and the records show that not long before the surrender of Aire-sur-la-Lys to the allies in November 1710, the Comte d'Estaing (an ancestor of the Admiral who did such good service to the American cause), under orders from Versailles succeeded in bringing to St.-Omer from Dunkirk a complete supply of powder and other munitions of war. It seems to be likely enough that in this operation the military authorities availed themselves of the services of dame Jacqueline and of her boats. As she was a masterful dame, and, burying her third husband, who was twelve years her junior, in 1720, lived on to depart at the age of seventy-five in 1732, a local legend evidently grew up about her personal share in the events of the great war of 1710. The first official historian of St.-Omer, a worthy priest Dom Devienne, writing in 1782, gave this legend form. As he transformed Jacqueline from a rich and prosperous woman of affairs into a 'woman of the dregs of the people,' calling her Jane, by the way, instead of Jacqueline, she became, after the Revolution, a popular heroine; her third husband, who appears to have been a young Squire de Boyaval and a dashing grey mousquetaire of King Louis, was metamorphosed into a brewer's apprentice (Jacqueline among her other possessions owned a brewery); and now, in the year 1889 we have the thrifty dame who helped the king's officers carry out the king's [Pg 43] orders for the supplying of St.-Omer, immortalised in bronze as an Audomaraise Jeanne Hachette or Maid of Saragossa!

Is not this worthy to stand on record with Sir Roger de Coverley's tale of the old coachman who had a monument in Westminster Abbey because he figured on the box of the coach in which Thomas Thynne of Longleat was barbarously murdered by Count Konigsmark?

The Republican Mayor of St.-Omer took sides on the question of Jacqueline Robins in 1885 with the Republican 'Professor of History in the Lyceum,' both of them being 'officers of the Academy,' against the Society of Antiquaries; and I dare say the matter may affect the Parliamentary elections in September, 1889! [Pg 44]

CHAPTER III

IN THE PAS-DE-CALAIS—*continued*

AIRE-SUR-LA-LYS

It is a local tradition at Aire-sur-la-Lys that, about half a century ago, the good people of this ancient and picturesque town (which, like St.-Omer, remained a part of the Spanish dominions when all the rest of the Artois became French by the treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659) turned out with flags and music to welcome their mayor back from Paris, bringing the good news that the projected Northern railway should not pass through their territory, to disturb their settled trade.

This unique incident is often cited to show the tenacious conservatism of the Artesians. I believe, however, it only proves that the people of Aire, dwelling in a region which has been fought over from time immemorial, had a well-grounded objection to the exclusively military views with which Marshal Soult then desired that the Government of Louis Philippe should take up and carry out the projected enterprise.

At all events, Aire-sur-la-Lys now rejoices in a comfortable little railway station, which makes it an important point in the system of the Northern Railway of France.

There, on a lovely evening in June, I found the carriage of M. Labitte, one of the Councillors-General of the department, waiting to take me to his charming and hospitable home in the richly- [Pg 45] cultivated agricultural commune of St.-Quentin.

It was on the eve of Pentecost when, as the German poet tells us, 'the woods and fields put off all

sadness,' and a lovelier summer evening it would be hard to find even in England.

M. Labitte is a Conservative and a devout Catholic. As I have already mentioned, he was a candidate in the Pas-de-Calais in 1886 for the seat in the Chamber now held by M. Camescasse, and received 74,554 votes against 86,356 for his opponent. In Aire he was beaten by only 22 votes out of a total of 3,536. His influence in the country here is, in a certain sense, hereditary, for he came of a family which in the last century gave many excellent ecclesiastics to the service of the Church, among a population then, as now, remarkable for its strong religious feeling. When the States-General were convened by Louis XVI. a century ago, the first date fixed for the elections in Artois had to be postponed, at the request of the Duc de Guines, because it interfered with Easter. The Artesians cared more for the Church than for the State. Yet, in no part of France was the calling of the States-General more popular, and nowhere were more efforts made before 1789 than in Artois to improve the condition of the people and to secure a more just and liberal fiscal administration. The clergy were extraordinarily powerful in Artois, alike by reason of their property and of the religious disposition of the people; and it is a curious and interesting fact that under the constitution of the Estates of Artois it was established (thanks to the union of the clergy with the Third Estate) that, while no votes of the nobility and the clergy united should bind the Third Estate, any joint vote of the Third Estate with either of the other two orders should bind them all. Here, long before the much-bewritten date of 1789, we have the Church in Artois [Pg 46] arraying itself on the side of the tax-paying people against the privileged classes. Modern inquiries show, indeed, that this was the attitude of the great body of the French clergy long before what is called the 'Revolution.' The majority of the representatives of the clergy in the States-General of 1789 did not wait for the theatrical demonstrations in the Tennis Court of Versailles, about which so much nonsense has been talked and written, to join the Third Estate in insisting upon a real reform of the public service. No French historian has ventured to make such a picture of the Catholic clergy of France under the Bourbons as Lord Macaulay thought himself authorised to paint of the Protestant clergy of England under the Stuarts. There were flagrant scandals among the higher orders of the Church in France, no doubt, as there were in England. The names of Dubois, of Loménie de Brienne, of De Rohan are not associated with the cardinal virtues. De Jarente, Bishop of Orleans, driving Mdlle. Guimard to the opera in his coronetted and mitred coach, is not an edifying figure, nor is Louis de Grimaldi, Bishop of Mans, saying Mass in his red hunting-coat and breeches. But the Protestant Dean of St. Patrick's thought the execution for felony of another Protestant dean a capital theme for a merry ballad; and at the end of the eighteenth century Arthur Young painted the English rural clergy in very dark colours. The curates, the rectors, the monks of France as a body, showed under the old régime the same qualities of devout faith and Christian sympathy with the people with which they met and baffled their persecutors after the crash of the monarchy. The three representatives of the clergy who first struck hands with the Third Estate on June 13, 1789, were curates sent to Paris by a province more intensely Catholic than Artois. They were Poitevin priests from the region which [Pg 47] we now know as La Vendée, and which only four years afterwards rose in arms to defend its altars and its homes against the intolerable despotism of the 'patriots' of Paris.

When Turgot was put in charge of that work of fiscal reform which might have spared France the horrors and the disasters of the Revolution, had Louis XVI. been capable of standing even by Turgot to the end, he carried on an extensive correspondence with curates in Artois as well as in the other provinces of France, as the best means of educating the people to an intelligent appreciation of his purposes and of his plans. Condorcet, who treated the brutal murderers of the Duc de la Rochefoucauld with a complaisance which entitles him to the confidence of the most advanced anti-clerical philosophers of our own day, bears witness to the good intentions of Turgot's correspondents. He says, in his memoir of Turgot, printed at Philadelphia seven years before the Revolution of '89, that 'the curates, accustomed to preach sound morals, to appease the quarrels of the people, and to encourage peace and concord, were in a better position than any other men in France to prepare the minds of the people for the good work it was the intents of the ministers to do.'

What was true of the French curates a hundred years ago is true of them to-day, the duties prescribed to them by the Church being still precisely what they were when Condorcet bore this testimony to the good dispositions of men much more conscientious than himself. Then, too, as now, the curates were required to look carefully after the education of the children in their parishes. France is indebted, not to the Revolution, but to a great Protestant historian and statesman, Guizot, and to King Louis Philippe for the foundation of her system of public [Pg 48] education. The revolutionists of 1789 left the country worse off in this matter than they found it. The royal ordinance of Louis XIV. in 1698, which required the establishment of schoolmasters and schoolmistresses in every parish in which they were not then to be found, and fixed the salaries to be paid these masters and mistresses out of a public tax in every parish in which no foundations for their support existed, was distinctly a public-school law. This ordinance made it incumbent upon all parents and other persons who had charge of children to send them to the schools until they were fourteen years of age, and it also enjoined upon the curates the duty of 'watching with particular attention over the education of the children in their respective parishes.' The spirit in which the clergy of Artois, at least, discharged this duty appears in an ordinance of the Bishop of Arras issued in 1740, half a century before the Revolution of 1789, in which the bishop lays it down as a maxim that 'the greatest charity which can be shown the poor is to ensure them the means of obtaining an education.'

This, down to thirty years ago, was the principle of legislation in Virginia upon the public school question, the State not attempting to interfere with the authority of parents over their children in

the matter of education, but making an appropriation for the instruction of the children of the poor. That mischievous wind-bag Lakanal lived in Mississippi and Louisiana during his exile in America, and it is possible that his influence may have had something to do with the early adoption by another southern State, Louisiana, of the general public school system. However that may be, Louisiana in 1850 spent upon her public schools three times as much money annually as any of the New England States, with the result that, out of a native white population of 186,577, [Pg 49] she had in her prisons 240 native white criminals, or 1 in 777 of the whole number, being 'the largest proportion of criminals to population at that time to be found in America, if not in the world.' Virginia, out of a native white population of 1,070,395 in 1860, had no more than 163 native white criminals in her prisons, or 1 in 6,566 of her native white population.

It is a curious fact, by the way, that but for the fidelity of the French clergy before 1789, in carrying out the work imposed upon them by the ordinance of Louis XIV., and commended in the ordinance of the Bishop of Arras in 1740, two of the most conspicuous actors in the grotesquely horrible drama of the French Revolution would have starved to death in the streets of Arras, or grown up there in vagabondage. The clergy of St.-Vaast in the diocese of Arras found, in 1768, two wretched urchins thrown upon the world by an unnatural father. One of these, Maximilian Isidore de Robespierre, was born in 1758; the other, Augustus Bai Joseph de Robespierre, in 1764. The good priests picked them up, cared for them, and put them in the way of getting a good education, which they turned to such purpose that both of them eventually came to the guillotine in the flower of their years, and amid the cordially contemptuous execrations of decent people all over the world. One of the most accomplished public men in Massachusetts told me years ago, that he was stopped on his way to school one morning in 1794, by a friend of the family, who bade him run back at once and tell his father the news had come from Europe that 'the head of Robert Spear had been cut off.' 'Make haste,' said this gentleman, 'and your papa will give you a silver dollar, he will be so glad to hear it!'

It was rather instructive to think of the 'sea-green incorruptible' and his idiotic 'Feast of the Supreme Being' on that beautiful clay of Pentecost, in the charming rural commune of St.- [Pg 50] Quentin, the peace and happiness of which was for a time so cruelly broken up by his atrocities and follies a hundred years ago. The fine old church, near by my host's residence, has been restored with great taste and good sense. It was crowded at early mass with the farmers and their families, many of the men wearing their blouses, but all well-to-do, for this region is one of the richest and best cultivated districts of Northern France. The service was celebrated with much simplicity, but with no lack of due ceremony; the singing was excellent; and the priest's homily, a brief and very good discourse on the spirit of Christian charity, was listened to with great attention.

The pretty custom prevails here, as in Normandy, of handing about in the congregation, at a certain point in the service, a basket of bread. Two gravely courteous old peasants presented the baskets in turn to all the people. The service over, the farmers stood and chatted together in groups in the churchyard and about the porch, and I heard much talk of the outlook for the crops, of the price of cattle, and of certain properties which had recently changed hands. Of politics next to nothing.

My host was for many years a notary at Aire. He has transferred this position now to the husband of his only daughter, and occupies himself mainly with his agricultural interests. The notary, who is a personage everywhere in France, is especially a personage in Artois. This has come about in part through the great changes which have taken place in the proprietorship of land in this province during the last three centuries. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, after the province was substantially united with France by Louis XIV., great numbers of small proprietors, who had done well enough under the Spanish rule, found themselves forced, by the pressure of [Pg 51] taxation, to part with their land, and there was a marked increase in the great estates, not only of the clergy but of the laity. After the First Consul took the country in hand, and began to reorganise it socially, on the principle laid down by him so often and so energetically, in his dealings with his councillors, that 'true civil liberty in a State depends upon the absolute safety of property,' there began to grow up in Artois a great middle class of landholders, corresponding in many conditions to the 'strong farmers' of Ireland. With the increase of this class came a natural increase in the importance and influence of the notaries, already and through the Spanish traditions very considerable in this region. In many parts of the province the notary is recognised as an unofficial, but authoritative, social arbiter, to whom may be safely referred for settlement all sorts of disputes, including very often questions of property which would elsewhere be taken before the courts of law. It was pleasant to see that the relation thus established between M. Labitte and the people generally had not been affected by the political agitation of the last ten years. When I drove about the country with him, I observed that he was saluted everywhere in the friendliest fashion, and that, as he more than once told me, by persons politically quite hostile to his re-election as councillor-general.

After luncheon on Pentecost, a most interesting ceremony took place at St.-Quentin. A long procession made up of the inhabitants of the commune, the men wearing their best clothes, the young girls garlanded and dressed in white, set forth from the porch of the church, after a brief service there, and marched around the commune. It was the English beating of the bounds without the beating, and with the old religious rites. In the midst of the procession, which extended perhaps a quarter of a mile, the parish priest walked alone under an embroidered [Pg 52] canopy borne up by young villagers. Acolytes, with lighted candles, moved on either side of the canopy. Before it was borne a white silk banner of the Virgin, and behind it a banner

embroidered in gold. All the park and grounds of M. Labitte lying within the commune, and being thrown open to the people, a very beautiful altar of verdure and roses had been set up under a bower in the great garden behind the house, by the daughter of M. Labitte. Before this altar the procession paused, a brief service was performed there, and then the long line resumed its march, a chorus of some twenty male voices chanting, as it went, the Magnificat. Nothing could exceed the unaffected simplicity and seriousness of the people of both sexes and of all ages. The day was one of those perfect days, which, as Mr. Lowell says, come to the world in June, if ever they come at all; and as the long line wound its way around the fields, green with the prospering crops, beneath the orchards and the groves, and between the fragrant hedgerows, the silvery chiming of the bells in the old church alternated with the far-off chanting of the choristers, and the fitful breeze brought us, from time to time, the grave deep voice of the priest reciting, as he moved, the ancient prayers of hope and of thanksgiving.

It was interesting to remember that under the first French attempt at a republic, this lovely rural spectacle would have been as impossible as it would be to-day under the rule of the Mahdi in the Soudan; and also, to reflect that France is governed to-day by men who dream of making it thus impossible once more. [Pg 53]

CHAPTER IV

IN THE PAS-DE-CALAIS—*continued*

AIRE-SUR-LA-LYS.

My host at St.-Quentin being a councillor-general, his term of office expires with the elections fixed to take place on July 28. There is no reason in the nature of things why councillors-general should be elected on the same lines with deputies and senators. On the contrary, it would seem to be very desirable that local rather than national considerations should govern the election of such functionaries. But it has been found difficult, even in England and Wales, to keep national party politics out of the election of the new county councillors, whose duties are modelled in some important respects upon those assigned to the councillors-general in France; and it is evident that the French local elections in July will be largely determined by considerations affecting the national elections which must take place in September and October. M. Labitte, who was elected a councillor-general by the Conservatives in this department six years ago, was defeated in 1886, as I have already said, in a by-election, held to fill a vacancy in the Chamber of Deputies. It is the wish of his party friends that he should offer himself as a candidate for re-election as a councillor-general on July 28; but he does not seem disposed to do this, preferring, I think, to keep himself quite free to do his very best to bring about a Conservative victory in the [Pg 54] national elections in September, with the importance of which to the future of France he is deeply impressed. Meanwhile, he is giving a personal account of his stewardship as a councillor-general to his constituents in a series of 'conferences.' One of these conferences he was good enough to invite me to attend.

It was held in a commune, distant some ten or twelve miles from St.-Quentin-par-Aire, and, as the custom of France is, it was held on a Sunday afternoon. M. Labitte's son-in-law drove out from Aire with his wife to dine and spend the evening with us. And about three o'clock M. Labitte, his son-in-law, and myself set out for the conference. Our road lay through a level but richly cultivated and, in its way, very beautiful region. In the last century, Artois seems to have been a kind of Ireland. The climate was excessively damp, the lack of forests and the undeveloped coal-mines left the peasantry dependent upon turf and peat for fuel; the roads were few and bad. There were good crops of grain; but the Intendant Bignon, drawing up a report on the province at the close of the seventeenth century, for the Duke of Burgundy, tells us the wars had made an end of all the manufactures, including the long-famous tapestry-works of Arras. 'There were few fruit-trees, little hay, and little manure.' Here and there some linen was made; but the trade of the province was carried on almost exclusively in grain, hops, flax, and wool. Iron and copper utensils, and coal and slates came to Artois from Flanders, cod-fish and cheese from the Low Countries, butter and all kinds of manufactured goods from England. Yet the population steadily increased all through the eighteenth century, while it was falling off in the neighbouring provinces of France. The worthy intendant thought the people sadly wanting in 'intelligence, [Pg 55] activity, and practical sense,' and seems indeed, like a Malthusian before Malthus, half-inclined to attribute the phenomena of increase and multiplication in Artois to these defects. It would surprise him, I fancy, to look on the people and the land of Artois to-day. The land has become one of the most fertile and prosperous regions of France; the people, unaffected to any appreciable extent by immigration, and unchanged alike in race and in religion, increase and multiply as of old. The well-tilled fields, the well-kept and beautiful roads, the neat, green hedgerows, the orchards bear witness on every side to the intelligence, the activity, the practical sense of the inhabitants.

M. Baudrillart in one of his invaluable treatises on the condition of France before the Revolution of 1789, gives us the main key of this great difference between the condition of agricultural Artois in the eighteenth century and its condition to-day. He cites a most curious appeal to the estates of Artois in behalf of the rural populations, from which it appears that the citizens of the chief towns had combined with the *noblesse* and the higher clergy to keep the village curates and

the farmers out of the provincial assemblies, and to throw the whole burden of taxation upon the agriculturists. 'The soil of Artois,' say the authors of this appeal, 'is quite as good as the soil of England; and yet the Artesian farmers can only get out of their labour on it one quarter as much as the English do.' It was the fiscal maladministration, they maintain, which checked the progress of agriculture and depressed the condition of the farmers; and it is interesting to observe that these rural reformers proposed to remedy the evils of which they complained, not by abolishing [Pg 56] all the privileges of the privileged classes in a night, as did the headlong mob of the States-General at Paris in 1789, but by securing a fairer representation of the rural regions in the Provincial Estates, limiting the duration of the Provincial Parliaments to three years, and deciding that one-third of the seats should be vacated and refilled every year. This does not look as if the Artesians of the last century were particularly deficient either in intelligence or in practical sense.

On our way to the conference we saw several sugar factories, most of them now abandoned, though the beet crops of Artois are still very important; and my companions told me that the people here, with all their traditional conservatism, are very quick to abandon any industry which ceases to promise good returns, and to change their crops as the conditions of the market change. We saw but few châteaux. One of the most considerable, standing well in view from the road in the midst of an extensive park, and approached by a long avenue of well-grown trees, seemed to be shut up. The proprietor, the Count de——, I was told had not visited it for two years past, one of his gamekeepers having been murdered in a conflict with some poachers.

Under the existing laws in France, political conferences must be held within four walls. Trafalgar Square meetings would be as impossible in republican France as in monarchical Germany. As the commune in which M. Labitte was to meet his constituents possesses no convenient hall, and the local authorities were not particularly eager to facilitate the conference, one of the local Conservatives, a well-to-do farmer, had taken it upon himself to provide, at his own expense, a proper place of meeting, by fitting up a fine large barn with seats, and putting up a simple rustic platform in one corner of it for the speaker. It struck me that this was a symptom of genuine [Pg 57] interest in the politics of his region not likely to be shown in similar circumstances by many English or American farmers. He was a man of middle age, with the quiet, self-possessed carriage, general among his class in all parts of France, and received us, in the large and neatly-furnished best room of his old-fashioned and very comfortable house, with frank and simple courtesy. On the walls hung a number of engravings and two or three small paintings. One of these represented the Duc d'Orléans, the father of the Comte de Paris, in the uniform of the celebrated corps of Chasseurs which he organised and to which he gave his name. 'That picture,' said the farmer, 'was given to my father by the prince. He used to stop here often while he was at the camp of the Chasseurs, and take his breakfast. I remember him perfectly, for I was then a well-grown lad, and he was always full of kindness and good spirits. Ah! if he had lived! We should not be where we are to-day in France, with all these debts and all these dangers!'

The constituents of my host, all of them specially invited by letter to attend the conference, had already begun to assemble when we arrived, but some of them had two or three miles to walk after service in their respective churches, and it was nearly six o'clock when the conference began. By that time the large farmyard and the rooms of the house were filled with a company of perhaps a hundred and fifty men, almost all of them farmers. Among them was only one landowner of the aristocratic class, the Comte de ——, who had walked over from his château about three miles off. He was a type of the old-fashioned French country gentleman, tall and sinewy, with finely cut features, simply, not to say carelessly, dressed, but with an unmistakable air of distinction, and a certain peremptory courtesy of manner which would infallibly have got [Pg 58] him into trouble in the days when, near Baume-les-Dames, Arthur Young had to clear himself of the suspicion that he was a gentleman on pain of being promptly hanged from a lantern hook.

The seats in the barn once filled, some fifty auditors grouped themselves in the farmyard about the wide-open doors of the barn, and M. Labitte mounted the extemporised platform. The proceedings had to be suspended for a few moments as the attention of the audience was suddenly drawn to the high road by the galloping past of two generals in full uniform, with their staff officers, from St.-Omer. There was no nomination of a chairman or a secretary, none of the inevitable formalities of an English or American political gathering. M. Labitte called the meeting to order by the simple process of beginning to address it. Nothing could be more direct and business-like than his speech. It was exactly what he told his hearers he meant it to be, an account of his stewardship as their councillor-general. He said not a word about the personal aspects of the party conflicts raging in France, and very little about the national aspects of that conflict. Speaking in a frank conversational way, and referring to his notes only for figures and dates, he gave his constituents a succinct picture of the effect upon their own local interests of the policy pursued by the Government of the Republic. He told them how much of their money had been spent under the action of the Council-General during the six years of his term, and on what it had been spent, and with what results. If they liked the picture, well and good; if not, the remedy was in their own hands at the next election. He had forewarned me to expect nothing demonstrative in the attitude of his audience. 'They listen most attentively,' he said, 'but they [Pg 59] give you no sign either of agreement or disagreement, of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. At night, after the meeting is over, they will break up into little knots and coteries, and talk it all over among themselves. If they are pleased on the whole, one of the group finally will say: "Well, Labitte told us the truth," and that being admitted by the rest, the conference will be a success!'

On this occasion the auditors were much more outspoken during the conference. Speaking of the

unequal pressure upon the different communes of the military service, M. Labitte told them a story of a youth who came to him to get an exemption from service. 'I told him,' said M. Labitte, 'that I should be very glad to get it for him, but that his commune was not at that moment entitled to an exemption, and that I could not be a party to putting an injustice upon another commune. He was annoyed at this, and thought I ought to do him a favour, no matter at whose cost. I declined, and he went away. Some time after I met him, when he exultingly told me that he had seen one of my colleagues, a Republican, and had got from him the exemption he wanted. After that I heard stories put about to the effect that Labitte cared nothing about the pressure of the military service on the labouring people! Was I not right? Was it not my duty to see no favouritism shown to one commune at the expense of another?'

To these queries there was a prompt and general response, 'Yes! yes! You were quite right,' and several voices cried out, 'Bravo!—quite right, Labitte.'

Again, in dealing with the question of education, M. Labitte told his hearers of three instances in which small communes had been made to expend sums inordinately disproportionate to their resources upon what he called 'scholastic palaces,' although a great majority of the people in [Pg 60] each instance distinctly refused to send their children to the lay schools established in these 'palaces.' One case was that of a commune of some seven hundred souls compelled to expend more than sixty thousand francs, or 2,400*l.* sterling, upon a 'scholastic palace'! 'I opposed these expenditures,' he said, 'for I think it is part of the duty of a councillor-general to look closely into the use made of your money.'

This, also, the hearers applauded, not noisily at all, but with a kind of gratified murmur, not unlike the very loud purring of a very large cat. By this time it was evident that the speaker had his audience well in hand, and M. Labitte took up some points of attack made on himself. One of these was that he was a 'clerical.' He said that he certainly was a 'clerical,' if that meant a man who had a religion and respected it, and wished to see the religion of other people respected; and gliding on from this to the question of the religious education of children, he asked the people whether they wished to see the curates forbidden to teach their children the principles of their religion. He was instantly answered by a man standing in the crowd just outside the door of the barn, who, in a loud and rather husky voice, shouted out that 'the priest had no business in the school.' Several of the audience met this interruption with derisive laughter, and two or three of them sharply invited the man to hold his tongue and go about his business. For a moment it seemed as if we were about to have a scene. But M. Labitte interposed. With perfect good temper he replied to the man that he was quite of his opinion as to the proper place of a priest, and that he had no wish to see the children at school interfered with in their school hours by any instruction not a part of the school programme. He suggested, however, that, instead of shouting [Pg 61] and clamouring, the man should wait till he, M. Labitte, had got through, and then come up 'amiably and prettily' on the platform and state his own views as fully as he liked. This made the man in the doorway angrier than ever, and as the audience good-naturedly laughed at him, he began to use rather abusive language. Upon this several stalwart peasants rose and made their way towards him with very plain intimations that if he did not take to the highway he would be carried there. The uproar was all over in five minutes. Some companions of the anti-clerical gentleman, not liking the look of the audience, contrived to surround him and led him off, and he disappeared uttering a threat or two of incoherent defiance as he went out of the farmyard. A burly farmer seated near me explained that 'the fellow was drunk. But,' he added, 'he was sent here to do all this, and I know who sent him. Do you see that high chimney across the road some way off among the trees? Well, he is a factory hand there. There are a number of them—they don't belong to this country, and the manufacturer is an intriguer. He wanted to be a councillor-general, and we beat him off. He doesn't like it—and that's at the bottom of it all.'

M. Labitte spoke for about an hour, the audience gradually increasing and listening with close attention. At the end the farmer, who had arranged the conference, got up and thanked the councillor-general for the account he had given of his services, and then the meeting broke up as quietly as it had assembled, and with as little ceremony.

Before the company began to leave the barn, a young man near the door asked for some information as to the duties likely to be imposed to protect the farmers, and getting a brief and clear reply, he said that would be very satisfactory—if only 'some proprietors would not put such [Pg 62] high prices on their land.' The Count, who sat just in front of me and who had kept his hawk eye fixed on the speaker, chuckled to himself and said to me, 'That shot was meant for me!'

Altogether the proceedings gave me a very favourable notion of the intelligence and the practical sense of the people. If all the constituencies in France could be handled in this direct fashion at the national elections in September, the result of those elections might be at least the approximative expression of the sense of the nation.

But this is not to be expected. There is much more canvassing done, I think, by legislative candidates in France, and much less public speaking than in America or in England, and the pressure of the Government upon the voters is very much greater here even than it is in America. The proportion of office-holders to the population is much more considerable, and the recent governments have made the tenure of office in France even more dependent upon the political activity of the officials than it has ever been in the United States. This is one of the many evil legacies of the First Republic. The maxim that, 'to the victors belong the spoils,' I am sorry to say has been pretty extensively reduced to practice on my side of the Atlantic; but it was first formulated, not by Jackson, but by Danton. Louis Blanc tells us that this brutal Boanerges of the

Jacobins startled even his allies one day, by cynically declaring that 'the revolution was a battle, and, like all battles, ought to end by the division of the spoils among the victors.'

Gabriel Charmes, a republican of the republicans, reviewing the conduct of the governments which have succeeded each other in France with such kaleidoscope rapidity since the death of [Pg 63] Thiers, deliberately declares that 'epuration is the watchword, and the true aim of Republican politics' in France. And 'epuration' is the euphemism invented to describe the simple process of kicking out the office-holder who is in, to make room for the office-seeker who is out. Gambetta began this process in December 1870, when he wrote to the Government at Paris: 'Authorise me and all my colleagues to "purify" the *personnel* of the public administration, and it shall be done in very short order.' Within a month, the Minister of the Interior telegraphed to the prefects, 'you are authorised to make all the changes among the public school teachers, which, from a republican and political point of view, you may think desirable.' M. Crémieux, Minister of Justice, followed the work up so energetically, that by the end of the year 1871 he declared that he had 'weeded out eighteen hundred justices of the peace, and two hundred and eighty-nine magistrates of the courts and tribunals.' When the republicans of the different Radical shades got into power in 1877, the newly elected deputies, according to M. Floquet, held a meeting, and insisted upon a further 'epuration.' They were of the mind of the sub-prefect of Roanne, who telegraphed to his superior, 'If Republicans alone are not put into office, the Republicans will rise and we shall have civil war.' In January 1880, M. de Freycinet, then, as now, a Minister, loudly called for a 'reform of the *personnel* of the Administration; and M. Gabriel Charmes, speaking of the then situation in France, tells us that only one prefect of the previous Republican Administration had escaped 'purification,' and not one procureur-general. 'Has a single justice of the peace,' he added, 'or a single public school teacher in the slightest degree open to suspicion, [Pg 64] escaped the avenging hands of MM. Le Royer and Jules Ferry? Certainly not.'

This was nine years ago. So thorough was the weeding, M. Charmes tells us, that, 'even the rural constables had not escaped, and the epuration policy had carried terror and anarchy into all branches of the public service.'

In 1885 more than three millions of voters recorded their protest against these methods of government, and against the deputies who had identified these methods with the Republican form of government. This protest was met by M. de Freycinet, on January 16, 1886, with a speech, in the course of which he calmly said, 'Let no one henceforth forget that liberty to oppose the Government does not exist for the servants of the State.'

That is to say, the Republican Government, which is itself the servant, and the paid servant, of the State, will not permit any of its fellow-servants and subordinates, who are also presumably French citizens and taxpayers, to form and express at the polls any opinion on public affairs differing from the opinions held by the ministers who make up the Government.

It was upon this simple and beautiful principle that Mr. Tweed and his colleagues consolidated the local administration of affairs of the city of New York. Applied to the administration of the affairs of thirty-six millions of people in France, it ought certainly to produce results far transcending in splendour any achieved by the Tammany Ring. For M. Gabriel Charmes is quite in the right when he says that 'under this word of "epuration" lie concealed the most deplorable forms of personal greed, and the least avowable personal spites and rancours.' Like other clever devices, however, 'epuration' may possibly be carried too far. If it comes to pass that no actual functionary thinks his head safe, while, at the same time, every office the Government has to give [Pg 65] represents a dozen or twenty 'expurgated,' and therefore exasperated and disaffected, previous holders of that office, the confidence of the garrison may be shaken while the animosity of the assailants is intensified. This point may possibly have been reached in France. If it has not been reached, the influence of the Government upon the voters must be very formidable. For the average French voter is hemmed in and hedged about by innumerable small functionaries who have it in their power to oblige or to disoblige him, to gratify or to vex him in all sorts of ways; and though the ballot is supposed to be sacred and secret in France, it can hardly be more sacred or more secret there than in other countries. And whatever protection against annoyance the ballot may give to the voter, nothing can protect the candidate.

What I have heard in other regions I hear in Artois, that nothing is so difficult as to persuade men of position and character to take upon themselves the troubles, and expose themselves to the inconveniences, of an important political candidacy. There are a hundred ways in which a triumphant Administration conducted on the principles of the 'epuration' policy may harass and annoy an unsuccessful banner-bearer of the Opposition. The question of expense is another obstacle in the way of a thorough organisation of public opinion against such a Government.

An average outlay of 400,000 francs per department would be required, I was told by an experienced friend in Paris, adequately to put into the line of political battle all the departments of France, large and small together. As there are eighty-three departments in France, this gives us a total of 33,200,000 francs, or some 1,300,000*l.* sterling, as the cost of a thorough political [Pg 66] campaign against an established French Government. If we suppose each deputy to make a personal contribution of 20,000 francs to this war-chest, that will give us only about one-third of the necessary amount. The rest must be made up by the personal contributions of public-spirited citizens, and my own observation of public affairs, going back, now, over a good many lively and interesting political conflicts in the United States, leads me to believe that liberal contributions of this sort are, as a rule, more easily collected by the beneficiaries of a more or less unscrupulous Government actually in power, than by the disinterested advocates of a real political reformation.

We wound up the day of the Conference with a delightful little dinner at St.-Quentin. The traditions of the old French *cuisine* are not yet extinct in the provinces, nor, for that matter, in the private life of the true Parisians of Paris. They all centre in the famous saying of Brillat-Savarin, that a man may learn how to cook, but must be born to roast—a saying worthy of the philosophic magistrate who, coming to America, under the impression that he was to be fed upon roots and raw meat, went back to France convinced that a New England roast turkey and an Indian pudding were not to be matched in the old world. It is one of the many curious things of this curious world of the nineteenth century, that a *cuisine* of made dishes of which Grimod de La Reynière long ago gave us the origin, in the downfall of the kitchens of the prince-bishops along the Rhine, should be gravely and generally accepted by Frenchmen themselves, or at least by the Parisians of literature and the boulevards, as the national *cuisine* of France. The charming daughter of my host at St.-Quentin knew better; and she received with a graceful, housewifely satisfaction the neatly-turned compliments which one of the guests was old-fashioned and [Pg 67] sensible enough to pay her upon the skill of her cook.

The city of Aire-sur-la-Lys itself, like St.-Omer, shows traces still of its connection with Flanders and with Spain. I do not know if it is true of Aire as M. Lauwereyns de Roosendaele, writing about Jacqueline Robins, declares it to be of St.-Omer, that there are people there, even now, who think of the days of the Spanish rule as the 'good old times.' But there is a certain Castilian stateliness about the older buildings of Aire; and the portals of the larger residences, leading from the street into charming secluded courts, gay with trees and flowers, remind one of the zaguans of the Andalusian houses. Very Spanish, too, is the Jesuit Church, despite some extraordinary decorations due to the zeal of its more recent possessors.

The Flemish past of the city is commemorated especially by a very remarkable little building known as the Corps de Garde, and by certain portions of the Church of St.-Pierre.

Aire formerly had a cathedral, but during the worst period of the Terror that exemplary ruffian, Joseph Lebon of Arras, the unfrocked priest, who organised pillage and massacre throughout the Pas-de-Calais, frightened the good people of Aire into a frenzy of destruction and devilry. The Church of St.-Pierre was then a collegiate church, but it was turned over to the worship of the Supreme Being invented by Robespierre, desecrated and defaced and left in a deplorable state. It had already suffered, like so many other churches all over France and England, from the ingenious 'restorers' of the eighteenth century, who have left their sign-manual on the upper part of the edifice and on the mass of a huge organ loft which crushes and disfigures the main [Pg 68] entrance. The greater part of the building is of the fifteenth century; and it has been restored within our own times as tastefully and effectively as in the circumstances was possible, under the supervision and in part, I believe, at the cost of a devoted and conscientious curate, a member of a Scotch family long fixed in Artois, the Abbé Scott, who took charge of the church at the end of the reign of Charles X. and who now lies buried in the building he did so much to preserve. It is a very considerable church, measuring three hundred feet in length and a hundred-and-twenty in width; with a height of seventy feet in the main nave. The ogival windows are filled with rich, stained glass; all the ancient monuments which escaped the fury of 1793 have been excellently restored, and the church bears witness in its condition to the active piety of the faithful of Aire.

The 'Corps de Garde' is a quadrilateral jewel of Flemish architecture of the end of the sixteenth century. It was of old the central point of the city, where the armed citizens met who patrolled the streets like the burghers of Rembrandt's magnificent 'Ronde de Nuit.' A gallery runs round it of arcades, and brickwork supported by monolithic columns. Above these arcades runs a frieze of trophies of arms with the attributes of St. James—the mayor of the city in whose time it was built bore the name of this apostle—and the cross of Burgundy.

The principal façade fronts the 'Grande Place,' and is surmounted by a picturesque pointed roof. An attic storey, running all around the building, is richly decorated with sculptures of the Theological and Cardinal Virtues, the Four Elements, and the patron saints of Aire—St. Nicholas and St. Anthony. On another façade is the sculptured niche, now vacant, wherein stood a statue [Pg 69] of the Virgin, before which all the great processions, civic and military, were used to halt and do obeisance.

In 1482, after the death of Charles the Bold, Louis XI. of France succeeded, 'by treachery and corruptions,' in annexing Aire for a time to the French crown, and the local records give a picturesque account of a French tournament held here in 1492, the year of the discovery of America, under the auspices of no less a person than the Chevalier 'sans peur et sans reproche.' Pierre du Terrail, dit le Bayard, came to Aire on July 19 in that year, and at once sent a trumpeter to proclaim through all the streets and squares that on the morrow, being July 20, he would hold a tournay under the walls of Aire, for all comers, 'of three charges with the lance, the steel points dulled; and twelve sword strokes to be exchanged, with no lists drawn, and on horseback in harness of battle.' The next day the combat to be renewed 'afoot with the lance until the breaking of the lance, and after that with the battle-axe so long as the judges might think fit.' The chroniclers celebrate in superlatives the valour and skill shown by the hero in these gentle and joyous assaults of arms, and the beauty of the Artesian dames and damsels who thronged from all the country round into Aire to witness the tournay, and take part in the dances and banquets which followed it. But the hearts of the people were evidently Flemish and Spanish, not French; for they hailed the restoration of the Austrian authority by Charles the Fifth with all manner of rejoicings. Charles, with his usual sagacity, confirmed all the ancient rights and privileges of the city and its corporations, which had been a good deal disturbed under the centralising rule of the French sovereigns, and a record of the year 1538 tells us that on the proclamation in that year of

the truce of Borny, the Austrian authorities paid the treasurer of the city 'lxxviii. sols' for silver money 'thrown in joy to the people.' The treasurer himself seems to have been so enthusiastic on this occasion that he threw his own cap after the silver money, for the record adds a further payment to him 'for a certain cap belonging to him, which was likewise thrown to the people.' All the records of this age at Aire are picturesque with lively accounts of all manner of junketings, carousals, and festivities, and the good people seem to have passed no small part of their lives in merry-making. There is a curious entry on the occasion of the marriage of the Archduke Philip to Mary of England. This auspicious event was celebrated at Aire by a grand procession, followed by 'songs and ballads in honour of the married pair;' and the treasurer paid to 'Johan Gallant, goldsmith, iiii. livres iiii. sols for the silver presents, to wit, an eagle, a leopard, a lion, and a fool —all in silver—which were given to those who made the songs, ballads, and games in honour of the said good news!' [Pg 70]

Like Calais, St.-Omer, and other cities of this region, Aire offered a refuge in 1553 to the unfortunate inhabitants of the ancient historic city of Thérouanne, which, after a heroic defence by d'Essé de Montmorency, was taken in that year, five days after the death on the ramparts of the gallant commander, by the troops of Charles the Fifth, and by his orders razed to the ground. The details of this merciless destruction recall the sack of Rome by the Imperialists; and it is the blackest feature in the black record of the First French Revolution that the men who then got control for a time of the government of France, in the names of Liberty and Progress, deliberately and wantonly rivalled the most unscrupulous of the kings and emperors whom they were constantly denouncing, in their treatment, not of foreign fortresses conquered in war, but of [Pg 71] French cities, of the lives and the property of French citizens, and of the most precious monuments of French history. Charles the Bold at Dinant and Charles the Fifth at Thérouanne were outdone, in the prostituted name of the French people, by the younger Robespierre at Toulon and by the paralytic Couthon at Lyons.

The annals of these north-eastern cities of modern France are full of most curious and valuable materials for a really instructive history of the French people. The most cursory acquaintance with them suffices to show how much worse than worthless are the huge political pamphlets which during the last hundred years have passed current with the world as histories of the French Revolution, and how important to the future, not of France alone but of civilisation, is the work begun in our own times by writers like Mortimer-Ternaux, Granier de Cassagnac, Baudrillart, Biré, and Henri Taine. Here in Artois, under the conflicting influences of Flemish, Spanish, and French laws and customs, a genuine development of social and political life may be traced as clearly as in Scotland or in England, down to the sudden and violent strangulation of French progress by the incompetent States-General and the not less incompetent king in 1789.

The archives of Aire show that the question of public education was a practical question there, at least as far back as at the beginning of the seventeenth century. In 1613, the magistrates asked and obtained the permission of the Archduke Albert and the Archduchess Isabella to lay a special tax on the city of Aire and two adjoining villages, for the purpose of founding a college, private citizens having already given an endowment of 750 florins a year for this object. The importance of this contribution may be estimated from the fact that after the siege of Aire by the French in [Pg 72] 1641, a sum of I,000 florins left to the Collegiate Church of Aire by a canon of Tournay was found sufficient to restore the chapel of Our Lady, the whole right wing of the church, and many houses belonging to the canons, which had all been destroyed by the French artillery. No time was lost in opening the college to the youth of the city and the suburbs, and only a few years afterwards the priests in charge of it wrote to the Seigneur de Thiennes, asking for further endowments in order to increase the number of the teachers to twenty, so great was the affluence of scholars from all the country around, 'to the number at that time of more than three hundred.' The collegiate chapter of Aire appointed one of its canons superintendent of the school, under the title of the 'Ecolâtre.' There really seems to be as little foundation in fact for the common notion that there was no provision made for the education of the people in France before 1789, as for the notion, not less common, that there were no peasant proprietors in France before 1789. It is hardly excusable even that Mr. Carlyle, rhapsodising more than fifty years ago about the 'dumb despairing millions,' should have fallen into this error. For though De Tocqueville and Taine had not then exploded it in detail, Necker, in whose career Carlyle took so much interest, not only declared officially that there was 'an immense number' of such proprietors in France, but took the trouble to explain how it had come about. The law of 1790 establishing the land-tax required every parish to furnish a detailed account of the then existing properties in land, and it is shown by these that there then existed in France nearly two-thirds as many landholders as now exist, although the population of the country is now about twenty-five per cent. greater than it then was. [Pg 73]

CHAPTER V.

IN THE SOMME.

AMIENS

By turns English, French, and Burgundian, Upper Picardy, of which Amiens was the capital, became definitely French under the astute policy of Louis XI. The Calaisis and the Boulonnais,

with Ponthieu and Vimieu, eventually constituted what was called Lower Picardy, and the whole province, divided under the Bourbons into the two 'generalities' of Amiens and Soissons, formed before 1789 one of the twelve great departments of the monarchy, and was brought under the domain of the Parliament of Paris.

The city of Amiens, associated now, I fear, chiefly, in the English and American mind, with 'twenty minutes' stop' on the way between Calais and Paris, and with a buffet which perhaps entitles it to be called the Mugby Junction of France, is really one of the most interesting of French cities. No student of Ruskin can need to be told that its glorious cathedral makes it one of the most interesting, not of French only, but of European cities; and two or three excellent small hotels make it a most comfortable as well as a most instructive midway station, not for 'twenty minutes,' but for a couple of days, between the capitals of England and France. Arthur Young found it so a hundred years ago, when he encountered there the illustrious Charles James Fox returning to London from a visit to the Anglomaniac Due d' Orléans, in the company of a [Pg 74] charming 'Madame Fox,' of whom Arthur Young and London had no previous cognisance.

Like Dijon, and Nancy, and Toulouse, and Rennes, and Rouen, Amiens still wears that 'look of a capital' which is as unmistakeable, if also as undefinable, as Hazlitt found the 'look of a gentleman' to be. York and Exeter, for example, in England, have this look, while Liverpool and Hull have it not. There are traces of the Spaniards in Amiens, as there are wherever that most Roman of all the Latin peoples has ever passed, and the curious *hortillonages* of Amiens, which may be roughly described as a kind of floating kitchen gardens, remind one so strongly of the much more picturesque Chinampas of Mexico as to suggest the impression that the idea of establishing them may have come hither by way of Spain.

At the present time, Amiens is a point of no small political interest. It is the bailiwick of one of the few really notable men of the actual Republican party in France—- M. Goblet—and yet it is one of the strongholds of Boulangism. There is an old song, the refrain of which, as I heard it sung, more years ago than I care to recall, always haunts me when I visit this ancient city:—

Vive un Picard, vive un Picard,
Quand il s'agit de tete!

The Picards have always shown, not only sense, but a kind of stubborn independence of character. In the days of anarchy which came upon France with the brief but ill-omened triumph of the Girondins, Amiens was the first of the French provincial cities to resist and denounce the too successful attempt of Danton and the commune of Paris to terrorise France by a skilful abuse [Pg 75] of the imbecility of Roland. The authorities of Amiens were the first to protest against the outrageous pretensions of the 'commissioners,' who came there with Roland's commissions in one hand, and the secret instructions of Roland's colleague and master, Danton, in the other, to pillage the property of the inhabitants under the pretence of gathering supplies for the national defence, and to establish an irresponsible local despotism under the pretence of suppressing 'treason.' To them, in the first instance, belongs the credit of compelling Roland to get up before the Assembly on September 17, 1792, and confess that he had 'signed in the council commissions without knowing anything about the commissioners who were to use them;' and to them, therefore, in the first instance, history is indebted for the formal record which shows that the actual fall of the French monarchy was followed, and its formal abolition preceded, by the letting loose upon France of a swarm of scoundrels, who filled 'the prisons with prisoners as to whom no one knew by whom they were arrested; who gave over to pillage the treasures accumulated in the Tuileries, and in the houses of the emigrant aristocracy; who conveyed away everything which could tempt the cupidity of a subaltern, without any record whatever; and who were delivering over Paris and France to the most absurd folly and the most insatiable greed.' It was not the fault of Amiens if the efforts of Mazuyer and Kersaint demanding a law to show 'whether the French nation was sovereign, or the Commune of Paris,' and the sonorous eloquence of Vergniaud denouncing the 'citizens of Paris' as the 'slaves of the vilest scoundrels alive,' only led in the end to making France herself for a time the slave of these same 'vilest scoundrels alive.' [Pg 76]

In more recent times, Amiens received and entertained Gambetta on his way by balloon from Paris to Tours. I asked the veteran Count Léon de Chassepot, who for years was regularly returned at every election at the head of the municipal councillors of Amiens, how the people received Gambetta on that memorable occasion. His answer was that there really was no 'reception.' Gambetta came down in his balloon at a little place some way off, between Amiens and Montdidier, and when he reached Amiens he was too tired and hungry to think of 'receiving' people or making speeches. Count Léon de Chassepot had nothing, I believe, to do with the invention of the guns which bear his name. But he has a glance like a rifle-shot, and at fourscore years 'Spring still makes spring in the mind' of this vivacious veteran. I asked him how Amiens behaved when the news came there of the capture of Paris by the revolutionists of September 4, 1870. Was the new republic hailed with enthusiasm? 'Enthusiasm!' he said scornfully; 'why should it be? The people of Amiens were thinking of fighting the Prussians, not of upsetting the Government! They received the news with stupefaction, as a matter of little consequence in comparison with the invasion. The disaster of Sedan had afflicted them profoundly. The Empire was popular in Picardy. At the municipal elections which took place in Amiens just after the declaration of war—early in August 1870, that is—the Imperialist candidates had all been elected by overwhelming majorities. M. Goblet, now so prominent in the Republican counsels, made his appearance then as an anti-governmental candidate, together with M. Petit, the present Radical mayor of Amiens. M. Goblet got 530 votes, and M. Petit 423. They were the leading persons on that side, and the leading persons on the side of the Government received, respectively, 5,099 [Pg 77]

and 4,964 votes. This being the temper of the good people of Amiens at that time, you will understand that they were more astounded than pleased by the so-called revolution of September in Paris. But they were more patriotic than the people of Paris, and they acquiesced in the overthrow of the Government to show a united front to the enemy. He was within striking distance of Amiens, by the way, and the boulevardiers unfortunately thought that Paris was out of his reach.'

The first act of the revolutionists of September, it appears, was to disorganise as far as they could the public service by removing the prefects, and putting their own people into place and power. They sent a certain M. Lardière down post-haste to Amiens to take the place of the then prefect of the Somme, M. de Guigné, and that was all they did to defend Amiens!

In the course of a pleasant morning spent with M. Ansart, a gentleman of high character and position in Amiens, and with several of his friends, I heard much that was interesting as to this critical period. The attitude of the leading men throughout Picardy seems to have been in complete conformity with M. de Chassepot's account of the bearing of the city of Amiens. The mayor of a commune not far from Amiens, a marquis and a leading Imperialist, on getting the news of the political somersault executed at Paris, read out the bulletin to the people from the mairie, reminded them that the enemy were sure to come into Picardy, and then exclaimed, 'Well, my friends, since it seems we are in a republic, Long live the Republic!'

This was the general feeling of good men everywhere at that time in France. Said one gentleman, a landed proprietor from Brittany, 'Nobody out of Paris who had a head on his shoulders approved what had been done in Paris. But by common consent a great blank credit was opened [Pg 78] for the Republic all over France. If the Republicans would do their duty to France, not as party men but as patriots, France was ready to accept them. It is their own fault, and their fault alone, that the men who made this change at Paris went to pieces so fast in the public estimation. It is the fault of the Republicans, and their fault alone, that now, after nearly eighteen years, they are an offence to sensible and liberal men from one end of France to the other.'

The new prefect sent down from Paris turned out to be a wind-bag. By the middle of November it became clear that Amiens must fall into the power of the enemy. The new prefect launched a ridiculous proclamation, blazing with adjectives, at the advancing Teutons, and then one fine night got out of the way as fast as possible, leaving the city and the department of the Somme to face the wrath of the not very placable conquerors.

On November 28, the Prussians occupied the city, one French officer, Commandant Vogel, falling at his post, which he refused to surrender. Count Lehndorff, appointed to be German Prefect of the Somme, came down upon the people heavily for war contributions, which were raised under the management of M. Dauphin, who had been the Imperialist mayor of the city ever since 1868, and who has of late years been a conspicuous Republican. As peace drew near, Amiens had to borrow five millions of francs, for which M. Dauphin agreed the city should pay M. Oppenheim of Brussels a commission of 10 per cent., and issued its obligations at 7½ per cent. for fifty years.

Naturally the Germans are not much liked at Amiens. Count de Chassepot thinks the Picards in general really want war with Germany. They turned out very generally during the contest. He [Pg 79] commanded a battalion of National Guards who turned out in full force, not a man missing, though they were armed with wretched old muskets, and perfectly understood what that must lead to for them. On making his rounds very early in the morning, he found, in an advanced post, at a point of great danger, a picket, a *sentinelle perdue*, who proved to be one of the most respectable men in Amiens, the first president of the Upper Court of the city, nearly sixty years of age, doing his duty as a private soldier. 'In a hospital here,' said M. de Chassepot, 'I have six hundred patients. Every man of them is eager for another turn with the Germans.'

I was anxious to learn when and how it was that M. Goblet, just now the leading Republican personage of this part of France, began to appear conspicuously on the horizon. 'Not till Gambetta's new social strata began to appear,' I was told. This was in 1874. The finances of the city, left in a sad condition by the war, had been put into order by the municipal council which was elected during the German occupation in 1871; the public works had been restored, fine barracks built, and a sufficient number of school-houses. In return for those services the councillors who had rendered them were turned out in 1874, M. Dauphin among them, by the newly-organised 'Union républicaine.' This put M. Goblet at last into the council with his ally, M. Petit, the latter being the editor of a Radical journal, the *Progrès de la Somme*, which the military governor of Paris had ordered to be suppressed early in 1874, for its attacks on the then President, Marshal MacMahon. In 1876 M. Goblet became mayor of Amiens.

'The very next year, when the contest began between Gambetta as head of the Union of the Left and the President of the Republic, M. Goblet threw himself as ex-mayor of Amiens openly on the [Pg 80] side of the ex-dictator, and made such speeches that he was dismissed from his office by the President in June 1877.'

'Did he like this?'

'No, he didn't like it at all. As Minister of the Interior, in more recent times, M. Goblet has knocked off the heads of a great number of mayors. But when his own head was knocked off in 1877, he loudly and scornfully denounced all municipal officers who would stoop to accept their positions from the national government.'

'In that you have the whole character of M. Goblet,' said another gentleman. 'I have known him

from childhood. He is not a bad man, and, as you know, he is a man of ability, one of the very few able men to be found acting with President Carnot. But he is very vain, very ambitious, very excitable. As the associate of Petit, who is a rampant atheist, and of the anti-clericals generally, he has to pose as an unbeliever; but he is, in fact, nothing of the sort. His wife is a good woman, and he goes in great awe of her, which I think to his credit. I think if he felt his health suffering he would go to confession in a quiet way by night, just as the Gambetta prefect ran away from the Prussians in 1871. When the grand funeral of Admiral Courbet took place at Abbeville, and it was announced that Monseigneur Freppel would come and deliver the funeral service over that noble Christian sailor and patriot, the victim of Ferry, M. Goblet was in a dreadful state of mind. He said to me, "I think I shall not attend the funeral." "Pray why?" "Well, I wish to attend it, but I am sure that Bishop Freppel will say things offensive to me." "Pray accept my congratulations," I replied; "you really are in great luck that the first orator in France should take the trouble to come all the way to Picardy expressly to insult you on such an occasion!" So he thought better of [Pg 81] it and attended, and his sensible wife afterwards thanked me for preventing her husband from behaving like a donkey.'

'An excellent woman, Madame Goblet!'

'Her husband owes her much, and he has some good friends. Comte de Chassepot prevented him from playing the stupid farce of a Roman son by sacrificing his father's funeral to a discussion on the laicisation of the schools; for, seeing what he had in his mind, Comte de Chassepot simply moved an adjournment of the council. His evil genius is M. Petit, now a senator, the present mayor of Amiens. I have caught M. Goblet offering the holy water with his hand behind my back to his wife; but M. Petit is an outspoken unbeliever, and a very type of the anti-christian demagogue.'

Upon this he told me a story which, as it is certainly typical of the proceedings taken against religion all over France by functionaries of M. Petit's way of thinking, I shall set down here.

In 1869 all the crosses and stones in the cemetery of the Madeleine at Amiens set up on graves held by temporary concessions had to be removed by reason of the lapse of these concessions. The then mayor and municipal council had them sold, and ordered the proceeds to be spent in erecting a large and beautiful cross with an image of the Saviour, and an inscription stating that this crucifix was erected in memory of all the dead buried in the cemetery whose crosses and tombs had been removed. This crucifix, called the 'Calvary of the Poor,' was thus a touching monument of the family affection of the poor among the people of Amiens. Outraged by this symbol, the Radical mayor of Amiens caused this Calvary to be dismantled, in the night of November 10, 1880, and the crosses to be sawn in pieces and thrown away beyond the limits of [Pg 82] the cemetery. Surely this is an advance beyond Robespierre, and even beyond the senseless Vandalism which solemnly ordered the destruction of the tombs of the kings and heroes of France. Even Robespierre, when Cambon made his proposal that the Convention should violate the public faith pledged by the Constituent Assembly to the support of the French clergy by the State in exchange for the seizure by the State of the property of the Church, had sense enough to say, in a letter to his constituents opposing the project, that 'to attack religion directly was to strike a blow at the morals of the people.' I am not surprised to be told that, notwithstanding the support given him by the central government of the Republic at Paris, this worthy mayor has speedily lost popularity even with his own Radical party, and that in the most recent elections he barely escaped defeat. 'He is ensconced, though, comfortably as senator,' said my shrewd informant, 'and I dare say he will see his friend, M. Goblet, turned out of the Chamber! So—what does he care? His zeal against the Calvary in Amiens may hurt him with the poor people upon whose faith and whose affections he tramples; but, like his brutal expulsion of the Sisters from their schools and hospitals, and his truculence towards the religious processions in which the Picards delight, it recommends him to the clique who have got our poor France into their clutches at Paris, and who pose before all the gaping world at the Universal Exposition as friends of Liberty and Progress!'

The laicisation of the schools has been pushed forward at Amiens, as elsewhere. It began under M. Spuller, now Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was made Prefect of the Somme in 1879. M. Goblet, who had then been mayor for a year, resigned, to become under-secretary in the Ministry of Justice, and the prefect put M. Delpech in his place. Everything, it will be seen, was moved [Pg 83] from the centre at Paris.

'This M. Delpech and his associates,' said one of my informants, 'began the laicisation of the boys' schools. They were men who would not think of picking a man's pocket, but see how they behaved in this business!

'There were six primary schools at Amiens conducted by the Christian Brothers. Five of these had always been so conducted, and the sixth for twenty years. The Christian Brothers agreed to give up this sixth school, M. Petit promising them that, if they did this, they should not be disturbed in the others. Very soon this promise was broken, and they were turned out of the school of Notre-Dame. Then a charge was brought against one of the brethren of the school of St.-Leu. It was serious and went before the Assize Court, where the accused was promptly acquitted. But this took time, and while the proceedings were pending, our admirable M. Petit sent in a report to the Council recommending that the Brethren be dismissed from their four remaining schools. On August 26, 1879, the Council adopted this report, and within a week M. Spuller, the prefect, issued an order of expulsion, "in obedience," as he wrote, "to the resolution of the Municipal Council of Amiens, and to the wishes of the population."'

M. Spuller appears to be a true disciple of Robespierre, who, in his famous socialistic speech before the Convention, affirming that bread, meat, and all provisions are not private, but common, property, laid down the maxim that, 'even if the measures proposed as their desire by the people are not necessary in the eyes of law-makers, they should be adopted.' *Civium ardor prava jubentium* is a moral law for legislators of this admirable school. [Pg 84]

I should note by the way that these Brethren, thus expelled summarily, were refused payment of their already fixed salaries for the month of September.

A debate ensuing, the question was finally remitted to M. Jules Ferry, 'Grand Master of the University of France,' who decided that the salaries were indeed due and the property of the Brethren, but that, as the work could not be done by reason of their expulsion, the salaries need not be paid!

Furthermore, the municipality appraised the school furniture, which had been bought and paid for by the Brethren, and having ascertained its value, decided—that it belonged to the municipality!

Will my readers think the expression of M. Fleury, an accomplished journalist of Amiens, to whom I am indebted for these details, at all too vigorous, when he described these proceedings as 'exactly defined in the French Dictionary, and in the 379th article of the Penal Code, under the word "theft"'?

In August 1880, on the refusal of the Sisters in charge of the girls' school to take their pupils to an 'obligatory festival' during the time fixed on Sunday for divine service, M. Petit, the municipal Emperor Julian of Amiens, moved for 'the immediate laicisation of all the girls' schools in Amiens.' This was too much even for M. Goblet, who, to his credit, not only protested but voted against the proposition. It was, however, carried. M. Goblet and six other councillors withdrew, including the mayor, M. Delpech; and M. Petit thus became, by seniority, mayor of Amiens.

'When this happened,' said a citizen of Amiens to me, 'and M. Petit was thus put in charge of the rights and the property of the Sisters, it had been perfectly well known for ten years that, by the Parliamentary Inquest of 1871 into the story of the Commune of Paris, M. Petit had been proved to be the founder at Amiens of the secret society known as the "International," and yet he was never prosecuted, and he is now a senator of the Republic. How do you expect honest people, who respect the ordinary laws of order and civilisation, to support a Republic which accepts and promotes the members of such a society? [Pg 85]

'On October 2, 1880, this remarkable mayor went in person with a locksmith and some others to the communal girls' school of St.-Leu, then managed by the Sisters. The Sisters had been already that day notified to leave the school-buildings "the next day." M. Petit ordered them to go out immediately. They showed the notification and declined to go till the next day. The curate of St.-Leu, with his vicar and with a member of the board of Churchwardens, came up and protested against this invasion of the school. "Show me the documents proving this house to be the property of the municipality," said the curate. M. Petit showed no documents, but demanded the keys. The curate refused to give them up. M. Petit ordered his locksmith to pick the locks, which was done, and then turning to the curate shouted out, "As for you, if you are here when the commissary comes, I will have you turned out by force." Upon this the curate, a venerable old man, withdrew.

'From the school of St.-Leu our local Robespierrot drove to the girls' school of St.-Jacques, sprang out of the municipal coach (paid for by the public treasury), dashed into the house, and seated himself without a word.

'One of the Sisters asked him civilly what he wished. "I wish you to get out of this house," he replied, "We cannot possibly leave in this way," answered a Sister who has for years devoted herself to this work. "I have nothing to say to you," he cried; "I want the Superior." The Superior quietly came and informed the mayor that the church officers had told her not to leave, excepting under force. "Very well, you shall have force! If you are not all out of here by Tuesday, I will put you all into the street!" [Pg 86]

'Now observe the consequences to the taxpayer of Amiens! The Church of St.-Leu, as it happens, owned the greater part of the school-buildings. The church began proceedings against the city, and in August 1881, the tribunal ordered the city to give up the buildings seized by this adventurous mayor, and to withdraw its lay teachers. The upshot was that the performances of M. Petit, in one way or another—although M. Goblet, then in the ministry at Paris, came to the rescue of his demagogic ally—cost the taxpayers, in round numbers, some fifty thousand francs. Now you see why the laicising Republicans are so anxious to shake the whole system of the French magistracy. There may be judges at Berlin. It is not convenient there should be judges in Republican France!'

This recalled to me what I heard the other day at Calais about the functionary decorated at Bapaume by President Carnot, because the tribunal had given a decision against him in a case raised by certain Christian Brothers whom he had unlawfully put out of property which, under the law, belonged to them.

'You think that a remarkable case!' said the Picard friend to whom I mentioned it. 'It is an everyday affair. Wait a minute! Let me show you the documents in regard to a performance of our worthy mayor and senator, which throws President Carnot into the shade. They are as

amusing, too, as they are instructive, and I will give you copies of them which you may use as you like. You tell me people in England and America have no idea of what is going on in France? I assure you that people in France who know what is going on around them, have no idea of what it all means, or of what it must lead to in the end. [Pg 87]

'Sometimes I think we were so stunned as a nation by the invasion and the Commune that we are still staggering about like a man knocked on the head in a dark road.

'But let me tell you the tale of M. Petit and Mademoiselle Colombel. Mademoiselle Colombel was a lay teacher at the head of one of our schools, the school of the Petit St.-Jean. I don't quite see, by the way,' he observed, 'why M. Petit and his squad have not changed the names of these schools. In Paris, you know, they had the courage to change the name of one of the great lyceums into the Lyceum Lakanal. To be sure it didn't stay changed very long, for even Paris—which suffers one of its boulevards to commemorate that wretched creature Victor Noir—wouldn't stand Lakanal. But to infect the minds of children with the names of little Saints—surely this is a monstrous thing! Well, Mademoiselle Colombel lost her temper one day, and tried to find it about the person of one of her little pupils, with slaps, and pinches, and other caresses of the kind. She was brought up before the police for it, and sentenced to pay a small fine with costs. She appealed, but the court confirmed the sentence of the police magistrate, who had acted strictly within the law. What followed? This was in May 1885. Mdlle. Colombel declared herself to be a persecuted martyr of "laicisation," and in that capacity called upon the mayor, M. Petit, for aid and comfort. I believe they were old allies in the sacred cause. Be this as it may, the mayor made himself her champion against the magistrate, and wrote her, for public use, this letter. Pray print it. It is a great thing for Amiens to possess a mayor, and for France to possess a senator, who can write such a letter. It ought to have been sent to the Exposition. [Pg 88]

'"Amiens, May 1885.

'"Madame,—On the strength of calumnious imputations fomented by an Ulysses who could not console himself for the departure of Calypso, and complacently listened to, you have been prosecuted for cruelty to your pupils.

'"After an inquiry as long and as voluminous as if the matter at issue had been a case for the Assize Court, this intrigue came to a miserable end before a simple police tribunal. From the moment, when, through a singular sort of suspicion about your natural judges, you were removed from the disciplinary action of your superiors, without any preliminary inquiry made by them, and, indeed, without apprising them of the matter, you should have been taken before the Courts. Nobody seemed to understand this, so you were condemned by default to pay a fine, trifling indeed, but so imposed as to take from you the right of appeal. Be this as it may, since some of the law officers of the Republic are ready to revive against the lay instructors of our schools, the methods of the law officers of the Empire, it is well your colleagues should know that, whilst I am at the head of the municipal administration of Amiens, they shall not be given over defenceless to the rancour of the clerical world, its dupes, or its accomplices. I have therefore the honour to inform you that I not only relieve you from all the costs of your case, but that, in order to soothe the trouble it may have caused you, I grant you an indemnity of one hundred francs! [Pg 89]

Against the sentence which condemned you put this proof of esteem and sympathy. Honest people and Republicans will think this testimony at least as good as any other. Accept, Madame, the assurances of my most distinguished consideration.

'"The Mayor of Amiens,

'"Frédéric Petit."

'Ulysses bewailing the departure of Calypso is charming, is it not?' said my friend. 'M. Petit is a cotton-velvet manufacturer, and his classics are cotton classics. But what do you say to the applause of "honest people" acclaiming a mayor who puts his hand into the public treasury and makes a present out of it to soothe the injured feelings of a schoolmistress fined by a public tribunal for ill-treating her pupils? Can you ask for a more flagrant illustration of the state to which this Republic is bringing our public services? And the mayor who wrote this letter, and took this money out of the public treasury, and offered this open insult to the tribunals of the city of Amiens, has since then been made a senator of the Republic, with the help and concurrence of M. Dauphin, then First President of our Courts, whose plain official duty it was to revoke his commission as mayor as soon as this letter was published! With such men as this in the French Senate do you wonder the country laughs at senatorial courts of justice? I have no great opinion of General Boulanger, though I have as good an opinion of him as of M. Clémenceau, who invented him. But really is it not grotesque to see such cotton-velvet senators as this mayor of Amiens going about to decide questions of fidelity to public duty? Take my word for it' he continued, 'it is the direct personal knowledge which the people have of just such personages as the mayor of Amiens all over France, which makes two-thirds of the popular strength of General Boulanger. If the Senate and the Government succeed in putting about the impression that General Boulanger is no better than they are, they will no doubt weaken him with the people, but they will not strengthen themselves. This Third Republic is dying, not of any passion for the monarchy, not even of the Imperialist legend, which is very strong in the country—more because France was so prosperous under the third Napoleon than because France dominated Europe [Pg 90]

under the first Napoleon: it is dying of popular contempt. It is dying of the Goblets, the Petits, the Dauphins. They are to be found all over France—under different names—yes—but always the same: shallow, vain, vulgar sycophants of universal suffrage while they are out of place, bullies and traders when they are in power. And then!' he exclaimed after a pause, 'what most exasperates me is that they are such a pack of wordmongers, for ever ranting about things which may have intoxicated our grandfathers in 1792—they don't seem to me to have invented gunpowder, our grandfathers!—but which simply make sensible men sick to-day.

'Wait a moment! Let me complete the picture of our model Picard Republican senator for you. The Comte de Chassepot told you the story, did he not, of the Calvary in the cemetery of the Madeleine? Yes. But he did not show you the correspondence about it between the bishop and this charlatan of twopenny Atheism? No? Well it is a tit-bit, and I give it to you! Petit sent his order to the keeper of the cemetery of the Madeleine in November 1880, to raze the cross, saw off the arms, and detach from it the image of Christ. He was then, observe, not really mayor of [Pg 91] Amiens, but only mayor by reason of the refusal of his senior to serve in the office.

'The work was done at night. The cross was destroyed. The image of the Saviour was thrown into a shed.

'Two days afterwards, the Bishop of Amiens wrote this letter to the Prefect of the Somme, Spuller, the same person who is now—heaven save the mark!—Minister of Foreign Affairs of the French Republic!

'"Amiens: Nov. 12, 1880.

> '"Mr. Prefect,—A most deplorable incident—indeed a grave scandal—has just taken place at the cemetery of the Madeleine, and is exciting, with too much reason, the strongest and most painful feelings among the people of Amiens.
>
> '"The figure of our Saviour Christ, set up there in very special circumstances, and with a solemn ceremony in which more than 30,000 spectators took part, was clandestinely thrown down and taken away the night before last. It is impossible for me to imagine that the authorities can have ordered such a thing to be done.
>
> '"I must request you, Mr. Prefect, to order an inquiry to be made into this inexplicable affair, and to cause the authors of the act to be prosecuted according to law. Please accept the assurance of my respectful regard.
>
> '" ✠ Aime Victor-Francis,
> '"Bishop of Amiens."

'To this letter, written by the highest ecclesiastical authority of the chief city of his préfecture—will you believe it?—M. Spuller, who is after all not a perfectly illiterate person like Petit, actually made no reply!

'But the cotton-velvet bagman of blasphemy three days afterwards, reading in the papers the letter of Bishop Guilbert, burst into print with this incredible but most instructive effusion, [Pg 92] addressed to his friend the Prefect:

'"Amiens: Nov. 15, 1880.

> '"Mr. Prefect,—I find this morning in the journals of the bishopric the text of a letter addressed to you by the Bishop of Amiens in regard to the suppression of the Catholic emblem placed at the entrance of the general cemetery of the Madeleine.
>
> '"It was by my order, and my written order, that the Christ of the Madeleine was removed. The only failure to comply with my orders was that the operation was performed in the evening after the cemetery was closed, instead of in the morning as I had directed. In acting thus, I have shown great tolerance; for, in virtue of Article 13 of the Law of the 7th Vendémiaire of the Year IV., circumscribed in its application, but not abrogated by the Law of the 18th Germinal year X., as is shown by a ministerial decree of the 7th Fructidor following: 'No sign special to any religion can be raised, fixed, and attached in any place whatever, so as to strike the eyes of citizens, except in an enclosure intended for the exercises of this religion, or in the interior of private houses, in the studios or warehouses of artists or merchants, or in public edifices destined to contain monuments of the arts.'"

'Then followed a dozen pages of similar twaddle, meant to show that the mayor of Amiens was a most tolerant prince, in that he had not ordered the destruction of every cross set up on a private grave!

'Of course all these laws of the First Republic were long ago shot into space under the Consulate and the Empire, and of course, even if they had not been shot into space, a consecrated cemetery is an "enclosure intended for the exercises of religion." But what did that signify to M. Petit, who, in a public speech the year after, boasted that he "had not been married in church, and that his [Pg 93] children had never been baptized."

'Did all this give the man any right to destroy and carry away a costly piece of artistic work, the property of the city?'

Obviously, it is as absurd to expect peace and order in France under a republic in which men like M. Petit, and M. Spuller, and M. Dauphin, and M. Goblet are leading friends of the Government, as it would have been to expect peace and order in the England of the seventeenth century, when churchwardens—as at Banbury, for example—went about breaking at night into the churches confided to their care, and smashing the statues of the saints and defacing the glorious monuments of the past.

After considering all these humours and graces of the most recent French Republic, as set forth by the senatorial mayor of Amiens, for the edification of Picardy and France, it was interesting to walk with Mr. Ruskin from the Place de Périgord up the 'Street of the Three Pebbles,' past the theatre and the Palais de Justice, to the south transept of that glorious cathedral which has not as yet been taken down by night, under the senatorial mayor or his friends the ministers, M. Spuller and M. Yves Guyot. Why should this 'Parthenon of Gothic architecture,' as M. Viollet-le-Duc calls it, be left standing when the Calvary of the poor at Amiens is cast down and sawn in pieces?

For surely Mr. Ruskin, who has written many true and eloquent things, has written nothing truer than these words with which he brings to a close his remarkable paper called the 'Bible of Amiens':—

> 'The life and gospel and power of Christianity are all written in the mighty works of its true believers, in Normandy and Sicily, on river-islets of France and in the river glens of England, on the rocks of Orvieto and by the sands of Arno. But of all, the simplest, completest, and most authoritative in its lessons to the active mind of Northern Europe, is this on the foundation-stones of Amiens. Believe it or not as you will—only understand how thoroughly it was once believed—and that all beautiful things were made and all brave deeds done in the strength of it—until what we may call "this present time," in which it is gravely asked whether religion has any effect on morals, by persons (senatorial and other) who have essentially no idea whatever of the meaning of either religion or morality.'

[Pg 94]

[Pg 95]

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE SOMME—*continued*

AMIENS

Where party names are taken from persons, there we may be sure that the people are either losing, or have never had, the political instincts which alone can make popular government a government of law and order. The Englishmen who are readiest to proclaim themselves 'Gladstonians,' whatever may be their other merits, are hardly perhaps the most devoted champions either of the British constitution as it is, or of strictly constitutional reform. In France to-day, the Republican party is made up of clans, each taking the name of its chief. There are Ferryists and Clementists, as there were Gambettists; and the Government of the day is putting forth all its strength to check the drift over of what I suppose I may without impropriety call the Republican residuum into Boulangism. Here in Amiens the tide seems to be too strong for the authorities at Paris, and for that matter throughout the department of the Somme. At the election nearly a year ago, on August 19, 1888, of a deputy to fill the vacancy caused by the death of a Royalist member, M. de Berly, General Boulanger came forward as a candidate and was elected by an overwhelming majority. There are 160,400 electors in the department. Of these, 121,955 voted. General Boulanger received 76,094 votes, and his Republican competitor, M. Barnot, only 41,371, General Boulanger having been elected at the same time for the Nord and the Charente-Inférieure. General Boulanger resigned his seat and his Republican followers cast their votes for a Royalist, General de Montaudon, who was elected. In the arrondissement of Amiens, with 57,527 registered voters, General Boulanger had a majority, in 1888, of 15,274 voters, the whole vote thrown there being 42,609. Yet, in 1881, on a total registration of 47,923 voters, the Republican candidates for Amiens, M. Goblet and M. Dieu, were elected by a combined majority of 7,094 votes. If the Boulangists carry Amiens, therefore, at the legislative election this year, it may be taken for granted, I think, that M. Goblet and his friend the senatorial mayor have not educated their fellow-citizens into very staunch and trustworthy supporters of the Republic.

[Pg 96]

M. Fleury, the editor-in-chief of the Conservative *Echo de la Somme*, who made a pretty thorough canvass of the department before the election of August 19, 1888, gives me some curious details as to that election.

The monarchists, both royalists and imperialists, gave a general and tacit, and in many cases an overt and active, support to General Boulanger, their object being the same as his—to bring about a repeal of the existing law of 1884, which was passed to prevent any real revision of the constitution in a sense hostile to the existing republican form of government. Of course if the people of the Somme had really cared anything about the Republic as a form of government, they ought to have defeated General Boulanger. It is the opinion of M. Fleury that the people of the Somme, and indeed of Picardy, not only care little or nothing about the Republic as a form of government, but actually and by a considerable majority prefer some monarchical form—probably, on the whole, the Empire.

[Pg 97]

They are not in the least likely to express this preference at the polls, because, in common with the vast majority of the electors throughout France, they have been born and brought up to take their form of government from Paris. So long as the government at Paris—be it royal, imperial, or republican—controls the executive, the people of the provinces are extremely unlikely to make an emphatic effort of their own to be rid of that government. If Louis Philippe, in 1848, would have allowed Marshal Bugeaud to use the force at his command in Paris, the Republic improvised in February of that year would have been strangled before birth, to the extreme satisfaction of an enormous majority of the French people. This was afterwards overwhelmingly shown by the election of Louis Napoleon, when General Cavaignac, with all the advantage of the control of the machinery of government at Paris, could secure only a relatively insignificant popular vote at the polls against the representative of the imperial monarchy. I spent the winter in Paris two years afterwards as a youth, during my first tour in Europe, and I there heard an American resident of Paris, well known at that time in the world of French politics, Mr. George Sumner, a brother of the senator from Massachusetts, relate in the *salon* of M. de Tocqueville a curious story of the days of February, which strikingly illustrates the disposition of the French provinces at that time to take whatever Paris might send them in the way either of administration or of revolution.

The king refused to let the Maréchal Duc d'Isly restore order (as there is no doubt he could easily and quickly have done), on the ground that he had received the Crown from the National Guard [Pg 98] in Paris, and that he would not allow it to be defended by the line against them. The recently published letters of his very popular son, the Duc d'Orléans, prove that, had that prince been then living, he probably would never have allowed this scruple to stand in the way of averting a social and political catastrophe. But the duc was in his untimely grave, and the control of events fell most unexpectedly into the hands of a few men who had no concerted plan of action, and, indeed, hardly knew whether they were awake or dreaming. 'They proclaimed a republic,' said Mr. Sumner, 'because they did not know what else to do;' but they were in a state of utter bewilderment at first, as to how they should get the republic accepted by the provinces. A happy thought struck M. Armand Marrast. In those days the French railway system was little developed. Most of the mails from Paris were carried through the country by malles-postes and diligences, and every evening an immense number of these coaches left the central bureau for all parts of France. M. Marrast sent into all the quarters of Paris and impounded, in one way or another, the services and the paintpots of every house and furniture painter upon whom his people could lay hands. These were all set to work upon the mail coaches. The royal arms, with the Charter and the Crown, were painted over, and the vehicles which, from Paris, carried to all parts of France the news of the proclamation of the Republic carried everywhere also an outward and visible sign of the establishment of the new government in the words 'République Française' brightly blazoned upon their panels.

I recalled this story to Mr. Sumner years afterwards in New York, and he assured me not only that it was literally correct, but that he had been consulted himself about it by M. Marrast at the [Pg 99] time. This particular device could not now be used as effectively. But, with the telegraph wires and the telephones in its control, any government which may get itself installed to-morrow in Paris would certainly have tremendous odds in its favour, from one end of France to the other. The immense increase of the French public debt under the republican administration since 1877 has correspondingly increased, all over France, the number of people known as *petits rentiers*, who, having invested their savings, in part or wholly, in the public securities, will be as quick to acquiesce in any revolution which they believe to have been successful at Paris, as they are slow to promote any revolution, no matter how desirable otherwise a change in the government may seem to them to be. So long as it is not shaken out of the public offices at Paris, the government of the Republic may probably count upon this vast body of quiet people, as confidently as the Empire counted upon it twenty years ago, or as the monarchy or the dictatorship might count upon it to-morrow, were the king or the dictator acclaimed in the capital.

M. Fleury cites one of General Boulanger's most active supporters, M. Mermieix, as saying to him during the election in 1888, 'with a few millions of francs, the liberty of the press and of public billsticking, and three thousand rowdies, I can change the government of this country in less than a year.'

The remark is slightly cynical. But the extreme anxiety of the government of the Republic to get General Boulanger either into a prison or out of Paris certainly goes far to justify the boast of M. Mermeix.

'I told General Boulanger at Doullens,' said M. Fleury, after going thither in company with him from Amiens, 'that he was sure of his election. My reason was that while I saw little real [Pg 100] enthusiasm for him at Amiens, none at all indeed among the middle classes, and no open display of any on the part of the workmen, I found the peasants for him almost to a man. They crowded about his railway carriage. They insisted on shaking hands with him, many of them kissed his hand (that ancient form of homage lingering still in their traditions), they fired off guns, and, above all, the women held up their children to be kissed by him. This settled the question for me. When I saw him kissing the little girls, I knew that he had captured the mammas, and the mammas govern the rural regions of Picardy.

'At Doullens I said to him, "You may be sure of your results now. You will win by twenty-five thousand majority." He was very modest about it; but, though he certainly is not a great politician, he seemed to understand the meaning of this unquestionable popular interest in him and his progress. I could not help, however, calling his attention to the evidence it gave of what I believe to be the profoundly monarchical instincts of the peasantry in this part of France.'

'How did he take it?

'Oh! he said nothing, but smiled in a way which might mean anything. Of course his idea of a republic of honest men means, and can mean, nothing but a republic with a chief who is beyond the reach of deputies and contractors.'

'That,' I said, 'seems to have been simply Lafayette's idea, in 1792, of an American republic for France, with a hereditary executive; or, in other words, a French edition of the English "republic with a crown."'

M. Fleury replied, that this is rather the aim of the monarchists than of the Boulangists. One of General Boulanger's lieutenants, M. Mermeix, already cited, told him frankly that the Boulangists [Pg 101] want a sort of consulate stopping short of the Empire—a strong republic with a nationally nominated chief, freedom of conscience, freedom of education, no more parliaments, a simpler public administration, and the cutting out of the financial cancer which is destroying the resources of France. The coalition now existing between the royalists, the imperialists, and the Boulangists, in view of the elections of 1889, obviously rests upon the conviction, common to all these parties, that the Republic, as at present constituted, is so far committed to a policy of reckless public expenditure and of deliberately irreligious propagandism that its leaders cannot, if they would, either readjust the national finances or let the religious question alone.

A man of much ability and of very high character, who has filled important financial posts under the Empire in this part of France, tells me that there has been no real balancing, now, of the public books for several years, because the members of the Cour des Comptes whose duty it is to get this done have found it impossible (and so reported) to get all the necessary accounts from the Ministry of Finance. As no Conservative members are permitted to sit on the Committee of the Budget, even such a monstrous thing as this passes unchecked by the Chamber. No wonder that he should tell me, M. Bethmont, one of the members of the Cour des Comptes and a Republican, is of the opinion that nothing can make matters straight again in France but an Emperor with a Liberal constitution, or, in other words, a revival of the Ollivier experiment of 1870.

I tried in vain to get from M. Fleury some definite notion of the political programme of General Boulanger. As I have been constantly assured that the General formed his programme from his [Pg 102] observation of the institutions of my own country during the short time which he spent in America, as one of the chosen representatives of France during the centennial celebration of the crowning victory of Yorktown, in 1881, I have long been not unnaturally curious to ascertain precisely how he proposes to 'Americanise' the actual government of France. But on this point I can get no more light from M. Fleury in Picardy—though M. Fleury spent some time with the General as a not unsympathetic ally—than I have been able to get from any of the General's most devoted partisans in Paris. In Picardy as in Paris, Boulangism seems to represent a destructive—or, if the phrase be more polite, a detergent—rather than a constructive force. It is not the less worthy of consideration, perhaps, on this account. But on this account it appears to me more likely to play a subordinate than a leading part in the political movement of these times. It is rather a broom, if I may so speak, than a sceptre which the 'brav' général' is expected to wield. In conversation with M. Fleury, another of General Boulanger's intimate and confidential lieutenants, M. Turquet, formerly an Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry of Fine Arts, who ran for a seat as deputy in the Aisne in 1885, summed up the programme of Boulangism as 'a programme of liberty.' 'I mean,' he said, 'real liberty, such as exists in America, not our Liberalism, which is spurious and archaic. Our actual republicans of to-day are Jacobins, sectarians. Their only notion is to persecute and proscribe, and they are infinitely further from liberty than you royalists are, for you have at your head a prince who has a thoroughly open mind. The form of government, after all, signifies little. The real question is not whether we shall have a monarchy or an empire, an autocracy or a democracy. It is whether we shall have [Pg 103] liberty.'[3]

'I answered him,' said M. Fleury, 'that what he said was very fine, and that the friend of Fourier, Victor Considérant, had said it before him. What I wanted to know, however, was, what the Boulangists proposed to do with the Catholics, the believers, in France should the General get into power.'

'We shall begin,' said M. Turquet, 'by suppressing the budget of worship. We shall do this to satisfy the blockheads who are a noun of multitude.

'But we shall restore, in another shape, to the clergy the indemnity which is certainly due to them. We shall give the bishoprics either a fixed sum, or a revenue proportional to the population of each bishopric, so that the people may receive gratuitously the offices of religion. This is a public service, and it shall be remunerated as it ought to be. As to the Religious Orders, they shall have full liberty to constitute themselves, to educate children, to care for the sick and infirm, so long as they keep within the limits of the common law. All property in mortmain shall be suppressed. A community of teachers, for instance, may own the college necessary for the students, but not a forest adjoining that college.'

To M. Fleury's natural question how the college should be maintained, M. Turquet replied, 'You know as well as I do, that wealth no longer consists in real estate alone. You can now carry in your pocket a fortune in bonds payable to the bearer. The Religious Orders may own these, like other people. A dozen of us in the Chamber hold these views. You seem to think us Utopianists. [Pg 104] But General Boulanger will make it possible for us to apply these ideas!'

If General Boulanger and M. Turquet really imagine these views to be 'American,' it would be instructive for them to look into the masterly protests of the Catholic Archbishop of New York, against the doctrines of Mr. Henry George as adopted and expounded by Father McGlynn. The Catholic Church in the United States holds its own property, real and personal, and manages it to suit itself. It would be interesting to see an attempt made in the legislature of an American State, to carry through a law like the decrees issued in France in 1881, forbidding curates and vicars to receive legacies left to them for the benefit of the poor in their parishes, or to distribute to the poor sums left to the Bureau of Public Charity, with an express proviso that they should be distributed by the clergy of the place.

On one very important question of French politics, M. Fleury, as a practical politician in this great and active department, gives me a good deal of useful light. This is the question of the expenses of the electoral machine. In France, as in America, no limit is set by the law to the possible expenditure of a political candidate. I have already given the estimate made for me in Artois of the general cost of the legislative elections, and I have been told by more than one well-informed French politician in other parts of France, that the average cost of a candidacy for a seat in the Chamber may be roughly estimated at twenty-five thousand francs, or a thousand pounds sterling. This would show, allowing two candidates only for each seat, an expenditure of thirty millions of francs, or twelve hundred thousand pounds, at each French parliamentary election, being very nearly the figure given me in Artois. We send only 330 members to [Pg 105] Washington, but we elect a new House every two years. The British House of Commons, though more numerous even than the French Chamber, probably spends a good deal less upon getting itself elected than either the French or the American House.[4]

One of the 'working sub-prefects' of the Boulangist party in Picardy gave M. Fleury a very frank estimate of the expense of electing the General in 1888, in the Somme. He put it, in round numbers, at nearly or quite one hundred and twenty-five thousand francs, or five thousand pounds. This unusual outlay was made necessary by the great efforts of the Government to defeat the General. Furthermore, it was swollen by the disinterested devotion of many of the General's friends. Some of these auxiliaries spent days at the best hotels in Picardy labouring for the cause, with the result of a special hotel account, amounting to several thousand francs. Nothing makes men so thirsty as political emotion. Another partisan, at the head of a journal, sent in a bill for forty-five thousand francs expended by him upon printing and stationery, no charge being made for his personal services! The chief agents received about two thousand francs apiece. One of them must have worked very hard, for he earned no less than fifteen thousand francs. While all this expense was incurring in Picardy, furthermore, two other elections were pending, in each of which the General was a candidate, one in the Charente and one in the Nord. It would seem to be probable enough, therefore, that on these three elections In 1888 General Boulanger, or the [Pg 106] Boulangists, must have spent at least two hundred and fifty thousand francs, or ten thousand pounds.

'Where did all this money come from?' is a not unnatural question. For M. Fleury tells me the General's bills were paid much more promptly than the bills of the Government candidates. It is an open secret apparently that the Government candidates are very bad paymasters when they are beaten. Some of the bills incurred by them in 1885, when the Conservatives swept so large a part of Northern France, were still due, it appears, in 1888. But the bills of General Boulanger were settled very soon after the close of the campaign.

M. Mermeix insisted to M. Fleury that the General's war-chest was supplied by voluntary subscriptions. 'Every day,' he said, the General finds some ten thousand francs in his mails, and his followers 'are all either beggars or millionaires.'

Another of the General's managers gave M. Fleury the names of two very rich persons, one of them a cattle merchant at La Villette, who subscribed between them a hundred and forty thousand francs to carry on the campaign in Picardy. The enormous importance given to General Boulanger by his terrified former associates in the Government seems to me to be a very striking proof of the little confidence they really have in their own hold upon the country, or in the permanency of 'republican institutions' as they now exist in France, and this adequately explains the readiness of speculators to 'invest' in what may be called the 'Boulangist bonds.' Such a report as that presented not very long ago to the Chamber by M. Gerville-Réache on the state of the navy in France suffices to show that the speculative maladministration of the French finances [Pg 107] has been so great as to make it quite certain that any 'honest government' coming into power must reconstruct the system of the public indebtedness. That is an operation which can hardly be carried out by the most scrupulously honest government without very great profits to the financiers concerned in it, and I only set down what is said to me by respectable Frenchmen when I say that the Boulanger campaign funds are openly described, by persons not at all hostile to 'Boulangism,' as 'bets on the General.' 'The difference between the managers of the Boulangist campaign and the managers of the Government campaign,' said a gentleman to me in Amiens, 'is simply this—that the Boulangist managers are playing the game with private funds, and the others with public funds. So the latter, I think, will win, for they have the longest purse to draw on.' This gentleman is of the opinion, however, that but for General Saussier, in command of the garrison of Paris, General Boulanger, after the election of January 27, 1889, in which he took the capital by storm, might have turned the Government neck and heels out of doors. The weak point of Boulangism,' he said, 'is Boulanger.' 'He has no strength with the officers of the army. They have no confidence either in his character or in his ability; not that they think his character bad or deny his ability, but only that they regard him as a shallow, vacillating, and mediocre person

who made himself valuable to the Republican politicians by going into alliances with them to which other officers of strong character and high ability would not stoop. As for the quarrel between Boulanger and these politicians, it is a beggars' quarrel, to be made up over the pot of broth. But it won't be made up, because they can't agree as to the distribution of the broth. [Pg 108] Meanwhile all the chickens of France are going into the broth, and the peasant's pot will see them no more, as in the good old days of Henry IV.!'

As for the absurd story that the Boulangist funds come from America, the only foundation I can find for that seems to be the intimacy, which, I believe, is no longer as close as it was, between General Boulanger, M. de Rochefort, and a French nobleman of an ancient historic family, who has married a very wealthy American wife, and who has long been known to entertain the most extreme, not to say revolutionary, notions in politics. The honest Boulangists who really hope to see a good government established by putting out M. Carnot and putting in General Boulanger, swell the tide of his supporters, apparently, here as elsewhere in France, because they blindly hope for everything from him which their experience forbids them to hope for from the men actually in power. As one of his most cynical supporters long ago said in Paris, he is 'the grand common sewer of the disgust of France.'

His popularity with the common soldiers is another element to be counted with in estimating the strength of this military French Mahdi.

I have struck up a friendship here at Amiens with an excellent woman who presides over a shop—not one of the *pâtisseries* so justly celebrated by Mr. Ruskin—and who is a very good type of the shrewd, sensible French '*petite bourgeoise*,' such a woman as, I dare say, Jacqueline Robins of St.-Omer was in her own time. She has a son in the army, who is likely soon to be a corporal. '*Dame*, Monsieur,' she said to me, 'if M. Boulanger is not the best General in France, why did they make him Minister of War? You do not know what he did for the soldiers! My son when he gets his stripes is to marry—she is a very nice girl, an only child, do you know? and her father, [Pg 109] who is very solid, will put her in her own furniture—and more than that! and they will have their own establishment. They could not have that, you know, but for General Boulanger, who made the new rule about the wives of the sub-officers. And they used to shave the soldiers—imagine it!—just like prisoners, and such beds as they gave them—it was a horror! Well, all that he changed, and he made the soup fit to eat.'

'The other generals are not very fond of him, you say? *Parbleu!* that is likely enough! It is like the *conseillers* here in the city—one of them does well, the others always find something to say behind his back! And that affair on the frontier! You know, Monsieur, he had all the army in hand—ah, well in hand—a hundred thousand men ready to march; and those rascals of Germans they knew it, and they gave up our man. I am glad we had no war. No! I do not want a war, but, *dame*, one must have teeth, you know, and be ready to show them!'

'You want to see your War Minister made president, then?' I asked.

'President? what does that signify? Chief of the State—Emperor; ah! those were the good times here in Amiens, Monsieur, not as it is to-day with the eternal debts that M. Dauphin made us a present of. Eh! an old hypocrite that man is! and with these *centimes additionnels* that never end! And then these water-mètres! Eh! that is a pretty invention to make water as dear as wine at Amiens, and yet, God knows, wine is not too cheap, with the octroi of Amiens! It is worse than at Paris! Call him what you like, Monsieur, *c'est Boulanger qu'il nous faut*—that is to say, we must have a man at Paris. And you will see he is the man; all the mothers of soldiers will tell you that!' [Pg 110]

From the point of view of the municipal finances, the 'good old times' of the Empire may well have a charm for the taxpayers of Amiens.

In 1870 Amiens, with 61,063 inhabitants, raised and spent a municipal revenue of rather more than a million and a half of francs, or, in round numbers, about 25 francs, or 20 shillings, *per capita* of the population. A public loan, made in 1854, had been almost wholly paid off, and the city treasury still held 600,000 francs of a loan of 1,600,000 francs made in 1862 for certain public improvements. The municipal government cost 372,000 francs, and 180,000 francs were spent on the public schools. Of the municipal income, 987,802 francs were derived from four forms of direct taxation, and 770,000 francs from the *octroi*. This gave an average of a little less than 13 francs *per capita* as the burden of the *octroi* upon the population.

In 1886 the population had increased to 74,000. The direct taxes brought in 1,184,724 francs, and the *octroi*, 1,498,459, making the average burden of the *octroi per capita* 20 fr. 20 c., or an increase of about 50 per cent. in the pressure of that form of tax upon the population, as compared with 1870. As the *octroi* is imposed upon food and beverages of all kinds—fuel, forage, and building materials—this tax is regarded in France as a measure for estimating the general well-being of the inhabitants. Thus measured, there would seem to be a falling off in the general well-being of the people of Amiens since 1883. For, while the pressure *per capita* of the octroi is much greater than it was in 1870, the actual receipts from the *octroi* were less with a population of 74,000 in 1886, than they were in 1883. In 1883 the *octroi* yielded 1,533,140 francs. In 1886 it yielded only 1,498,459 francs. The falling off was in the receipts from beverages, from provisions, [Pg 111] from forage, and from building materials. The tariff of the *octroi* meanwhile has remained substantially without change from 1873 to the present time. It is an expensive tax to collect, the costs of collection in 1886 amounting to 11.85 per cent. of the receipts.

Adding together now the receipts from the direct taxes and the *octroi* of Amiens in 1886, we have

a sum of 2,683,183 francs, or in round numbers about 1,100,000 francs more than in 1870. But while, as I have stated, in 1870 the receipts equalled and balanced the expenses of the municipal government, this is no longer the case.

In 1886 Amiens, with an income of 2,683,183 francs, spent 4,162,294 francs, giving an average municipal outlay of 56 fr. 10 c. *per capita* and an excess of expenditure over revenue of no less than 1,479,111 francs, or very nearly the total income and outlay of the city under the Empire. No wonder that the public debt of the department of the Somme, of which Amiens is the capital, seems in 1886 to have amounted to 18,303,496 francs! What inequalities of pressure upon the people of the department this involves may be estimated from the fact that, while there are in the Somme 836 communes, only 404, or less than half of these communes, are authorised to raise money by loans, and one-eighth of them to raise money by *octrois*. Yet we are constantly told that all inequalities and privileges were abolished throughout France by a stroke of the pen in the *annus mirabilis* 1789![5] The taxation in 20 communes is estimated at 15 centimes, or less; in 87, at from 15 to 30; in 268, at from 31 to 50; in 428, at from 51 to 100; and in 33, at 100 centimes and upwards. These are the communal taxes. To these must be added 51 centimes for the departmental taxes, ordinary and extraordinary; 2 centimes for the land-tax; 19 centimes for the [Pg 112] personal tax and taxes on personal property; 18.8 centimes for the doors and windows tax; and 39.6 centimes for licences. For Amiens these fractions taken together mount up to 119-4/10 centimes.

I have no wish to weary myself or my readers with figures. But these figures tell the story of the difference between the government of France under the much reviled Empire and under the present government, which is represented to us as the natural and admirable 'evolution' of republican institutions in this country. In 1870, as I have stated, the receipts and expenditure of the city of Amiens balanced one another. The city paid its way, and lived up to, not beyond, its means.

With the war came upon it, of course, heavy and unexpected burdens: German local exactions, its share of the general German ransom of France, local war expenses, and its share of the general war expenditure. For three years the citizens left their affairs, thus disturbed and encumbered, to be managed by a municipal council trained in the methodical habits of the imperial administration, with the result that in 1874 the expenses of Amiens amounted to 2,479,802 francs, and its revenues to 2,016,130 francs, leaving thus a deficit of 463,672 francs, substantially accounted for by the necessary payments on a loan of 5,000,000 francs negotiated in Brussels by M. Dauphin at the very high rate of 7½ per cent. The affairs of Amiens were arranged three years afterwards by a municipal Commission, which turned them over, in 1878, to the 'Republicans of Gambetta,' with a budget involving an expenditure of 2,686,660 francs, against a revenue from taxation of 2,249,245 fr. 52 c., showing a reduced deficit of no more than 437,405 francs. [Pg 113]

By 1880 the expenditure had risen to 3,156,616 francs, while the revenue stood at 2,531,762, showing a deficit of 624,854 francs, being an increase of nearly fifty per cent, in two years! From that time the gulf has gone on widening between the receipts and the expenditure of the ancient capital of Picardy, until the figures laid before me, as taken from the official reports, show during the seven years 1880-86, a total of 18,530,477.01 francs of receipts against a total of 24,551,977 francs of expenditure, leaving a deficit for these seven years of 5,021,500 francs, or more than the amount of the Dauphin loan incurred by Amiens as a consequence of the German occupation, and of the exactions of Count Lehndorff!

What has been done during the past three years can only as yet be conjectured. The accounts are made up at the mayoralty office, and thence sent to the préfecture, and they do not get within range of the taxpayer for at least a twelvemonth afterwards.

But M. Fleury assures me that between the years 1884 and 1888 the city expended in buildings, chiefly 'scholastic palaces' erected as batteries of aggressive atheism from which to beat down the temples of religion, no less than 1,700,000 francs; so that the total of deficit of the budget of Amiens, from 1880 to the present time, in all probability exceeds six millions of francs.

If we assume the local finances of the rest of France to have been handled during the last decade on the same lines, there is nothing extravagant in the estimate made by a friend of mine, who formerly held a very high post in the Treasury, and who puts the accumulation of local deficits and the local indebtedness in France, independently of the national deficits and the national loans, since 1880, at two milliards of francs, or eighty millions of pounds sterling. For, although [Pg 114] Amiens is an important city, it represents only about one four-hundred-and-fiftieth part of the population of France.

While I was at Amiens in June M. Goblet came there and made a rather remarkable speech. It was in the main aimed at a society called the 'Association of the Conservative Young Men of Amiens,' all of whom, I am told, except the president, are young working men—mechanics, clerks, or the sons of clerks, mechanics, and working men—in short, a kind of French 'Tory democracy.' They are not Boulangists at all, but outspoken royalists. They support Boulanger simply and avowedly in order to get at a revision of the Constitution and make an end of the Republic. 'This association,' said M. Goblet, 'is making a tremendous stir. I admit its right to do this. It holds meetings and conferences; it listens to speeches in the city and the suburbs; it attacks both democracy and the Republic in no measured terms; it does not hesitate to denounce its enemies personally and by name, and neglects no means of acting on public opinion. These conservative

young men speak and act energetically. They believe in the re-establishment of the monarchy; they desire it; they preach a reaction against all that we have done for twenty years past!'

There could hardly be a more signal proof given of the reality and vitality of the anti-Republican movement in this part of France than these words of a Republican leader who began his political career, as I have shown, twenty years ago in a hopeless minority of Republicans under the Empire, who has since worked his way up the municipal ladder at Amiens and up the legislative ladder in Paris; and who, after reaching the top of the tree, now finds himself in imminent peril of slipping down again to the point from which he started. The force of the testimony is certainly not [Pg 115] weakened by the fact that at the legislative elections in September, M. Goblet, standing as a candidate for the Chamber, was completely beaten.

I have shown what a large part the *octroi* plays in the revenue of a city like Amiens. Nothing resembling it, I believe, exists in England since the abolition, two or three years ago, of the coal dues in London; and, though I suppose it would be within the power of any American State to establish a tax of this sort within its own boundaries, it would be practically impossible to enforce it without coming into collision with the commercial rights of other States under the Federal Constitution. I once had to pay the *octroi* tax on two brace of Maryland canvas-back ducks, which I was taking over from London to a Christmas dinner in Paris. But Maryland would not submit to an *octroi* upon her birds entering New York.

The importance of the *octroi* at this time in the financial system of France is one of the most conclusive and most amusing proofs of the essentially superficial and ephemeral character of the alleged 'Great Revolution' of 1789. The *octroi* was a revival in mediæval France of the Roman *portorium* which survives in the Italian offices of the *dazio consume* and in the *garitas* of Spain and Spanish America. It was originally imposed as a local tax by a city, under the sanction of a royal charter. To get such a charter from a sovereign strong enough to enforce respect for it was essential to the citizens who bound themselves to one another to maintain their local independence against the barons in their neighbourhood; and when such a charter was granted by a sovereign it was said to be *octroyée* by him. The tax therefore is rooted in a privilege. Amiens obtained the right to impose it in the fourteenth century. Of course the 'Great Revolution [Pg 116] of 1789' swept this right away, one of the most obvious 'rights of man' being to pluck an apple in an orchard, take it into a town in his pocket, and eat it there. But equally, of course, the Republic in the year VII. on the 29th Vendémiaire re-established it; and in the next year, VIII., provided that the privilege should be exercised as under the sanction of the National Government, the National Government reserving the right to revise the tariffs fixed by the municipal councils, and thereby making the restored privilege of the *octrois* another string whereby to fetter and control the local action of the people on their own affairs. The *octroi* of Amiens was re-established on the 3rd of Brumaire next following. Under the Empire, the Restoration, and the Monarchy of July, the Council of State granted the *octrois*. Under the Republic of 1848 this power naturally went to the National Assembly as a means of legislative pressure and corruption. The Second Empire restored it to the Council of State; and it has now, naturally, gone back to the Chambers. Neither the people of the cities nor the rural populations like the *octroi*, but, in the immortal words of the late Mr. Tweed of New York, 'What can they do about it?' It is a ready-money tax, from which the taxpayer receives no visible equivalent, as he does when he pays a penny for a postage stamp. When he has paid it, he is simply allowed to take his own property where he wishes to take it, and do with it what he wishes to do. It is quite likely that this *octroi* may have something to do with the disinclination of the common people in France to part with small change as readily as do the Americans, and even the English. They must always have 'money in the pocket' if they want to bring a sausage and a bottle of beer through a 'barrier,' whereas an American is never called upon to pay cash down to his Government except at a custom-house when he returns to his [Pg 117] country from a foreign trip, or in exchange for a licence or a document of some sort which represents value received in one or another form.

The time wasted over this tax in a city like Amiens is an extraordinary burden on the patience of the people, trained as the French people are to submit to a torment of eternal red tape, a week of which would drive an American or English town into open revolt. At Amiens, for example, there is a central bureau of the *octroi*, where the tax is received from the great breweries and warehouses after the amounts have been fixed by the officers on duty at those establishments. Then there are ten bureaux or 'barriers' at the railway stations, the slaughter-houses, and the fish-markets; and then again eight secondary bureaux, where the people must go and pay amounts of less than one franc. There are, and I am told have long been, loud complaints as to the inconvenient location of the bureaux; but nothing comes of these outcries as yet, and I presume nothing ever will come of them until something like an independent local administrative life exists in the provinces of France.

The elements of such a life ought surely to be found, if anywhere, in this ancient province of Picardy. You cannot traverse it in any direction without being struck by the evident prosperity of the people. Arthur Young, a hundred years ago, travelling from Boulogne to Amiens, found only 'misery and miserable harvests.' He would find now only comfort and excellent crops. Possibly he would think of the country what he then thought of the region about Clermont and Liancourt, where, under the fostering care of the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, the farmers had developed a highly-diversified cultivation; 'here a field of wheat; there one of luzerne; clover in one direction, [Pg 118] vetches in another; vines, cherry and other fruit trees making up a charming picture, which must, however, yield poor results.'

But he would be wrong. This diversified culture of modern Picardy has been highly remunerative,

and the extensive kitchen-gardening of the province is so still. The 'agricultural crisis' has doubtless hit the large farmers rather hard, but I am told they are standing up well under it—thanks to their past savings, and to French protection—better, indeed, than the large farmers in England; while the peasants proper are actually profiting by it. They not only get as much for their labour as when the large farmers were making money, but they are buying up land at lower rates. This may very possibly help the Republicans in the coming elections, for the peasants always give the credit of a state of things which is satisfactory to them to the Government of the day—be that Government what it may—so that while the larger farmers tend to Conservatism, the peasants will probably lean the other way. It is next to impossible to get a political opinion out of a Picard peasant, but I have more than once heard a peasant speak of the farmers in his neighbourhood as 'aristocrats,' which I took to be as precise a formula of political opinion as one was likely to get from him. It seemed to me to represent, among the peasants of to-day, the enlightened 'principles of 1889,' very much as the same formula, applied to the *noblesse* of a century ago, represented, among the large farmers of that day, the 'principles of 1789.'

Both then and now the formula simply means 'the man who has what I want to have is an aristocrat.' I think I have observed something like this in other countries—as, for example, in Ireland—where the guilty possessor of acres, however, is not only an 'aristocrat' but an 'alien,' as [Pg 119] appears from a song popular in Kerry:—

The alien landlords have no right
To the land God made for you;
So we'll blow them up with dynamite,
The thieving, hellish crew!

Dynamite was unknown in Picardy a century and a half ago. And the Picard has very little, except his religion, in common with the Irish Celt. But the sentiment of this simple and pleasing little ditty glowed deep in the Picard heart long before the Revolution of 1789. The 'earth hunger,' which has given the act of 'land-grabbing' the first place in the category of human crimes, invented, long ago in Picardy, and especially in that part of Picardy now known as the Department of the Somme, a custom called the *coutume de mauvais gré* or the *droit de marché*. Under this custom a tenant-farmer in Picardy considered himself entitled to sell the right to till his landlord's fields to anybody he liked, to give it as a dowry to his daughter, or to leave it to be divided among his heirs; and all this without reference to the expiration of his lease. If the landlord objected and went so far as to lease his land to another person, the previous tenant was regarded by his friends and by other farmers as a *dépointé*, entitled to take summary vengeance upon the 'land-grabber.' He might kill off his cattle, burn his crops and his buildings, and, if occasion served, shoot or knock him in the head. As the whole country was in a conspiracy, either of terror or of sympathy, to protect the *dépointé* against the vengeance of the law, this cheerful 'custom' had a liberalising effect upon the Picard landholders. Rents fell, and if the value of landed property rose the landed proprietor got no advantage from that. The torch and the musket [Pg 120] kept down the demand, which was equivalent practically to increasing the supply. The results of this 'custom' were such that in 1764, a quarter of a century before the Revolution of 1789, the king intervened, but in vain, to put a stop to it. The 'oppressed and downtrodden peasant' of Picardy under the *ancien régime* did what he liked with his neighbour's property—that neighbour being a landlord—as cheerily as the manacled Celt of Mayo or Tipperary in our own times. Two years before the Revolution, in 1787, the assembly of the Generality of Amiens, by its president the Duc d'Hâvré, vainly urged the royal government to take resolute action in this matter. With the Revolution, of course, things grew worse very rapidly. The *dépointés* became ardent lovers of liberty, equality, and fraternity; tore up all their leases, sent their landlords and the land-grabbers to the guillotine, or into emigration as traitors, and made themselves proprietors, in fee simple. There seems to be no doubt that the traditions of this *coutume de mauvais gré* (which obviously had much more to do with the politics of Picardy a century ago than either Voltaire or Rousseau) still survive in the Department of the Somme, and every now and then break out in agrarian outrages, rick-burnings, and general incendiarism, whenever leases fall in and landlords try to raise their rents on the shallow pretext that land has risen in value.

While these traditions show that there was no lack of energy and force among the 'downtrodden' Picard peasantry before the Revolution of 1789, the local history of the province also proves that the liberal ideas which are commonly supposed to have been introduced into France by the Revolution were at work in Picardy among the *noblesse* and the clergy long before. The *corvée*, for example, of which we hear so much in many so-called histories of the French Revolution, was [Pg 121] abolished under Louis XVI. in Picardy, before the States-General of 1789 were convened.

That the *corvée*, in itself, cannot have been the absolutely intolerable thing it is commonly supposed to have been may be inferred, I think, from the fact that, under the name of *prestation en nature*, it still exists in many parts of the French Republic. It figures in all the schedules of departmental taxation which I have seen down to the year 1889; and, for that matter, it existed in New England down to a very recent date, if it does not now exist there. It was obviously liable to abuse, and doubtless was abused, and the Intendant of Picardy, M. d'Aguay, made a striking speech, on the benefits to be expected from its abolition, to the Provincial Parliament in 1787. From this speech we learn that the money value of the *corvée* in hand had been computed at 900,000 livres, but that the Intendant working out the details of the abolition of the system, with the help of a number of the local landholders (commonly supposed to have been the tyrants who profited by the abuse), had reduced this estimate to 300,000 livres, at which sum the tax had been converted into a money payment for the maintenance of the roads, the province being thus

relieved of two-thirds of the burden borne by it. It is instructive to learn that attempts to bring about similar results elsewhere in France were resented and resisted, not by the great landholders, but by the corvéable peasants themselves! What they really wanted, it would seem, was not so much to be relieved of the obligation of forced labour by a payment of money, as to have their roads made for them at the expense of the State, under the impression, ineradicable down to our own day, and elsewhere than in France, that what everybody pays nobody pays, an impression which is the trusty shield and weapon at once of the Socialists and of the Protectionists all over the world. [Pg 122]

Public education in Picardy, as well as elsewhere in France, long antedates the Revolution of 1789. Three centuries ago Olivier de Serre and Bernard Palissy lamented the foolish disposition of French peasants in the Limousin and in Picardy to give their elder sons a better education than they had themselves received. 'The poor man will spend a great part of what he has earned in the sweat of his brow, to make his son a gentleman; and at last this same gentleman will be ashamed to be found in company with his father, and will be displeased to be called the son of a labouring man. And if by chance the good man has other children, this gentleman it will be who will devour the others and have the best of everything; he never concerns himself to think how much he cost at school while his brothers were working at home with their father.' This reads like a complaint of the nineteenth century in democratic America, but it is, in fact, a complaint of the sixteenth century in feudal France. It must have been frequent enough in this part of Picardy, now the Department of the Somme. For from a very early time this region has been full of small farmers bent on bettering their own condition or that of their sons. In the public library of Abbeville there is a land register drawn up in 1312 for the service of the officers of King Edward II. of England, who had married Isabel of France, from which it appears that the small tenants in this part of Picardy were then as numerous as the small proprietors now are. 'One is led to believe,' says M. Baudrillart, 'that the only difference between the condition of the country then and now in this respect is, that the enfranchised labourer has in many cases simply taken the place of the feudal tenant and become proprietor of the soil.' So great has long been the number of small landholders in Picardy that in the province, taken generally, a holding of sixty hectares may pass for a large property, one of fifteen for a moderate estate, and one of ten for a small holding. The action of the French code upon this state of things since the Revolution and the Empire has, in the opinion of many intelligent observers, been mischievous. It has made it difficult to check the excessive subdivision of the land into holdings too small to be profitably and intelligently cultivated. There is no provision in the French law it seems, as there is in the German law, making it obligatory upon the heirs of a small landed property so to arrange their respective shares as not to impede the proper cultivation of the land. The great prosperity of kitchen-gardening in modern Picardy modifies the evils flowing from this state of things however, and those who know the country best tell me that, taken as a body, the small landholders of Picardy, thanks to their thrift in regard both of time and of money, are substantially well off. They don't like the townspeople, for the old traditions are not yet forgotten of the time in which Amiens and the other large towns used to shift the main burden of the expenses of the province upon the shoulders of the peasantry; and if anything like a genuine provincial legislature could be established, with a working system of 'Home Rule,' all the elements are here which might be developed into a healthy political activity. The system of working on France from the centre at Paris to the circumference has certainly been tried long enough, and thoroughly enough, to show that nothing but evil, and that continually, can be expected from it. [Pg 123]

More than fifty years have passed since Heine said: 'When I speak of France I speak of Paris—not of the provinces; just as when I speak of a man, I speak of his head, not of his legs. To talk about the opinion of the provinces is like talking about the opinion of a man's legs.' [Pg 124]

In this spirit France is still judged abroad, for in this spirit France is still governed at home. But if, on some fine morning, the legs should suddenly wake up with a very positive opinion of their own, the results may be awkward—not only for the government at Paris but for the rest of Europe. [Pg 125]

CHAPTER VII

IN THE AISNE

ST.-GOBAIN

The short railway journey from Amiens on the Somme to La Fère on the Oise takes you through a country which, on a fine summer's morning, reminds one of the old Kentuckian description of an agricultural paradise—'tickle it with a hoe, and it laughs with a harvest.' As, in one direction, Picardy extends into the modern Department of the Pas-de-Calais, so in other directions it includes no inconsiderable part of the modern Departments of the Oise and of the Aisne. In this way it touches the central province of the Ile-de-France, the main body of which is now divided into the three Departments of the Seine, the Seine-et-Oise, and the Seine-et-Marne. From Amiens to La Fère, therefore, the pulse of the French capital may be said to throb visibly about you in the rural beauty of a region which owes its value and its fertility less to the natural qualities of the soil than to the quickening influences of the great metropolis. For centuries Paris lived mainly on the Ile-de-France, and the Ile-de-France on Paris. Since the steam-engine and the railway have

opened, both to the province and to the capital, the markets of all France and of all Europe, both the province and the capital are infinitely more prosperous than in the old days when the lack of communications and the lawlessness of men made them dependent one upon the other. The [Pg 126] steppes of Russia and the prairies of America now compete with the grain-fields of the Ile-de-France; the timber of the Baltic with its timber; and I have no doubt that, during his six years in the prison of Ham, Louis Napoleon drank there better Chambertin than ever found its way to the table of the Grand Monarque at Versailles, after a certain enterprising peasant walked all the way from his native province to the capital, beside his oxcart laden with casks, to prove to the king the merits of the true Burgundian vintage.

Certainly it would never occur to anybody now in Soissons or Laon to make the journey to Paris, as people did a hundred and fifty years ago, to drink the water of the Seine, as being 'the best in the world, and a specific against burning fevers and obstructive ailments.'

But the vast commons which lay waste throughout the Ile-de-France a hundred years ago are now green with crops; meadows have replaced the marshes; orchards and gardens on every side show what the Campagna of Rome may become, at no distant day, if Italy can make her peace with the Church, and the Italian capital remain, on terms of justice and reason, the capital of the Catholic world.

Before the Revolution the Generality of Paris contained 150,000 arpents of waste commons; the Generality of Soissons 120,000 arpents. In 1778 a writer deplores the spectacle, 'within thirteen leagues of the capital, of vast marshes left to be inundated because they are common lands, producing not a single bundle of hay in a year, and affording scanty pasture to a few miserable cattle.' In a single hamlet this writer found 35 poor families feeding 22 cows and 220 sheep on 1,100 arpents of common land! I believe there are philanthropists in England and Scotland who think the enclosure and cultivation of common lands a crime against humanity; and it would be [Pg 127] edifying to listen to a 'conference' between them and the shrewd, prosperous small farmers and gardeners who are tilling these great spaces to-day in the Ile-de-France. One of the few plainly advantageous results of the headlong Revolution of 1789 was the transfer into many private hands of the immense estates which were held by the abbeys and the clergy in and around Paris; and this transfer might perfectly well have been brought about by steady and systematic means without shaking the foundations of property and of order. We might then have seen throughout France what we see in England—the gradual and pacific evolution of a great industrial and commercial society on lines not contradicting, but conforming to, the traditions of the nation.

The influence of the capital, of course, has had much to do with the extraordinary development in these regions of all kinds of horticulture. Nurseries, kitchen-gardens, flower-gardens occupy an increasing area of the Ile-de-France, and a constantly growing proportion of its inhabitants. M. Baudrillart says that in the single Department of the Seine-et-Oise this proportion has increased tenfold since 1860, and he puts it down for that Department in 1880 at 50,000 persons out of a total population of 577,798.

The proportions can hardly, I should think, be much smaller in the Departments of the Aisne and of the Oise. How much this industry adds to the beauty of the country I need not say. Its influence is shown in a notable increase of the love of flowers among the population generally. The English villages no longer have the monopoly which they certainly once had of flower-plots before and around the cottages, and of plants carefully tended and blooming in the cottage windows. Years ago Dickens used to say that London was the only capital in the world in which [Pg 128] you could count upon seeing something green and growing somewhere, no matter how gloomy otherwise might be the quarter into which you strolled. This is beginning to be true of not a few French towns and cities, while the conditions of successful horticulture, in its various branches, give the aspect of a garden to the rural regions in which it flourishes. The nursery gardens, which are the most extensive, seldom cover more than eight hectares; seed gardens range in extent from half a hectare to a hectare; the fruit gardens from half a hectare to two hectares; the gardeners who send up 'cut flowers' to market usually concentrate their activity upon half a hectare of soil. These cultivators are all capitalists in a small way, the least important of them requiring a capital of from four to five hundred pounds sterling. And land so employed is very often let on leases of three, six, or nine years, at thirty-five pounds a hectare.

It is a curious thing that what may be called the 'Home Departments' of France around Paris should be so much richer in these highly-developed and remunerative forms of cultivation than the home counties of England around London. Why should flowers, fruits, and vegetables, as a rule, be so much better, so much cheaper, and so much more plentiful in the French than in the English capital? The superiority of the French markets cannot arise wholly from a difference of climate. Great risks are run in this respect by the horticulturists of Picardy and the Ile-de-France. M. Baudrillart tells a story of a large flower-gardener in the Seine-et-Oise who, during the severe winter of 1879-80, found his gardens deep in snow one morning, and, upon examining them, carefully made up his mind that he stood to lose nearly 2,500*l.* sterling worth of his best plants. [Pg 129] That same evening he left for England, brought back eleven waggon-loads of plants to supply the place of those killed by the cold, and, by the spring, not only covered his losses but made a profit.

With its 'polygon' and its promenades the little city of La Fère, set in the midst of well-tilled and fertile fields, has a martial air which harmonises with its history. During the religious wars which ended with the coronation of Henry of Navarre, this small Catholic stronghold was besieged, taken, and retaken no fewer than four times in twenty years; and, if we may believe an old sixteenth-century local ballad, the Huguenots behaved in a way which showed that the

'Reformation' had not improved their morals. The 'Déploration des Dames de la ville de La Fère tenues forcément par les ennemis de la religion catholique' draws a doleful picture of life in a conquered city three centuries ago.

Est-ce pas bien chose assez déplorable
De voir (hélas) son haineux à sa table
Rire, chanter et vivre opulément
De ce qu'avions gardé soigneusement?
En nostre lict quand il veut il se couche,
Faict nos maris aller à l'escarmouche
Ou à la brèche, enconstre notre foy,
Pour résister à Jésus et au Roy.

There are soldiers enough in La Fère to-day, for it is an artillery station, as it was when Napoleon got his training here, but the peace of the picturesque little fortress-town is less troubled by them than by the politicians. A little local newspaper published here, which I bought of an urchin at the uninviting but thriving station of Tergnier, was full of paragraphs deriding and denouncing the clergy, which might have been inspired by that model patriot and philanthropist Curtius, who [Pg 130] proposed in the year one of the Republic that the Government should make a bargain with the Deys of Tunis and Algiers to ransom the French held as slaves in those countries, exchanging them for French priests 'at the rate of three priests for one patriot'!

'What sort of a newspaper is this?' I asked a cheery, red-faced old man, well and substantially dressed, and, as he afterwards informed me, a cattle-breeder and dealer on his way from Amiens to Laon.

'That journal, Monsieur?' he replied with a kind of 'sniff': 'that leaf? It is a cabbage-leaf, Monsieur!' 'C'est une feuille de choux!' As for himself he was a Republican—no, not a Boulangist—but he had voted for Boulanger, and he would vote for him again. There must be an end of all those taxes. It was too strong. The land could not pay them. In his country a farm worth 30,000 francs eight years ago, to-day would not sell for 20,000 francs. The farms that were mortgaged would not pay the amount of the mortgages. Look at the taxes on cattle! These free-traders at Paris want to drive us out of our markets with meat on the hoof, and killed meat, from all the ends of the world. Here they are trying to patch up that treaty of commerce with Italy, and bring back all those competing cattle from Sardinia. That's a pretty idea! and for those Italians, who owe France everything and now lick the boots of M. de Bismarck. And now the Paris Chamber of Commerce wants an International Congress on treaties of commerce. The devil take the treaties of commerce!'

At the station of La Fère I found waiting for me, one lovely morning in July, the *coupé* of M. Henrivaux, the director of the famous and historical glassworks of St.-Gobain. When Arthur Young visited these works in 1787, he found them turning out, in the midst of extensive forests, 'the largest mirrors in the world.' The forests are less extensive now, but St.-Gobain still turns out [Pg 131] the largest mirrors in the world. To this year's Exposition in Paris it has sent the most gigantic mirror ever made, showing a surface of 31.28 mètres; and the glory of St.-Gobain is nightly proclaimed to the world at Paris by the electric light which, from the summit of the Eiffel Tower, flashes out over the great city and the valley of the Seine an auroral splendour of far-darting rays, thanks to St.-Gobain and to the largest lens ever made by man.

St.-Gobain, however, has other claims upon attention than its unquestioned rank as the most important seat of one of the most characteristic and important manufactures of our modern civilisation. In a most interesting paper upon the life and labours of M. Augustin Cochin, one of the most useful as well as one of the most distinguished of the many useful and distinguished Frenchmen whose names are associated with this great industry, M. de Falloux describes the works of St.-Gobain as 'an industrial flower upon a seignorial stalk springing from a feudal root.'

The description is both terse and pregnant. The history of this great and flourishing industry, stretching back now over two centuries and a half, is a history of evolution without revolution.

There is nothing in France more thoroughly French than St.-Gobain, nothing which has suffered less from the successive Parisian earthquakes of the past century, nothing which has preserved through them all more of what was good in its original constitution and objects. The establishment is like a green old oak, and, to borrow a phrase from Wordsworth, its days have been joined each to each 'by natural piety.' The place which it first took through privilege and favour, and could have taken in no other way, it has kept ever since for nearly two centuries and [Pg 132] a half, and now holds by virtue of skill, energy, and that eternal vigilance which is both the price and the penalty of free competition.

The 'Knights of Labour' in our America of to-day put the cart before the horse when they undertake to make labourers knights. The Middle Ages knew better, and went to work in a wiser fashion by making knights labourers. As early as the thirteenth century the glassworkers of France had great privileges granted them, and an old proverb explains this by telling us that 'to make a gentleman glassworker—*un gentilhomme verrier*—you must first get a gentleman.' As soon as it was established that by going into such a costly and artistic industry as this, a gentleman did not derogate from his rank, the first important step was taken towards the emancipation of industry. The glassworkers were exempted from *tailles, aydes et subsides*, from *ost, giste, chevaulchier et subventions*, or, in other words, military taxes could not be levied upon them, nor troops quartered upon them, nor requisitions made upon them. The *gentilhomme*

verrier had the right to carry a sword and to wear embroideries, to fish and to hunt, nor could the lord of a domain refuse to him, in return for a small fee, the right to cut whatever wood he needed for his furnaces, and to collect and burn the undergrowth into ashes for his manufacture. It was the richly and densely wooded country about St.-Gobain which led to the establishment at this spot in 1665 of the glassworks since developed into the great establishment of our day. Even now, though gas has long since taken the place of wood in the manufacture, and towns and farms have grown up in the neighbourhood, no less than 2,440 hectares of the 2,900 which make up the territory of St.-Gobain proper are still in woodland; and the forests extend far beyond the limits of the commune which bears the name of the Irish Catholic prince St.-Gobain, who came here in the [Pg 133] seventh century, as St. Boniface went to the Rhine, to evangelise the country, and built himself a cell on the side of the mountain which overlooks the glassworks. Here he did his appointed work, and here, on June 2, 670, he was put to death. The mountain was then known as Mount Ereme or Mount Desert, and it is still heavily wooded throughout almost its whole extent.

The French Government also owns a very large domain around and beyond St.-Gobain, about two-thirds, I am told, of the 10,000 hectares constituting thirteen per cent. of the whole area of the Department of the Aisne, which are still covered with forests.[6] These ten thousand hectares are the remnant of the immense *sylvacum* of the Laonnois, the Andradawald of Eastern Gaul, through which Agrippa opened a great Roman road connecting the capital of the world by way of Milan, Narbonnese Gaul, Reims, and Soissons with the British Channel. At a short distance from St.-Gobain a part of this ancient road running from south to north through the lower forests of Coucy, is still in use, and is known by the name of Queen Brunehild's Causeway. The chronicle of St.-Bertin, cited by Bergier, attributes to that extraordinary woman the restoration of this whole road throughout Gaul, and she certainly built a magnificent abbey in the immediate neighbourhood.

Encouraged by the wise administration of Colbert, an association of glassworkers established itself at St.-Gobain in 1665 under the direction of a 'gentleman glassworker,' M. du Noyer. Twenty years afterwards, in 1688, a Norman 'gentleman glassworker,' M. Lucas de Nehou, who [Pg 134] had joined this association, invented the process known as the *coulage* of glass for mirrors, and this became the kernel of the great industry of St.-Gobain. The association took the name, in 1688, of the Thévart company, from De Nehou's most active colleague. It became the Plastrier Company in 1702, and ten years afterwards, in 1712, M. Geoffrin, the husband of the clever and enterprising friend of Voltaire and the Empress Catherine, took charge as administrator of the establishment. His wife really administered both the establishment and M. Geoffrin. It was she who confided the direction of the works in 1739 to M. Deslandes, and she is fairly entitled to her share of credit for the great progress made in the subsequent half-century down to 1789. Under the First Consulate St.-Gobain had to give up the privileges it had enjoyed and face the modern conditions of success. It has proved its claim to its ancient privileges by its triumphs ever since it surrendered them. The history of its relations with the crown and with the courts under the *ancien régime* is a most curious, interesting, and instructive chapter of the political and social, as well as of the industrial, annals of France, and it has been admirably told by M. Augustin Cochin in his book on the manufactory of St.-Gobain from 1665 to 1866.

A drive of less than an hour through a highly cultivated rolling country, made attractive by well-grown trees and luxuriant hedgerows, brought me to the clear, bright, prosperous-looking town of St.-Gobain. Its two thousand inhabitants owe their well-being, in one form or another, to the great company, and among the most comfortable as well as the most picturesque dwellings in the place are the houses built by the company, and conceded on very favourable terms to the families [Pg 135] of men employed in the works. Piles of timber attested the activity of the forest administration. The people I passed, singly or in groups, saluted the director's carriage in a friendly, good-natured way, which seemed to show that here, at least, the 'irrepressible conflict' between capital and labour has not yet passed into the acute stage. A fine old church of the thirteenth century, with a tower of the sixteenth, and the noble trees which cover the slopes and shade the roadway of St.-Gobain, are no more in keeping with the standard English and American type of a manufacturing town than is the parklike domain in the midst of which rise the main buildings of the great manufactory itself.

There M. Henrivaux gave me a cordial welcome. The château of St.-Gobain, in which the offices of the company have long been established, is a vast square edifice of the time and the style of Louis XIV. It occupies the site, and, I believe, comprises one remaining wing of an earlier château, which was stormed and partially destroyed by the English in the fourteenth century. Henry IV. was seigneur of St.-Gobain, and when the glassworks company, at the end of the seventeenth century, bought the domain and the buildings from the Count de Longueval, then governor of La Fère, the title of the crown to the property had to be extinguished as well as his.

Nothing can be finer in its way than the wide panorama of forest-clad hills and rolling vales, dotted here and there with towns, villages, and châteaux, over which you gaze from the terrace in front of this unique establishment. It has its pleasure-grounds and its park. Within the main building, besides the extensive suite of apartments assigned to the director, who resides there [Pg 136] with his family, is another handsome suite of apartments, reserved for the administrators, six in number, whenever they may choose, collectively or severally, to visit St.-Gobain. These apartments are furnished with stately simplicity, and the whole interior preserves the grand air of the eighteenth century. The *fleurs de lis* still adorn the lofty chimney-pieces, the waxed floors are sedulously polished, and, as M. Henrivaux says, could the ghost of Lucas de Nehou have returned to St.-Gohain only a year or two ago, he would have been welcomed at the entrance

gate by a Swiss wearing the royal liveries of the House of Bourbon, and resting majestically on his halberd, like the guards of the Scala Regia in the Vatican. This imposing warden has now passed away, at the ripe age of a hundred and two, and M. Henrivaux tells me that he was more alert and active to the last than his more celebrated contemporary at Paris, the venerable Chevreuil.

When a new administrator first makes his appearance at St.-Gobain, I am told, he is received with music by day and an illumination at night, a grand mass is celebrated in the chapel dedicated to the royal Irish martyr, and the whole place assumes for a moment the aspect of another age.

In one of the *salons* of the administration, two pictures commemorate visits paid to the manufactory: one, under the Restoration, by the Duchesse de Berri, the mother of the Count de Chambord; the other, under the Second Empire, by the Empress Eugénie—pathetic pictures both, making the room a place wherein to 'sit upon the floor and tell strange stories of the deaths of kings.'

Beside the canvas in which the Empress appears—a graceful, gracious woman in the prime of her life and her beauty—hangs a small mirror in a gilded frame, silvered by her own imperial hand in [Pg 137] the great workroom of the manufactory. The work was well and deftly done, but so delicate is the process that when the light strikes athwart this mirror at a particular angle, you can clearly trace a faint hair line of shadow traversing it, the ineffaceable record of a ripple of laughter which broke from the Empress's lips at some gay remark made by one of the personages grouped about her while her hand was completing its task.

I spent a delightful day with M. and Mme. Henrivaux, inspecting all parts of the manufactory of mirrors, visiting the houses provided for a considerable number of the workmen and their families, on terms most advantageous to them by the company, and inquiring into the working of the co-operative association founded by M. Cochin.

This association is an association of consumers only, not of producers. Its original statutes were drawn up very carefully by M. Cochin, and as they have been as carefully observed by the members and the managers, it is the opinion of M. Henrivaux that the experiment has proved to be a success. This may be inferred from the fact that the title of 'co-operative' has been assumed in the town of St.-Gobain by a bakery, which seems to be managed on the principles of private competition under the 'co-operative' flag. If the 'trademark' were not popular, it would hardly have been assumed.

The company also encourages societies among its own workmen and in the town for educational purposes, including a philharmonic and a choral society, and is liberal in its expenditure upon the schools, both here and at Chauny, the seat of its very important chemical works.

At St.-Gobain alone, I understand, it is now making an outlay of some sixty thousand francs on [Pg 138] new school-buildings, which is a larger sum than the total of the taxes paid by the people of the place. The 'budget' of the commune amounts to 27,500 francs, or rather more than ten francs *per capita* of the population. Obviously the prosperity of the glassworks makes the prosperity of St.-Gobain, which, but for them, would doubtless soon relapse into the proportions of the little hamlet gathered, twelve hundred years ago, by the Irish evangelist about the miraculous fountain, which is said to have been evoked by him with a blow of his staff, and which still flows beneath the shelter of his church.

When Arthur Young visited St.-Gobain a hundred years ago he congratulated himself on his 'good luck' in hitting upon a day when the furnaces were in full blast and the *coulage* going on. A traveller of the present day who should reach St.-Gobain armed with the letters of introduction necessary to secure his admission into the works, and find the furnaces not in full blast and the *coulage* not going on, would be in very bad luck indeed.

For while in 1789 St.-Gobain was a privileged company, enjoying, for the output of its works here and in Normandy, and in the Faubourg St.-Antoine at Paris, a chartered monopoly, the output of its works to-day, under the wholesome pressure of competition with a fair field and no favour, is enormously greater than it was a century ago, both in volume and in value; and the position of St.-Gobain among the glassworks of the world is at least as high under the presidency of the Duc de Broglie, in 1889, as it was under the presidency of the Duc de Montmorency in 1789. Yet the company is still administered, not indeed according to the letter of its original statutes of the time of the Grand Monarque, but in the spirit of those statutes. It is an ancient dynasty which has [Pg 139] simply accepted the changed conditions of modern life and modern activity, and conformed its operations to them without abandoning its fundamental principles. The successful advance of this great industry, through all the changes, convulsions, and developments of the past century, is quite as instructive as are the successive catastrophes of French politics during the same time. 'I think,' said M. Henrivaux to me, 'that when you compare the St.-Gobain of 1702 with the St.-Gobain of 1889, you will perhaps agree with me that there is some force in our double motto, 'tradition dans le progrès et hérédité dans l'honneur.'

It is a curious fact that Lucas de Nehou, the inventor of plate glass, was originally induced by the founders of St.-Gobain to leave his own establishment at Tour-la-ville in Normandy and come to their works in Paris, because the Venetian glassworkers who had been invited by Colbert into France, refused to instruct the French workmen in their 'art and mystery.' They could not be blamed for this. Venice was then the acknowledged headquarters of the glass manufacture, and it was the unchangeable policy of the 'most serene Republic' to keep all her secrets to herself. A

fundamental statute ordained that if any artisan or artist took his art into a foreign country he should be ordered to return. If he did not obey, his nearest relatives were to be imprisoned, in order that his affection for them might lead him to submit. If he submitted, his emigration should be forgiven, and he should be established in his industry at Venice. If he did not submit, a person was sent after him to kill him, and after he was well and duly killed his relatives were to be released. In the thirteenth century Venetian artists suffered death under this statute in Bologna, [Pg 140] Florence, Mantua, and other Italian cities. Even in Venice the glassworks were rigidly confined to the island of Murano, in order to keep the workmen from coming into contact with strangers visiting the city. When the Republic, in 1665, as a matter of policy allowed a certain number of glassworkers to go to France, at the request of Colbert, and to take service there under Du Noyer at Paris, in his manufactory of mirrors, these workmen were forbidden to teach their trade to any Frenchman. The result, as I have said, was that Du Noyer finally brought about a combination with M. de Nehou, the owner of certain glassworks at Tour-la-ville in Normandy, that De Nehou came to Paris, that out of their joint enterprise eventually arose the company now known as the Company of St.-Gobain, that the French workmen trained by De Nehou did excellent work, and that De Nehou put himself in the way of making, towards the end of the seventeenth century, his invention of plate glass, which finally drove Venetian mirrors out of the markets of the world. The Venetian mirrors, charming as they are from the æsthetic point of view of decorative art, are simply blown glass rolled flat, cut, polished, and tinned. The art of making them came, like other arts, to Venice from the East, and in the sixteenth century the Venetian mirror was the true 'glass of fashion' all over Europe. The famous 'Galerie des Glaces' at Versailles, of which Louis XIV. was so proud, was filled up with mirrors of 'French manufacture after the fashion of Venice,' as the royal expense-rolls state, and it took De Nehou and his workmen five years—from 1678 to 1683—to do the work. Eight years afterwards, in 1691, he presented King Louis with certain 'large mirrors of plate glass,' the firstfruits of his invention, made in 1689. In 1693, he was made Director of the 'Royal Manufactory of Grand Mirrors,' and the manufactory was established in the [Pg 141] ruined Château de St.-Gobain.

A hundred years afterwards, in 1798, Napoleon Bonaparte occupied Venice with a French army and made an end of that 'most serene' republic, as he did, not long afterwards, of the least serene republic at Paris. He put Berthier in command, and a commission of French savants, of which Berthollet was a member, proceeded to pick the locks and investigate the mysteries of Venetian art. Their report upon the Venetian glassworks was to the effect that France knew more about the matter than Venice. 'The industries of Venice,' said these irreverent conquerors, 'as precocious as the industries of China, have stood still like them.'

In this age of jointstock companies and limited liabilities, it may be interesting to see on what terms the original founders of the Company of St.-Gobain put their heads and their purses together, to establish a great industrial enterprise. Their articles of association were signed by twelve associates on February 1, 1703, some ten years after William Paterson and Lord Halifax laid the foundations of the Bank of England and of the British public debt. The capital of the company, estimated at 2,040,000 livres, was divided into twenty-four shares of 85,000 livres each, called 'sols,' and these again into twelve parts each, called 'deniers,' making a total of 288 'deniers.' These curious designations, taken from the currency of the time, were used down to the overthrow of the restored Bourbon monarchy in 1830. The owners of these shares, or 'deniers,' bound themselves solemnly never to make a loan, but to meet all the expenses of the enterprise by assessments in proportion to their holdings, and always to keep in hand a fund for current expenses of at least one million of livres. They were to receive ten per cent. on their capital, a special honorarium of 1,000 livres a year apiece, and a fee of two crowns for attendance at [Pg 142] meetings. All misunderstandings were to be settled by arbitration, and all the proceedings were to be secret. Under these articles St.-Gobain grew up, prospered, withstood the shock of successive political revolutions in France, and kept its place in the front of the great industrial movement of the nineteenth century down to the year 1830.

During this long life of over a century and a quarter, the payment of dividends seems to have been suspended for three years only, and that after the Terror, from 1794 to 1797. In 1792, when the Girondins and the Jacobins were tearing France to pieces between them, and courting foreign invasion as a stimulus to domestic anarchy, the works were stopped for a time in Paris, at Tour-la-ville and at St.-Gobain, but only for a time. The very able director of the company, M. Deslandes, originally selected, as I have said, by Madame Geoffrin, and who had vindicated her good judgment by managing the affairs of the company with success for thirty years, resigned his post in 1789. He was a model disciplinarian of the old school.

In 1775, finding that some of the workmen at Tour-la-ville had been seduced from their duty by a glassmaker at La Fère-en-Tardenois, M. Deslandes called upon the Intendant at Soissons to clap them into prison. Turgot, the friend of Franklin, objected to this, but M. Deslandes gave him plainly to understand that 'a government which should tolerate such misconduct would be detestable.'

When a great mirror was to be cast at St.-Gobain, M. Deslandes always took command of the works in full dress, his peruke well powdered and his sword by his side. Clearly such a director as this was out of keeping with a king who would not let his officers fire upon a howling mob, and [Pg 143] who put on a red cap to oblige a swarm of drunken ruffians.

M. Deslandes was followed into retirement by several of the administrators of the company, who emigrated, and in 1793 the Republic caused the cashier of the company, M. Guérin, to be guillotined on the heinous charge of corresponding with his former employers and friends beyond

the frontier. Naturally this crime was committed, like so many similar crimes of that day, with an eye to the main chance. The shares of the administrators who had emigrated were confiscated, in the names of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, and the confiscators sent sundry 'patriots' to sit on the administrative council of the company. Their incompetency was so ludicrous and mischievous that Robespierre, representing the State which had thus stolen an interest in the enterprise, could not stand it. He actually 'requisitioned' two noblemen—two 'aristocrats'—among the as yet undisturbed owners of the property, to come forward and direct it, just as the leader of a successful mutiny of convicts on board of a transport might 'requisition' the deposed captain and mate of the vessel to carry her safely through a storm!

With the return of law and order in the person of the Corsican conqueror things resumed their normal course at St.-Gobain; and as I have already said, the company flourished under its old organisation down to the establishment of the Monarchy of July. Then the owners of the 'deniers' put themselves and their property under the general Civil Code, in the form of what is called in modern France a 'société anonyme,' and at the first general meeting of the 'société' in April 1831 the accounts of 128 years, over which no question had ever arisen among the representatives of [Pg 144] the original holders, were presented and approved. Certainly this must be admitted to be a most noteworthy case of 'l'hérédité dans l'honneur.'

The new 'société' has greatly extended and strengthened its operations since 1831. The works at Tour-la-ville have been abandoned, the site sold, and the workmen transferred to St.-Gobain. The glassworks of St.-Quirin, the proprietors of which, on the abolition in 1804 of privileges in general, had taken to making plate glass, were taken over in 1858 by the St.-Gobain company, together with certain other works at Mannheim in Germany and the chemical works at Cirey, and the 'société' assumed the name under which it is now known of 'The Company of Mirrors and Chemical Products of St.-Gobain, Chauny, and Cirey.' In 1863 it bought up the works at Stolberg near Aix-la-Chapelle in Rhenish Prussia, in 1868 a minor manufactory at Montluçon in the Department of the Allier, and finally during this current year 1889 it is establishing a manufactory at Pisa in Italy.

The operations of the company, as it now exists, extend to six manufactories of mirrors, six manufactories of chemicals, a mine of iron pyrites, a salt mine, many thousand hectares of forests in this department of the Aisne and in the province of Lorraine, and to a local railway connecting St.-Gobain with Chauny, where the plate glass cast at St.-Gobain is polished and the mirrors are silvered. At St.-Gobain, besides the plate glass mirrors, glass is made for roofs, for floors, for pavements, for optical instruments, including the finest lenses used in the lighthouses of France. Here, as I have said, the lens was made now used at the top of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, from which, night after night, a gigantic auroral ray of electric light leaps into space and shoots for miles athwart the sky, to the inexpressible delight of the gaping crowds below, and I hope to the [Pg 145] edification of the world of science.

Since 1870 the output of the company from its various manufactories has more than doubled. It now amounts, in round numbers, to 800,000 square mètres a year of polished plate glass; to 500,000 square mètres a year of rough glass; to a million kilogrammes a year of blocks and castings for floors and roofings, and to eighty thousand kilogrammes a year of optical glasses of all sorts.

In the time of Louis XIV. and before Lucas de Nehou had made his invention of plate glass, there was absolutely no public demand for what in those days were called 'large mirrors' made in the Venetian fashion, mirrors which to-day would not find a market in the most remote frontier towns of America or Australia. Colbert then wrote to the Comte d'Avaux apropos of the works of Lucas de Nehou in Normandy, that 'there was absolutely no market for large mirrors in the kingdom, the king being the only person who could possibly need them!'

This was in 1673.

In 1702, ten years after the invention of the process by which plate glass is made, a mirror with a surface area of one mètre cost 165 francs. In 1889 such a mirror costs 30 f. 25 c. A mirror with four mètres of surface area cost, in 1702, 2,750 francs. In 1889 it costs 136 francs.

When we come down to modern times and to the much larger mirrors produced of late years, the fall in prices is extraordinary. In 1873 a mirror with ten square mètres of surface cost 1,200 francs. To-day such a mirror can be bought at St.-Gobain for 467 francs, showing a fall of nearly two-thirds in price within sixteen years! [Pg 146]

To-day the total production of polished plate glass in the world is estimated as follows:—

	square mètres
England (4 companies)	900,000
Belgium (6 companies)	600,000
Germany (4 companies)	150,000
United States (7 companies)	500,000
France (not including St.-Gobain)	130,000

St.-Gobain	800,000
Total	3,080,000

From this it will be seen that nearly one quarter of the plate glass of a world in which plate glass, like champagne, is rapidly ceasing to be a luxury and becoming a necessity, is produced at this ancient establishment. With a keen perception of the tendencies of this age St.-Gobain, of late years, has been fitting its machinery to produce the very largest plates of glass possible to be made. Go where you like, from the Eden Theatre in Paris to the Casino of Monte Carlo, from the new monster hotel at the Gare St.-Lazare to the enormous edifice which an enterprising firm of tradesmen has planted in the centre of the Corso at Rome, and the vast glittering sheets of silvered glass turned out from the great forges everywhere confront you. At the French Exposition of 1878 St.-Gobain enabled the 'fly gobblers' of two hemispheres to admire themselves in the most gigantic mirror ever made down to that date. It measured six mètres and a half in height, by four mètres and eleven centimètres in width, which gave it a surface area of 26 mètres 12 centimètres. Naturally M. Henrivaux determined to surpass this prodigy in 1889, and to match the Eiffel Tower with a mirror. The Belgian rivals of St.-Gobain suspected this, it seems, and sent forth subtle persons to spy out the plans of the great French manufactory. These colossal plates of glass are cast upon immense 'tables' of metal, and by ascertaining the dimensions of the tables [Pg 147] ordered for St.-Gobain the ingenious Belgians hoped to get the measure of the effort it would be necessary for them to outdo. In anticipation of this subtlety the director of St.-Gobain ordered two immense tables, and when these were sent to the manufactory, had them skilfully thrown into one. Upon the gigantic table thus prepared the grand mirror of the Exposition of 1889 was cast at the eleventh hour. This mirror was the special delight of the Shah of Persia during his visit of this year to Paris; and as I suppose the seven plate-glass manufactories which have grown up in my own beloved country under the benediction of the Protective Tariff, since a prohibitive duty was originally clapped on plate glass to encourage the one solitary establishment of the sort then existing in America, will give themselves up to producing something more stupendous still for the New York Exposition of 1892, I here set down its dimensions. It measures in height 7 mètres 63 centimètres, and in width 4 mètres 10 centimètres, giving it a superficial area of 34 mètres 24 centimètres. It is 12 millimètres thick, and weighs 940 kilogrammes. This enormous glass was cast from a single crucible, containing 1,600 kilogrammes of vitreous matter. To have seen this operation would have been worth a very much longer journey than that from New York to St.-Gobain, for the colour and glow of such a mass of vitreous matter in fusion can only be matched by the evanescent hues of a crimson aurora on a fine night in the North, or by the intense lights which play over the surface of a stream of molten lava.

At every stage in the operation the utmost skill and delicacy of handling are required to convert what might easily pass for a heap of rubbish swept together from a macadamised roadway into [Pg 148] the smooth, glittering, lustrous plate which the French so picturesquely call a *glace*, and which indeed most nearly resembles the evenly frozen surface of a crystal lakelet. These sands, silicates, chalks, and carbonates—rough contributions from Oken's 'silent realm of the minerals'—are first crushed and mingled together by machines—one of the best of them, I was glad to hear, of American invention—then passed on into the great rectangular hall, in which they are shot into the crucibles of the melting furnaces and fused, mainly by gas, on a system invented and perfected by the late Dr. Siemens, I believe, who made such a stir a decade ago at Glasgow by his discourse on the storage of force before the British Association. The furnaces which, according to their varying capacity, now require from eight to ten tons of coal a day, consumed, before the development of the Siemens system, from sixteen to twenty tons. Twenty-four hours now suffice for the fusion and the casting of the glass, and if the casting were now to be conducted as ceremoniously as in the time of that fine old martinet M. Deslandes, M. Henrivaux would pass his life in a cocked hat, knee-breeches, peruke, embroidered coat, and sword, for the casting now takes place every day and at a fixed hour. None the less, rather the more, it is a work still of extreme nicety, one to be done by experts, who must be as cool as soldiers under fire. In a certain way and measure it is like ladling out the molten lava of Vesuvius and pressing it into slabs for a lady's toilette-table. The plates, once cast, must be smoothed and made even. This is a very pretty process, and used to be performed by machines which bore the very pretty names of *valseuses*. That paviour's rammers should be called *demoiselles* has always seemed to me an outrage and an impertinence, though I may suppose it finds its excuse in the short-waisted [Pg 149] costumes of our grandmothers. But the movement of the glass-smoothing *valseuses* was really a sort of waltz movement. The plates of glass were fixed with plaster on a solid rectangular table. Granite-dust was scattered upon the plates, and then a wooden plateau, armed on the under side with bands of cast iron or steel, was set to waltzing over it backwards and forwards with a semi-rotatory motion, the granite-dust supplied becoming finer and finer as the waltzing went on.

Instead of these *valseuses* two great plates of glass are now fixed side by side with plaster on huge tables, and two large ashlars are set turning by steam on their own axes while they describe a great orbit over the plates of glass. A stream of water constantly plays upon the plates, which are also constantly powdered with fine sand. The ashlars turn on their axes thirty or forty times a minute, and the plates of glass are usually smoothed and 'evened' on both faces now by these machines in from eight to nine hours, including the time spent in taking them out of the plaster after one face has been smoothed, and fixing them anew in the plaster, that the other face may fare as well. Here again a considerable economy of time has been made. And, after all, when one

looks into the practical production of any of these great marvels of human industry, it is in this economy of time that the real advance of modern science beyond the results of ancient invention seems to consist. With all our nineteenth-century chorus of 'self-praising, self-admiring,' where should we be if certain—for the most part, uncertain and forgotten—men of genius had not invented the primordial processes which made art and civilisation possible? The workshop came first, and was the real marvel in the case of every great industry. To talk of the 'invention' of the [Pg 150] steam-engine, for example, is an absurdity. The 'invention' was the engine, an invention as old as Egypt or China. The discovery that steam could be made to work the engine is the more modest modern achievement. In this industry of glass-making the amazing thing is that it should have come into the mind of a man so to apply the heat of burning wood to sands and silicates enclosed in an earthen vessel as to convert them into an entirely new substance possessing qualities not perceivable by any human sense in the sands, the silicates, or the earth.

What our modern progress in chemistry and in mechanics has enabled the makers of glass to do, is greatly to reduce the trouble and cost of producing this entirely new substance, greatly to improve the quality of the substance produced, and to extend the range of the uses to which it can be applied.

What would the Egyptians, who paid their tribute in glass to Rome, have thought of a serious order to pave the Via Sacra with blocks of purple glass? Yet such an order could be executed now at St.-Gobain, and when one sees the great flags weighing nine kilogrammes made here and used to let light into the cellarage below the carriage-ways, for example, of the huge Hôtel Continental, at Paris, it comes easily within the probabilities that the whole underworld of our great cities in time may thus come to be made available for divers uses, as so much of the underworld of Broadway now is in New York.

The great 'pavement question' is an open question still, in spite of asphalte and of wood, and there would seem to be nothing in the nature of things to prevent its being eventually solved by the glassworkers. The roofing question clearly belongs to them. The casting of glass for roofs began, I believe, with England, in the time of Sir Joseph Paxton, but it has been immensely [Pg 151] developed at St.-Gobain. Over a hundred thousand square mètres of glass roofing made here were required for the building of the Exposition of this year at Paris. All the most important railway stations in France, from Nantes to Strasburg (unless the Germans have changed this), and from Calais to Marseilles, are thus roofed. In great warehouses, markets, public museums, street galleries—like those of Victor Emmanuel at Milan—factories, workshops all over France and the Continent, this conversion of the roof into a colossal window has revolutionised matters within the last twenty years. The light is making its way even into Turkey, where the great bazaar at Salonica has been roofed in glass by St.-Gobain, and as the Chinese, who, despite their early invention of glass, never got beyond using it for beads and little bottles, have condescended to admit great French mirrors into the Imperial Palace at Pekin, the glass roof may, ere long, make its way even into China.

In the form of tiles, such as are now made here, glass must inevitably, sooner or later, displace slates and shingles and terra-cotta for the roofs, even of private houses, it being quite certain that these glass tiles can be so used as to give a much better light in the garrets of private houses than can possibly be got through the windows. When that comes to pass the burglar's occupation of clambering stealthily from roof to roof will be seriously interfered with. What with glass roofs and glass floors and electricity, indeed, the city of the future is likely to be much more easily 'policed' and patrolled, as well as incomparably more cheery and habitable, than the city of to-day. Perhaps, too, when we all come to living in glass houses, the cause of peace and good neighbourhood may gain, and even Mrs. Grundy may grow more careful about looking into the [Pg 152] affairs of her friends and acquaintances.

If that much maligned potentate the Emperor Nero had any real notion of the capabilities of glass when he established the first glassworks at Rome, the lamentation with which he took farewell of the world, '*qualis artifex pereo*,' may have been inspired by regret at his not being allowed time enough to develop them. Certainly such gigantic mirrors as those which St.-Gobain has this year sent to the Exposition would have shown to better advantage in his colossal 'Golden House' than in any of our petty modern palaces. In what palace in England or in France to-day could a mirror measuring 7 mètres x 63 centimètres in height by 4 mètres x 12 centimètres in width, and thus displaying a surface of more than 30 square mètres, be placed, without dwarfing everything about it? These immense and magnificent mirrors must go hereafter to decorate palaces of public resort—'palaces of the people,' not palaces of princes. What was a royal luxury when Colbert wrote to D'Avaux in 1673 has become a popular attraction. The smallest restaurant in Paris would think itself discredited to-day were it decorated with one of the *grandes glaces* for which Colbert in 1693 thought St.-Gobain would find no purchaser save the king; but the Grand Café and the Hôtel Terminus of the Gare St.-Lazare order mirrors in 1889 which no king of our times would very well know what to do with.

Yet, once more, how the cost of these mirrors has fallen! In 1702 a plate-glass mirror showing two square mètres only by surface, cost, at St.-Gobain, 540 francs. In 1889 such a mirror, showing four square mètres of surface, costs, at St.-Gobain, 136 francs. A mirror showing ten [Pg 153] square mètres of surface, which could not have been made in 1702 at any price, can now be had for 467 francs!

In 1802, under Napoleon, a mirror showing four square mètres of surface cost 3,644 francs, or very nearly three times the present cost of a mirror, not tinned like the mirrors of 1802, but

silvered, of twice and a half that size. While new markets are constantly opening to this great industry all over the world, the progress of chemical science and of mechanics is as constantly suggesting new economies and new improvements in the manufacture of glass, and St.-Gobain, though one of the most thoroughly French of all French 'institutions,' shows no Chauvinism in its incessant study and prompt appropriation of these economies and these improvements. During the invasion of 1814 the workmen of St.-Gobain marched off to Chauny to resist the advance of the Prussians, and the manufactory had to pay a heavy fine for its patriotism. But it avails itself as readily of German as of French science to-day, and I found M. Henrivaux entirely and minutely familiar with the very latest phenomena of the great change which is coming over the glassworks, as well as all the other industries, of Pittsburg, through the use there of natural gas instead of coal gas and coal. All the most recently invented furnaces—English, German, American—have been tried and tested here as soon as they were made; and the latest American 'crushers' and 'regulators' get to St.-Gobain as soon as they do to Pittsburg. The materials which go to the making of a plate-glass mirror pass through seven processes before the original heap of pebbles, dust, and ashes is transformed into a sheet of splendour and light.

A hundred years ago more than ten days were required to complete these seven processes, from [Pg 154] the crushing and mixing and putting into the furnace of the soda and the silicious sand and the charcoal and the lime and the broken glass, called here *calcin*, through the fusion, and the moulding, and the squaring, and the smoothing, and the washing, and the polishing. Now this is all done in half the time—127 hours instead of 246.

With all this the condition of the workmen employed at St.-Gobain has also steadily improved. It seems always to have been good, relatively to the general conditions of workmen in other industries and other establishments in France. Under the original statutes, and in the time of the excellent M. Deslandes, the nominee of Madame Geoffrin, who ruled St.-Gobain with great success from 1759 down to the Revolution, the workmen of St.-Gobain, as I have shown, were looked after, as well as kept to their duty, on strictly patriarchal principles, not likely to find favour in modern eyes. That they did not themselves dislike the system may be inferred from the fact that no such thing as a strike has ever been known at St.-Gobain, and that a considerable proportion of the workmen employed here now are the direct descendants of workmen employed here in the last century. There are even workers by inheritance, as men may be soldiers and sailors or magistrates by inheritance. Of course with the great extension in our own time of the operation of the company, great numbers of workmen other than glassworkers have come into its employment. But in the glass manufactures alone there are now employed: at St.-Gobain 375 workmen, at Chauny 583, at Cirey-sur-Vezouze 628, at Montluçon 473, at Stolberg, in Rhenish Prussia, 842, at Waldhof, in Baden-Baden, 518; making, in all, 3,419. [Pg 155]

The wages of the workmen are paid by the day, by the month, or by the piece, according to the special work which they do, but in all cases (and this, I believe, has been the rule here from the beginning) the workman is interested in his work by one premium on the amount, and by another on the quality of the work done. Furthermore (and this also dates from the beginning) the company look after the primary education of the children of the workmen. At St.-Gobain, at Chauny, at Cirey, at Montluçon, and I believe, also, at Waldhof, it maintains schools for both sexes at its own expense, together with asylums and training schools for the children. In these there are now more than 1,400 children. When the company owns no such school it pays a subvention to the nearest school for the benefit of the children of its workmen.

Here at St.-Gobain the company owns a number of houses, each house having a garden and dependencies, which it lets to the workmen at an average rental of eight francs a month. I saw not long ago, at one of the stations on a line newly opened by the Great Eastern Railway Company of England, very neat and even handsome cottages well built of brick and thoroughly comfortable, which are leased to servants of the company at 2*s.* 6*d.* a week, or ten shillings a month. The houses I saw at St.-Gobain let at less than seven shillings a month, were quite as large as those of the Great Eastern Company, and the gardens were much larger.

I gathered from the remarks made to me at St.-Gobain by people who seemed to be both well-informed and well-disposed, that of late years the liberality of the company in regard to these houses has, in not a few cases, worked mischief rather than good. They are not confined to St.-Gobain, and the company owns and leases no fewer than 1,256 of them. A good many allotments [Pg 156] of land around the factories are also made at nominal rates to the workmen, who cultivate them assiduously. The glass-founders are particularly favoured in making these leases and allotments. Besides these houses meant for families, the company provides lodgings near the factories for unmarried workmen, or for workmen whose homes are at a considerable distance from their work.

Within the buildings of the manufactory itself at St.-Gobain, M. Henrivaux showed me some such lodgings, as well as several bath-rooms which the workmen are allowed to use on the payment of a very slight fee. It is his experience that the workmen prefer to consider the bath as a luxury, and to pay for it.

All the relations between the company and its workmen, indeed, seem to me to be governed by a sensible avoidance on the part of the company of everything like fussy paternalism; and to this, in some measure, I have no doubt, must be attributed the remarkably smooth and easy working of these relations through so long a course of years. The workmen are treated, not like children, but like reasonable beings, who may be expected to avail themselves of advantages which are offered them with an eye at once to their own interests and to the interests of the company.

The co-operative societies at St.-Gobain and at Chauny, for example, were founded in 1866, not by the company, but by the employees of the company under statutes carefully drawn up by M. Cochin, and the company simply undertook to assist them; in the first place by leasing them, at a low rent, the buildings necessary for the business, and in the next place by taking charge gratuitously of their financial operations. The goods supplied are sold only to members of the societies, as in the co-operative stores in England. The transactions amount to about 1,500,000 [Pg 157] francs a year, the goods are sold at prices below those charged in the local shops, and the members divide an average annual profit of from eight to ten per cent. The management is entirely in the hands of the members.

The company has founded at St.-Gobain a kind of savings-bank in which the workman may make deposits of from one franc to 400 francs, drawing interest at the rate of 4 per cent. per annum, until the maximum is reached, when the money is either paid back to the depositor or, if he prefers, invested for him, without charge by the company, in the public funds or in railway securities. In this way many of the workmen are coming to be small capitalists. If they wish also to become house-owners the company advances, at the lowest possible rate of interest, the necessary funds for the purchase, and workmen in good standing with the company find no difficulty in getting gratuitous advances of money repayable in small fixed amounts, upon showing good reasons for the advance. And in all the establishments of the company, except at Montluçon, where there is a special fund to give assistance in cases of accident or disease, the workmen and their families are entitled to medical advice and medicines at the expense of the company.

In addition to all these arrangements for promoting a real community of interests between the company and its employees, there is a pension fund out of which retiring pensions, varying from one-fifth to one-fourth of the wages earned by the pensioner, are granted to employees who have served the company for a certain number of years, or who find themselves disabled from further service by age or by disease. A certain proportion, determinable by the circumstances of each case, of these pensions is settled upon the widows and young children of the pensioners; and in [Pg 158] order to encourage habits of thrift and forecast among the workmen, the company undertakes to manage without charge the investment of a certain proportion of his wages by any workman in the 'pension fund' of the national government.

The total outlay of the company upon these various methods of promoting a community of interests between itself and its employees amounted in 1888 to 438,033 francs, thus divided:—

	francs
Pensions	241,657
Medical Service	100,055
Schools and Religious Services	57,788
Recreations	17,667
Gifts and Assistance	19,758

The outlay upon 'recreation' is made in the form of subventions and prizes granted to associations of the workmen, such as shooting and gymnastic clubs and musical societies. The manufactory, for example, boasts a philharmonic society of its own, and there is a Choral Society of St.-Gobain. Both of these have scored successes in various public exhibitions. There is a rifle club, founded in 1861, and reconstituted in 1874, with an eye to the possible military necessities of the country.

The relations between the company and its employees under this system, the germs of which were planted here two centuries ago, have assumed such a character that the workmen habitually speak not of the manufactory but of the 'maison.' They are and feel themselves to be members of a great economic family. Of 2,650 persons now actively employed in St.-Gobain, Chauny, and Cirey, 432, or 16.3 per cent., have been employed for more than thirty years; 411, [Pg 159] or 15.5 per cent., for more than twenty and less than thirty years; 553, or 20.9 per cent., for more than ten and less than twenty years; and only 1,254, or 47.3 per cent., for less than ten years.

It would be instructive to compare this record with the records of the most important industrial establishments in England and America during the past thirty years, and I should be glad to see this done by some of the people who talk so glibly in England and America of the inherent fickleness and instability of the French character, as offering an adequate explanation of the political catastrophes which have so often recurred in France during the past century.

One of the most curious features of the establishment at St.-Gobain is a subterranean lake. The fine forests around St.-Gobain and La Fère—forests of oak, beech, elm, ash, birch, maple, yoke-elm, aspen, wild cherry, linden, elder, and willow—flourish upon a tertiary formation. The surface of clay keeps the soil marshy and damp, but this checks the infiltration of the rainwater and therefore favours the growth of the trees. In the calcareous rock the early inhabitants hollowed out for themselves caverns, in which they took refuge from their enemies and from the beasts of the forest; and these caverns, called by the people *creuttes*—an obvious corruption of the name of *crypts*, given them by the Roman conquerors of Gaul, just as the early French trappers gave the name of 'caches' to the Indian hiding-places of the Far West—are to be found all about Soissons

and Laon. The more modern lords of St.-Gobain, its monks and its barons, dug out of the calcareous rock the stones which they used to build their châteaux and their churches, and they created great *creuttes* beneath St.-Gobain. It seems to have occurred to M. Deslandes, during his [Pg 160] long and skilful supervision of the works here, that these caverns might be put to the very practical use of securing an adequate water-supply. The idea has been thoroughly carried out, and the subterranean reservoir of St.-Gobain is much more impressive as a spectacle than the crypts of the Cisterns at Constantinople. It is kept filled to an average depth of one mètre by the infiltration of the surface waters and by the overflow of a pond, La Marette, on the plateau of St.-Gobain, and it covers an area of some 1,200 square mètres.

After two or three hours spent in visiting the various departments of the glassworks overhead, M. Henrivaux led me through winding passages, which reminded me of the dismal vomitories at Baiæ, down into this strange underworld. Walls and pillars, partly of the natural rock, left in the working of the quarries, partly of masonry built up to strengthen the reservoir, give this weird water, when you reach it, the aspect rather of a stream than of a lake. A workman, who had preceded and guided us with a swinging lantern, put out a long boathook, and drew slowly around to the landing-place a long, shallow boat, into which he invited us to step. M. Henrivaux had kindly sent orders in the morning to have the reservoir illuminated with Venetian and Chinese lanterns of various colours. These had been hung from hooks in the rocks and pillars with infinite good taste at long intervals, so as to illuminate not too brilliantly the mystical darkness of the scene. Looking upon the vague, indefinite vista, as it glimmered away into an indefinable distance, one seemed really to stand

> Where Alp, the sacred river, ran
> Through caverns measureless by man,
> Down to a shoreless sea.

[Pg 161]

Seating ourselves carefully in the boat, our silent boatman, like a spectral gondolier, rowed us silently along the labyrinthine canals of this dim and ghostly Venice. Vathek Beckford would have made them waterways to the Hall of Eblis. [Pg 162]

CHAPTER VIII

IN THE AISNE—*continued*

LAON

The lively little city of Chauny, standing in the heart of the rich and lovely valley of the Oise, the 'golden vale' of this part of France, has a history of its own of which I shall presently have something to say, and which throws some interesting light upon the general history of France.

But Chauny owes its actual prosperity mainly to its connection with the Company of St.-Gobain. From a very early period in the annals of the company, the plate-glass made at St.-Gobain was sent across the country to Chauny, and thence by water to Paris, where it was polished and 'tinned' at the company's works in the Rue de Reuilly.

When the first machines were invented for saving much of the manual labour spent upon these processes, it occurred to the managers of the company that these machines might be advantageously worked with the water-power of the Oise at Chauny. This was in the beginning of the present century. About the same time, thanks to the foreign wars provoked by the Girondists to promote the Revolution, it became very difficult to obtain the supplies of natural soda necessary for the manufacture of plate-glass, these supplies having been drawn, down to that time, almost exclusively from Alicante in Spain; and the chemist Leblanc hit upon a process for [Pg 163] extracting soda on a great scale from sea-salt. Of this invention the managers of St.-Gobain promptly availed themselves; and, after a brief and unsatisfactory experiment at a place called Charlesfontaine, they established at Chauny some soda-works, which have since been developed into the most extensive chemical works in France.

Taken in conjunction with the glassworks also now established here, these works extend over an area of some thirty hectares, fourteen of which are occupied by buildings. Numerous canals fed from the Oise traverse this immense area, some of them supplying water-power, others serving as waterways. The place, in short, is an industrial Amsterdam or Rotterdam in miniature, lying between the river Oise, the Canal de St.-Quentin, and the Canal de St.-Lazare. The Cité Ouvrière, built for the workmen by the company, lies beyond the Canal de St.-Lazare and on the road from Château Thierry in Champagne (the birthplace of La Fontaine) to Béthune in Artois.

The streets and areas within the works are most appropriately baptized by the names of the eminent men of science to whom the company is indebted for great services either directly or indirectly: the Cour Lavoisier, the Rue Pelouze, the Rue Guyton de Morvaux, the Rue Leblanc, the Rue Gay-Lussac, the Cour Scheele, the Rue Hély d'Oisset.

Besides the dwellings put up for the benefit of the workmen at Chauny, the company has built here a chapel, established a free dispensary, and organised excellent schools for the children of both sexes, under the supervision of the devoted Sisters, who have not yet been 'converted' out of Chauny.

'What is the feeling of the people here on this question of clerical teaching?' I asked an acquaintance of mine, who formerly filled an important post in the local administration of this [Pg 164] region, and who now devotes himself to his flowers and his library in a charming old house of the eighteenth century, the high-walled courtyard of which is tapestried with luxuriant vines and creepers.

'All the sensible people in Chauny,' he said—'and there are many sensible people in Chauny, though in the old times our neighbours used to speak of us as "the monkies of Chauny"—are quite disgusted with all this newfangled nonsense, and with these incessant attacks on the clergy. The troublesome element here in Chauny is not to be found among the workmen: it is to be found among the people who do not work. Of course, everybody knows that it is the great chemical and glass works here which make Chauny prosperous. But for St.-Gobain we should be where we were a hundred years ago. And so there is a tendency all through the Department to come to Chauny, in hopes of finding work under the company. Of course, in nine cases out of ten, those who seek it thus do not get it, for it is the rule of the company always to give the preference to people from Chauny, or the immediate neighbourhood.

'Of course the unsuccessful "immigrants" linger about the place, and as they don't find work they go lounging about the town, and take to drink too often and, in short, soon become the raw material of which in these days the freemasons are making what they call "Republicans." You have it all,' he added, 'in the letter which M. Allain-Targé has just written, refusing to be a candidate this year for the Chambers.'

I remembered very well the energy shown by M. Allain-Targé, as a Republican Minister of the Interior, at the time of the elections of October 18, 1885. He then issued an official circular [Pg 165] instructing all the public functionaries that, while they were to be absolutely 'neutral' as between Republican candidates of different colours, they must exert themselves to the utmost as against all 'reactionary' candidates. I was much interested, therefore, to learn the present opinion of M. Allain-Targé as to the outlook of the Republic under his successor, M. Constans, in 1889. It was very instructive to find that M. Allain-Targé now declines to be a Republican candidate because, to use his own words, though the High Court of Justice may 'deliver the Republic from General Boulanger and his confederates, it is beyond the power of the High Court of Justice to bring France back—let us not say to the heroic age, but to the age of good faith, of disinterestedness, of common sense, and of that prudent, sincere, and loyal policy, thanks to which, during long years, France passed safely through so many serious trials.'

'The new generations of electors,' says M. Allain-Targé in this remarkable letter, 'exact of their representatives conditions to which I will not submit. I will not undertake to make the promises which it is now the fashion of candidates to lavish, and which I cannot regard as serious.' These 'new generations of electors' are the 'new social strata' about which Gambetta used to declaim so confidently only a few years ago, and I quite agreed with my philosophic friend near Chauny in thinking that no slight significance must attach to such a verdict upon them, pronounced in 1889 by an 'advanced Republican' like M. Allain-Targé, who only four years ago, in 1885, was the most active minister of a Government called into existence to carry out the ideas of Gambetta, and to found a stable republic upon these 'new social strata.'

Put into plain English, this letter of M. Allain-Targé, who had more than any of his colleagues to [Pg 166] do directly and in the way of business both with the electors and with the elected of France four years ago, and who now declines to have anything more to do with them all—simply means that the electors sell their votes to the highest bidder, and that the man who will make the most unscrupulous bid is likeliest to get the votes. It is hard to see much difference between such a verdict and the outspoken declaration of M. Paul de Cassagnac that law, order, property, and liberty in France are threatened to-day, not by a 'democracy,' but by a 'voyoucratie' or 'blackguardocracy.'

The 'anti-clerical' agitation here, as elsewhere in France, I am assured, is plainly under the control of the 'freemasons.' Not that the 'freemasons' are avowedly very numerous here. But they are influential because they act together, in silence, and on lines common to the agitation all over France. 'Three or four energetic members of the order,' said one very intelligent man to me here at Chauny, 'can easily manage the whole official machinery of a large political district. To understand their methods and their organisation you must go back to the worship of Baphomet in the Middle Ages. In some of their lodges they reproduce with a goat one at least of the abominations which Von Hammer tells us were charged upon the Knights Templars as Baphometic. They are a sect—a persecuting sect, and a sect bent on absolutely destroying the Christian religion. To this end they parody the Christian symbols and the Christian scheme of charity and of good works. They do not, most of them, hold office, it being much more to the purpose for them to awe the officials, and that is their favourite way of working. There are, however, exceptions to this. If you go to Marmande in the South you will find a sub-prefect there [Pg 167] who is a most energetic and mischievous "freemason." In the Aisne the Prefect is a freemason, and here all the public functionaries go in fear of the order. They own the newspaper, control profitable contracts of all sorts, and can make or mar the career of public servants, through their occult relations with people at headquarters in Paris.'

I suggested that in England and Germany and the United States the 'freemasons' are not only regarded as friends of order and of law, but number among their dignitaries men of the highest official and personal rank.

'That is quite true, no doubt,' he said. 'But this order in France has, I believe, no official relations

now with the order in either of these countries. Its affiliations are with the "freemasons" of Italy, of Belgium, and of Spain, so far as it has any affiliations. There have been "freemasons," as you must know, among the Radical leaders in Belgium who have not hesitated, while holding high public positions, to denounce Christianity in open meetings as a "corpse blocking the way of modern progress"; and what the freemasonry of Italy and of Spain is I am sure you must know.'

I told him that in Spanish America and in Brazil I had met priests who were members of the order; and I particularly cited the case of an ecclesiastic of considerable importance, who in Costa Rica, some ten or twelve years ago, was at the head of the Order of Freemasons in that country.

'That may be,' he replied, 'but officers of our expedition into Mexico under Maximilian have told me that the freemasons in Mexico were active allies of the Liberals and of Juarez in their war against the Church.'

This I could not contradict, for while I never heard that President Juarez was himself a 'freemason,' I know, from my conversations with him after the fall of the Empire, in 1871, that, [Pg 168] though educated by the priests in Oajaca, as Robespierre was by the priests in Arras, he was an unbeliever of the type of the advanced Encyclopædists of the last century, and though not such a fanatic as Condorcet, strongly disposed, not only to deprive the Mexican clergy of their 'fueros' under the old Spanish system, but to make an end of Catholicism in Mexico if possible. Nor was he much more friendly to the Protestants, who were then trying, under Bishop Riley, to found a Protestant propaganda in Mexico.

'In France, at all events under the Third Republic,' he went on, 'the "freemasons" are the implacable enemies of religion. It was in full accord with them, and as a battle-cry in their interest, that Gambetta uttered his famous declaration that "Clericalism is the enemy!" And if the "freemasons" of any other country recognise and in any fashion affiliate with the Grand Orient of France, they ought to understand what they are doing, and to what objects they are lending themselves, consciously or unconsciously. You tell me that General Washington was a freemason. Yes, no doubt, but the freemasonry which he accepted was no more like the modern "freemasonry" of France than this Third Republic of ours is like the republic of which he was the founder!'

The processes carried on in the great chemical works at Chauny are in their way as interesting as the processes carried on at St.-Gobain or in the glassworks here. But I cannot say they are as pleasant, or even as picturesque. Commercially speaking, the output of the chemical works of this great company is at least as important now as the output of its glassworks. The chemical works grew up out of the necessities of the glassworks. When the company was led, at the beginning of this century, by the pressure of the war epoch, to adopt in its glassworks the use of [Pg 169] the artificial soda made by Leblanc, the Director soon found it advisable to have the artificial soda manufactured by the company itself. This led to the establishment of the chemical works at Chauny, and down to 1867 the company itself was the chief consumer of these chemical products. The Exposition of that year widened the horizon, by making France acquainted with the agricultural importance of the English fabrication of 'superphosphates' as fertilisers. At the Exposition of 1878 the Company of St.-Gobain exhibited, and received a gold medal, for superphosphates, which it was then turning out at the rate of 20,000 tons a year from three establishments—one at Chauny, one at L'Oseraie, and one at Montluçon. As the company was then turning out a great production of sulphuric acid, and owned the only important mine of pyrites in France, it went on with increasing energy, and now, in 1889, shows an output of 110,000 tons of superphosphates, from no fewer than six establishments—Chauny, Aubervilliers, Marennes, Saint-Fons near Lyon, L'Oseraie, and Montluçon. Besides these it possesses salt-works at Art-sur-Meurthe, its iron pyrites works at Sain-Bel, and some important deposits of phosphates at Beauval. These give employment to no fewer than 3,300 workmen, independently of those employed by the company at its various glassworks in the glass manufacture. At Chauny alone the chemical works employ 1,350 of these workmen. For these, as for its glassworkers, the company has established a system of savings institutions and of pensions. Medical advice and medicines are given gratuitously to the workmen and their families. The co-operative association founded by M. Cochin at St.-Gobain has not, I believe, been extended to the chemical works; but the company maintains establishments which supply the chief wants of the workpeople at cost [Pg 170] price, and the dwellings provided for them, either gratuitously or at very low rents, now number more than seven hundred, independently of the dormitories for unmarried workmen. Retiring pensions, varying from one-fifth to one-fourth of the wages of the workmen, are granted to all after a certain number of years of service, and to workmen disabled by disease or by accidents.

At the pyrites-mine of Sain-Bel, in the South, near Tarare, where more than 400 workmen are employed—300 as miners and the rest in the works above named, the former earning on an average 1,309 fr. 25 c., and the latter on an average 1,114 fr. 90 c. a year—a system exists under which any workman who chooses to put aside his savings in a *caisse de la vieillesse* receives from the company, when he has completed twenty-five years of service, or has attained the age of fifty-five years, an annual pension more than equal to the amount at that time of his savings in the *caisse*.

As I have said, the manufacture of chemical products is not so pleasant or so picturesque in itself as the manufacture of plate-glass and mirrors. Within the last decade the output of sulphuric acid alone from the company's works has more than doubled, and now amounts to more than 200,000 tons a year. The gases disengaged in the manufacture of chemical fertilisers, such as carbonic

acid, sulphuretted hydrogen, fluorine of silicium, and so on, it was found at Chauny, destroyed entirely in a very short time the polish of the glass in the window-panes of the houses opposite to the works, and certainly did not improve either the respiratory organs or the general health of the workmen. The company therefore spent a good deal of time and of money in working out a system for the complete condensation of these gases. I am told that it has proved completely [Pg 171] successful, and is now established in all the chemical works of the company, to the great advantage not only of the workmen, but of the company also.

Although Chauny is really a very ancient city—dating back at least to the age of Charlemagne, when the monks of Cuissy and St.-Eloi-Fontaine, with the keen eye of those early agriculturists for a good thing, reclaimed its marshes and turned them into a fat land, yielding, as an old local *dicton* tells us, the

'septem commoda vitæ,
Poma, nemus, segetes, linum, pecus, herba, racemus.'

—it has almost nothing to show to-day in the way of antique architecture. Of the 'seven comforts of life,' the vine has vanished also; but all the others flourish abundantly, and the people of Chauny have little to complain of on the score of the natural resources of their region. During the wars, though, of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the place was so often taken and retaken that its buildings were pretty well battered to pieces. The English of Harry the Fifth stormed it in 1417, and England held it for a quarter of a century, during which period an incident occurred much more creditable to the burghers of Chauny than is the taking of the Bastille in 1789 to the citizens of Paris. Monstrelet tells the story in a quaint and vigorous fashion. Chauny at that time was part of the appanage of the Duc d'Orléans, then a prisoner in England, and it was held for the conquerors by a French, nobleman, 'Messire Collard de Mailly,' who had accepted the office of Bailli of Vermandois from King Henry of England. The burghers of Chauny, who had lived for two centuries in the enjoyment of the rights and privileges granted them in a royal charter by Philip Augustus, did not like this state of things at all. So they made up their minds to demolish [Pg 172] the castle, lest 'Messire Collard de Mailly' should fill it with English soldiers and make himself quite unendurable.

It was a rather hardy enterprise, and the burghers went about it with great coolness and good sense. Theirs was a real rising of the citizens of a town to abate a nuisance which threatened their liberties, and not, like the attack on the Bastille, a blow struck at law, order, and the constituted authorities of a great kingdom by a subsidised mob; and their leaders were the most respectable men of Chauny—not a crew of thieves and murderers like the infamous Maillard, that 'hero of the Bastille,' against whom his own employers and allies were eventually forced to proceed as the chief of a gang of ruffians, and who, not content with assassinating political prisoners and stealing their property in Paris, roamed all over the Departments of the Seine and the Seine-et-Oise, torturing farmers to make them give up their money, and maddening the countryside with outrages not to be described.

Jean and Mathieu de Longueval, Pierre Piat,[7] and other 'notable persons' of Chauny, bound themselves together by an oath, in 1432, to 'take the fortress of the city and demolish it.' They chose an occasion when the bailli, Collard de Mailly, and his brother, Ferry de Mailly, with some of their men, went riding out of the fortress 'to take their pleasure in the town.'

With a few courageous 'companion adventurers,' previously posted in hiding near the castle, [Pg 173] these determined burghers suddenly sallied 'forth from the place where they were watching the castle gates, and, no one paying any heed to them, entered the castle courtyard, drew up the bridge after them, and took possession.'

'News of this going after the two brothers, they were sore displeased, but they could do nothing,' says the chronicler; 'for the citizens who were in the plot straightway fell to sounding the tocsin, and gathering about the castle in great numbers, with arms and with sticks, were soon admitted into it.'

The castle being thus secured, 'sundry notables of the city went to meet the two knights, and assured them that no harm should come to them or theirs, for that what had been done was done only for the peace and prosperity of the city.' Quite different this from the cowardly murder of the Governor of the Bastille, struck down after his surrender by some of Maillard's confederates, while that scoundrel himself still had his hand upon the unfortunate De Launay's collar.

The 'Messires de Mailly' made the best of a bad business, and, with all their friends and followers, withdrew into an hotel in the town. There all their property was brought from the castle and delivered to them, which, having been done, the good people of Chauny 'with one accord fell to work to slight and demolish the said fortress, and this with such good-will that in a few days' time it was wholly razed and destroyed from top to bottom.'

The bailli and his brother soon departed out of the place, and 'Messires Hector de Flavy and Waleran de Moreul,' who were sent to govern it by the Comte de Luxembourg, 'found the citizens much more stiff and disobedient than they had ever been before the desolation of the aforesaid castle!' [Pg 174]

After Joan of Arc had driven the English out of the realm, Charles VII. had the good sense to pardon the citizens of Chauny for destroying the castle, and it was never rebuilt. The Spanish occupied Chauny after their victory of St.-Quentin in 1557. Five years afterwards Condé and his

Huguenots took the place, and did so much proselytising there that in 1589 Chauny was one of the first towns in France to recognise Henry of Navarre as King of France. It stood out for him when Laon and other important towns in this region had joined the League, and during his long struggle with the House of Guise it was a central point about which the hostile forces constantly manœuvred. Henry himself came here often, and during the siege of La Fère 'La Belle Gabrielle' kept him company at Chauny, Sinceny, and Folembray.

In the next century the French and the Imperialists fought all around the place, to the great disgust of the poor peasants, who hid themselves as eagerly in the woods from the troops of their own sovereign as from those of his imperial enemy; and in 1652, Chauny, after a sharp but short siege, surrendered to the Spaniards, who, however, agreed, by the terms of the capitulation, to 'maintain the burgesses in all their goods, rights, privileges, charges, and offices.' The Mayor of Chauny, Claude le Coulteux, behaved so well in the siege, that Louis XIV. ennobled him; and the curé of the church of St.-Martin, it is recorded, fought at the ramparts, and 'pointed the cannon with his own hand.'

This was the last deed of arms in the annals of this little city, though the fortune of war has twice put Chauny under foreign rule. In 1814 the allies, and in 1870-71 the victorious Germans, occupied it, and laid it under contribution.

That the Revolution of 1789 left the citizens of Chauny much less determined to do battle for [Pg 175]
their rights than their ancestors were in the days of the English invaders, may be fairly inferred, I think, from the very curious circumstance that, in 1815, they actually made a public subscription for the purpose of presenting a very handsome gold medal, weighing two ounces, to the Prussian Commander of Chauny, Colonel Von Beulwitz.

This medal bore the inscription, in French, 'The grateful city of Chauny to M. Von Beulwitz, Commandant of Chauny.' The local authorities also asked, and obtained, for their Prussian satrap and his secretary the cross of the Legion of Honour!

All this was no doubt very creditable to the German authorities, and not discreditable to the good people of Chauny. But it certainly seems to show that at the end of the Napoleonic era, the French people in the provinces were thoroughly weary of the Revolution and all its consequences. They welcomed peace at any price from any quarter. The testimony of all impartial contemporary observers accords with the deliberate opinion given by Gouverneur Morris to Alexander Hamilton in 1796, that the French people in general were royalists at heart, and utterly averse to the general overthrow of their institutions by the legislative mob at Paris, or, as Mirabeau comprehensively called them, 'that Wild Ass of the National Assembly.'

At Chauny, in 1816, the inhabitants held a meeting under the presidency of the mayor, at which they declared, with great unanimity, that 'the people of Chauny had never, in fact and of their own free will, adopted the impious and seditious principles introduced in France by a factious minority, and that they regarded the death of the most Christian king, Louis XVI., as the most execrable of crimes.' [Pg 176]

Chauny was a city then of less than 4,000 inhabitants, but the peripatetic 'patriots' of 1793 had contrived to do mischief enough, even in this small and quiet corner of France, to earn the detestation of its people. They desecrated its churches, turning Notre-Dame into a saltpetre factory, stealing the church bells to sell them, pulling down the steeples and towers, and defacing the monuments.

They arrested and imprisoned numbers of the best citizens, broke up the ancient hospitals, driving away the Sisters of Charity, and brought about the murder, by the revolutionary tribunals, of a celebrated French admiral, who co-operated in America with Rochambeau to secure the independence of the United States—the Comte d'Estaing, who was well known and very popular in Chauny.

When the tribunal, after its fashion, called upon the fearless sailor for his name, he replied, 'You know my name perfectly well,—it suits you, perhaps, to pretend that you do not. But when you have cut off my head, as you mean to do, send it to the English fleet, and they will tell you my name!'

Here at Chauny, as elsewhere, the first concern of these revolutionary 'friends of the people,' when they got possession of the machinery of the State, was to confiscate the funds devoted by the piety and the benevolence of past ages to the service of the people. The more closely one looks into the social annals of France, the more amazing it is that the world should so long have swallowed the monstrous misrepresentations current in our century, as to the condition of the French people before 1789, and especially as to the organisation, under the *ancien régime*, of public charity and of public education in France.

Chauny possessed, as far back as the beginning of the twelfth century, a public hospital or Hôtel- [Pg 177]
Dieu, and a hospital for lepers called the 'Maladrerie.' Who founded the Hôtel-Dieu is not known, for in those 'ages of faith,' so lovingly described by Kenelm Digby, it was not thought so extraordinary a thing that a man or a woman should devote his or her substance to benevolent purposes, as it is fast coming to be in our own times.

The mayor and sworn magistrates of the city were the official governors of the hospital, and the chaplain was taken from among the monks of Saint-Eloi-Fontaine. A century and a half afterwards, in 1250, the Abbot of Saint-Eloi-Fontaine received, under the wills of three burghers

of Chauny, a sum equal to about 40,000 francs of our time for the service of the hospital of the Hôtel-Dieu. It is worth remembering that the Third French Republic has passed a law forbidding ecclesiastics to receive or execute such benevolent trusts as this.

I have already alluded in a note to a subsequent legacy made to this institution in the fifteenth century by a pious dame of Chauny. A few years later, in 1419, Colart Le Miroirier, a resident of Chauny, left to the Hôtel-Dieu all his lands and goods at Chauny, Ognes, and Roy.

The 'religious wars' wrecked the Hôtel-Dieu in the sixteenth century; but in 1620 a devout woman, Marie Dubuisson, took the work of reconstruction in hand, and the citizens followed it up; so that, by the end of the seventeenth century, it was well in order once more, and it continued to be administered for the benefit of the poor of Chauny till the 'patriots' confiscated it in 1793.

Under the Empire, in 1811, the re-established hospital was combined with an orphan asylum, and both were put under the charge of the Sisters of Charity, one of whom, Sister Renée Canet, had [Pg 178] the good sense to found here a little manufactory of hosiery and caps, which holds its own, I am told, despite the not very benevolent combinations against it of the local hosiers. The old buildings of the Hôtel-Dieu, however, no longer exist, and the chief public hospital of Chauny is installed in a large edifice put up under the Second Empire in 1865, and known as the 'Hospice-Sainte-Eugénie,' in honour of the Empress. It says something for the common sense of the local authorities that they have not insisted on changing the name of the institution.

During the orgies of 1793 the paintpot was busy with all the streets and places of Chauny. The Rue de Prémontré, so called because some property there belonging to the famous abbey of the Præmonstratensians, became the *cul-de-sac* or 'bag-bottom of Fraternity;' the Rue des Moinets took the name of Jean-Jacques Rousseau; while the Rue Ganton, the licensed abode of the social evil of Chauny, received, with exquisite tact and propriety, the name of the Roman hero Scævola! The monastery of the Holy Cross, founded by Mary of Clèves, Duchesse d'Orléans, about the end of the fifteenth century, was confiscated, and made the headquarters of the Republican Commission, the street on which it stood receiving the name of the 'Bag-bottom of Vigilance,' from the banner which was borne upon public occasions through the streets by this commission, on which was depicted 'the Eye of Vigilance, a symbol of that exercised by it over the enemies of the Republic and the people.'

Another street in Chauny, the Rue des Bons Enfans, preserves the memory of the early foundation in the little city of public schools for the children of the poor—'les bons enfans escholiers.'

Where now stands the communal school of Chauny stood, I am told, a public college, founded [Pg 179] here in the earliest years of the fourteenth century. The buildings of this college were restored under the Regency and Louis XV. They were confiscated, and the establishment swept away by the worthy Revolutionists of 1793, at the same time that they gave a public ball in the Church of Notre-Dame in honour of the Tree of Liberty, which the young girls of the place were expected to attend 'in dresses of white, symbolic of their innocence, and adorned only with their virtues!'

Besides this public college, Chauny, before the beneficent epoch of the Revolution, possessed a public school in each parish of the town. The schoolmaster, besides his regular scholars, who paid for their education, was expected to receive and educate eight poor children nominated by the mayor and sworn magistrates. For this he received, under Louis XIV., in 1706, forty setiers of wheat and fifty livres in money. It is interesting, also, to learn that the principal of the public college, when he happened to be a layman, received a salary, under Louis XIV., of 400 livres in addition to his dwelling-house. When he was a priest he received only 300 livres, but he might also receive 172 livres more as chaplain of the Hôtel-Dieu. The well-to-do citizens who sent their children to the college paid for each child forty sols a year.

When law and order had been re-established by Napoleon in France, two citizens of Chauny, Carra and Dumoulin, in December 1802, got permission to re-open the college, which the Revolution had closed. It has never recovered its former importance however, and Chauny now possesses only a communal school, I am told, and two religious or free schools, besides the establishments maintained by the Company of St.-Gobain. One educational foundation of the *ancien régime*, however, still survives, in the bursaries of the Abbé Bouzier. [Pg 180]

Antoine Bouzier d'Estouilly, priest, abbot of Notre-Dame-lès-Ardres, doctor in science, doctor of the Sorbonne, canon and écolâtre of the collégiale of St.-Quentin, was a noble as well as a priest. He founded, on October 10, 1713, a fund for endowing two poor boys with the funds necessary to enable them, in his own words, 'to serve the Church as ecclesiastics, or the public in civil functions.' This phraseology is worth noting by people who are tempted to believe the nonsense current in our day to the effect that 'almost everything we know as modern civilisation in connection with institutions of a philanthropic sort has taken shape within the last hundred years, and is due to the influence of the Revolution of 1789 in France.'

Nothing can be wider of the truth than this. On the contrary, the progress of modern civilisation in connection with such institutions was distinctly checked and thwarted for a time in France by the shock of this Revolution, and in other countries by the horror and indignation which the follies and crimes of the French Revolutionists excited.

The foundation of the Abbé Bouzier was expressly intended by him to benefit 'the poorest' of those who should compete for its advantages, regard being had to their natural ability and

aptitudes for study. Each beneficiary was to enjoy his scholarship for eight consecutive years, dating from his entrance into the third class. If he had got beyond the third class when he secured his nomination the difference was to run against him. For example, a scholar ready to enter the class of rhetoric who received a nomination was to hold his scholarship for six years only; if he was ready to enter upon the study of theology, law or medicine, for three years only; [Pg 181] after the expiration of which another must be appointed to enjoy it. Provisions were also made to secure the good conduct of the beneficiaries. How this excellent foundation escaped the cupidity of the Revolutionists is not clear.

From June, 1793, to March, 1795, the *Société Populaire* of Chauny, organised by emissaries from Paris, ruled the town absolutely. The official authorities of the city and of the district went in abject terror of them; for a denunciation sent to the headquarters in Paris by this society was like a report sent thither from an army in the field by one of the legislative spies who accompanied the generals of the Republic, and swaggered about in the camps wearing the mountebank costumes which may be studied with amusement and advantage in the museum of the Revolution established this year in the Pavillon de Flore at Paris. The members of this *Société Populaire* openly pillaged the churches and convents, made domiciliary visits, sold certificates of 'civism,' and dictated the most extraordinary measures of confiscation and outrage. Their loudest leader was a certain Pierre Gogois, who used to wind up their meeting by singing songs of his own composition, addressed to the 'crowned brigands who were trying to re-establish the abominable monarchy with the help of their anthropophagous hordes!' These worthies abolished the school kept by the 'Daughters of the Cross,' confiscated their property, and set up their own headquarters in the convent.

In some way the Bouzier fund escaped their clutches, and it has been so well managed that in 1871 the income was found large enough to warrant the managers in establishing three scholarships instead of two.

The good example of the Abbé has been followed in our own times by a Christian lady, Madame Lacroix of Sinceny. In memory of her son, a Councillor-General of the Aisne, who was universally [Pg 182] esteemed throughout the department, and who died at the early age of thirty-five, this lady founded, a few years ago in perpetuity, eight prizes, to be annually competed for by the pupils of all the communal schools of the canton of Chauny, and by the pupils of the schools established here by the Company of St.-Gobain, as well as four full scholarships at the School of Arts and Industries in Châlons-sur-Marne.

The prizes are to be competed for in applied geometry, in linear and ornamental drawing, as well as in all the obligatory studies of the schools concerned. The competitors for the four Châlons scholarships must be the sons of workmen, domestic servants, labourers, or persons employed in agriculture or in manufactures within the canton of Chauny, whose incomes or earnings do not amount to 2,000 francs a year.

In 1874 the Municipal Council of Chauny founded six purses of 450 francs a year, each to be competed for by candidates wishing to fit themselves to compete for the Lacroix scholarships, the successful candidates being left at liberty to enter any one of the free schools in Chauny. As Madame Lacroix has made the curates of the churches of Notre-Dame and St.-Martin *ex-officio* members of the council of her fund, it is to be presumed that the Government at Paris will find some way of striking these clergymen out of the list, as it has already struck all ministers of religion out of the local committees of supervision in educational matters throughout France, for a French Republic is nothing if not logical.

My likening of Chauny to a French Rotterdam or Amsterdam may be excused when I say that in the middle of the last century the Mayor of Chauny assured the Intendant of Soissons that the municipality had to keep up no fewer than twenty-seven bridges. What with the Oise and its [Pg 183] affluents, and the many watercourses created about the place, either to drain the marsh lands or to facilitate navigation, Chauny really is an aquatic little capital like Annecy in Savoy. Naturally its citizens set a certain value on their fishing rights, and it may edify those who obstinately insist on regarding the feudal ages as ages of brute force, to know that so early as in 1175 the citizens of Chauny, by the lieutenant of the bailliage, Messire Regnault Doucet, asserted and successfully maintained before the royal representatives their right to fish in all the waters round about their town in all lawful ways against the pretensions of no less a personage than the Duchesse d'Orléans. In 1540 this right was confirmed to them anew, and it was then shown that at an inquest held in 1475 the witnesses had testified that from time whereof the memory of man ran not to the contrary no citizen of Chauny had ever been molested in the exercise of his right to fish in the waters of Chauny either on behalf of the Duc d'Orléans or on behalf of the King. The local archives, which are singularly rich and well-preserved, are full of instances like this, which show that the general current of life in this corner of France, long before the Revolution, was determined neither by the caprices of the great, nor by the passions of the mob, but by systematic considerations of law and of tradition, until for the confusion of France, and more or less of the civilised world, the natural evolution and development of law and order were suddenly and insanely interrupted through the inconceivable weakness of a most amiable and useless king, by the 'wild asses' of Mirabeau, acting in 1789 under the pressure of what so friendly an eyewitness of their conduct as Gouverneur Morris calls the 'abominable' populace of Paris. [Pg 184]

So complete was the civilisation of this region long before the Revolution of 1789, that the mayor, the magistrates, and the citizens of Chauny, early in the seventeenth century, succeeded in breaking down and ruining an Italian gentleman, Cesare de Rusticis, who, thanks to Concini, had

secured a royal patent for canalising the Oise from La Fère to Chauny. They got a notable advocate, M. Louis Vrevin, to draw up a protest against the enterprise in the most florid and elaborate fashion of the *Plaideurs* of Racine, and by dint of bombarding the King's Council with the names of Julius Cæsar, Pompey, Xerxes, Sesostris, Cleopatra, Cicero, Tertullian, and others, got, in 1625, what we in America now call an 'injunction,' putting a stop to the works begun by this foreigner, who 'had come into France to fix the eye of curiosity upon the river Oyse and to disturb it.' And a century later I find an operation carried out here for converting a not very satisfactory private investment into cash at the expense of the State which really would not discredit the most ingenious American 'railway king' of our own times. This also concerned a canal, the canal which unites the Oise with the Somme. This waterway became the property in 1728 of a celebrated millionaire of that time, Antoine de Crozat, and after his death fell, in the division of his estates, to the share of his granddaughter, the Duchesse de Choiseul. It was not very profitable, and it represented a capital which ought to have yielded 2,200,000 livres a year. So a certain M. Laurent, who had built for the Duc de Choiseul his magnificent Château de Chanteloup, near Amboise (pulled down fifty years ago by Chaptal, the first great producer of beetroot sugar in France), undertook to get the canal turned into money. The plate-glass works of St.-Gobain were then under the direction of M. Deslandes, the clever nominee of Mme. Geoffrin. [Pg 185] M. Laurent tried to persuade M. Deslandes to employ Picard coal (which could be brought by the canal) instead of wood in the furnaces at St.-Gobain. M. Deslandes made the experiment, but soon gave it up, as the coal smoke injured the plate-glass. He consented, however, to take four boatloads of the Picard coal and use it in the forges connected with the works. This was enough for M. Laurent, who went to Paris with an invoice of the four boatloads of coal, laid it before the Council with an elaborate paper setting forth the value to the canal of a traffic necessary to carry on the manufacture of the famous plate glass at St.-Gobain, and got the Council finally to purchase the Duchesse's canal on his own terms. I really do not see what M. Laurent had to learn either from the 'Contrat Social' of Rousseau or even from the American Declaration of Independence! If he had lived now he would have been a sharp competitor with a countryman of mine, of whom I am told in Chauny that he came here only a few years ago, inspected the chemical works, looked into the composition of certain heaps of rubbish thrown aside even by the sagacious managers of these works, and setting up near one of the canals a genuine wooden American shed, so applied to what he found in this rubbish certain processes for the vulcanisation of indiarubber as to produce at very low cost certain articles for which a great and increasing demand exists, and thus founded a considerable industry here. He has since turned his establishment over, I am told, to a company at a great profit to himself, and gone back 'to the Rocky Mountains.' I am sorry for this, for I should have been glad to 'interview' him! [Pg 186]

CHAPTER IX

IN THE AISNE—*continued*

LAON

It would be hard to find in France, or out of France, on a pleasant summer's day, a more charming drive than the highway which leads from Chauny, with its great modern industries and its lively, bustling people, to the little feudal town of Coucy-le-Château, perched upon its lofty hill and dominated by one of the grandest, if not, indeed, the grandest, of feudal fortress-homes.

I do not know that Gargantua would now find the people of Chauny as entertaining as Rabelais tells us they were in his time. Then he 'amused himself much with the boatmen, and above all with those of Chauny in Picardy—wonderful chatterboxes, and great at bandying chaff on the subject of green monkeys.' There is no lack of boatmen now at Chauny, though the railway has taken away much of their living; but the glory of the green monkeys, I fear, has departed. In the days of Gargantua, the Chaunois were as famous as the Savoyards now are, for wandering over France with trained monkeys and trained dogs. On October 1 in each year, on the feast of St. Rémy, every one of these peripatetic citizens was expected to appear in his native town, there to join in a procession which marched from what is now known as the Port Royal to the Bailliage, bearing to the lieutenant-general of the king a traditional present in the form of a huge pasty, [Pg 187] decorated with eggs and chestnuts, and surmounted by a pastry tower.

To the confection of this pasty the famous mills of Chauny, reputed the best in France, were bound to contribute five *setiers* of wheat, and the guild of the butchers a calf's head.

Before the procession marched a learned dog, trained to all manner of tricks and devices, and upon either side of the dog the town trumpeters, sounding their finest and loudest *fanfares*.

At the Bailliage the lieutenant-general received the procession, seated in a great chair of state in the midst of the hall, with wide open doors, that all the people crowding into the Place might see what went on within. Before this high functionary the learned dog advanced, quite alone, and performed all his best tricks. He then gave way to the bearer of the pasty. This having been gravely accepted, after the manner of a feudal homage, by the lieutenant-general, the bearer, passing it on to the servants of the Bailliage, proceeded himself to imitate as exactly and as skilfully as possible all the performances of his predecessor the learned dog, amid the shouting and applause of the multitude.

This over, a great silence fell upon the whole assembly, and it then became the duty of the performer, assuming an attitude of profound and deferential obeisance, to salute the lieutenant-general after a fashion more easily describable by Rabelais or by M. Armand Silvestre than by me, and which seems to have been derived from some of the singular rites attributed by Von Hammer to the Templars, as a part of the ceremonial observed by them in their secret conclaves.

When all this had been duly gone through with, the 'jongleurs' of Chauny received the Royal permission to resume their perambulations of the realm for another year, and the day wound up with junketings and jollifications all over the town. [Pg 188]

The 'jongleurs' and the learned dogs and the green monkeys have passed away, with the lieutenant-general of the king. But I found a certain homely shrewdness and vivacity in the people with whom I talked as they went in and out of the '*Pot d'Etain*,' the chief hostelry of the place, and the fact that this chief hostelry still keeps its good old-time name of the 'Tin Pot,' and has not changed itself into a 'Grand Hôtel de Chauny,' seemed to me to argue a survival here of common sense and sound local feeling. The host of the 'Tin Pot,' a solid, well-to-do personage, learned in crops and horses, gave me a capital trap, shaded with an awning such as is worn on the delightful little basket-waggons at Nice and Monte-Carlo, and a wide-awake driver for my trip to Coucy and Anizy, on the way to Laon. His daughter, a decidedly good-looking young lady, not wholly unconscious of her natural advantages, who kept the guests of the café in capital order, seemed to have no high opinion of the powers that be in France. She took up an English sovereign which I laid down on the counter when settling a bill, and looked at it with much interest. 'That weighs more than a napoleon,' she said; 'and who is the young lady? She is pretty, and it is a good head.'

I explained that the lady was young because the coin was old, and that the head was the head of the Queen of Great Britain, who had reigned over that realm for more than fifty years.

'More than fifty years!' exclaimed the damsel; 'is it possible! And still the same queen! Ah! they are well behaved the English; no wonder they are rich. They are not such babies as we are!'

After passing through the well-built and neatly kept *cités ouvrières* of the Chauny branch of the Company of St.-Gobain, and the little suburb of Autreville, the highway to Coucy-le-Château, and to the once royal city of Soissons, runs through such fine woodlands, alternating with parks and highly-cultivated fields, that one seems to be traversing a great private domain. The trees are as well-grown as any you see in England; the hedges are luxuriant, the roadway is admirably made and perfectly well kept. The Comte de Brigode has a handsome château here, standing well in a large park; and there is a good deal of hunting and shooting here in the season. [Pg 189]

Near by, too, is the pleasant château of Lavanture, long the home of a branch established here of the once famous Dauphinese family of De Théis. It was brought here from the land of Bayard and of De Comines by a stalwart soldier, one of the lansquenet officers of Francis I., but its renown in Picardy is of a gentler and more humane type; and after giving a long succession of kindly and learned men to the public service through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it finally died out with Constance de Théis, Princesse de Salm, who was known under the Directory and the Empire in Paris as the 'Muse of Reason,' and the 'Boileau of Women,' and with her nephew, the last Baron de Théis, one of the most charming of men, and one of the most conscientious and accurate of archæologists and collectors. The baron died in 1874. The 'objets d'art et de haute curiosité,' brought together by him with infinite pains and unerring taste into his château of Lavanture, were dispersed under the hammer of the auctioneer, and Lavanture itself passed into the possession of another race.

This whole region of the Laonnais and the Soissonnais is full of historic souvenirs. It may be almost called the cradle of the French monarchy. Its reasonably well authenticated annals go back to the Roman domination. Its mediæval monasteries were among the richest; its mediæval monks among the most learned and industrious and useful of France, draining the marsh-lands, reclaiming the wastes, clearing the forests. Its feudal barons were typical men of their order, alike in their virtues and in their vices. The seigneurs of Lizy and of Mareilly, of Esternay and of Roncy, of Mauny and Trucy, come and go through the archives of the towns and communes here, now defying the kings of France and trampling on the peasants, now standing by the peasants and still defying the kings; quarrelling with and plundering the Church to-day, doing penance to-morrow, and endowing chapels and convents. You continually come amid the smiling farms and fertile acres upon some shattered hold whose towers once rose above the hamlet and the church. [Pg 190]

A region such as this in England would be rich, not in historic ruins and historic recollections alone, but in ancient strongholds of feudal power converted gradually, through the gradual progress of a strong and steadfast race, into stately modern homes. It would have its Warwick Castle and its Charlecote, its Guy's Cliff and its Stoneleigh, as well as its Kenilworth.

But in the great houses and the châteaux, of which there is no lack in the Laonnais and the Soissonnais, there is little now that is historic, save their names and their sites. They are standing witnesses to the essentially criminal and senseless character of the Revolution of 1789. The *Jacqueries* which Arthur Young found raging all over France during that year of ill omen were not much less brutal and they were much more inexcusable than the *Jacqueries* of 1357 for which the Comte de Foix and the Captal de Buch exacted the stern vengeance chronicled by Froissart. They were the cause and not the consequence of that emigration of the landed classes which contributed so much to the downfall of law and order in France. [Pg 191]

They were one of the justifying causes, not one of the excusable consequences, of the armed coalitions of the Continent against Revolutionary France. Pétion and the other scoundrels in Paris who stirred them up were doubtless 'political' criminals, to adopt a distinction without a difference much in favour in our times. But the peasants who took an active part in these crimes were simply brigands and assassins. They murdered men, they tortured women and children, they pillaged houses, while the King of France and Navarre was assembling the States-General to reform the abuses of the government. France was at peace with all the world. It was the fashion at Versailles and in the drawing-rooms of Paris to fall into spasms of sentimental emotion over periwinkles and over peasants—to rave about the instinctive nobility of human nature and the inherent Rights of Man. Never was any country in the world in less danger of being trampled under foot by 'tyrants and oppressors' than was France in 1789, when of a sudden, all over the kingdom, the peasants, who were about to be liberated and crowned with flowers, rose like wolves upon the landholders who were to liberate and to crown them—burst by night into defenceless châteaux, dragged tender women and young children out of their beds, and drove them out into the world penniless and to starve, demolished all the valuables they could not carry away, wrecked the buildings, burned the pictures, the works of art, and the libraries.

The 'Terror' of 1793 at Paris was black and vile enough. But the Terror of 1789 in the provinces was blacker and more vile. Arthur Young met on the highway seigneurs flying from their homes [Pg 192] half-naked, with their families, in the vain hope of finding shelter in the nearest town. At Montcuq, in what is now the Department of the Lot, the peasants broke into the château of the Marquise de Fondani, and carried off all the grain, all the beds, a hundred and twenty sheets, forty-two dozen towels, fifty-four tablecloths, two hundred and forty chemises, eleven silk dresses, twelve dresses of Indian muslin, thirty-two pairs of silk stockings, five fine Aubusson tapestries. The plundered mistress of the house was driven out, to live on the charity of her friends. Her aunt, aged ninety-four years, was thrown upon a dunghill, where she died gazing on the peasants whom she had cared for and treated with kindness for years, as they divided among themselves her house-linen, her furniture, her plate, her porcelains, the very doors and windows of her home. All this was in the summer of 1789, long before a German trumpet sounded to arms on the French frontier. And all this went on throughout the glorious year 1789 all over France. At Mamers, on the Dive, in Brittany, in July 1789, while the Gardes-Françaises were dishonouring the uniform they wore and disgracing the name of France by joining in the cowardly attack of a howling mob on the Bastille, and protecting the ruffians who butchered the unfortunate De Launay, the estimable peasants of that place seized two ladies, Madame de Barneval and Madame des Malets, and beat their teeth to pieces with stones like so many Comanche savages.

The people of the city of Le Mans at the same time beat to death M. de Guilly, burned alive the aged Comte de Falconnière, broke into the Château de Juigné, cut off the ears and the noses of all the persons they found there, and drove them out with pitchforks, following and striking them [Pg 193] till they died. In Provence similar horrors were committed at the same time, under the direct instigation of the local authorities, called there the consuls.

In August, 1789, M. de Barras was cut in pieces before the eyes of his wife. Madame de Listenay and her two daughters were tied naked to trees and tormented. Madame de Monteau and all the inmates of her house were tormented for eight hours and then drowned in the lake in her own grounds. At Castelnau de Montmirail, near Cahors, the head of one of two brothers, De Ballud, was cut off and the blood left to drip upon the face of the surviving brother; the Comtesse de la Mire was seized in her own house by the peasants and her arms cut to pieces; M. Guillin was slain, roasted, and eaten before the eyes of his wife. At Bordeaux the Abbés de Longovian and Dupuy were beheaded and their heads carried about on pikes. M. de Bar was burned alive in his château. All these horrors, and innumerable others not less revolting, were committed all over France in cold blood, before the advance of the 'standard of the tyrants' had set M. Rouget de l'Isle to composing the declamatory rigmarole of the *Marseillaise*. Is it possible to regard a revolution which began in this hideous, cowardly, and burglarious fashion with any feelings other than those inspired by the Gordon riots of 1780 in London? If the truth in regard to these things could have been known in America in 1789, as it may now be learned from the unanswerable testimony of authentic contemporary documents in France, there can be little doubt that Washington would have treated anyone who begged him to accept a key of the Bastille as he would have treated Dickens's Hugh or Dennis tendering to him a key of Newgate prison, with the [Pg 194] compliments of Lord George Gordon.

From the private conversation and correspondence of the few Americans then in Europe who really knew what was going on in France, the most thoughtful and alert of our public men gathered enough of the truth to regard the first French Republic with loathing and contempt. Their general feeling on the subject is expressed in an entry in his diary made during the month of October, 1789, long before 'the Terror,' by Gouverneur Morris. 'Surely it is not the usual order of Divine Providence to leave such abominations unpunished. Paris is, perhaps, as wicked a spot as exists. Incest, murder, bestiality, fraud, rapine, oppression, baseness, cruelty, and yet this is the city which has stepped forward in the sacred cause of Liberty!'

This picture of Paris in 1789 is the more impressive that it was not drawn by a Puritan or a Pharisee. Gouverneur Morris was eminently what is called a 'man of the world,' His diary abounds in proofs that, to use his own language, he was 'no enemy to the tender passion.' Indeed, while the elections for the States-General were going on, he appears to have been almost as much interested in finding out the fair author of an anonymous billet-doux as in unravelling the politics of the day. He was not so much scandalised by the immorality as appalled by the

lawlessness of the French capital. He foresaw the failure of the Revolution from the outset. A week before the States-General met in April, 1789, he wrote to General Washington: 'One fatal principle pervades all ranks. It is a perfect indifference to the violation of all engagements.' [Pg 195]

He noted at the same time the fears of Necker lest it should be 'found impossible to trust the troops.'

Of the Tiers-Etat, when it had carried into effect the grotesque and senseless dictum, of the Abbé Sieyès, that the Tiers-Etat, having thitherto been nothing in France, ought thenceforth to be everything, Morris expected only what came of it under its self-assumed title of a 'National Assembly.' 'It is impossible,' he wrote to Robert Morris in America, 'to imagine a more disorderly body. They neither reason, examine, nor discuss. They clap those whom they approve, and hiss those whom they disapprove.... I told their President frankly that it was impossible for such a mob to govern the country. They have unhinged everything. It is anarchy beyond conception, *and they will be obliged to take back their chains*.'

All this was long before 'the Terror,' I repeat. It was long before 'the Terror' that the hotel of the Duc de Castries was stormed and pillaged in Paris by a mob because the son of the Duc, having been grossly insulted by a popular favourite, De Lameth, had called Lameth out, allowed Lameth's seconds to choose swords as the weapons, and then wounded Lameth. This monstrous performance the Assembly sanctioned.

'I think,' wrote Morris very quietly, 'it will lead to consequences not now dreamt of.'

In this same year, 1789, long before 'the Terror,' Morris, noting in his diary a conversation with General Dalrymple, a kinsman of the rather celebrated Madame Elliot, observes, 'he tells me of certain horrors committed in Arras, but to these things we are familiarised.'

It was this essentially criminal and anarchical character of the Revolution of 1789 which brought on 'the Terror,' not 'the Terror' which engendered the crime and the anarchy. [Pg 196]

Why should 'horrors' have been committed at Arras in 1789? The contemporary documents show that the people in and about Arras were much better off in 1789 than they had ever before been. The renting value of farms about Arras was nearly or quite thirty per cent. higher in 1750 than it had been in 1700, and it was nearly or quite 100 per cent. higher in 1800 than in 1750. M. de Calonne cites a farm which had brought only 1,800 livres in 1714 as bringing, in 1784, 3,800 livres. Men paid these advanced prices not for the ownership of the land, which before 1789 carried with it certain social distinctions and advantages, but for the use, the productive and commercial use, of the land. The horrors of which General Dalrymple spoke, at Arras as elsewhere throughout France—here, in the Laonnais and the Soissonnais, in Provence, in Normandy, in Languedoc—were perpetrated not by a downtrodden peasantry, rising to shake off oppression, nor yet in the frenzy of a great popular rally to resist a foreign invader. They were an outburst of crime stimulated, no doubt, as we are now enabled, by fearless and conscientious investigators of the documentary history of France, to see, by cabals of political conspirators at Paris, just as the Gordon riots at London in 1780 were stimulated by anti-Catholic fanatics. But in both cases the perpetrators were governed by the mere lust of pillage and destruction. Châteaux were broken into, sacked, and burned here in the Laonnais and the Soissonnais, as Lord Mansfield's house was broken into, sacked, and burned in London, because they were full of valuables to be looted. As the drama went on, other passions came into play—passions not less but more ignoble than the mere savage lust of plunder and destruction. A branded rogue and libeller, Brissot, hurried back from his exile beyond the Atlantic to compete with Camille [Pg 197] Desmoulins in that noble work of 'denouncing' his fellow-citizens, which earned for Camille the ghastly title of '*procureur de la lanterne*.' Madame Roland, 'the soul of the Gironde,' sustained, inspired, and animated that most mischievous group with all the concentrated fires of envy, jealousy, and revenge, which had smouldered in her own heart from the time when, as a girl of seventeen, she had passed a week 'in the garrets' of the palace at Versailles with Madame Le Grand, one of the tirewomen of the Dauphiness. The firmness with which Madame Roland met her own fate on the scaffold has been sufficiently celebrated in poetry and in prose. But it is wholesome also to remember the ferocity with which, in the 'glorious' month of July, 1789, a fortnight after the capture of the Bastille, she clamoured for the blood of Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI. In 1771 Marie Phlipon, the engraver's daughter, a girl of seventeen, educated, as her own Memoirs tell us, on 'Candide,' the 'Confessions of Rousseau,' and the 'Adventures of the Chevalier de Faublas,' came away from Versailles so gangrened with envy of the glittering personages among whom she had been condemned to play the part of a humble spectator, that 'she knew not what to do with the hatred in her heart.' In 1780 she took as her husband M. Roland, a small Government official. He styled himself M. Roland de la Platière, from the name of a small estate which belonged not to him but to his elder brother, an excellent priest and canon of Villefranche (who, by the way, was guillotined at Lyons in 1793), and in 1781 his young wife made him take her to Paris, where they spent some time in vain efforts to secure letters patent of nobility! The efforts failing, they went back to live at Lyons, where M. Roland was an inspector of manufactories, and from Lyons, in July, 1789, Madame Roland, now become at last a most [Pg 198] classical Republican, wrote to her friend M. Bosc (who afterwards published her Memoirs), a letter denouncing the timidity of their political friends. 'Your enthusiasm,' she exclaims, 'is only a fire of straw! *If the National Assembly does not regularly bring to trial two illustrious heads, or if some generous imitators of Decius do not strike them down, you will all go to the devil.*'

I soften and tone down the final phrase of this extraordinary outburst, for though in the original it is but an indecorum as compared with that famous passage in the 'Memoirs of Madame Roland'

which M. de Sainte-Beuve gracefully describes as 'an immortal act of indecency,' it is yet an indecorum of a sort more tolerable in the French than in the English tongue. If the style is the man, the style is also the woman. In 1771 Marie Phlipon 'knew not what to do with the hatred in her heart.' In 1789 Marie Roland, then on the eve of her appearance upon the public stage of the Revolution, had found 'what to do with the hatred in her heart.'

In this letter to Bosc we have the 'soul of the Gironde' *tout entière à sa proie attachée*. She clung to her regicide purpose with the tenacity of a tigress. Everything which furthered it she approved, everything which retarded it she denounced. When the king and queen were brought back captives from Varennes to Paris in June 1791 she wrote, in an ecstasy of delight, to Bancal des Issarts, that 'thirty or forty thousand National Guards surrounded our great brigands'; and her desire was that 'the royal mannikin should be shut up, and his wife brought to trial.' She was then inclined to favour the scheme of a regency, of which her ally Pétion should be the chief. We know from his own nauseating account of his conduct while journeying back from Varennes to Paris with the unfortunate royal family, how unbridled were Pétion's dreams of his own probable [Pg 199] share in this regency; and by a very curious coincidence a passage in the diary of Gouverneur Morris confirms, on the authority of Vicq d'Azyr, the Queen's physician, Pétion's odious revelations of his own vanity and vulgarity.

Under the spell of this scheme Madame Roland seems for a time to have suspended her merciless pursuit of the sovereign whom she hated. She even got so far as almost to regret the failure of the royal fugitives to escape. Why? Because their escape 'would have made civil war inevitable!' These are her own words in a letter written to Bancal des Issarts, June 25, 1791: 'We can only be regenerated by blood!' This was the horrible core of her Republican creed.

It made her the ally, the accomplice, the apologist by turns of all the most sanguinary wretches who grasped at power in her distracted country—of Marat, when in a spasm of unusual energy La Fayette sought to suppress his abominable journal; of Robespierre, whose eventual triumph was to seal her own fate and that of all her personal friends, including the one man whom in all her life she seems to have passionately loved; and of Danton, red with the blood of the helpless prisoners butchered in these massacres of September 1792, of which her husband, then a member of what called itself a 'Government' in France, did not hesitate publicly, and under his official signature, to speak to the people of Paris in these terms: 'I admired the 10th of August; I shuddered at the consequences of the 2nd of September' (at the consequences of the horrors that day perpetrated, as M. Edmond Biré very aptly points out, not at all at the horrors themselves); 'I well understood what must come of the long-deceived patience and of the justice of the people. I did not inconsiderately blame a first terrible movement, but I thought that it was well to prevent [Pg 200] its being kept up, and those who sought to perpetuate it were deceived by their imagination!'

This monstrous language was used by Roland in a placard published on the walls of Paris on September 13. The massacres had not then really ceased, and the 'first terrible movement' seemed likely to be followed by a second not less 'terrible,' which might make things dangerous, not for the prisoners huddled under lock and key only, but for certain members of the Legislative Assembly, the Girondists themselves!

Is it conceivable that now, after a hundred years, rational beings should look back with any feelings but those of contempt and horror upon these 'patriots' of 1789? Madame Roland, 'the soul of the Gironde,' was simply the soul of a conspiracy of ambitious criminals masquerading in the guise of philanthropists and philosophers. There is something biblical in the dramatic completeness of the chastisement which overtook this unhappy woman. 'They that take the sword shall perish by the sword.'

The murder of the king, which Madame Roland did so much to compass, led not indirectly to the ruin of her own most trusted political friends and associates. The murder of the queen, for which she had longed and laboured, was brought to pass, on October 16, 1793, by men who had then made up their minds to send herself to the scaffold, and who sent her to it, three weeks afterwards, on November 8, 1793. In the ridiculous revolutionary calendar of the epoch, this date stood as the 18th Brumaire; Year II. It was celebrated six years afterwards on the 18th Brumaire of the year VIII. of the Republic, by the advent to supreme authority of the Corsican soldier who was to found a despotic empire upon the results of that 'universal war' into which France had [Pg 201] been insanely driven by 'the soul of the Gironde.' A mere coincidence, of course! It was a mere coincidence, too, that the Girondist, Dufriche-Valazé, who, at the trial of Louis XVI., especially gratified the personal malignity of Madame Roland by the insolence with which he treated the royal captive, should have tried to save his own head when he and his comrades at last were writhing in the iron grip of Robespierre, by eagerly denouncing his friend and associate, Valady, as the real author of a particularly virulent placard intended by the Girondists to turn the fury of the Parisian mob against the Jacobins! Seeing that he had disgraced himself to no purpose, the wretched creature, who had contrived to conceal a dagger about his person, drew it out when the merciless prosecutor, Fouquier-Tinville, rising in his place, demanded, on October 29, 1793, that all the Girondists then on trial, having been found guilty by the jury—though no plea had been heard in their defence, and the judge had not summed up—should be instantly condemned to suffer death and the confiscation of their property under the Law of December 16, 1792—a law passed by the Girondists themselves, and highly approved by 'the soul of the Gironde.'

Unobserved in the general excitement Valazé drove the dagger into his heart, and crying out, 'I am a dead man!' fell bleeding to the floor. When his companions had been removed by the guards, Fouquier-Tinville rose again in his place, and requested that the tribunal would order the

corpse before them to be taken with the living criminals to the Place de la Révolution, and there with them *guillotined*!

From this even the Convention shrank. But the dead body of Valazé was in fact carried in a little cart through the streets of Paris, behind the dismal cortège of the condemned, 'lying stretched upon the back, and the face uncovered,' on October 31. After the execution was over it was flung, with the remains of his companions, into a great pit. [Pg 202]

This was the end, for Madame Roland and her worshippers, in four short years, of the 'great reformation' of which, on May 17, 1790, she had written to one of her friends that it could only be carried through by 'burning many more châteaux!'

For France, and the French people, the end of it, I fear, has not yet come.

Rapine and confiscation have not been unknown, unfortunately, in the history of any civilised State. But under what modern government, excepting the government of the first French Republic, has sheer pillage, mere downright robbery, been recognised as a legitimate instrument of political propagandism, and, in fact, as a title to property? While the Girondists predominated in France, Brissot, self-styled de Warville, was their avowed leader; and Brissot, ten years before the Revolution, in his 'Philosophic Researches into the Rights of Property, and Robbery considered in the Light of Nature,' published at Chartres in 1780, had laid it down as a great principle that 'exclusive ownership is, in Nature, a real crime.' 'Our institutions,' said this worthy man, 'punish theft, which is a virtuous action, commended by Nature herself.' Clearly such 'institutions' needed a great reformation. It came. France was 'regenerated by blood,' and the disciples of Rousseau widened the area of human happiness, not by burning only, but by 'looting' all the houses they could break into.

The châteaux having been duly pillaged and burned, and their owners driven to fly for their lives, the government, controlled by the 'principles' of Brissot, made emigration a crime, seized the remaining property of the 'emigrants,' and turned it over with a national title, to other people! [Pg 203]

A most interesting and valuable chapter in history is still to be written on the relation of the French Revolution to property in France. Such a history cannot be written by the unassisted light of the statutes and the code. Family records, private correspondence, the reports and despatches of the diplomatic agents of the successive French Governments between 1789 and 1799, must all be laid under contribution, if we are to get at the truth concerning the conditions under which a very large proportion of the land of France passed during that period, from the ownership of men who had much to lose by the changes of the Revolution, into the ownership of men who had everything to gain from those changes.

The landed proprietors of France were driven into emigration, not that France might be free—for France was much more free before the emigration began in 1789 than she was in 1791—but that other people might get possession of their estates. Without understanding this, it is impossible to understand some of the most atrocious measures adopted, chiefly while the Girondists were masters, first by the Legislative Assembly, and then by the Convention, in regard to 'emigrants.'

This subject was evidently dealt with in the Assembly and the Convention, as the American Colonel Swan discovered, in 1791, that the tobacco question was dealt with—'by a knot of men who disposed of all things as they liked, and who turned everything to account.'

On October 23, 1792, for example, a decree was adopted inflicting the penalty of death on any emigrant who should return to France! A fortnight later, on November 8, 1791, a similar decree made it a capital offence for any 'emigrant' to enter a French colony! [Pg 204]

The first of these decrees was levelled at emigrants whose estates had been seized by the 'popular societies' all over France, and sold, or put in the way of being sold. The second was aimed at the owners of estates in such colonies as Hayti, then one of the richest and most flourishing, as it is now one of the most wretched and uncivilised islands in the world. A curious 'Minute Book' of the 'Friends of Liberty' at Port-au-Prince, which was given to me in 1871 by an old French resident of Santo Domingo, contains a list of the great proprietors of the island, annotated and marked in a way which indicates that a systematic plan of action against them was either then adopted, or about to be adopted, by the agents of the 'Friends' at Paris. As the spoliation went on, the decrees became more and more Draconian. In March and April 1793, it was decreed that 'any person convicted of emigration, or any priest within the category of priests ordered to be transported, who should be found on French territory, should be put to death within twenty-four hours!' As in many cases the question of the crime of emigration was to be decided by persons actually enjoying the property of the alleged emigrant, this short shrift was a most effectual 'warranty of title.'

On March 5, 1793, it was decreed that, 'any young girl *aged fourteen* or more, who, having emigrated, should have come back and have then been sent out of France by the authorities, and who should return to France a second time, should be forthwith *put to death*.' This is perhaps the most shamelessly felonious of all these felonious decrees, adopted, be it remembered, while Madame Roland was still the 'soul of the Gironde,' and still taking an active part in the preparation and promulgation of all the acts of the State! [Pg 205]

The object of this abominable decree was obvious.

In some cases the property of families in France was actually saved and carried through the

tempest of the Revolution by young girls, who fearlessly faced all the horrors of the time, remained in their homes, and, supported by a few faithful friends and servants, such as for the credit of human nature and the confusion of Schopenhauer, are really sometimes to be found doing their duty in such emergencies, successfully maintained their right to the estates of their fathers. Near the picturesque old capital of Le Puy in the Haute-Loire, Mademoiselle Irène de Tencin, after her father was driven from his château, remained there with her young brother and a few loyal servants—maintained her rights, collected what money she could, bought *assignats* for gold, and so bought back the confiscated land and the furniture of her home. A tailor of Le Puy wished to marry her, and the 'Republican' council threatened her with death if she refused! 'Death on the spot!' she replied. Then they actually locked her up in prison for a year! But she held out to the end and carried her young brother safely through until the days of law came back. The decree of March 5, 1793, condemning girls of fourteen to death in certain cases, was intended to prevent 'emigrants' from sending back any more daughters of this type to France, to represent the rights of the family.

About this there can be no manner of doubt. Could a more signal proof than this decree affords be given of the essentially predatory and criminal direction which was given to the domestic policy of France by the 'knot of men who disposed of all things as they liked, and who turned everything to account'? They had their tentacles out all over France. The 'Sociétés populaires,' of [Pg 206] which I have seen it stated by writers of authority that no fewer than 52,000 existed, and were at work in 1792, served them everywhere, the local leaders of these 'societies' of course sharing with them in the general booty according to their several deserts.

The story of a single family in Provence, as told in an admirable monograph by M. Forneron, illustrates perfectly the methods and the results of this organisation of confiscation in the name of patriotism and philanthropy.

When the States-General were summoned in 1789 the Marquis de Saporta, a kinsman of the great house of Crillon, now represented by the Duchesse d'Uzès, was the seigneur of Montsallier, a domain near the ancient and picturesque little city of Apt between Avignon and Vaucluse. His own estate was large, and he had greatly increased it in 1770, by marrying a daughter of one of the richest planters in Hayti. Like many other men of his rank at that time, he was an ardent admirer of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and a firm believer in the native nobility and general perfectibility of man. He was a very popular landlord, and his generosity was equal to his wealth. During six months of a severe famine he fed the peasants of Montsallier at his own expense. He was one of the believers in Madame de Staël's man of destiny, her father, the Genevese banker, Necker. In November 1790 he was elected constitutional mayor of Apt, and inducted into office 'with much applause' by a solemn service in the parish church. In February 1791, a local patriot named Reboulin surnamed the 'Roman,' and an armourer named Thiebault who had joined the Marseilles club, and consequently were in correspondence with Paris, organised a systematic attack upon the Marquis. 'This man,' they said at Marseilles, 'is an enemy of the constitution by [Pg 207] reason of his rank and of his rage at what is going on. He is a *ci-devant* noble, who became mayor by intrigues and cabals.'

From that moment no peace was given to the Saporta family till, one by one, they were driven out of France. The Marquis held out bravely as long as he could, and was the last to leave. When his wife left he gave her a passport signed by himself as mayor, in which he described her as the 'citoyenne Laporte,' the object of this being that no evidence should exist to show that Madame de Saporta had really 'emigrated.' In default of such evidence there was some chance that her property rights might be respected.

After the fall of the Directory the Saportas ventured to come back, and in 1800 they finally recovered so much of their property as had not before that time been sold 'by the State.' There was not much left. A sister of the Marquis, the Marquise d'Eyragues, who had enjoyed a very large income before the Revolution, wrote to her nephew in 1800 that she esteemed herself very happy to recover a 'house to live in and two thousand francs a year.'

Here in this beautiful region around Laon and Chauny and Coucy, the story of those evil days is told almost as instructively by the properties which then escaped ruin as by those which, like the estate of the Saportas, were confiscated and broken up.

In the eighteenth century it was full of fine buildings—châteaux, churches, monasteries, hospitals. Go where you please, you come upon the sites of edifices, once local centres of civilisation, which were pillaged, burned, and demolished, while the 'national agents' ruled the provinces for the benefit of the speculators at Paris. Here stood the stately Château de Molerepaire, of which nothing now remains but a farmhouse; there, the ancient parish church of [Pg 208] St. Paul at Mons-en-Laonnois, one of the finest in the district, now utterly gone, all its materials having been sold for the profit of certain 'national agents' in 1794. Wissignicourt possessed in 1789 one of the most beautiful churches in Northern France and two considerable châteaux. The church of St.-Rémi was first robbed of all its ornaments, and finally, in 1793, completely demolished.

The Château de la Cressonnière, built in the sixteenth century by Claude de Massary, and inhabited by his descendants as resident landlords until the Revolution, has entirely disappeared. Of the Château de Wissignicourt, founded in the twelfth century by a baron of the great Picard family of De Hangest, some portions still exist. But this little commune, which occupies one of the most naturally charming sites in the Laonnois, between Anizy and Laon, is indebted to the 'patriots' of Chauny, who domineered over it during the Revolution, for the annihilation of local

features, which in these days of railway travel and picturesque tourists would have materially enhanced the value of its not very fertile territory. These buildings, these châteaux and churches, were part of the accumulated capital of France, and certainly not the least important part of the accumulated capital of the commune of Wissignicourt. If they had been destroyed in the heat of conflict, as so many such buildings were destroyed in this country during the wars of religion, and in Germany, and even in Great Britain, the philosophers might have some plausible pretext at least for citing their favourite proverb that you 'cannot make an omelette without breaking some eggs.' And we might be invited to set off, against this loss of accumulated capital, certain important gains in the way of more liberal institutions and an enfranchised industry. But this is [Pg 209] not the case. The vandalism of the Revolution of 1789 was perpetrated in cold blood. I speak, of course, now of the real authors of it all, at Paris, not of the mere mobs in the provinces, hot with the sordid lust of plunder or with personal spites and rancours—and it was perpetrated for the profit of those who promoted it. The bronzes and brasses and lead and hammered iron of the desecrated churches were turned into money, and the money went into the pockets of the 'patriots.' Monuments that would now be priceless were destroyed, for example, at St.-Denis, not in the least that the metal might be cast into cannon—I am told the military records show that the republican armies fought their battles, when finally they got to fighting them, exclusively with the artillery of the monarchy—but that the metal might be sold in the markets, and the proceeds confiscated by the vendors. Certain rogues at Chauny and their employers in Paris were doubtless the richer a hundred years ago for the desecration of the Church of St.-Rémi and the pillage of La Cressonnière and the Château de Wissignicourt. But Wissignicourt and its people are the poorer to-day for these performances.

An instructive estimate might be made of the dead loss which the little city of Bourg-en-Bresse would have sustained during the past century if the sensible Savoyards of that place had not cunningly protected the magnificent statue-tombs of Marguerite d'Autriche, Marguerite de Bourbon and Philibert le Beau in their grand old church of Notre-Dame de Brou, against the rapacity of the revolutionary 'operators,' by cramming the whole church full of straw and hay.

Soissons, in reality one of the very oldest cities in France, the seat, when Cæsar first assailed it, of a Gallic prince, whose authority extended beyond the Channel into Britain, and the cradle long [Pg 210] afterwards of the first Frankish monarchy, might be taken, so far as its general aspect goes, for a creation of the Second Empire, were it not for its beautiful old cathedral, sadly damaged in 1793, but very successfully restored, and for the graceful towers of St.-Jean-des-Vignes. These latter were rescued with extreme difficulty by the townspeople themselves from the felonious fury of the democratic operators, who despoiled their city for ever of all the rest of that superb castellated abbey. Of St.-Médard without the walls, which, were it now standing, would be to the history of the French people what Winchester Cathedral is to the history of the English, only the subterranean chapels remain. The materials and the contents of the abbey itself were turned into cash.

St.-Médard-lez-Soissons was only one of eighteen considerable Benedictine abbeys which down to the Revolution existed within the limits of the modern department of the Aisne of which Laon is the chief town. Besides these, this region, the early reclamation and cultivation of which, as I have already said, was chiefly due to the monastic orders, possessed, before 1793, sixteen abbeys and monasteries of the Premonstratensians. The mother abbey of this great order, founded by Saint-Norbert in the twelfth century, commemorates in its name the great agricultural work done by him and his disciples. Prémontré, 'the meadows of the monastery,' was the chief seat of the Order which a hundred years ago comprised more than eighteen hundred monasteries, the chapters-general of which were held here. The vast and stately buildings of Présmontré are still standing. They were constructed on a scale of royal grandeur, worthy of the Order, under the Abbé de Muyn, towards the end of the reign of Louis XIV., and they much resemble the buildings [Pg 211] erected at the same time at the Grande Chartreuse, near Grenoble. Like these, they were seized upon in 1793 by the revolutionists. But in both cases the buildings were saved, those of the Grande Chartreuse because there was no temporal use to which they could be put, standing, as they do, high up above the gorges of the Guier, in their glorious solitude amid the pine-forests of Dauphiné; and these of Prémontré for exactly the opposite reason, because they were available for purposes more profitable than the sale of their materials was likely to be. They were converted first into a saltpetre factory by the little knot of financial operators who bought them for a song as 'national property.' Afterwards an attempt was made to establish glassworks in them. Then they became an orphan asylum, and now they are a great asylum for lunatics!

St.-Jean-des-Vignes at Soissons, already mentioned, was the only monastery of the Joannists in France, and it was one of fifteen Cistercian abbeys in this region. The remaining ruins of the church of one of these Cistercian abbeys at Longpont, near Soissons, vindicate its ancient fame as one of the jewels of French religious architecture. It was built under St.-Louis, and consecrated in his presence. It shared, in 1793, the fate of the almost equally beautiful church of St.-Leger at Soissons, the apse, transepts, and cloisters of which, even in their present condition, suffice to show what Soissons lost when it was looted and desecrated. A worthy bishop of Soissons, M. de Garsignies, bought what remained of St.-Leger in 1850, and established there a seminary.

Add to these edifices those of twelve commanderies of the Temple, ten commanderies of St. John of Jerusalem, two Chartreuses, ten collegiate churches, and more than a hundred and fifty [Pg 212] priories, nunneries, and other religious communities, and it will be seen what a grand field of enterprise and speculation was thrown open in the Laonnais and the Soissonnais to the disciples

of Brissot de Warville and of Condorcet by the seizure of the Church property alone.

Scarcely less numerous than the religious edifices in this region were the châteaux. Of these comparatively few are now standing, either as picturesque ruins or as residences. The bas-reliefs and tapestry of the ancient buildings of La Ferté-Milon, the birthplace of Racine, are still worthy of a visit. Of Nanteuil, a fine château of the time of Francis I., a single tower remains. The magnificent manor-house of the Ducs de Valois at Villers-Cotterets (a little beyond the limits of the region I am now treating of) was made an historic monument by Napoleon III.; but it is none the better for base uses against which it surely ought to have been protected as the birthplace of Alexandre Dumas by the ghosts of Porthos, Athos, and Aramis! The towers and the donjon of the Château of Nesle on the Somme, whence sallied forth, in the time of Louis XV., the four much too famous sisters De Mailly, were not so maltreated in 1793 as to be quite uninhabitable when the first Napoleon passed a night there, during his final struggle for empire; and there still is to be seen the old Lombard-Roman church of St.-Leger, wherein was held a council strong enough to coerce Philip Augustus into doing what Henry VIII. refused, three centuries afterwards, to do, and to make him take back his divorced queen Ingelburga of Denmark. Braisnes, planted upon a peak, overlooks what is left of the exquisite twelfth-century church of St.-Yved, ruthlessly battered and abused in 1793, and robbed of certain matchless monuments in enamelled copper for the benefit of a syndicate of patriotic rogues. The Châteaux de Gandelu, de Neuville, de St.- [Pg 213]
Lambert are ruins. The lordly cradle of the great House of Guise; the tower of Marchais in which, tradition tells us, the League was first conceived by which the princes of Lorraine were backed in their struggle for the throne of France; the keep of Beaurevoir, one of the prisons of the Maid of Orléans—these may be seen. Of how many others, the names of which ring out as from a chronicle of French history, nothing but the names is left! Caulincourt, Cœuvres d'Estrées, de Bohain de Luxembourg, d'Armentières, de Conflans, de Condé, de Comin, de Buzancy, de Puységur.

Two of the most important châteaux in this region in 1789 were those of Pinon and of Anizy. The first still exists, and stands substantially as it then stood, and is now admittedly the finest in the Laonnais. The second was wrecked and demolished. It is perhaps worth while to tell what befell Anizy, and how Pinon escaped.

Both Anizy and Pinon are of very ancient origin.

Anizy seems to have been a fortress of the Emperor Valentinian in the fourth century, and it was pillaged by the Vandals in the fifth. On December 26, 496, Clovis, in recognition of the baptism he had received on the preceding day at the hands of St.-Rémi in the cathedral church of Reims, gave the lordships of Anizy, Coucy, and Leuilly to that prelate. Two years afterwards St.-Rémi, who had made Laon a bishopric, gave Anizy to his nephew St.-Génébaud, the first bishop of Laon, to be held and the revenues thereof to be applied by the bishops of Laon for ever to the benefit of the poor of that diocese. He coupled the gift with a solemn curse and anathema upon all who should ever disturb or misapply the donation. From that time to 1789 Anizy was a lordship of the [Pg 214]
bishops of Laon, who in time were made dukes and peers of France.

The annals of Laon attest the loyalty through long ages of the bishops of Laon to the injunctions laid upon them by St.-Rémi. The Normans came to Anizy, for example, in 883, and pillaged and ruined the place. Four years afterwards the bishop of Laon founded there a hospital, or Hôtel-Dieu, for the poor and infirm of the diocese, and the king, Charles le Gros, endowed it handsomely. In 904 Jeanne, sister of Raoul, bishop of Laon, with the help of her brother, founded at Anizy a priory of Sisters to receive and care for the young girls of the place. In 996, Adalberon, bishop of Laon, founded a maladrerie, or lepers' hospital, at Anizy, to be 'a refuge and place of healing for the poor of Anizy, Wissignicourt, and Pinon.'

As time went on and the feudal system became more fully developed, the bishops of Laon found it judicious to establish one of those high feudal personages known as Vidames, and the relations of the Vidames of Laon with their episcopal superior, on the one hand, and with the people of such lordships as Anizy on the other, become very interesting.

They are made more interesting still by the entrance upon the scene of the kings of France, contending for a real royal authority, of great barons like the Sires de Coucy bent on getting a complete local independence of any central government, and of the people of the communes, who very early saw their own game as between the Church, the barons, and the king, and played it here, as in so many other places, with most respectable skill and success. There is a picturesque story of Pope Benedict VIII., who held a council at Laon, going from Laon to view the episcopal château at Anizy, with a *cortège* of cardinals and bishops, and on the way springing down nimbly [Pg 215]
from his horse to rescue the bishop of Cambray, obviously a prelate of much weight, under whom a little bridge gave way as they were crossing the river Lette. This was in the year 1018. A century later, in 1110, Gandri, bishop of Laon, summoned John Comte de Soissons, Robert II. Comte de Flandre, and Enguerrand I. Sire de Coucy, the three loftiest and lordliest personages then of this part of the world, to a conference at his château in Anizy, there to fix and define where the authority of the Sire de Coucy ended and that of the bishops of Laon began. In 1210 the burgh of Anizy became a free commune and elected its first mayor. The next year its seigneur, Robert de Châtillon, bishop-duke of Laon, at his own cost fortified the place with walls and towers, and did this so well that three years afterwards Enguerrand III. de Coucy, just then the most masterful person in all this part of France, thought it wise to treat with the bishop-duke as to their respective rights of ownership in the adjoining forest of Roncelais. They agreed so perfectly that the formidable lord of Coucy immediately afterwards did the bishop-duke and the

people of Anizy the notable service of leading a band of his retainers against a company of brigands who were burning lonely farmhouses and carrying off the crops.

Having got their mayor and their walls and their towers, the burghers of Anizy took to quarrelling with the bishop-dukes of Laon, and so got their communal rights suppressed by one of those prelates in 1230, only to see them re-established again half a century later in 1278, by another bishop-duke, Geoffroi de Beaumont, who made a compromise with his troublesome vassals, reserving only to himself the right to nominate the officers of justice. The king of France, Philippe le Hardi, be it observed, took sides with the burghers in this affair, and they raised a monument to him in 1293. [Pg 216]

This, with almost everything else of any importance in Anizy, was destroyed by the English of Edward III., in the next century, one of the local seigneurs, the lord of Locq (where a château still represents the extinct lordship) and the curé of the church of St.-Peter falling valiantly in the defence of their people. The bishop-duke came over to help them from Laon, and died in his château at Anizy the next year.

In 1352, another bishop-duke founded a free market at Anizy for three days in each year, at the feast of St.-George, and in 1408 his successor built a grain-hall there. In 1513 Louis XII. granted the burghers a free market every Monday. This so incensed the then bishop-duke, Louis de Bourbon-Vendôme, that he tried to suppress the annual market and take back the grain-hall, in return for which attempts the worthy burghers pillaged his château at Anizy and pulled it nearly to pieces.

Clearly the seigneurs did not have things all their own way in these good old times! For after several years of contention Louis de Bourbon-Vendôme came to terms with his burghers, and matters were put upon so friendly a footing that, in 1540, the bishop-duke began the erection at Anizy of a new château, to be surrounded with an extensive and beautiful park. The plans were made by the first architects and artists of the Renaissance; the sculptors of Francis I. were employed to decorate the façade with statues—the new buildings were connected with what remained of the earlier château by a grand gallery; pavilions flanked the main edifice and adorned the grand cour d'honneur. King Francis, during his stay at Folembray, frequently visited his cousin the Bishop-duke in this château, one of the great chambers of which was long known as the room of King Francis. When Louis de Bourbon-Vendôme died in 1557, the château was not [Pg 217] entirely finished, and a lawsuit followed his death, between his personal heirs and the bishop-dukes for the possession of the buildings. It lasted for nearly a century, and when the prelates at last were declared to be the owners, in 1645, the stately edifice had fallen into a sad state of dilapidation. The Cardinal d'Estrées restored the façade in 1660, but one of his successors actually unroofed it and sold the lead. In 1750, a bishop-duke of quite another type, the Cardinal de Rochechouart, spent great sums of money upon it, restored it, and decorated it throughout, and made it one of the noblest residences in this part of France. At the same time he put in order all the public buildings of Anizy, and had the roads carefully paved throughout the borough. He was followed by a prelate of a like mind, Louis de Sabran, the last bishop-duke of Laon, who is still remembered in his episcopal city for his public spirit and his benevolence, and who made the park of Anizy his special care.

Then came the Revolution.

In 1790, the local 'directory' of the district of Chauny laid violent hands upon the château. It was in great part demolished, and what was left of it defaced. It was robbed of its precious furniture, pictures, and ornaments, its valuable chimney-pieces, its elaborate iron and brass work. The old trees were cut down in the park, and the railings destroyed. The fine old church of Ste.-Geneviève at the same time was first turned into a hall of meeting for the electors, who distrusted each other so profoundly that when their first meeting was held, May 3, 1790, the documents relating to the elections were locked up in a confessional, lest they should be stolen, and then deliberately wrecked and looted by the 'friends of Liberty,' or, in other words, by a squad of ruffians from Chauny and the neighbourhood, who, after putting on the sacerdotal [Pg 218] vestments, marched about the church carrying the daïs, beat the crosses and the carved stalls to pieces, smashed and defaced the monuments and the altars, broke open the poor-box, and carried off all that was worth stealing. The stone slabs from the graves were sold, a saltpetre factory was established in the church, the presbytery was made a town-hall, and the 'worship of Reason,' in the person of a young woman of Chauny, was solemnly inaugurated at Anizy! The château and the park were sold by the self-constituted dictators of Anizy to one M. Orry de Sainte-Marie on August 7, 1792, for a nominal price. This M. Orry seems to have been an 'operator.' For in June, 1793, he sold the château to the 'ci-devant Vicomtesse de Courval,' the mother of the then owner of the Château of Pinon, about which I shall presently have something to say, and bought it back from her again in March 1795, leaving her the right to enjoy it until her death, which took place in 1806. All this curiously illustrates the perils and uncertainties of land-ownership in such times! In 1808, Orry de Sainte-Marie, having by that time become a justice of the peace at Anizy, and doubtless a fervent Imperialist, sold the château to M. Collet, Director of the Mint at Paris. From him it passed by sale, in 1824, to M. Senneville, and in 1841 to M. Lafont de Launoy.

Let us turn now to Pinon, two kilomètres to the south of Anizy, long one of the chief seats of the power of the famous Sires de Coucy, one of whom seems to have been the real author of the arrogant motto since, in one or another form, attributed to more than one great family in France:

Roi ne suis

Ne prince, ne comte aussy:
Je suis le Sire de Coucy.

[Pg 219]

The Château of Pinon was originally built by Enguerrand II. of Coucy in the twelfth century. His grandfather Enguerrand I. had been invited by the Archbishop of Reims to establish himself at Pinon, which was a part of the splendid Christmas gift made by Clovis to the see of Reims, as I have already stated, after his baptism at Reims; and Enguerrand II., who appears to have been a typical baron, finding the place favourable for the feudal industry of levying toll on trade and commerce, there erected a great castle, one of the many legendary castles to be found all over Europe which boasted a window for every day in the year. He thought fit, however, to select for this castle a site which belonged to the Abbey of St.-Crispin the Great at Soissons, and thus got himself into trouble with the Church. Strong as he was, he found the Church too strong for him. The Bishop of Soissons compelled him to agree to pay an annual and perpetual rent to the Abbey, and made him also take the cross and go to the Holy Land to expiate his sacrilege. There he fell in battle. The grandson of this baron, Robert de Coucy, in 1213 granted the people of Pinon 'a right of assize according to the use and custom of Laon,' and the next year founded there a hospital. Twenty years afterwards Pinon became a commune, and John de Coucy granted the inhabitants a free market. The Château of Pinon passed in the 14th century to the elder branch of the great house of de Coucy, and in 1400 it was sold, under duress to Louis of France (Duc d'Orléans) by the last heiress of the house Marie de Coucy, daughter of Enguerrand VII. by his first wife Isabel, Princess Royal of England, and eldest daughter of Edward III. by Philippa of Hainault.

A hundred years afterwards Louis XII. had taken possession of the estates and the château, and made a gift of these to his daughter Claude de France. In spite of this, however, the property [Pg 220] passed into the hands of the ancient family of De Lameth, and towards the end of the seventeenth century the Château de Pinon witnessed one of the most romantic and abominable murders recorded in the annals of French gallantry.

As Pinon is still, after all the chances and changes of seven hundred years, the finest inhabited château in the Soissonnais, and as, by a curious throw of the dice of Destiny, it now belongs to a fair compatriot of mine, perhaps I may be allowed to tell this somewhat gruesome tale, which has a flavour rather Italian than French.

Charles Marquis d'Albret, the last of that illustrious race, Prince de Mortagne and Comte de Massant, was the nephew of the Maréchal d'Albret, and he came therefore, on the mother's side, of the royal blood of Henry of Navarre.

He loved, not wisely but too well, Henriette de Roucy, Comtesse de Lameth, called 'la belle Picarde,' whose husband was seigneur of the Château de Pinon. In August 1678, the Marquis d'Albret was at the Château de Coucy with the army of Flanders, then commanded by the Marshal-Duke of Schomberg, who afterwards fell fighting for King William III. in Ireland at the battle of the Boyne.

The Comte de Lameth, who had in some way discovered the relations which existed between his wife, 'la belle Picarde,' and the Marquis d'Albret, shut the comtesse into a room at Pinon, and compelled her, by threats and violence, to write a letter to the marquis giving him a rendezvous at Pinon. On the day mentioned in her letter the Comte de Lameth ordered six horses to be put to his coach, and (having previously put his wife under watch and ward) drove off with an escort to Laon. News of this was carried at once to Coucy. The Marquis set forth with a single attendant on [Pg 221] horseback to Chavignon, where at the hostelry of La Croix Blanche, he was met, as from the letter of his lady-love he expected to be, by a servant from the Château de Pinon.

Armed only with pistols in his holsters, he mounted after dark and rode on from Chavignon to Pinon. There, as he entered the park-gates, just after midnight, three men, one of them Jocquet, the valet de chambre of the Comte de Lameth, sallied out upon him from under an archway, and, feigning to take him for a robber, opened fire upon him. He killed one of his assailants, and then himself fell.

About fifty years ago, the then proprietor of Pinon was building a lodge for one of his keepers when the workmen came upon a gold ring in digging for the foundation. It bore the engraved name of D'Albret, and the name of the royal regiment which he commanded. He had doubtless been buried where he fell in the park.

This proprietor was the father of the late Baron de Courval, formerly an officer in the French army, who, during the Second Empire, married Miss Ray of New York.

The De Courvals became possessors of Pinon through the murder of the Marquis d'Albret. The way in which this came about curiously illustrates the course of justice and injustice under the *ancien régime*. This differed more in form than in fact from the course of justice and injustice in our own time. Claude, Comte de Lameth, the jealous husband of 'la belle Picarde,' was a great personage, not only Comte de Lameth but Vicomte de Laon, d'Anizy, de Marchy, and de Croix, and seigneur of Bayencourt, Pinon, Bouchavannes, Clacy, Laniscourt, Quincy, '*et autres lieux*.' But the Marquis d'Albret was a greater personage still, and the widow of the marquis, who [Pg 222] refused to believe the story of his affair with 'la belle Picarde,' was a *dame d'atours* of the queen, Marie Thérèse. So also was the cousin-german of the marquis, and these two dames made such a clamour about the murder that the king, Louis XIV., and of course with the king the whole court, so waged war against the Comte de Lameth that his whole family found it wise to seek safety in

flight, and fearing the confiscation of all his property, the Comte (whose wife had previously gone into an Ursuline convent) sold the estate and Château of Pinon, with other estates, to his friend Pierre Dubois de Courval, president of the parliament of Paris.[8]

In 1730 Dubois de Courval pulled down the ancient Château de Pinon, and, on the designs of Mansard, built the present stately and imposing edifice. Le Nôtre laid out for him also the extensive park, and, when he died, in 1764, he left Coucy-la-Ville and Fresnes to his elder son, and to his younger, with the title of Vicomte de Courval, the château and estates of Pinon.

It was the widow of this younger son, Aimé-Louis Dubois de Courval, who, as I have already said, saved what could be saved of the Château of Anizy in 1793 by buying it from the enterprising M. Orry de Sainte-Marie.

Her husband, a man of worth and of note in the parliament of Paris, died on the very eve of the great troubles, December 1, 1788. He was then in his sixty-seventh year, and as he had done nothing but good at Pinon, not only embellishing the château and the park, but giving much time and money to improve the condition of the people, he would probably have been sent to the guillotine at Paris by the local 'directory at Chauny' had he lived long enough, and his property [Pg 223] confiscated, like the property of the bishops and dukes at Anizy. His oldest son was a lad of fifteen when the storm burst in 1789. His mother took his interests resolutely in hand. She came of two aristocratic stocks, the Millys and the Clermonts-Tonnerre, but she got the better of the democrats. Like old Madame Dupin at Chenonceaux, she carried herself and her property, by woman's wit and woman's will, through the Revolution. In 1791 she contrived to get her son, then only seventeen, elected commander of the National Guard at Anizy. He ripened rapidly, under the stress of the times, bought up the 'patriots' when it was necessary—and there is abundant evidence to show that they were always in the market, even at Paris and during the worst times of the Terror—was made a baron of the empire by Napoleon, elected President of the Canton of Anizy in 1811, a councillor-general of the Aisne in the same year, and deputy in 1814. With the Restoration he became once more Vicomte de Courval and seigneur of Pinon, having long before converted the park and gardens of the château into the 'English style,' with fine watercourses and an extensive lake, and died quietly at Paris in 1822. In 1794, at the age of twenty, he married a daughter of the Marquis de Saint-Mars.

His son and successor, Ernest-Alexis Dubois de Courval, was taken into high favour by Charles X., but was nevertheless made a councillor-general of the Aisne under Louis Philippe. He married the only daughter of Moreau, who was a child of nine years old when her father fell fighting against France and Napoleon in 1813. In a curious Gothic tower which he built at Pinon are still preserved some of the standards captured from the enemies of France by Moreau, and these I am assured are the only such standards, excepting those of the Invalides, recovered through the [Pg 224] efforts of the House of Peers, which existed in France before the Crimean War. In this tower the Vicomte de Courval formed a remarkable collection of mediæval arms and armour, antique furniture, stained glass, medals and coins. This region is very rich not only in Roman remains, but in druidical stones and other vestiges of the races which dwelt here before Cæsar came. Marcus Aurelius, Trajan, Hadrian, Alexander Severus, Probus, Gordian, Constantine and Constantius are all represented on the coins found in and around the property of M. de Courval; but one of his most interesting acquisitions was a silver coin bearing the name of Clovis, with the title of 'imperator.' There is a record at Anizy of a treasure of coins of Aurelius, found there so long ago as in the middle of the twelfth century; and under the bishop-dukes of Laon a collection of Roman coins and vases was gradually formed at the mairie of Anizy, which 'disappeared' soon after the 'patriots' of Chauny undertook to 'liberate' that commune.

The American Vicomtesse de Courval, who now owns Pinon, and passes a part of each year there, is the widow of a son of this Ernest de Courval.

Looking backward dispassionately over this 'centennial record' of two considerable estates in the Department of the Aisne, what advantages, social, political, or economical, can be shown to have enured to the people of the commune of Anizy and of Pinon from the revolutionary processes to which those estates were subjected a hundred years ago? Not a man in Anizy or in Pinon owns a rood of land now which he might not just as easily have owned had the alienation of the Church property in those communes been conducted through the gradual and systematic processes of law and order. Instead of one remarkable and interesting château, these communes would now [Pg 225] possess two, each in the natural course of things, a centre of local activity and civilisation. Instead of one ancient church, much despoiled and damaged, Anizy would now possess three such churches, each in its own way an object of interest to architects and artists, and it would be possible for an honest gendarme or a poor labourer on the highway to hear mass, if he liked, in any one of them, without incurring the wrath of his superiors and the loss of his daily bread. [Pg 226]

CHAPTER X

IN THE AISNE—*continued*

LAON

The lofty hill on which the Sires de Coucy planted their chief fortress rises above the fields and

forests of the Soissonnais as the Mont St.-Michel rises above the waves and the sands of the Norman coast.

The narrow streets and quaint old houses of the little town of Coucy-le-Château are huddled around the outworks of the colossal castle, almost as closely as are the climbing streets and the terraced houses of St.-Michel around the martial monastery; and each of these two places is, in its own kind, unique.

I had been strongly recommended to pass the night when I visited the château, not in the little city itself, though it boasts a 'Hôtel des Ruines,' but at a little wayside inn, rather indeed a restaurant and a baiting-place for travellers by the highway than an inn, which stands at the foot of the hill of Coucy. I took the advice, and had no cause to repent it. The walk up the hill, of some two miles, to the tower and the castle was simply delightful on a fine afternoon in June. Opposite my little inn is a small and rather dilapidated château of the eighteenth century, which originally must have been a very pleasant residence; and in the extensive meadows about it were grazing a number of fine cattle, the property of M. de Vaublanche. 'He is the only man hereabouts who takes any trouble with his beasts,' said my cheery, athletic young host, and leading the way for [Pg 227] me into the meadows, he pointed out the princes of the herd, all of them really fine animals of the best French breeds, with as much pride as if he had been the owner. 'It gives more pleasure to see these—does it not, sir?—than to look at yonder dead chimney,' he said, pointing to some extensive sugarworks, all closed and deserted, on the other side of the road. The sugar crisis has been very sharp here, as in other parts of France, and many smokeless chimneys are to be seen here as in other departments.

An embattled gateway of the thirteenth century welcomes the traveller now with its open arch as he approaches the town of Coucy, and the best views of the château are to be got from the road as you climb up the long ascent.

In the quaint little town the house is still carefully preserved, and the chamber itself religiously kept in order, in which, on June 7, 1594, Gabrielle d'Estrées gave birth to a son destined afterwards to make his mark in the military annals of France as César, Duc de Vendôme. An inscription on a tablet in the wall thus commemorates his advent into the world: 'In this chamber was born, and in the chamber above was baptized, the legitimised son of France, de Vendôme, a prince of very good hopes, the child of the most Christian, most magnanimous, most invincible, and most clement King of France and of Navarre, Henry IV., and of Gabrielle d'Estrées, Duchesse de Beaufort.'

Not far from this house is the ancient belfry of Coucy, wherein swings a bell of dolorous prestige, the tradition of Coucy averring that, whenever a citizen of Coucy is about to die, this bell tolls of itself, and is heard by him alone.

Doubtless the communal schoolmaster will ere long drive this tradition out of the mind of the [Pg 228] rising generation in Coucy. If so I trust, though I hardly expect, that he will drive out with it another and more mischievous tradition, born within the precincts of the ancient castle. Not once, but a dozen times, this year in different parts of France, I have seen allusions made, in political journals, to the monstrous right which the seigneurs of old possessed and exercised of hanging small boys for snaring and killing rabbits within their parks and woods. The old game laws of France, like the old game laws, and indeed like many other old laws, of England and of other countries, were not over-mild. Was not a woman first strangled and then burned in England for 'coining' in the year 1789, while the States-General were performing at Paris their fantastic overture to the ghastly drama of the Terror? Yet England in 1789 knew a great deal more of personal liberty than France knows now in 1889. The tradition of the seignorial right of hanging boys for killing rabbits originated, it is probable, with Enguerrand IV., Sire de Coucy, of whom it is told that, exasperated by three young lads, scholars of the monastic school of Saint-Nicolas-aux-Bois, whom he found shooting at rabbits and hares in his woods with bows and arrows, he had the lads seized and hanged. So far from doing this within his seignorial rights, however, was the Sire de Coucy, that the monks proceeded against him vigorously, and Saint-Louis had him arrested for it, and was with much difficulty restrained by the barons of the realm from hanging him in his turn. He was only pardoned on very severe conditions, one of which was that he should do penance for a number of years in his own castle of Coucy, where, the chroniclers tell us, he died 'in shame and repentance.' His successor, Enguerrand V., took the matter so much to heart that he led the life of an anchorite at Coucy, and had himself buried in the Abbey of Prémontré [Pg 229] near the doorway; like Alonzo de Ojeda the Conquistador, the slab upon whose grave I saw some years ago at the entrance of the ruined church of San Francisco in Santo Domingo, with an inscription reciting that he was there laid to rest, by his own request, as a great sinner, upon whose ashes all who passed should tread.

Tortuous little streets lead through the town of Coucy into a great green space which commands the castle. It is approached from the new and rather pretentious lodge in which the keeper of the castle now resides, through one of the finest and loftiest avenues in France. But the tallest trees are dwarfed by the gigantic donjon tower. This rises to a height still of at least 180 feet. It is 150 feet in circumference at the base, and slopes very gradually to the summit. The hall on the ground floor measures more than forty feet in diameter, the walls being of enormous thickness. Over one of the doorways is a defaced bas-relief representing a lion attacked and slain by Enguerrand I. de Coucy. The chimney-place in the ground floor hall would make a very respectable modern house, and there is a well within the hall said to be of unknown depth. The donjon consists of three storeys above the ground floor, the main hall on the first floor being

particularly remarkable for its height. The vaulted ceiling of this hall must have been very fine, and throughout it is apparent that the builders of the Château de Coucy had the comfort of the inmates and a certain stately elegance of effect much more in mind than was common with the builders of castles in the thirteenth century. The walls at the summit are more than nine feet thick, and they were doubtless surmounted originally with a great circular gallery of wood covered in with a roof. The Sires de Coucy, like other crusaders, doubtless brought back all [Pg 230] manner of rich carpets and stuffs from the East, and with these and the wonderful carved chests and massive woodwork of the time the Château de Coucy may well have been a much more agreeable place of abode than, from our modern acquaintance with their winding stone stairways and denuded walls, we are apt to imagine these great feudal fortresses to have been.

The views from the summit now are simply superb. The vast forests over which Enguerrand, the builder, gazed, seeking out the sites on which he planted so many strongholds—(it is known that besides Coucy he erected at least eight other castles, from Folembray to Saint-Lambert)—have been replaced in great part by fertile fields and smiling towns. But the land is still richly wooded. Far down, in a little wilderness beneath us, the guardian pointed out to me an odd edifice looking like a combination of a modern Gothic church with a seaside villa. This, he told me, was the residence of a distinguished artist of Paris, who passes a part of every year in this region, making studies of forest scenery. Beyond this, in a large park, is a château of the Marquis de la Châtaigneraie, once a part of the domain of Coucy.

The enceinte of the château is of enormous extent. The solidity of the walls and the towers resisted so successfully the mines and pickaxes of Richelieu that the great outlines of the immense building are still easily definable, with fine traces of the architecture of the great chapel. That St.-Louis and Henry IV. visited Coucy we know, and the guardian was good enough to give me very minute and particular information as to the chambers which they occupied.

He was a curious fellow, this guardian, an Alsatian immigrant, he informed me. The people here, he thought, were not so much pleased as they ought to be that the Government had given him the [Pg 231] place, which brings him in 400 francs a year, with the lodge I have mentioned for a residence, and the right to all the crops of any kind he can raise on the land attached to the château. He was then cutting the grass, which grew very well within the precincts of the château. But he took great pains to impress upon me that he was doing this, not so much for the sake of the hay he expected to make as for the accommodation of visitors like myself, 'to make the ground pleasanter to walk upon.'

This was an attention which no right-minded person could fail to recognise with a *pour-boire*, particularly as the worthy guardian complained of the extremely poor quality of the wine grown about Coucy. I told him I had always heard that King Francis I. insisted on having his wine sent to him from this place. 'Ah!' he replied, 'in those days what did they know about good wine?'

The rooks in countless numbers were flying and cawing all over the beautiful old place. 'I have tried to kill these birds,' said the guardian wearily. 'They destroy my peas. But the cartridges cost too much, and I have had to give it up.' He had been in his place four months. I might think it very pleasant seeing it in June. But if I could see it in February, with the wind howling 'through the tall trees and around the huge tower!'

On my return to my neat little hostelry my host came out to meet me. 'He had just heard that four councillors-general, on their way home from a meeting, would like to dine at his house. Would I object to their dining with me—there was no other good room?' Naturally I was only too glad to share the room and the dinner with them. A very good dinner it was too. 'Men learn to cook, but are born to roast.' My host's cook was born to roast both fat chickens and a capital leg of mutton. [Pg 232] One of the councillors-general, when they drove up, went out into the kitchen to examine and report upon the outlook. He came back presently rubbing his hands together with glee. 'Admirable!' he exclaimed; 'it will be a Belshazzar's feast—a superb leg of mutton, truly superb!'

'The first green peas of the season here!' said our host, coming in with them. 'You will see if they are good. They come late here, the green peas, but you see what they are when they do come.'

The four councillors-general were all Republicans. One of them, a country banker, as I learned, was a trifle sarcastic about the prospects of the party. 'They are too soft,' he said, 'at Paris. They lack wrist. They do not hit hard enough. What we want is a man; where are we to find him?' Another, a tall grey-bearded man, an attorney, agreed with the banker as to the 'softness' of the authorities. 'I am a Republican of yesterday,' he said. 'I remember, under the Empire, how, when I spoke at Chauny, I spoke with a gendarme at the table behind me, and a couple of spies in the hall. That is what we should have now in these meetings where they abuse the Republic.' I observed that while this councillor, by the way, always spoke of 'the Republic,' the banker as invariably spoke of 'the Republican party.' They both agreed, however, and their companions agreed with them, that the real want was the 'want of a man.'

'The President is doing well though,' said the grey-bearded 'Republican of yesterday.' 'He is beginning to stand out against the horizon, is he not?' The others were not so sure of this, and then there arose a most lively and singularly outspoken exchange of views as to the different leaders of the Republican party. It would be hardly fair for me to cite these; but one remark made [Pg 233] by the banker, in regard to a very conspicuous political personage, amused me. 'Yes,' he said in reply to one of his companions: 'yes; —— is skilful—very skilful—but he has no foresight. Would you trust him with your pocket-book? No!' 'Oh certainly not!'

It seemed they had been attending a conference about agriculture. They were all agreed as to the existence of 'an agricultural crisis,' but beyond that they seemed to be at sea. One councillor was quite sure that the thing to be done was to get the farmers to use cattle instead of horses in their work. The cattle cost less, worked as well, and they could be killed for beef. They were also more valuable as fertilisers. Upon this another councillor, apparently the only agriculturist of the company, went into a disquisition on chemical fertilisers and the scientific applications of them.

'I never believed in these chemicals,' he said, 'till last year. But last year I was in my fields, talking with my neighbour So-and-so, who has spent I know not how much on these chemicals. He went away with his men after a while, and I saw they had been applying their chemicals to a field sown like mine. An idea occurred to me. I went and brought a basket. I stepped across into their field and took a certain quantity of their chemicals. These I applied in a particular part of my field. Do you know the plants came up there wonderfully—but really quite wonderfully! There is no doubt there is a good deal in these chemicals! But one should test them first!'

After dinner we sate out in front of the little inn for a time with our coffee. There was a good deal of coming and going, a tremendous clattering about of children in little wooden *sabots*, and much good-natured 'chaff' between the people of the inn, who came out to take the air after their day's [Pg 234] work, and the passers-by. There seems to be little in the peasants here of that positive *morgue*, not to say arrogance, which marks the demeanour of their class in the western parts of France. There are regions in Brittany where the carriage of the peasants towards the 'bourgeois' gives reality and zest to the old story of the *ci-devant* noble who called a particularly insolent varlet to order in the days of the first Revolution by saying to him: 'Nay, friend, you will be good enough to remember that we are living in a republic, and that I am your equal!'

There was the most perfect civility and amiableness even in the interchange of not very delicate pleasantries between the people at Coucy. 'Don't go too near the butcher's shop!' called out one of the ostlers to a man with whom he had been talking as the latter drove off in his cart. 'Ah! you won't eat me, if I do,' the other replied; 'it would cost you too much!' An old farmer who sate sipping his *petit verre* near me, explained to me that the man was a resident of Barisis, a little village not very far off, the dwellers in which from time immemorial have been known as 'the pigs of Barisis.' 'Try and pick up a husband on the way,' another of the stable lads called out after a pretty girl who paused with a companion, as she went by the place, to chat with him—'try and pick up a husband on the way and we'll keep the wedding feast here!' 'Ah bah!' the damsel rejoined in a merry voice, 'more marryers come your way than ours. Tie up the first one that comes and keep him for me!' This quickness to catch and return the ball certainly shows a greater natural or acquired alertness of mind among these Picard peasants than is commonly found in people of the same condition in rural England. [Pg 235]

The country all the way from Coucy to Laon is one continuous garden, and Laon itself is pre-eminently a city set on a hill. The Château de Coucy stands upon its pinnacle of rock, like a knight in armour, with folded arms, looking loftily down upon the world, conscious of his strength, and calmly awaiting attack. The fortress-city of Laon, a fortress from the earliest Roman days, looks out from the promontory on which it stands, over the wide expanse of plain beyond and around it, like an advanced sentinel, watchful and alert.

You go up to it by long flights of steps, as in the case of so many high-perched Italian towns, and the fine winding carriage-way which has been constructed around the hill, commands, from beneath the beautiful trees by which it is shaded, a series of the finest imaginable views. It has suffered much, of course, from war, and not a little from the revolutionists. But its magnificent cathedral and the ancient palace of the bishop-dukes, now occupied by the courts of justice, have fared better than many other monuments. For some time past, however, the cathedral has been undergoing repairs, which is as much as to say that the interior is practically hidden from the eye by a maze of scaffolds and hoardings and ladders. Mr. Ruskin somewhere complains, not wholly without reason, that 'the French are always doing something to their cathedrals,' and the complaint is in order now both as to Laon and as to Nantes. No one can tell when the fine recumbent statue of Raoul de Coucy, who fell at Mansourah by the side of St.-Louis, will again be visible at Laon, or the matchless tomb of the Duchesse Anne at Nantes.

Here, as in the region around Chauny and Coucy, I was struck with the extreme good-nature and simplicity of the people. Through the narrow, old-fashioned streets went the town-crier with his bell, calling 'Attention! attention! attention!' announcing an auction sale of furniture after the old [Pg 236] custom which existed in some old American towns quite down to the middle of the present century.

The people were at their trades in the street, as in the Italian towns, shoemakers hammering at their lasts, ironworkers banging and thumping away. When I had found the house of a gentleman whom I wished to see, in the beautiful old cathedral close, and had rung in vain a dozen times at the bell, a courteous passer-by paused, and asked me if I wished to find M. ——. 'Eh!' he said, 'the house is shut up because he is in the country for the day. I think he will be here to-morrow; but if you will come with me I will show you a little inn not far from here where I know you will find his coachman, who can tell you exactly when he will return.'

How long would a stranger have to ring at the door of a house in an English cathedral town before it would occur to anybody passing to stop and thus enlighten him?

With all their kindness and good-nature, however, the people of Laon are not lukewarm in politics. I found a hairdresser, the local Figaro, a raging Boulangist. 'He had served in Tonkin; he

had seen, with his own eyes seen the soldiers robbed and starved and left to die. He had seen, with his own eyes seen the Government people taking huge "wine-pots" from the natives. It was *infecte*! And the governor Richaud, whom they called back to France because he wished to expose the way in which his predecessor had taken thousands of francs and a diamond belt from the king of Cambodia, Norodom. I had surely heard of that?'

I certainly had heard of that, for all France rang with the exposure made of it in the Chamber of Deputies—that is to say, all France rang with it for a couple of days. [Pg 237]

'Yes! that is true. Paris forgets everything in a day, and Monsieur is speaking of Paris; but here in Laon we do not forget; Monsieur will see. Was it natural, I ask, Monsieur, that of all the people on board of the ship which was bringing back M. Richaud to France—he, only he, and his valet, his Chinese valet—I ask was it natural only they two should on the ocean have the cholera, and die? Was it natural? And if they died was that a reason why all the effects, all the papers—note that, Monsieur—all the papers of M. Richaud, the papers to prove that corruption exists there in Tonkin, should be thrown overboard, all thrown into the sea? Yes! and on what pretext? To save the rest of the ship from the cholera! Is it transparent, that? No! we must have Boulanger!'

'The light must be let in; we must have the light!'

'Were there many people of Figaro's mind in Laon and in the Department?'

'If there are many? You will see, Monsieur; here in the Aisne we shall elect the greatest friend of General Boulanger. Monsieur does not know him? M. Castelin—André Castelin. Ah! he is strong, Castelin! He was in Africa with General Boulanger. He was there with the General when he put his hand on that governor of Tunis, that Cambon, the brother, Monsieur knows, of that Cambon who was a deputy? Castelin saw the General at work in Tunis. He is with him, he will be with him in the new Chamber. We shall elect Castelin, and then—you will see!'

My notes of Figaro's very clear and positive talk in the summer are not without interest to me now when I revise them in the autumn. For Figaro prophesied truly, and the Department of the Aisne certainly did elect M. André Castelin to be one of its Deputies at Paris. [Pg 238]

Another worthy citizen of Laon with whom I talked in his shop, a shoemaker, while much less confident than Figaro as to the results of the elections, was quite as positive in his hostility to the Government. It is the tendency of shoemakers all over the world, within my observations, to be extreme Radicals. The shoemakers of Lynn in Massachusetts long ago were the advanced guard, I remember, of the Abolitionists. They were the strength of the 'Old Org.—' the 'old organisation'—enemies of slavery, as slavery, without compromise or hesitation. Every man of them was as ready as the Simple Cobbler of Agawam to tackle any problem, terrestrial or celestial, at a moment's notice. It was idle to cite *ne sutor* to them in matters of art or of politics, of science or of theology. My shoemaker of Laon was less of a fanatic, but not less of a philosopher, than his brethren of Lynn. He was opposed to the Republic, but he was equally opposed to the monarchy. He had his idea; it was that government must be abolished, and the affairs of the country carried on by committees of experts. He liked the law authorising professional syndicates; there he thought was the germ of the true system. The professional syndicates should nominate the experts, each syndicate the experts in its own business. These should meet, settle the general necessary budget, recommend measures. Then the people, in their communes, should act upon all this. It was his system. It would be long to develop. He was not a man to write or to speak, but he thought.

As to the present situation he bitterly condemned the Exposition. It was a mistake, for it brought all the world to see the progress of France and to steal the French ideas. It also took too many people to Paris; that was good for the railways. But Proudhon long ago was right; the railways [Pg 239] were the new feudal system; they were the enemy more than clericalism. Then see to what corruption this Exposition led. Had I not seen the votes, the credits given to the Ministers for entertaining? 'Ah! it was monstrous!' With this he drew a paper out of his pocket; he had it all there, with the dates and the figures. 'Observe, Monsieur, here, on April 6, the Chamber votes one million of francs—yes, one million of francs to be allowed for dinners, for balls, for punches, for I know not what, to the Ministers—only to the Ministers! How many are they? Ten! Yes! one hundred thousand francs to each of them for eating and drinking during the famous Exposition! Only there are some who get more, some who get less. That little watchmaker Tirard, they give him 250,000 francs! Did he ever earn 250,000 francs in his life? Never! and will they spend all this money on dinners and punches? No, never in life! It is just simply to pocket a million of the money of the people!'

That the political contest will be sharp in Laon I am assured by a friend who is thoroughly familiar with the whole machinery of politics in this department of the Aisne. Laon, it seems, is the true headquarters of the freemasonry of this department, and in the Aisne, to use his language, 'the freemasons are the Government.' 'I mean this,' he said, 'in a more extensive sense than you may, perhaps, be disposed to accept. You will find, I think, if the Government secures a majority in the next Chamber, that the Aisne will have a good deal to say in the organisation of the Chamber. Then, perhaps, you will understand the true meaning of that letter of M. Allain-Targé, of which you heard at Chauny. There is a pretty comedy under it, for M. Allain-Targé, remember, is a freemason! [Pg 240]

'It would be very amusing, but we taxpayers have to pay too much for the play. What you were told at Chauny about the freemasons in the department was quite true. Only you did not get the

whole of the truth. Look at the press of the department! You saw at Chauny the building of the local journal there, *La Défense Nationale*'?

Certainly I had seen it, for it is the most conspicuous and the newest edifice in the main street of Chauny, and so glorious with golden letters that I took it for a great insurance office.

'Very well; that journal is under the control of a Brother of the Order, a hatter at Chauny, M. Bugnicourt. Here, at Laon, the *Tribune*, the chief Republican organ of the department, is entirely in the hands of the Order. The chairman of the publishing company is Brother Dupuy. Go on towards Hirson by the railway and you will come to the busy little town of Vervins. Brother Dupuy sits in the Chamber of Deputies for Vervins, and at Vervins Brother Dupuy owns and prints another journal, *Le Libéral de Vervins*. The political director of the *Tribune* here at Laon is Brother Doumer. Brother Doumer, as you know, is also a Deputy! And how did he become a Deputy? Let me tell you. It is an instructive story, and you will find M. Allain-Targé at work in it—that excellent man who will not make promises to the electors which he cannot keep.'

'In the winter of 1888, M. Ringuier, a Deputy from the second circumscription of Laon, unexpectedly died. The Order at once determined to capture his seat. With Brother Allain-Targé as Prefect, what could be easier? M. Allain-Targé hastened the new election almost indecently. Hardly a fortnight after the death of M. Ringuier, early in March 1888, the Brethren came up [Pg 241] from all quarters to Laon, and it was announced that Brother Doumer had received the orthodox Republican nomination. Of course, with the préfecture and the freemason press of Laon, Chauny, Soissons, Château Thierry, Vervins, behind him, Doumer was elected. This year he will find it harder work, for all the opposition will be concentrated in support of Castelin, the friend of Boulanger. Brother Allain-Targé is no longer prefect, but his secretary, another Brother, Huc (no kinsman of the famous Abbé), is sub-prefect at Soissons, and the Brethren all over the department help each other in every circumscription. They are very strong among the Revenue officers, and that, as you will easily understand, gives them and the Order generally a very important invisible leverage! I could tell you now of a Brother at Soissons whom they mean to put into the Chamber. They knew his money value; they have got him into their shop. He is as stupid as he is rich—just as fit to be a deputy as to command the garrison of Paris. But they will get him nominated, and then the Government will get him elected, and then he will do the bidding of Brother Doumer and the others, to help them to put pressure on the ministers and on the President, and be helped by them to recoup himself, in one way or another, for all the cash advances he will make before he is elected.'

Laon sends two deputies to the Chamber. My friend's opinion in August was that the Opposition now control the city, and that both of these seats would be carried against the Government. The event proved that he was right. He was right, too, as to the outlook at Château Thierry, the charming birthplace of La Fontaine, on the road to Epernay. There he expected to see the Republican candidate who sat in the late Chamber, M. Lesguillier, hold his seat against the monarchical candidate, M. de Mandat-Grancey, the author of a well-known and interesting book [Pg 242] on Ireland, *Chez Paddy*. M. de Mandat-Grancey is a landed proprietor who has taken an active and successful part in promoting the improvement of the breed of horses in this country. He is a man of liberal ideas as well as a man of enterprise, and in the present agricultural 'crisis,' of which one hears so much in France, such men would certainly be of use in the Chamber. But at Château Thierry, according to my friend, 'everything is organised by the freemasons. They control a journal there, the *Avenir de l'Aisne*. The mayor, M. Morlot, is a freemason. Another freemason, an ex-deputy, M. Deville, wields great influence there. You will see that the recent deputy, who is an insignificant person, will be re-elected, and that M. de Mandat-Grancey, who would be of use, will be beaten.'

'Perhaps because he is an avowed monarchist,' I replied, 'and the people may be Republicans,'

My friend looked at me for a moment. 'Are you speaking seriously?'

Of course I was.

'Well, then, that astonishes me! Can you possibly suppose, after all you have seen and known of France, that the people in a place like Château Thierry are such simpletons as to believe that it makes the slightest difference what name you give to a government? They leave that sort of thing to the journalists and the village actors! They have long memories in the provinces! And they judge governments, not at all by their names, but by their men. They know the functionaries by heart. "Not much of a government," they say to one another, "that sends us so and so!"

'In this region the Empire is still very popular, thanks mainly to this. No! outside of the influence of the freemasons, which will be exerted against him through the pressure put upon the friends [Pg 243] and families of the small army of government employés, and will therefore be formidable, what M. de Mandat-Grancey will have most to fear will be not the preference of the people for the Republic—for that, I tell you, does not exist—but the indiscreet zeal of some of the clergy in his behalf.

'It is natural the clergy should wish to be rid of this persecuting gang at Paris, and of these disgusting freemasons—quite natural. But they do not always remember one peculiarity of our peasants. There is a great love for the *culte* here among our people—a very great love for it; but they do not like to be meddled with in politics by the curés or the priests. They will vote for the curé if the curé lets them alone. But if he bothers them about it they are much more likely to vote against him.

'If Constans knows his business he will tell that freemason Thévenot, the Keeper of the Seals, to let the curés and the clergy do all they feel disposed to do in politics. Pardie, I am not sure he has not already been suborning some of our curés to go into a conservative propaganda!'

'This is my great fear,' he added presently, 'for Soissons in September. We ought to carry that seat. The freemasons mean to make the Republicans accept a most absurd candidate there, as I have told you, and if we can only keep some of our clerical friends quiet, we shall beat him. But we shall see! If the curés hurt us sometimes by their over-zeal, on the other hand the Republican deputies and functionaries help us by making the Republic disreputable in the eyes of serious people, and that in all classes of society.

'Look at the working-men, for example, here in Laon. There are a good many of them who know [Pg 244] M. Doumer much better since he became a deputy than they knew him when he was first a candidate!

'The question of the Sociétés Ouvrières is a question which means a good deal for the working-men. M. Doumer would have been well advised had he let it alone. But no! M. Doumer gets himself appointed to draw up a Report of the Chamber of Deputies on this question, with a Project of a Law to supersede, modify, extend the Law of 1867, under which co-operative societies have so far grown up in France.

'The Report and the Project, as finally edited by the aspiring deputy for Laon, a freemason as I have told you, are to be printed by another freemason, the worthy hatter, M. Bugnicourt, at Chauny, who is the chief personage of the *Défense Nationale*, and all the voters are to see how Brother Doumer devotes himself to the interests of the working classes, at Paris, while other deputies go about amusing themselves with the *danseuses du ventre*, and the other marvels of the Exposition.

'This is all very well.

'But Brother Doumer, in his desire to pose before the voters of the Aisne as the heaven-born deputy in whom the working-man may put his trust, takes the trouble to make it quite clear that the Republic has done absolutely nothing but appoint committees to sit upon "the great question" of co-operation among the working classes!

'Brother Doumer, as I have told you, was made a deputy in 1888. After taking his seat he was made a member of the Committee which has been conducting an "extra-parliamentary enquiry" on the subject of co-operative societies among working-men for work and for production, and with the question of contracts between employers and working-men for participation in the [Pg 245] profits of industrial enterprises.

'This committee, he says in his Report, took the matter in hand in 1883, and spent *five years* over it, getting its project of a law on these subjects into shape only in 1888, on the eve of the election of a new Chamber of Deputies!

'During these five long years, according to Brother Doumer, the Republic was content to let co-operation among working-men take its chances under a law passed in 1867, under the Second Empire. And yet, according still to Brother Doumer, the idea of co-operation among the working classes was an exclusively French idea, and not only an exclusively French idea, but an idea which came to birth only under the Republic of 1848 (he glides silently over the famous experiment of the National workshops of 1848). Is it not really remarkable that the Republicans of 1879 should have been willing to leave this "beautiful and generous" idea at the mercy of a law passed by the Empire, and which—still according to Brother Doumer—left the co-operative societies of working-men without privileges, without favour, and with no particular facilities for constituting themselves and for keeping themselves alive?

'I say the "Republicans of 1879" advisedly, for you will see, if you look at page 5 of this delightful Report, that—still according to Brother Doumer—we really had no republic, in fact, in France till 1879. These are his own words; "the Republic, having been reconstituted, (after the fall of the Empire) *first in name*, and afterwards in fact, a new impulse was given to co-operation. The ill-will towards all societies of working-men of the Governments of May 21 and of May 16, retarded the movement. It was only in 1879 that, the wounds of the country having been healed and liberty reconquered, we had leisure to occupy ourselves with the question of the organisation of [Pg 246] labour."

'Is not this charming? Really, when one remembers what the "wounds of the country" were in 1871, and how those "wounds" were got first through the collapse of the wretched Government of the National Defence, and then through the Commune of Paris, the Governments of May 21 and May 16 may be credited with having done a good piece of work by "healing those wounds" and by "reconquering liberty." Is not this plain?

'But the "wounds having been healed," and "liberty having been reconquered," the true Republic, still according to Brother Doumer, was set free in 1879, to occupy itself with the question of the organisation of labour. Very good.

'1879! that is ten years ago! And only in 1888 do we find the Republic really occupying itself, in the person of Brother Doumer, with this great question, this beautiful and generous idea! How very odd! And what a strange coincidence that Brother Doumer, elected a deputy by the grace of the freemasons in 1888, and wishing to be re-elected a deputy by their grace in 1889, should be

the man of destiny called upon to solve this great question!

'He makes this perfectly plain!

'Two Ministers of Public Works, M. de Freycinet and M. Sadi Carnot,' he blandly observes, 'studied measures which might be taken in view of facilitating the concession to societies of working-men of certain public works!

'Ah! This is hard upon M. de Freycinet and M. Sadi Carnot, now President of the ideal Republic! They "studied," did they, "measures which might be taken"! But they never took any such measures! Oh, no! not they!' [Pg 247]

'So the first year of the "true Republic" went by, and still co-operation languished under the Imperial law of 1867. Then in 1880 came M. de Lacretelle, who "presented to the Chambers a proposed law tending" to the same end which M. de Freycinet and M. Sadi Carnot had so unprofitably "studied"! Of course the Chamber eagerly adopted it? Not at all! It was never discussed!

'Two years thrown away by the true Republic!

'Then in 1881 M. Floquet (now the favourite candidate of Brother Doumer for the Presidency of the Chamber if the Republicans carry the elections of 1889), being made Prefect of the Seine, had a great impulse! "He wished to revive the decree of 1848 as to that department." Excellent man! But he did not in fact revive it! He did what he could. He "appointed a Committee to study the question!" And this studious Committee eventually evolved—what? "A new schedule of prices for the public works of the City of Paris, which favoured co-operative societies and contractors whose workmen were to participate in their profits!"

'So the fourth year of the true Republic began, and found the "beautiful and generous idea" still prostrate under the Imperial law of 1867!

'In 1882, still according to Brother Doumer, two deputies, M. Ballue backed by several colleagues, and M. Laroche-Joubert heroically rushed before the Chamber, each with a proposed law "tending" (how all these laws "tend"!) to make it obligatory upon all contractors for public works to give their workmen a share in their profits! But the Chamber paid no heed, and the fourth year of the true Republic ended, leaving the "beautiful and generous idea" still under the iron heel of the Imperial law of 1867! [Pg 248]

'Then came March 20, 1883, and the Minister of the Interior rose at last to the height of his mission. He took it upon himself to issue a decree—instituting what? An extra-parliamentary committee to "study" the question of working-men's associations, and if, and how, they should be admitted to take part in the public works of the State!'

'Bravo!'

'And the committee was appointed. It consisted' (it is still Brother Doumer who speaks) "of directors and high functionaries of all the ministerial departments." It went to work. It heard "a great number of witnesses." It also showed conclusively "how complex was the question, *and how urgent the necessity of a solution*."'

'What then happened?'

'The committee immediately went to sleep!

'"*After an interruption* of more than a year" (it is still Brother Doumer who speaks), "*the extra-parliamentary committee resumed its sittings, on January* 16, 1885!"

'Six years of the true Republic having now been spent in these desperate efforts to deal with the "beautiful and generous idea," and the election of a new Chamber being imminent for the autumn of 1885, M. Waldeck-Rousseau, Minister of the Interior, proceeded to lay before the re-awakened committee—what? A project of a law to relieve the co-operative idea from the crushing weight of the Imperial law of 1867? Not a bit of it!

'He proceeded (it is still Brother Doumer who speaks!) to lay before the Committee "*a summary of the studies upon which it ought to enter*!" [Pg 249]

'According to Brother Doumer this "summary" was truly grand and even "vast." But alas! "the general elections," says Brother Doumer, sadly, "and afterwards successive ministerial crises, *suspended the inquiry during more than two years*! It was only in 1888 that the extra-parliamentary committee resumed its labours!"

'The Universal Exposition of 1889 was then organising and organising—let me ask you not for a moment to forget—with a specific eye, not so much to the "principles of 1789," about which our worthy ministers care as much as they do about the Edict of Nantes or the philosophy of Pascal, as to the Legislative elections of 1889!

'So what did the extra-parliamentary committee do in this *ninth year* of the one "true Republic" for the "beautiful and generous idea" of co-operation?

'They adopted a decree—"a firm and practical decree"—promulgated June 6, 1888, "permitting several co-operative societies to contract for public works, especially in connection with the Exposition"! and they also adopted "two projects of laws"!

'"The first of these projects" (it is still Brother Doumer who speaks), "aimed at the creation of a general provident fund, industrial, commercial, and agricultural, to be managed by the 'Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations.'"

'"This very interesting project," says Brother Doumer, "*has not yet been submitted to the Chamber*. Sent up to be examined by the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Commerce, it is there undergoing *a prolonged and inexplicable delay*!"

'No! no! Brother Doumer! "prolonged" if you like, but not "inexplicable!"

'And so, after now *ten years*, we have the true Republic which got complete possession in 1879 of [Pg 250]
all the machinery for giving force and effect to the "beautiful and generous" idea of co-operation, and for giving wings to that idea, leaving it still under the blighting curse of the Imperial law of 1867.

'And Doumer alone! Brother Doumer, whom Providence and the freemasons of Laon sent to the Chamber in 1888, has met the questions which have been "urgent" ever since 1848 with the grand practical solution of a "report" fifteen pages long, and of a "project of law" consisting of six titles and about a hundred clauses!

'Take this pamphlet with you,' said my friend, after going over it with me; 'take it, look into it minutely, and tell me if anything you have ever heard or read in the way of our Conservative attacks upon the flatulence, the fatuity, and the hypocrisy of these pretended friends of labour and of the working-man is to be compared, for cold-blooded cruelty, with this exposition made by Brother Doumer of the methods of his party.

'I don't know,' he added, 'what portfolio Brother Doumer expects to get if the Government carry these elections of 1889. He has kicked M. de Freycinet, as you see, into one corner, and President Carnot into another, for the benefit of his friend and ally, M. Floquet, so I suppose he expects to secure some commanding position, neither M. de Freycinet nor President Carnot being strong enough to resent the impertinences of an eminent freemason. But wherever they put him, this wonderful Report of his ought to be printed and circulated freely all over France by the Conservative committees. It is the most concise and eloquent history, that I know, of ten years of the true Republic in its relation to the working classes of France. You have seen at St.-Gobain the results of a co-operative association of working-men organized under statutes drawn up by a practical and liberal friend of labour, M. Cochin, in 1866, a year before the Imperial law [Pg 251]
of 1867 was passed.

'Wherever elsewhere in France you find the principle of co-operation adopted and bearing fruit for the benefit of working-men, pray remember that the "true Republic" has for ten years persistently evaded and dodged the problems with which the Empire grappled, and to which the Emperor gave a practical answer nearly a quarter of a century ago!'

After following my friend carefully through his amusing and instructive vivisection of the Report presented to the late Chamber by the masonic member for Laon upon the project of law touching co-operation proposed by M. Floquet, I was not surprised, of course, to learn that the 'project' still remains a 'project.' It was adopted in what is called a 'Friday session' by the Chamber, and then sent up to die a natural death in the Senate—the Senate, be it remembered, being the absolute stronghold of the existing Republican Government.

So that still, after ten years of power, the Republicans of M. Doumer's 'true Republic' leave the working-men of France, so far as co-operation can affect their interests, under the control of a law passed under the Empire more than twenty years ago.

Clearly one of two things must be true: either this law, passed under the Empire more than twenty years ago, is a good and sufficient law, assuring to the working-men of France all the advantages, and protecting them against all the disadvantages, incident to the principle of co-operation, so far as this influence and this protection can be given by laws; or the Republicans of M. Doumer's 'true Republic' have been humbugging and trifling with the working-men of France on the subject ever since they contrived, ten years ago, to get the control of power at Paris. Upon one horn or the other of this dilemma, the 'true Republicans' clearly must elect to take their [Pg 252]
seats.

The voters of Laon would appear to be of the mind that the 'true Republicans' of M. Doumer have been humbugging and trifling with them. For at the election of this year, M. Doumer lost his seat, and the candidate favoured by my Boulangist Figaro at Laon, M. Castelin, was elected. What followed is worth noting, to complete this picture of the working of representative institutions in one of the great French provinces under the Third Republic.

M. Doumer, in his address to the electors of the Aisne, issued at Laon on August 15, 1889, was at great pains to explain what his own relations had been with Boulangism and with General Boulanger in 1888, before he became a deputy from Laon in the place of M. Ringuier.

'I frankly admit,' he observes in this very curious document, 'that I felt a lively sympathy with General Boulanger *while he was Minister of War*!... In the journal which I conducted I insisted on his being put back into the Cabinet, on the fall of the Goblet Ministry.'

When, by the death of M. Ringuier in the early spring of 1888, a seat from the Aisne was suddenly vacated, the freemasons of Laon, as I have stated, selected M. Doumer as the Republican candidate to fill it. M. Doumer's friend, M. Floquet, was not then at the head of the

Government, and General Boulanger was still in command of his army-corps at Clermont, coming up to Paris, as the Government affirmed, disguised and wearing blue spectacles, to organise political mischief, and generally making himself a terror and a trouble to the 'true Republicans,' who had made a great man of him for their own purposes.

'Eight days before the election, which was fixed for March 25, 1888,' says M. Doumer, in his address of this year to the voters, "I had no competitor, and my election seemed to be certain."' [Pg 253]

No doubt. The 'Brethren' had arranged everything.

But suddenly the skies darkened! The Government of M. Tirard plucked up courage to make head against the 'brav' Général.' General Boulanger was relieved of his command at Clermont.

Thereupon the Boulangists resolved to avail themselves of the impending election at Laon as an opportunity of responding to the attack of the Government by a demonstration of their strength in the provinces; and M. Doumer was suddenly served with a notice that the seat of which he had felt so sure would be wanted for General Boulanger!

It was a cruel and a critical moment. What was to be done? To withdraw from the contest was to take sides virtually with General Boulanger against the Tirard Government, and much as M. Floquet and the friends of M. Doumer disliked M. Tirard, they were not ready to throw in their lot at that moment against him. So the Brethren, as my friend believes, were called upon to bring about an arrangement. What General Boulanger wanted was not to fill the seat for Laon; it was only to be elected to fill the seat for Laon. Plainly, therefore, the course of practical wisdom, for M. Doumer was to come to an understanding with the friends of General Boulanger. So this was done.

The Parisian Committee of the General came into the Aisne, and at a conference, which M. Doumer admits that he held with them at Tergnier, it was agreed that after the first balloting, on March 31, 'the voters who then voted for General Boulanger as a protest, should vote for M. Doumer at the second balloting, and so elect him.' [Pg 254]

The first balloting came off in due course of time. Both M. Doumer, the Republican candidate, and M. Jacquemont, the Conservative candidate, were left in the rear by General Boulanger, who received some forty thousand votes—the election being held in 1888 under the *scrutin de liste* adopted, before the elections of 1885, by the Republicans, in order to remedy what they had denounced as the 'intolerable' evils of the *scrutin d'arrondissement*. Under the stress of the Boulangist panic, these same Republicans suddenly threw the *scrutin de liste* over again in 1889, to readopt and reimpose upon their beloved country the 'intolerable' evils of the *scrutin d'arrondissement*!

The second balloting was to take place on March 31. Suppose that General Boulanger should take it into his head to force the fighting on that day at Laon—worse still, try to make an 'arrangement' with the Conservative candidate? What would then become of M. Doumer? So, on March 28, M. Doumer tells us he went up to Paris, from Laon in company with the chairman of one of the Republican committees, and there had an interview with a leading member of the committee of General Boulanger, the result of which was that the 'brav' Général' published a letter, in which he announced to the electors of the Aisne that he could not accept a seat which he could only occupy to the detriment of competitors 'beside whom, and not against whom, he had allowed himself to be made a candidate.' He wound up by requesting his friends in the Aisne 'to vote at the second balloting for the candidate who would best support the honour of the country and the interests of the Republic.'

Then came, at Laon, a meeting of the Republican Committee of the Aisne, at which the chairman of the meeting, M. Lesguillier, was instructed to do his best to 'dissipate the somewhat equivocal effect' of the language used by General Boulanger in his letter, and to induce the Boulangist committee to work, on the 31st, for the election of M. Doumer. And so, on March 31, 1888, M. Doumer was finally put into the seat, which enabled him to draw up his model report on the great question of 'co-operation.' That the Boulangists of Laon are not wholly delighted with the course of M. Doumer in the late Chamber, and that the working-men of Laon are not deeply impressed by the value to them of his model report on 'co-operation,' may be inferred from his defeat by the Boulangist candidate M. Castelin under the *scrutin d'arrondissement* in September, 1889. [Pg 255]

But M. Doumer is a typical French politician of the Third Republic, and as his alliance with M. Floquet seems to be firmer than ever, my friend in the Aisne is probably right in thinking that M. Doumer will still be heard of perhaps as a prefect, perhaps as a deputy filling the seat of some 'invalidated' deputy from Paris, perhaps as a Trésorier-Général, occupying one of the large number (I think there are eighty in all) of these lucrative posts, which it has been the custom of successive administrations under the Third Republic to distribute among their friends and supporters on retiring from power, as in England premiers, in like circumstances, distribute peerages and baronetcies and accolades of knighthood, one special difference between the two systems being that the rewards of political service bestowed in England not only entail no expense upon the taxpayers, but actually, I believe, bring a certain amount in the way of fees into the Treasury, whereas in France such rewards mean a steady increase of the public outlay.

As the late parliament on the very last day of its existence adopted a plan proposed by M. Doumer himself for re-organising the system of *Trésoriers-Généraux*, and making these officers regular members of the staff of the Finance Ministry with fixed salaries, my friend in the Aisne thinks it likely enough that one of these posts may fill the eventual perspective of M. Doumer's [Pg 256]

political career.

Meanwhile the defeated candidate for Laon has been comfortably lodged, at the public cost, in the Legislative Palace, as Secretary of the President of the Chamber, M. Floquet being President, and receives a salary of 15,000 francs, with perquisites and other advantages.

We do this sort of thing occasionally in the United States, for the benefit of defeated political candidates. But in one important respect the professional politician in France is better off than the professional politician in America. Our pension list is by far the largest in the world, but we do not offer any prospect of a pension to civil servants.

Nor have we so many paid legislative berths in which to lodge our professional politicians. The parliamentary business of the sixty millions of people who now inhabit the United States is done by eighty-four senators and 330 representatives, who receive something over $2,000,000 a year. The parliamentary business of less than forty millions of people inhabiting France is supposed to require the services of 300 senators and 578 deputies, who receive for doing it 11,937,940 francs, or, in round numbers, about $2,587,560. Whether the 878 French legislators really earn half a million of dollars more by their annual labours than do the 414 American legislators is a question which I leave my readers to settle after they shall have settled the previous question, whether either of those considerable sums of money is really earned by either body. But there can be no doubt, I think, that, under the existing economical conditions of society in the two [Pg 257] republics, the aggregate number of professional politicians aiming at the 878 prizes of the profession in France is likely to be considerably in excess of the aggregate number of professional politicians aiming at the 414 prizes of the profession in the United States. Of course, too, this increase in the aggregate number of the competitors must necessarily be attended by a decline in the average standard of character and capacity among them: and as it is the settled policy of the French Republicans of the 'true Republic,' who have been in power for the past decade, to exclude all persons not of their party from any share in the general administration of the Republic, it is obvious that this lowering of the level of character and of capacity must be most marked among the professional politicians of the Republican party. This is a matter of scientific necessity, and not at all of sentiment; and it suffices to account for the unquestionable average inferiority of the Government members of the Senate and the Chamber to the Opposition members in point both of character and of capacity.

The intense centralisation of power in France is another and a very important force working in the same direction. Outside of the Federal field of political ambition in the United States we have the State governments. But there can be no more than forty-two State governors in the United States, whereas in France there are eighty-six prefects, and three in Algiers, without counting the administrative authorities in the Regency of Tunis and in the French colonies. The governorships of the American States are elective offices, to be won only by local services and local combinations. But the administrative prizes of French politics can only be secured through the central administration at Paris, under pressure from the all-powerful cliques and [Pg 258] combinations in the National Legislature. Briefly, therefore, it seems to me quite clear that under the Third Republic in France the profession of politics is rapidly becoming, if it has not already become, much more easy of access, and, in proportion to the capital of character and of ability required for entering upon it, much more remunerative, than it has ever yet been in the United States, unless perhaps during the domination of Mr. Tweed and the Tammany Ring over the taxpayers of New York. [Pg 259]

CHAPTER XI

IN THE NORD

VALENCIENNES

It says but little for what Texans call the 'sabe' of the municipal authorities of Valenciennes that this, which ought to be one of the most picturesque and attractive, is really one of the shabbiest historic towns of North-eastern France. The streets are ill-paved and ill-kept, the public buildings are untidy, and the whole place contrasts most unfavourably, from this point of view, with the rich and beautifully cultivated region through which you reach it by the railway from Douai. This is the finest agricultural region in France—the old French Flanders, a 'fat' country as well as a flat. You hardly see a weed between Douai and Valenciennes. Great fields of beetroot are cultivated like flower-gardens, and the green and growing crops are as daintily ordered as the coils and plateaux of flowers with which it is the fashion to adorn dinner-tables *à la Russe*. It is not pleasant to be assured that the industrious dwellers in this land of Goshen are as fond of cock-fighting as the Spaniards, who probably enough introduced the amusement here during their long domination over what is now known as French Flanders, and that they are addicted also in a systematic way to the abominable practice of blinding bullfinches to make them better singers. I am told that in many communes the authorities actually give prizes for the best singing [Pg 260] birds thus produced, and that 'blind bullfinch societies' are among the many associations regularly established and nourishing among the fields and villages. The old Flemish love of strong drink also survives here, as is shown by the number and the prosperous appearance of the cabarets.

These average, for the whole Department of the Nord, no fewer than one to every sixty-six inhabitants, and around Valenciennes, the proportion rises as high as one to every forty-four. There is much subdivision of property, but it has not been pushed so far around Valenciennes as in some other portions of the department, a majority of the small properties extending to twenty-five hectares, and properties of from one hundred to three hundred hectares being considered large estates.

Thanks to the energy and intelligence of many considerable landholders, a great improvement has taken place of late years in the agricultural methods and instruments in use throughout this department: the open drains have practically disappeared, the country has become more wholesome, as well as more fertile, and the farmers in general are admittedly much better off, despite the crisis. This increasing prosperity is given as an explanation of the decreasing average number of children.

But French Flanders is nevertheless one of the densely populated parts of France, showing a population of 267 to the square league. It is proper to say, however, that this is chiefly due to the growth of certain great manufacturing centres. In the rural regions the population is much less dense, and the population of Valenciennes is actually declining. It fell from 23,291 in 1881 to 22,919 in 1886. The explanation is that people are moving out from Valenciennes into the new suburbs. Anzin, Thiers, Denain, and St.-Amand are increasing with the development of the [Pg 261] manufactories which are growing up here around the great coal-fields.

While I was at Valenciennes, there was a terrible commotion in the Paris newspapers over a certain colonel in the army, who, being in the service of a well-known arms factory, loudly protested against the alleged sale of that factory to the Germans, and the threatened consequent closing of its works near Paris.

After much journalistic and parliamentary gunpowder had been burned, it came to light that the proprietors were simply making up their minds to transfer their works to the vicinity of Valenciennes as a necessary measure of economy.

Notwithstanding the slovenly 'edility' of Valenciennes, I found it a very interesting place. The Hôtel du Commerce there is a very well-kept old-fashioned hostelry, installed in a stately and spacious house, long the residence of a considerable family. Indeed, one of my friends in Valenciennes was quite severe in his comments upon the indifference of the head of this family, still a man of large property, to this conversion of the ancestral mansion into an inn. With its fine gateway, its porter's lodge on either hand, its large courtyard shaded with well-grown old trees, and its well-proportioned apartments, it is certainly a specimen worth preserving of such a house as King Louis need not have disdained to enter, when he made Valenciennes and French Flanders definitely French in 1677.

'We have a noisy, ignorant set of people in power here now,' said my friend, 'who pulled down, not long ago, the finest of the only three good gates we had left, out of sheer stupidity; and you can see how they let things go at sixes and sevens all over the city. But the old-established citizens of Valenciennes are to blame also, not for the decline of our population perhaps, but for [Pg 262] the gradual disappearance of all the features of the city worth preserving. Like the head of this family, they care nothing about the past.'

In the course of a walk about the city, he showed me, in the Rue Nôtre-Dame, an edifice, the condition of which certainly excused his criticism of his fellow-citizens.

It is an ancient dwelling-house of the fifteenth century, standing at the corner of two streets. A most graceful *tourelle* markes the façade, and strikingly resembles that which decorates still the house at Paris near the Rue des Francs Bourgeois, in the vaulted doorway of which Louis, Duc d'Orléans, was murdered, a crime avenged by the death, on the bridge of Montereau, of its real author, Jean Sans-Peur, Duc de Bourgogne. The exterior ornamentation of this house is admirable, nor is it too far gone in dilapidation to be successfully restored. The door was locked, boardings were fixed in some of the beautiful windows, and advertisements of Amer-Picon and auctions and political meetings defaced the front. Obviously the house belonged originally to some personage of importance at a time when Valenciennes, the city of the Emperor Valentinian, was still one of the great marts of Western Europe and a capital of the civilisation of the West. Its population was then much larger than it now is. By the Scheldt, it communicated with the sea, and in the thirteenth century it was a member of the famous Hanse of London, which included also, Reims, St.-Quentin, Douai, Arras, St.-Omer, Abbeville, Amiens, Bruges, Ypres, and Ghent. This league dominated over the Channel. Its chief, the Count of the Hanse, who seems to have been in a manner a successor of the Roman Counts of the Saxon Shore, was chosen by the leagued cities from among the great burghers of Bruges. The privileges its representatives [Pg 263] enjoyed in London were balanced by sundry rather monastic restrictions; but it was a great commercial corporation, and it played a great part in the social and economical history of mediæval Europe. As early as the ninth century Valenciennes and Mons had been so rich and influential, that they were regarded as the pillars of the '*noble Comté de Hainault, tenu de Dieu et du Soleil*.' With the crusades, the importance of Valenciennes notably increased, and with its importance the independence of its burghers. The leading part taken by Godfrey de Bouillon in the early crusades is a proof of the power of these Flemish towns. When Baldwin of Flanders assumed the imperial purple at Constantinople, he did it expressly to benefit the commerce of the Flemish cities. At this day it is believed that there exist, in some palace of the sultan at Constantinople, tapestries of Oudenarde taken to the East by Baldwin, who was born at Valenciennes in 1171. At Valenciennes, too, were born his sister, Isabelle of Hainault, the first

wife of Philip Augustus of France, his brother Henry, Emperor of the East, and his two daughters. One of these daughters, Marguerite, grown to woman's estate, besieged Valenciennes because the burghers refused to recognise her as the born Countess of Hainault. Gilles Miniave, provost of the city, plainly said to her when he refused to surrender: 'We have taken and we intend to kill your soldiers, madame, as abettors of tyranny.' This was as much to the purpose in its way as the firing on the royal troops by the farmers of Lexington in America in 1775.

In the middle of the fourteenth century Valenciennes was so wealthy that Jean Party, provost in 1357, was regarded as the richest man in Europe. He went to Paris during the fair of the Landit, and for his own account bought up all the goods brought there for sale at one swoop; he then [Pg 264] retailed them at a great profit. He was invited to attend the court of France, and went there so magnificently attired as to excite the jealousy of the French nobles, who treated him in consequence with undue arrogance. He took off his cloak, enriched with fur and jewels, as no seat was offered him, made it into a roll, and sate down on it. When he rose with the rest to leave, he left the cloak where he had sate on it. The royal heralds, dazzled by the splendour of the garment, gathered it up, and one of them hastened with it after Jean Party, calling out to him that he had forgotten it.

'In my country,' said the haughty burgher turning towards the herald, 'it is not the custom for people to take their cushions away with them!'

One of the predecessors of this proud citizen, Jean Bernier, gave a banquet in 1333 to all the allies of the Comte de Flanders, which is celebrated by the chroniclers as the grandest ever seen in Flanders. There were sixty-nine guests, including the kings of Bohemia and of Navarre, and six tables 'so sumptuous with gold and silver plate, that the like had never been seen.'

In 1473 a chapter was held at Valenciennes of the Golden Fleece. In 1540 the city entertained Charles V., the Dauphin, and the Duc d'Orléans. In 1549 a society called 'the principality of pleasure' gave a festival to 562 guests in the woolstaplers' hall. Each guest was equipped with two flagons of silver, one for wine and the other for beer, and 1,700 pieces of silver and gold plate furnished forth the table, of which the chronicler observes, to the undying glory of the city, that 'all these vessels of silver and gold belonged to dwellers at Valenciennes; and also that *not one piece was lost*!'

The glory passed away from Valenciennes with the religious wars. The place became a [Pg 265] headquarters of Protestantism, and the Most Catholic King sent his armies to deal with it. The Spaniards took Valenciennes and long held it. In 1656, under Condé, they beat off the French under Turenne, and it was only in 1677 that Louis XIV. finally captured it, and turned it over to Vauban to be fortified.

As the town stands much lower than the surrounding country, Vauban planned his works with an eye to flooding the region, if necessary, by the waters of the Scheldt. Valenciennes stands at 25.98 mètres above the sea-level. But Anzin, the chief suburb, is at 39 mètres, and the hills beyond at 80 mètres above the sea-level.

When the Spaniards got the upper hand fairly in French Flanders, thousands of the workers in wool emigrated to England, carrying their industry with them. Many of these emigrants naturally went into the cloth-making West of England, and to this day I am told by genealogists Flemish names, translated or curiously transmogrified, are to be found in Somerset and Devonshire, which attest the extent and value to England of the exodus. What its real proportions were it is hard now to estimate. The chroniclers talk of a hundred thousand people going out from Flanders to England between the defeat of the Armada in 1588 and the repulse of the French from before Valenciennes in 1656. But the numbers are obviously conjectural.

What is certain is, that during this period Valenciennes was the centre of a most interesting spiral movement (to use the phrase of Goethe) in the history of modern Europe. Coming down later to the contest between France, under Louis XIV., and the allies, led by Marlborough and Prince Eugene, we find Valenciennes again playing a leading part. And during the last blind, [Pg 266] desperate effort of France to shake off the domination of the scoundrels who had fastened themselves upon her vitals at Paris after the collapse of the monarchy, Valenciennes became the theatre of the tolerably well-conceived, but intolerably ill-executed, attempt of Dumouriez to make himself a French Duke of Albemarle. It was quite as unprincipled as his political operations were at Paris in 1792, and in both cases he came to grief through his overweening self-confidence and consequent lack of the most ordinary prudence and forecast.

A morning may be spent with both profit and pleasure in the galleries of the Hôtel de Ville at Valenciennes. The building is of the early seventeenth century, and was remodelled and partially reconstructed under the Second Empire. It is spacious and not without a certain dignity, but, like the streets and squares, it is ill kept.

The galleries which occupy the whole of the second floor are extensive, well-lighted, and with a more careful and systematic arrangement of the pictures would be of considerable value to students of art. Valenciennes certainly had painters of merit before the sixteenth century. One of these, celebrated by Froissart, Maître André, was both a sculptor and a painter. In 1364 he became 'imagier' of Charles V. of France. The statues of that king, of Jeanne de Bourbon his queen, and of King John and King Philip, still extant at St.-Denis, are his work. Two exquisite manuscripts illuminated by him still exist; one in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris, the other at Brussels.

Simon Marmion, who died at Valenciennes on Christmas-day, 1489, was the court painter of that high and puissant prince, Philippe, Duc de Bourgogne, and ranked among the chiefs of the Flemish School. Pictures of his exist at Bruges, Nuremberg, and Paris. The Valenciennes museum [Pg 267] has an *ex-voto* on wood, the history of which is curious. It was found broken into two pieces, and hidden away behind a confessional in the cathedral of Notre-Dame. How it came there no one knows. It may have been flung there during the pillage of the church, or put there to save it. At all events, having been carefully (not too carefully) restored and cleaned, it now presents two interesting pictures, one of St. John, holding in his right hand a book on which the Paschal Lamb reposes, with an ecclesiastic kneeling before him in a red robe, covered with a transparent alb, a palm resting on his right arm. The other represents a dead body on a rug, half-covered with a shroud. Above, on a scroll, are the lines

Da requiem cunctis, Deus, hic et ubique sepultis,
Ut sint in requie, propter tua vulnera quinque.

In 1782 the provost of Valenciennes, the baron Pujol de Lagrave, who served as provost till 1789, and again after the capture of the city by the Duke of York, established here a school of art not unworthy the birthplace of Watteau and of Pater. Both of these painters are represented in the collection, the former by a characteristic little 'Conversation under the Trees in a Park' and by an interesting portrait of the sculptor Pater, the father of the painter. The two families of Watteau and of Pater lived on terms of such friendly intimacy at Valenciennes that the father of Pater sent his son up to Paris, to study his art under Watteau.

Watteau received his young compatriot so coldly, and made things so unpleasant for him, that he soon went back discouraged, to resume his career at home. There he encountered the hostility of the local corporation of St. Luke, that guild of painters refusing to allow him to practise his art without regularly passing through his apprenticeship, and taking his 'master's degree.' [Pg 268] Pater resisted, and the case went before the magistracy of Valenciennes, before the Provincial Council of Hainault, and finally before the Parliament of Flanders. It was contested for several years, and finally resulted in an arrangement, under which Pater bound himself never to paint in Valenciennes, 'under any pretext whatsoever.' He might go to Paris and paint as much as he liked, but in Valenciennes painting was the privilege of the corporation of St. Luke. This has a pre-Adamite sound in modern ears. But even now no man may lawfully kill or cure the sick in London or Paris or New York without a diploma, despite the 'epoch-making' principles of 1879. And the new French Chamber of 1889 apparently intends to forbid all foreign physicians to attend upon patients in France! In Valenciennes, as a matter of fact, a liberal School of Art was established in 1782, by which time both Watteau and Pater had done their life's work and taken their places among the masters in a world-wide corporation of St. Luke.

Two charming groups by Pater represent this painter in the Museum of his native city, together with a portrait of his sister, bequeathed by M. Bertin, the last representative of the Pater family in Valenciennes.

A grand and well-known triptych by Rubens, representing the preaching, the martyrdom, and the entombment of St. Stephen, in three compartments, upon the extension of which, when closed, appears a bold and striking picture of the Annunciation, is one of the chief treasures of the Museum. It belonged to the noble monastery of St.-Amand, which was wrecked and pillaged during the Revolution, and, with the valuable library of the monastery, very rich in missals and [Pg 269] manuscripts, was confiscated by the patriots of Valenciennes.

Another Rubens, of less importance, originally belonged to the church of Notre-Dame de la Chaussée, which was pulled down, as well as pillaged, at the same time. It seems to have been rescued from the spoilers by the good people of the neighbourhood, and was honestly bought for the Museum in 1866, not magnificently 'presented' to it by official 'receivers,' not much better than the original thieves.

François Pourbus of Bruges is represented here by two admirable full-length portraits of Philippe Emanuel de Croy, Comte de Solre, and of his sister, Marie de Croy, and by a full-length portrait of Dorothée de Croy, Duchesse d'Arschot, in a stately wedding-dress, painted, in the full maturity of his powers, at Paris, in 1617. This is the wedding-dress described, according to M. Foucart, an accomplished amateur of Valenciennes, one of the Conservators of the Museum, by Reiffenberg in his valuable book: '*Une existence de Grand Seigneur au XVI^e Siècle*,' and the Valenciennes Museum is particularly rich in pictures of interest from this, which may be called the documentary, point of view.

Among these must be reckoned a curious painting of the mother and the wife of Henri III., with sundry dames of high degree, and women of the people violently squabbling together over a pair of trunk-hose, the property of the king, who lies prostrate in one corner of the canvas, struck down by the clenched fist of a man in the robes of a member of the Parliament of Paris.

From this and from another painting on parchment which sets forth, as an inscription recites, 'the cruel martyrdom of the most reverend Cardinal de Guise by the inhuman tyrant Henri de Valois,' it may be clearly gathered that the people of French Flanders had very positive opinions, [Pg 270] and were not slow to express them, long before the Abbé Sieyès constituted himself the Isaac Newton of political science.

There is a goodly show, too, of historical portraits of interest, one of the Admiral de Coligny, which was exhibited at Paris in 1878, another of Fénelon, which came here from the pillage of

the Chapterhouse of Cambray, another of Prince Maurice of Nassau, another of Hortense Mancini. A good full-length portrait of Bardo Bardi Magalotti, colonel of the 'Royal Italian' regiment under Louis XIV., is set in a very remarkable frame of superbly carved oak, part of the woodwork of the demolished church of St.-Géry. Of historical interest, too, is a large Van der Meulen, representing the defeat of Turenne before Valenciennes in 1656, by the Spanish army under Condé. From a bird's-eye view of Valenciennes in the background of this large canvas, we may see how much the city has lost by the gradual destruction of its finest architectural features.

Within the last few years the Museum of Valenciennes has been endowed, through the munificence chiefly of a Wallachian nobleman, Prince George Stirbey, well known in Paris, with a unique collection of the works of Carpeaux, the sculptor of the famous groups which adorn the façade of the grand Opera House at Paris.

Carpeaux was born at Valenciennes, and the fine statue of Watteau which stands now in the city was both suggested and executed by him. So long ago as 1860, when he began to recognise his own place in contemporary art, he expressed his wish to have his memory perpetuated in his native place by as complete a collection of his works as could be made; and in his will, drawn up in 1874, he left to Valenciennes all his models in plaster, and all the drawings for his works, [Pg 271] together with all the sketch-books he had filled during his artistic life, and which were then in the keeping of his relations at Auteuil.

In process of time Carpeaux found it necessary to part with a great many of his drawings, and Prince George Stirbey, who had bought most of them, after the death of the artist, divided them into three lots, one of which he gave to the Louvre, another to the School of Fine Arts at Paris, and the third and richest to Valenciennes. To this princely liberality, Valenciennes is indebted for the singular fulness and value of the Carpeaux collection which it now possesses.

Among the portraits in the Museum proper, is one which ought to be sent to the Musée de la Révolution in Paris. It is a pastel of a typical Revolutionary personage, who bore the not very attractive name of Charles Cochon. He was one of the 'patriots' of 1792, and having vowed irreconcilable hatred to all kings and emperors, he was selected to go as a Commissary to the Army of the North after Dumouriez had delivered up Camus and his companions with Beurnonville to the Austrians. After the advent of Napoleon, this incorruptible Republican became one of the most serviceable servants of the new master of France, and ended his career as an Imperial senator, with the queer title of Comte de Lapparent!

I wisely availed myself of my first morning in Valenciennes to visit these collections in the Hôtel de Ville, for in the afternoon M. Guary, the son of the distinguished director of the great coal mines of Anzin, which I especially desired to see, kindly drove into my comfortable old hotel and most hospitably insisted on carrying me off to the mines.

At the beginning of the last century there was but a single house in all the territory now known as the Commune of Anzin. It is now the seat of a busy and growing town, a suburb, or—to speak [Pg 272] more exactly—an extension beyond the walls of the city of Valenciennes. This town has been called into existence during the last century and a quarter by the operations of the Anzin Company, the largest coal-mining company in France. The concessions held and worked by this company cover an area of 28,054 hectares.

Six years ago, when what is known as the great strike at Anzin attracted to this important region the attention of all persons interested in that question of labour, which the excellent M. Doumer tells us the 'true Republic' has been 'studying' in vain for ten years, the Anzin Company employed 14,035 workmen, of whom 2,180 were at work on the surface and 11,855 were employed on the subterranean work of the mines. The coal extracted, which had reached 1,677,366 tons in 1862, amounted in 1883 to 2,210,702 tons, being one-tenth part of all the coal-production of France. The coal-mining of Anzin is carried on now in the face of a great and increasing competition almost at its very doors. To the north and east lie the great coal-fields of Belgium, which in 1882 sent into France 4,064,625 tons of coal, and in 1883, 4,217,933 tons. On the north and west lie the great French coal-fields of the Pas-de-Calais, where, at Lens and other points, great discontent has shown itself during the current year among the miners, but which increased their output from 5,724,624 tons in 1882 to 6,148,249 tons in 1883. Then, beyond the Channel, England, which had sent into France, in 1882, 3,560,149 tons of coal, in 1883 sent in 3,818,205 tons; and, finally, from Germany in 1883 France took 1,186,769 tons against 1,035,418 tons. These figures will suffice to show the importance of Anzin as a coal-field. It draws its prosperity from roots struck deep into the soil nearly a century and a half ago, and long before the [Pg 273] traditional institutions of France were thrown into the melting-pot, amid the cheers of a mob in the streets, by another mob which called itself a National Assembly.

At the beginning of the last century, when, as I have said, there was but a single house in all the present territory of Anzin, coal was not known to exist in this part of France. In the Low Countries, then Austrian, and just beyond the French frontier, coal was mined, and it came into the head of an energetic dweller in the little town of Condé that what was found in Hainault might be found also in French Flanders. His name was Desambois, and he was not a rich man. But he succeeded in getting from Louis XV. a concession in 1717 authorising him to seek for coal within a considerable range of territory till 1740. The Crown even gave him a small subsidy. But the Mississippi bubble burst while he was struggling with the difficulties which surrounded him when he first struck certain imperfect veins of coal; and in the stress of that great crash he found himself obliged to part with his rights for the sum of 2,400 florins to two gentlemen of the *noblesse*, though not of the great *noblesse*, the Vicomte Desandrouin de Noelles, and M. Taffin.

There is a portrait in the Musée at Valenciennes of M. Desandrouin which shows the qualities one would expect to find in a man who so long ago and in such circumstances undertook such an enterprise with a limit of no more than eighteen years before him. These two connected with themselves a brother of Desandrouin, a 'gentleman glassworker' at Fresnes, and two brothers named Pierre and Christophe Mathieu. They worked on, undiscouraged but unsuccessful, for twelve years, until, finally, on June 24, 1734, Pierre Mathieu, who was a trained engineer, found [Pg 274] at Anzin the long-sought vein of bituminous coal.

This auspicious day is commemorated on the simple slab which marks the burial-place of Mathieu in the communal church of Anzin. When one considers what the discovery meant, and what its results now mean, to the welfare and the prosperity of France, one is tempted to regard the 24th of June as a date almost as well worth celebrating by Frenchmen as the 14th of July.

Marshal Villars is celebrated by a very uncomely obelisk on his battle-field of Denain near by, and General de Dampierre by a column in the public square of Anzin itself. Why should not Anzin set up a statue of Pierre Mathieu?

A comparatively short time sufficed to convince the adventurous associates that they had indeed found the great veins they had sought. Pierre Taffin went to Paris and got a considerable extension from the Crown of their concession. Money was raised and the work went on, bringing labourers and settlers to Anzin and founding the new industry. Then came a new danger, which might have been foreseen. The lords of the soil at Anzin had been quite left out of the calculation, but the lords of the soil at Anzin in 1734 were quite as well awake to their legal rights, and to the advantages to be derived from a judicious use of these rights, as were the small farmers of Pennsylvania long afterwards, when prospecting engineers began to sink shafts and to pump up oil along the slopes of the Appalachians. The Prince de Croy-Solre and the Marquis de Cernay brought forward their title to share in the riches found beneath their acres. Desandrouin and his associates contested these claims as long as they could. But the contests ended, as the lawyers had seen from the first that it must, in a compromise. The Prince and the Marquis on the one [Pg 275] hand with their titles to the land, and the Vicomte and his associates on the other with their royal concessions, came together, and in 1757 founded the Anzin Company.

As in the case of St.-Gobain, the capital of the company was divided into sols and deniers. There were twenty-four deniers, of which the Prince de Croy-Solre received four for himself and two associates, the Vicomte Desandrouin five sols and four deniers, the heirs of M. Taffin three sols nine deniers, the Marquis de Cernay and his six associates eight sols, and the engineer Mathieu six deniers. The phraseology of the articles of association is somewhat quaint and ancient, but the spirit of them is essentially fair and equitable. The recital of the objects for which the company was formed is a model in its way, and shows that the authors of these articles—nobles, rôturiers, engineers, and notaries of the *ancien régime* in 1757—had nothing to learn from Jean-Jacques Rousseau or the Abbé Sieyès as to the essential rights and duties of men in a civilised community. Thus it runs:—

'To bring about a general union of the coal-pits in the territory of Fresnes, Anzin, Old Condé, Raismes, and St.-Vaast, put an end to all the differences and proceedings brought before the Council and as yet unsettled, make it possible to live in good union and a good understanding, and secure the interests of the State and of the public by forming solid establishments, there are adopted by this present act, which shall be duly ratified before a notary, the following articles.'

These articles are nineteen in number, and, as in the case of St.-Gobain, one article binds the associates always to furnish, in proportion to their shares, whatever funds may be required for the enterprise.

The hereditary principle is distinctly recognised in these articles not only as to the ownership of [Pg 276] the shares, but as to the management, and the Prince de Croy-Solre and the Marquis de Cernay, with their successors, are accorded certain rights as arbitrators, and in the election of directors, a circumstance worth noting because I find that, notwithstanding the supposed abolition by the revolutionists of 1789 of the hereditary principle, and of titles of nobility and of privileges, these articles of association, just as they stood when they were signed and subscribed on November 27, 1757, were quietly recognised and registered, and a good fee taken for the recognition and the registration by the proper republican functionary at Paris, on the '11 Pluviôse, An XIII' of the Republic one and indivisible.

The main street of Anzin, through which M. Guary drove me to the offices of the company, is a broad and well-paved highway, with many shade-trees, and the houses, for the main part, well built, though not particularly picturesque. M. Guary tells me there are a good many small *rentiers* living here, which seems to show that the place must be orderly and quiet. Many of the houses are brightly painted, in blue, green, pink, and other colours not to be expected, and of cabarets the name is legion. M. Baudrillart pronounces intemperance to be a characteristic foible of the Flemish French, or French Flemings; but in these cabarets—which were, so far as I saw, rather exceptionally neat and even handsome—the customers seemed to be taking light beer and certain sweet beverages, rather than spirits.

At the main office I found M. de Forcade, a son of the celebrated minister of Napoleon III., to whom when he retired, on the accession to power of M. Emile Ollivier, the Emperor addressed a remarkable letter, recognising, in the strongest terms that could be used, his abilities, his [Pg 277] integrity, and his patriotism. M. de Forcade had just received a telegram from the father of M. Guary, at Paris, announcing his arrival at Anzin for the next day, and asking me to prolong my

visit, which I was very glad to do.

There are many factories at work in and around Anzin, but there is nothing Plutonian in the aspect of the place or of the neighbourhood, and the grimy side of coal-mining nowhere obtrudes itself. On the contrary the green fields, under a very high cultivation, everywhere encroach agreeably upon the town. The residence of M. Guary, the Director, stands in an exceedingly pretty park, and the mansion, a handsome modern château, is surrounded with fine and well-grown trees. You approach the mansion from the busy main streets of Anzin, traversed by a tramway leading to Denain, but from its windows and balconies which overlook the park, you gaze out upon the verdure and the spacious peace of a wide rural landscape.

A certain proportion of the workmen employed in the mines prefer to live in the town; but it is the policy of the company to encourage the development of cottage life, and wherever I went throughout its extensive domain I found families of the workmen installed in comfortable homes, surrounded by gardens and by what are called in England 'allotments.' Of these the company now owns no fewer than 2,628. Originally these houses were built in the form of *cités ouvrières*; but it has been found by experience that these blocks of contiguous houses are open to certain objections from the point of view of health, as well as from the point of view of morals, and the more recent constructions are detached cottages. A model of one of these cottages was exhibited in the social economy section of the Exposition at Paris this year, But it was more satisfactory to [Pg 278] see them actually inhabited and on the spot. Each cottage is built in a field of land of two acres in extent, and the rent varies from three francs and a half to six francs a month. For the lesser sum, or for forty-two francs a year, a workman at Anzin earning an average wage of three francs a day, or in round numbers a thousand francs a year, may thus secure a well-built house—most of those I saw were of brick—with proper drainage and cellarage, containing two good rooms on each of three floors, with closets, and standing in its own grounds.

Compare this, not with the squalid and noisome single rooms for which in the worst parts of Spitalfields a rent of tenpence a day, or five shillings a week (Sunday being thrown in free when the weekly rent is duly paid), or thirteen pounds sterling a year is exacted—but with the average rental of lodgings in the manufacturing towns of Massachusetts!

But this is not all. Whatever repairs are needed in these houses are made, not by the tenants, but by the company, and the company further leases to its workmen, who choose to avail themselves of them, at very low rates garden sites within each commune, for cultivation as kitchen-gardens. No fewer than 2,500 families now have such holdings under cultivation, making a total of 205 hectares thus put to profit by the workmen, who take a lively pleasure in cultivating them during their leisure hours.

Every workman is allowed furthermore by the company seven hectolitres of ordinary coal per month for his own use. In cases of illness, or where a workman has a family of more than six persons, this allowance is increased. In 1888 the coal thus given by the company amounted to 598,550 quintals, representing a money value of 359,150 francs. This is not only a practical [Pg 279] application of the Scriptural injunction 'not to muzzle the ox which treadeth out the grain;' it is a practical contribution to the solution of the great 'question' which M. Doumer in his Report tells us the 'true Republic' has been for ten years making believe to study—of the participation of the workman in the profits of the work. It is, indeed, from this economical and practical point of view, and not from the philanthropic point of view, it seems to me, that all these advantages conceded by the Anzin Company to its workmen should be considered.

No man of common sense needs to be told that to deal successfully with industrial enterprises which require the investment of a large capital for the production of commodities liable to great fluctuations in price, the managers of such enterprises must be executive men employing executive methods. If all the workmen employed in such enterprises are to be admitted in the ordinary way to a participation in the profits, they must obviously be admitted to a participation in the councils, and in the direction of the policy of the managers. How is that to be brought about without endangering the success of the enterprises? To consult the workmen of the company on technical questions within the range of their regular employment is one thing; to consider the commercial and fiscal policy of the company in its relation with competing companies, and with the consuming public, in a general conclave of all the establishment, would be quite another thing. It is a curious fact that in the original statutes of 1757 the founders of Anzin expressly provided that the six directors of the company should, when necessary, consult not only the employés, but the workmen of the company—the '*ouvriers*;' and this provision was insisted on at a time when, as the doctrinaires of the nineteenth century would have us believe, [Pg 280] 'labour' was not recognised in France as a social force to be considered.

Under its existing system of management the Anzin Company makes its workmen real participants in the profits of its operations, without at the same time exposing them to participate in the losses.

This is done not only through the singularly low rates at which the workmen are enabled to house themselves and their families, through the coal allowance, through the provision of cheap kitchen-gardens, and particularly through the establishment of a pension fund and of a savings-bank, but in many other forms.

Advances repayable without interest, for example, are made to workmen who wish to buy or to build houses for themselves. These advances in 1888 stood in the books of the company at a total of 1,446,604 francs, of which 1,345,463 fr. 91 c. had been repaid, leaving a balance due to the

company then of 101,140 fr. 9 c. With these funds workmen of the company had bought or built for themselves 741 houses, being thus visibly, and unanswerably to the extent of the value of these houses, participants in the profits of Anzin.

Not less real is the participation of the workmen in the profits through the various beneficial and educational institutions which I visited with M. Guary, or with his son, and of which I shall presently speak.

The concessions now possessed by the Anzin Company are eight in number: those of Vieux-Condé, Fresnes, Raismes, Anzin, Saint-Saulve, Denain, Odomez, and Hasnon. These concessions cover, in the form of an irregular polygon, about thirty continuous kilomètres of territory, stretching from Somain to the Belgian frontier, with a breadth varying from seven to twelve [Pg 281] kilomètres. The total area amounts to 2,805,450 hectares.

Of these concessions the four first-named were the original basis of the organisation of the company under the controlling influence of the Prince de Croy-Solre at the Château of l'Hermitage which still belongs to his family near Condé.

The others have been acquired since 1807; Hasnon, the latest, which covers about 1,500 hectares, in 1843.

But—and this is a notable fact—the Anzin Company from the beginning to this day has been organised and managed under the original statutes of 1757. Under these statutes, devised and drawn up absolutely under the *ancien régime*, and by an association of practical engineers and enterprising adventurers with feudal seigneurs, this great company has, for more than a century and a quarter, administered with signal success, and still administers, what may be fairly called an industrial republic, carrying on its affairs and developing its resources in the face of the enormous changes of modern life, and maintaining here, under what are thought to be the most trying conditions of labour, a most remarkable measure of harmony between an ever-increasing nation of labourers and a strictly limited administration, composed not only of capitalists, but of hereditary capitalists. What becomes of the rights of man and of the Abbé Sieyès, and of the Tiers-Etat, which 'ought to be everything,' and of the 'immortal principles of 1789,' in the face of all this?

To the wisdom of the National Assembly the workmen and the Company of Anzin owe considerably less than nothing. The National Assembly, of course, meddled with the mines of France, as it meddled with everything else. It did endless debating over the subject, in the course of which Mirabeau declaimed eloquently against the doctrine of Turgot, that the mines belong to [Pg 282] the men who find them, a doctrine which, after all, is much more rational than the more recent contention of sundry modern Orators of the Human Race that 'the mines belong to the miners'! But after it had talked itself hoarse, the Assembly had to descend to the prosaic business of legislation, and in dealing with the mines, as in dealing with other matters, it made a muddle of the laws which existed before it met, and left this muddle to be resolved into a new order of things legal, under the presiding genius of Napoleon.

Under the *ancien régime* the rights of the feudal lords of the land over the mines beneath the soil had been contested by the steadily increasing power of the sovereign. In the case of the Anzin Company, and of the articles of association adopted in 1757, we see the practical good sense of the practical men who adopted those articles bringing about a good working arrangement between the concessions granted by the Crown and the claims advanced by the lords of the land. The republican legislators in 1791 concocted a mining law, under which the dominion of the sovereign, taken over by the State, was brought into perpetual conflict with the recognised, but undefined, rights of the lords of the soil. Such was the mischief caused by this ill-digested law that, in 1810, Napoleon made an end of it, and substituted for it an imperial law, under which the absolute ownership of mines in France might be conferred by a concession of the Government. 'The act of concession,' says the seventh article of the law, 'gives a perpetual ownership of the mine, which from that moment may be disposed of and transmitted like any other kind of property, and no holder of it can be expropriated, except in the cases and under the forms prescribed with, regard to all other properties.' This law of course made an end both of the [Pg 283] royalties of the old French system, and of the English and American doctrine that he who owns the land owns up to the sky and down to the centre of the earth. For while the State recognises under this law the owner of the surface, and provides that the State shall give him what may be called a kind of 'compensation for disturbance' though on a scale to be fixed by itself, it recognises in him no ownership whatever of the mine beneath his soil.

Nor does it recognise under this law any right in the discoverer of a mine to a proprietary interest in a property which but for him might never have existed as an available property at all, either for the owner of the surface, or for the State, or for the concessionary of the State. The founders of the Anzin Company in 1757, it will be seen, recognised the right of Pierre Mathieu, the discoverer of bituminous coal at Anzin, to such a proprietary interest in the mine he had discovered; but they recognised it with a practical and sensible reference to the concurrent rights also of other people, and to the general utility. So much more deftly, it would appear, were practical questions, involving the interests of labour and of capital, handled under the *ancien régime* by practical persons, whether nobles, engineers, or adventurers, who had a practical interest in settling them wisely, than by theoretical persons, 'philosophers and patriots,' whose only practical interest lay in 'unsettling' them, during the long legislative riot which began in 1789.

The influence of this period upon labour and capital in France is well illustrated in the records of this company at Anzin.

In 1720, when poor coal, *charbon maigre*, was first found by the Vicomte Desandrouin and his friends at Fresnes, fifty-five tons of the mineral were extracted. In 1734, Pierre Mathieu 'struck it [Pg 284] rich' at Anzin, and work began in earnest. By 1744 the yearly output reached 39,685 tons. In 1757, when the Company of Anzin was finally formed, and the articles of association were signed, the output of the concessions worked by the company amounted to 102,000 tons. From that time it increased, not 'by leaps and bounds,' but steadily, till in 1789 it had reached 290,000 tons. In 1790 it increased again to 310,000 tons. Then came a decline—gradual at first, but as things grew worse at Paris, sharp and sudden. The output fell to 291,000 tons in 1791—fell again to 275,500 tons in 1792. With the murder of the king, and the final crash of law and order throughout France, in 1793 the output dropped suddenly to 80,000 tons, or less by 20 per cent. than it had been in 1756, the year before the company was finally formed. In the next year, 1794, it dropped again to 65,000 tons, a point below that of the production in 1752, four years before the formation of the company, when the lords of the land were in the thick of their legal battle with the Vicomte Desandrouin and the concessionnaires.

Things began gradually to look better as it became more and more clear that the Republic could not last, and with the establishment of the Consulate and the Empire they grew better still. But it was not till 1813 that the output approached the figure reached in the last year of the monarchy, 1790.

With the disasters of 1814 and 1815, of course, it fell again; but within two years after the restoration of the monarchy, in 1818, the output reached and passed the highest point attained before the Revolution, and stood at 334,482 tons. In 1830 the output had reached 508,708 tons, but the revolution of that year threw it back again, in 1831, to 460,864 tons. Under the monarchy [Pg 285] of July, the production gradually, though not regularly, increased again, until in 1847 it had reached 774,896 tons, only to be struck down by the senseless Revolution of 1848 to 614,900 tons in 1849. It went up with the establishment of the second Empire in 1852 to 803,812 tons in 1853, and by 1870 had reached 1,633,818 tons.

Under the governments of M. Thiers and of the Marshal-Duke of Magenta, during which, according to M. Doumer, the Republic existed 'only in name,' the output went up till, in 1877, it passed the two million limit, only to recede again with the advent to power of M. Gambetta and his friends, with their 'true Republic,' under which it fell in 1884 to 1,720,306 tons. The elections of 1885, marking the rise of a great conservative and monarchical reaction, were followed, in 1886, by an increase in the output of the Anzin mines to 2,337,439 tons; and in 1888, when from one end of France to the other, the Republic was officially and almost hysterically declared by the authorities to be in deadly peril, and men were speculating as to whether President Carnot, or General Boulanger, would open the Exposition in 1889, the Anzin output reached 2,595,581 tons.

Of course, account must be taken of other than political considerations in estimating the significance of this record, nor do I wish unduly to dwell upon what may be called its barometrical value in the study of contemporaneous French history.

But when we consider the relations of coal to all the great industries of our time, it is certainly noteworthy that for more than a century every development in Paris of a tendency favourable to republicanism in France, should appear to have been followed by an unfavourable effect, and every development unfavourable to republicanism in France by a favourable effect upon the [Pg 286] production, at Anzin, of a mineral which has come to be the 'staff of life' of all modern industry and commerce.

For during the whole of this period Anzin has been what it still is, the coal-capital, as St.-Gobain is the glass-capital, and Creuzot the iron-capital of France. Its mines produce about one-tenth of the total output of French coal. A falling off, therefore, in the output of the Anzin mines may be fairly enough taken as an indication of disease in the body politic of France. The most considerable falling off in this output of late years was in 1884, when the production fell to 1,720,306, from 2,210,702 in the preceding year, 1883. Two of the great French industries, the iron industry and the sugar industry, both of them most important consumers of coal, were then passing through a period of depression, the over-production of sugar in Germany having seriously damaged the French sugar-producers in particular. To meet the pressure put upon them by the decline in the demand for coal, the directors of the Anzin Company found it necessary to carry out certain economies, either through a reduction of wages or through some modification in their methods of production.

If they had been allowed to do this through an undisturbed arrangement with their workmen, there is no reason to doubt that it would have been done with little friction, and with no injustice to anyone. Wages at Anzin had steadily risen from a daily average, for the surface workmen, of 3 fr. 67 c. to 4 fr. 52 c. in 1883, concurrently with the development at Anzin of that system of practical participation in the profits to which I have already alluded. For the subterranean workmen, the advance had been from 3 fr. 38 c. in 1879 to 3 fr. 72 c. in 1883. [Pg 287]

The spirit in which the Anzin Company has been administered from the beginning is strikingly illustrated by the steady advance in the wage of the workmen. In Belgium, one of the chief seats of the competition with Anzin for the coal-market of France, on the contrary, the wages of the workmen are subject to the fluctuations of the general market. In 1873, for example, the average wage of the workmen in the mines of Hainault, as given to me by M. Guary, was 4 fr. 69 c., or

about 25 per cent. above the average wage of 1883 at Anzin. But 1873 was the year of the great advance in coal. In 1876 the average Hainault wage fell to 3 fr. 45 c.; in 1879 it fell to 2 fr. 68 c., and in 1880 it stood at 3 fr. 6 c. By 1880 the average wage at Anzin had risen (and steadily risen) to 4 fr. 23 c.

During the year 1883 the expenditure of the Company upon the assistance fund, the pension fund, the medical services, the gratuitous supply of fuel, the cottages, in addition to, and not at the expense of, the wages paid, reached a total of 1,224,730 francs. During this same year the profits of the company, as stated after an inquiry by the French Minister of Public Works, amounted to 1,200,000 francs. This really seems to warrant the assertion that at Anzin in 1883 the profits of the mines were virtually divided into two equal portions, one of which went to Capital and the other to Labour. Assuming this assertion to be, even roughly speaking, accurate, why should there have been any serious collision between Capital and Labour, in such an organisation, over a question of practical economies necessarily advantageous to both?

Yet there was such a collision. In February 1884, what is known as the great strike at Anzin broke out over a proposed improvement in the methods of working, the demonstrable effect of which must be to improve the position of the best workmen employed by the company, without [Pg 288] doing real injustice to others. A similar strike had occurred a quarter of a century before, when the company insisted on introducing from England and Belgium the use of ponies in the subterranean galleries. But in 1884 the conservative instinct of the workmen, which predisposes them in all callings against innovations of any kind, was adroitly worked upon and influenced by the direct influence of the politicians of the 'true Republic' at Paris. A workman of the company named Basly, who had taken an active part in organising a syndicate of mining workmen under a law passed in 1881 to favour such syndications, put himself into communication with the advanced Radicals at Paris, constituted himself the champion of the syndicates of workmen, and, according to the testimony given before a parliamentary committee, fomented a formidable exterior pressure upon the workmen at Anzin, to bring about the strike which eventually took place, and in connection with which M. Basly became a conspicuous figure in French Republican politics, receiving a much larger wage as a deputy than he had ever earned in the mines at Anzin, where, as the books of the company show, though by no means an exceptionally good workman, he earned, in 1881, 4 fr. 93 c., and in 1882 4 fr. 71 c. a day.

One obvious object of the syndicates of workmen being to establish a kind of despotic control over all the workmen of any calling, the syndicate of mining workmen at Anzin set itself, a year before the strike, in 1883, to break down what is known at Anzin (and elsewhere in France also, M. Guary tells me) as the system of 'marchandages.'

Under this system the company makes contracts with the workmen at a fixed price for coal, deliverable during several months. A good workman, holding one of these contracts and [Pg 289] stimulated by it, frequently gains from 20 to 25 per cent. more than the average daily wage of his class. The syndicate wished to establish 'equality' of wages, or, in other words, to put idle or inferior workmen on the same level with industrious and superior workmen.

To this end, the leaders resorted to the methods usual in all such cases, of intimidation and actual violence. Workmen at Anzin who had taken 'marchandages' were attacked and beaten, some of them so severely as to disable them for weeks.

At the parliamentary inquiry which followed the strike of 1884, such letters as the following, sent to workmen at Anzin, a year before, in 1883, were produced and read in evidence:—

'Cachaprez

'Citizen,—In the name of the syndical chamber of the miners of Anzin, thou art forewarned that, if thou dost not cease thy *marchandage*, as we have informed Lagneaux, thou wilt pass, in the sight of thy brethren coal-miners, for a traitor and a coward, as well as thy seven comrades, who are worth no more than thyself.

'If thou dost not what we exact of thee, be not surprised to find thyself stretched out a bit, and to be laid up for three weeks, as well as the good-for-nothings who are working with thee.

'Receive our great contempt.

'A group of workmen who will caress thee
one of these days if thou dost not give
up thy marchandage.'

Letters like these, which would not discredit the rural terrorists of Kerry and Clare, were followed, not only by attacks on the obnoxious workmen, but by the destruction of their flowers and vegetables in the gardens which, as I have stated, they are enabled by the company to [Pg 290] cultivate. As a workman may go to his work as soon as he likes in the morning (the gates are closed just before six o'clock), they have their afternoons to themselves, and those of them who have gardens I found working there with great evident satisfaction at most of the points which I visited.

With the outbreak of the 'strike' in 1884, matters grew worse. Dynamite was then called into play. Fusees were exploded under the windows and in the doorways of workmen who refused to be coerced into leaving their work. As nearly nine-tenths of the workmen had gone, or been driven, into the strike, the cabarets in which the region abounds were filled with crowds of idle men. Radical speakers and managers hurried down to Anzin from Paris, to harangue the multitude and stir the people up to mischief, and the position of the workmen who stood out against an agitation which they knew to be founded on no grievance of theirs, and which could have no possible result for them but to injure the company, with the prosperity of which they felt their own prosperity to be identified, became really dangerous.

In the thick of the contest thus provoked and carried on, it is interesting to find M. Allain-Targé, of whom I have already had occasion to speak, in connection with his conduct as Minister of the Interior during the elections of 1885, appearing on the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry, of 1884, into the situation at Anzin, as a friend and advocate of the 'syndicate of workmen,' and urging the Anzin Company to accept the syndicate and its secretary, M. Basly, as an umpire between itself and the 'strikers,' who had been seduced or coerced into 'striking' by this very syndicate and its secretary!

What possible good, either to Labour or to Capital, can be rationally expected—what possible harm to both may not be legitimately feared—from a republic controlled and administered by such men? [Pg 291]

One curious and important incidental object of the 'syndicate of workmen,' and of M. Basly in promoting this strike of 1884 at Anzin, revealed itself to me in the very full Report of the Parliamentary inquiry which M. Guary was good enough to put at my service.

After devoting large sums of money to the various institutions and funds established by it for the benefit of the workmen, the Anzin Company invited the workmen themselves to contribute to their own savings and pension fund at the rate of three per cent. of their wages, the expenses of management being borne, of course, by the company. The 'syndicate of workmen' and M. Basly did not like this. They preferred that any contributions to be made by the workmen from their wages should be made, not to a fund guaranteed and administered by the company, but to a fund to be handled by the syndicate.

Whereupon M. Basly wrote, and caused to be circulated among the workmen, a letter signed by himself as secretary of the syndicate, in which he bade them regard the proposal of the company as 'a snare set for their liberties.' 'To sign any such agreement as the company suggests,' he said, 'will be to sign your own death-warrant and that of your children!'

'Citizens! your enemies see our Union established. They know that we are on the point of having a pension fund solidly established *under the guarantee of the State*, which shall leave us all free to work whenever we like.'

This idea of a Labour Pension Fund under the guarantee of the State is not, I need hardly say, of M. Basly's invention. It 'trots through the heads' of all manner of political adherents of M. Doumer's 'true Republic.' It was very neatly 'thrashed out' in a brief colloquy which. I noted down one day in Paris between a representative of the 'syndicate of jewellers' and a deputy, M. Thiessé. 'What would you think?' asked M. Thiessé, 'of an obligatory assessment on wages, intended to secure, by the authority of the State and with perfect safety, a certain pension to the workmen of your corporation?' [Pg 292]

Whereunto the jeweller, M. Favelier, replied: 'We prefer freedom in this respect, as well as from the point of view of our work.'

M. Thiessé returned undismayed to the charge.

'Then you would prefer to organise a pension fund in your syndical chamber? But if you had not means enough to ensure pensions to your workmen, what would you think of an institution which would ensure them a pension and bread for their old age?'

To which M. Favelier, suddenly striking the bull's eye and 'ringing the bell': 'We do not want the State called in, to lay new taxes upon us!'

M. Basly, who is probably a consumer rather than a payer of taxes, had more 'advanced' views than the Parisian jeweller. But his chief immediate object evidently was to secure contributions from the wages of the Anzin workmen to a fund to be controlled by the syndicate. What the eventual meaning to the contributing workmen of a fund so controlled is likely to be may be inferred from an incident which came to my knowledge not long ago, in London. A question arose between a certain association of English engineers, and men employed by one of the great English railway companies, over an issue not unlike that presented at Anzin by the demand of the 'syndicate of miners,' that the Anzin workmen should give up their long time and profitable contracts. The men in the employment of the railway were old and excellent railway men, who were earning, on a kind of special contract, something like a pound a week apiece more than the usual rates paid to their class. They were members of the association referred to, and, as such, had for many years contributed to its funds under a system which promised them a certain pension at the expiration of a certain number of years. This being the situation, these men were notified by the association that if they did not give up their special contracts and content themselves with the usual wages earned by others of their class, they would, in the first instance, be fined, out of their own money in the hands of the association, a pound a week for a given time, [Pg 293]

at the end of which, if they still remained in disobedience, their pensions would be forfeited!

I should be glad to know what 'employer' ever devised a more shameless plan than this for reducing workmen to slavery, moral and financial? Probably the laws of England, if called upon, would protect them against such outrages. But how is a workman in such circumstances to call upon the laws? How is he to meet the legal cost of defending his rights? How is he to face the organised hostility of men of his own class?

The 'strike' at Anzin in 1884 ended as 'strikes' are apt to do. A certain proportion of the men who had been foremost in accepting or promoting it disappeared from the service of the company; others, and the majority, escaped from the domination of the 'syndicate' and of M. Basly. That the conduct of the company throughout the crisis was such as to commend itself to the workmen in general may, I think, be inferred from the fact that a fresh attempt to bring about a 'strike' at Anzin, since I visited the place, completely failed. The attempt originated with the leaders of a [Pg 294] 'strike' which was actually carried out in the mines of the adjoining Department of the Pas-de-Calais. The means employed in 1884 to intimidate the workmen at Anzin were again used. The troops and the gendarmerie were, however, called out at Anzin, not to protect Capital against Labour, but to protect the working-men of Anzin who chose to keep out of the 'strike,' against men of their own class who tried to drive them into it. In this case the original 'strike' seems to have been provoked by local rather than general causes. The managers of the mines in the Pas-de-Calais had resolved to increase the output of their mines. This necessitated a considerable increase in the number of miners employed, and this augmented demand for mining labour, not unnaturally, led the men to demand an advance on their wages. They were encouraged to demand this advance, too, by a somewhat sudden rise in the market-price of certain descriptions of coal, and it is not perhaps surprising that it should not have occurred to them to ask themselves whether the rise in the market price did, or did not, mean a real increase of profits to their employers, who, of course, could only take a very partial advantage of the advance, on account of the long contracts under which by far the greater part of their output had to be delivered to their customers.

I drove with the younger M. Guary through a charming bit of woodland country, to visit a newly-opened pit—the Lagrange pit. Part of the way led us through a large forest full of fine, well-grown trees. The shooting in this forest is good, chiefly deer and pheasants. It belongs to the domain of the State, and is leased to a former director of Anzin. That the country is a pleasant land to live in appears from such facts as this, as well as from the blue, yellow, russet and rose-pink houses [Pg 295] which enliven the long highway from Valenciennes, and are the habitations of well-to-do people living here on their incomes. From Valenciennes to the Belgian frontier, indeed, the road is virtually one long continuous street of houses and gardens, as the railway is between New York and Philadelphia.

M. Guary pointed out to me the house of another ex-director of Anzin who has invested in a considerable tract of land here, on which he has put up a number of exceedingly neat houses. They are built of brick, like the small houses to which the working-men of Philadelphia are indebted to the philanthropic enterprise of Mr. Drexel and Mr. Childs; but I think it would astonish Mr. Drexel and Mr. Childs to know that a brick house, containing four good 'upright' rooms and two good garret rooms, all wainscoted in hard wood and well fitted up, well drained, and with a large cellar and a garden rather wider than the house, running back for several hundred yards to a fringe of picturesque forest, can be rented here, from this private proprietor, for 120 francs, or $24 a year.

At an average wage of 4 fr. 50 c. a day, working 25 days in the month, an average workman at Anzin may easily earn 1,350 francs a year, so that he may rent such a house as I have here described for a good deal less than one-tenth of his income. What is the ordinary proportion between the house-rent and the income of a respectable tradesman or mechanic in New York? But the Anzin workman who rents such a house as this on such terms, enjoys also free fuel, free medical attendance, and schooling for his children.

We called at one of these private houses, seeing the miner, whom M. Guary knew very well, standing at ease in his doorway and surveying the scene with a pipe in his mouth. He was a shrewd, stalwart man of about forty, who glanced down complacently at his own well-developed [Pg 296] limbs and laughed scornfully when I asked him what he thought of a proposition I had seen made at Paris, by a friend of the workmen, that forty should be fixed as the age of retiring pensions for miners. 'He may be a friend,' said the miner, 'but certainly he is not a miner!'

This miner had long done his day's work in the mine, and after his pipe was going to work in his garden, where his vegetables were coming forward very well. Nothing could have been better than his manners—quiet, manly, civil, without the rather aggravating slyness of the ordinary French peasant, and with absolutely nothing of the infantine swagger of the small French *bourgeois*. These miners here wear a picturesque and practical costume, something between the garb of a sailor and the garb of a fireman, and as their life—like the life of a fireman or a sailor—is lived a good deal apart from the lives of other men, and has a constant spice in it of possible danger, they acquire a certain self-reliance and self-possession which give them a natural ease and even dignity of carriage. In talking with more than one of them I thought I detected a slight tone of contempt towards other workmen and especially towards the peasants, such as tinges the talk of a sailor about land-lubbers. M. Guary confirmed this, and told me that the men, especially of the old mining stock, certainly do regard themselves as rather better than their neighbours.

This may have something to do with the Conservative strength in this region. Politics do not

apparently run very high among the miners, either here or in the adjoining region of the Pas-de-Calais. Valenciennes covers three electoral districts, and the Anzin concessions extend into each of these districts. In the second or St.-Amand district there was rather a lively contest in [Pg 297] September, between M. Girot, a Republican, and M. de Carpentier, a Boulangist. The latter received 5,894 votes, but the former was elected, with 8,331 votes. In the first Valenciennes district the outgoing member, an Imperialist, M. Renard, was re-elected, receiving 5,803 votes, against 4,856 given to his Republican competitor.

In the second district another outgoing member, M. Thellier de Poncheville, a leading Royalist, was also re-elected, receiving 8,690 votes, against 7,263 given to his Republican opponent. In both of these cases it came within my knowledge that the authorities of the Department made the most open and unscrupulous efforts to prevent the return of the outgoing members. Both M. Thellier de Poncheville and M. Renard, however, sate on M. Pion's Committee on the mines, and the mining population of the region appear to have a singularly clear notion of the difference between sense and nonsense in dealing with mining matters.

Our miner, who hit the difference so neatly between 'miners' and the 'friends of miners,' after a little chat on the doorway, asked us, very politely, to walk in and look at his home. It was very neatly and adequately furnished, with clocks in each of the ground-floor rooms, sundry framed mezzotints hanging on the walls, and a goodly show of neatly-kept crockery. The wife, looking older than her husband, but very probably his junior, cheerily pointed out to me the local improvement she had made by transferring the cooking-range from the front room, looking on the highway, to the back room looking into the garden. 'It is pleasanter, don't you think?' she said, 'to sit out of the kitchen; and then, with the kitchen at the back, one can always leave the door open. That is my idea!' We assured her we thought it an excellent idea and most creditable [Pg 298] to her—a compliment which she received with modest satisfaction, saying, 'You know the wife must think of these things!' to which the husband good-naturedly assented, while the daughter, a well-grown good-looking girl of fourteen, looked up from her household duties, much interested in our visit. The husband, on his part, had contrived a convenient wine-cellar under the stairway. 'It will not hold much wine,'he said with a smile; 'but it is too large for all the wine I drink.' 'Ah!' said the wife archly, 'he likes cider much better!'

This miner was employed in the new Lagrange pit, and though I was much struck by the neatness of his person and apparel, I was more struck by the general absence of anything like the griminess which we commonly associate with mines and mining among his fellows, whom I found still at work around the pits. M. Guary told me that this is a characteristic trait of the Anzin miners. In the buildings attached to each pit there is a large hall, called the miner's hall, where the men meet when they go down to and come up from their underworld. There each man has a box, under lock and key, bearing his number, in which he puts away his ordinary clothes when he dons his mining suit; the company—I should mention here—provides every man when he enters the service with a mining outfit. And to this hall there is attached a lavatory for the use of the men. The hall is well warmed in winter, and, being always on an upper floor, is well aired and ventilated in summer. From this hall at the Lagrange pit we walked into an adjoining room, where we found the miners going down the shaft in a great metallic basket, while the coal came up. While we stood there, there came up a magnificent lump of coal, of a very brilliant and even lustrous surface, around which the admiring miners crowded. This is a new vein, and the coal [Pg 299] found in it, M. Guary tells me, burns with an unusually clear and intense flame.

A miner with whom I talked a little had been to see the Exposition, and it was curious to perceive that he had been much more interested in the Anzin part of it than in anything else. He spoke indeed almost disrespectfully of the Eiffel Tower, and he was entirely convinced that the workmen at Anzin were much better off than the workmen at Paris, as to which I am not prepared to dispute his opinion. He had not seen the President, which did not appear to disturb him much; but he thought the beer at the Exposition 'very dear and very bad.' The engines, however, he frankly admired, though 'everybody can see that it is not possible to make better engines than are made at Anzin.'

One curious thing he told me of the young miners who are drafted away into the military service. 'When they come back,' he said, 'some of them at first try other trades, but all that are of any use sooner or later come back to the mine. It is of no use,' he said reflectively, 'for any man to try to be a miner if he is not trained as a boy.' This is exactly Jack Tar's notion as to sailors.

From the Lagrange pit we drove, still through pleasant woods and fresh green farming-lands, to Thiers, where the company has a large number of working-men's houses, together with a considerable church, a lay and a religious school, and other institutions.

There we paid a visit to a delightful little old lady, with a face, full of wrinkled sweetness and humour, which Denner might have painted. She insisted upon showing us all over her home, and a little miracle it was of thrift and neatness and order; from the spotlessly clean little bedrooms [Pg 300] with the high Flemish beds, the crucifix hanging over the bed, and prints—not always devout—on the walls, to the sitting-room with its shining mirror, highly polished tin and brass candlesticks and platters, and abundant china. She was a staunch Imperialist, and had portraits of the Emperor, with prints of Solferino and of Sedan. 'There it was that they betrayed him!' said the little old lady, with deep indignation in her voice. I had not the heart to ask her who these traitors were. The garrets I found filled with new-mown hay. 'It keeps there till we sell it,' she said, 'and then it smells so sweet!' which was undeniable. Behind her house (her son and his wife were both absent at their work) she showed us the garden, very trimly kept and gay with the old familiar

flowers, and an arbour, in which she took especial pride, none of her neighbours possessing anything of the sort.

At Thiers I talked with an officer of the company who had served for some time in one of the great mines of Southern France. The differences in the habits and character of the mining populations there and here he found very great, and, on the whole, he evidently thought the Northern miners much superior, in most essential points, to their fellows at the South. Certainly, according to him, they are neater in their persons, more cool and sensible, less credulous, less addicted to politics, and much more thrifty. 'The women, when they are well-behaved and good managers,' he said, 'have more influence with the men in the North. In the South and in Auvergne, I have sometimes thought the worst women had more influence with the men than the best.'

He had an odd theory as to the effect of great altitudes on human character. 'In Auvergne and in Savoy,' he said, 'the higher up you go the more excitable and quarrelsome you find the people. Here in Flanders the people are placid, like the plains.' He called my attention, too, to the prevalence among the miners here at Anzin of a peculiar type of blonds with a sort of ruddy russet hair and beard, not quite the glowing Titianesque auburn, and yet by no means red. It is certainly a marked and peculiar tint, and may be seen faithfully reproduced in a large picture of the Anzin miners exhibited this year at Paris. I had supposed it to 'hark back' to the Scandinavians, who made themselves so much at home in all these fat and accessible regions after Charlemagne passed away. [Pg 301]

'No,' said my philosophic engineer, 'it is due to the potash. These miners are so addicted to washing themselves and use such quantities of strong soap, that it has permanently affected their hair.' Upon which another engineer, also familiar with Auvergne, broke in: 'That's all very well; but I have seen many miners in Auvergne with the same tint of hair and beard, and you know that there they wash their faces, at the most, once a week!'

This last speaker was an exceedingly shrewd man and, as I found, a strong Conservative. He had been asked to stand as a candidate for mayor in his commune, but had declined, though his personal popularity made his election almost a matter of form. I asked him why. 'Let myself be elected to a political office by my workmen!' he said; 'how can a sensible man think of such a thing? Ask men to give you their votes, and what authority will be left to you? No, I think I know my business too well for that. They tried that sort of thing, you know, during the war, and a beautiful business they made of it! I suspect it was the Germans who suggested it!' [Pg 302]

What I am told of the morals of the people here reminds me of the traditional reputation of certain sections of Pennsylvania settled by the Germans in the last century, and of the Dutch in Long Island. There is a good deal of drinking. *Buvettes* are forbidden within the limits of the *cités ouvrières*, but in the communes they are very numerous, averaging, I am assured, as many as twenty to every 1,200 inhabitants. To open a *buvette* nothing is needed but a police permission, and the *buvettes* are kept, for the most part, by the wives of miners and other artisans, as a means of adding to the family income. Beer is very cheap, costing only two sous a litre. Wine and spirits are more costly, though a great deal of gin is made, and inexpensively made, in the country. There is much sociability among the people, and great practical liberality as to the conduct of young girls, the ancient practice known as 'bundling' in New England being still in vogue among these worthy Flemings. M. Baudrillart, who evidently inclines to a favourable judgment of these Northern populations, puts the truth on this point very considerately.

'Conspicuous historical examples,' he observes, 'prove to me that the flesh is weak in this province of Flanders. The severity of public opinion does not always make up for the laxity of the control exercised by principle. Unmarried mothers are numerous, and incidents of this sort are often regarded as simple errors of youth and inexperience, to be remedied by marriage. The marriage-tie when formed, however, is not less respected than among our rural populations in general, and cases of flagrant misconduct on the part of married women are rare.'

Offences against persons and property are not relatively numerous here. On the contrary, while the proportion of persons accused of crime is 12 to the hundred thousand, for all France, in this Department of the Nord it falls to 8⅓ to the hundred thousand, and this notwithstanding the numbers crowded into the great manufacturing towns of the department. In the Department of the Seine, which includes Paris, the proportion rises to 28 to the hundred thousand, and in the agricultural Department of the Eure, which is the champion criminal Department of France, to 30 to the hundred thousand. One might almost imagine that M. Zola must have gone to the Eure for his studies of French peasant-life. [Pg 303]

Without being particularly devout, the people of this region, I am told, are fond of their religious observances, and much dislike the persecution of the Church and the laicisation of the schools.

At Thiers the church, which is a large one, fronting on an extensive Place Publique, was very handsomely decorated on Corpus Christi Sunday by the people of the commune. Flags and garlands were put up, too, all about the Place Publique. The Anzin Company are now building a large school for girls very near this church; and I visited, with M. Guary, one afternoon, the boys' school at Thiers. It is very well installed in a large building, with a playground and a gymnasium roofed in, but not walled. The teacher—a lay teacher, and a very quiet, sensible man—who lives in the school-building with his wife, told me he preferred to keep it thus, and the boys liked it better. They were at their lessons when I visited the school, and a very sturdy, comely lot of lads they were. Some of them were *en pénitence*, having slighted their lessons, as the teacher slily

intimated, by reason of the great Church festival. This I thought not unlikely, and he did not appear to regard it as an absolutely unpardonable offence, while the juvenile criminals themselves were evidently quite cheery in their minds. In a room near the gymnasium were racks [Pg 304] filled with wooden guns. These the teachers pointed out with pride. They were a gift from the company to his battalion of boys, who delighted in their regular military drill. He thought them, after only eighteen months' training, one of the best boy-battalions in the department, and would have liked to take them to Paris to compete for the athletic prizes. But to take up even a picked company of ten would have cost 400 francs, which he thought, and I agreed with him, might be better spent in Thiers. 'And then,' he said with a smile, 'what a life I should have led in Paris, with those ten boys to look after!'

The Anzin Company used to spend 80,000 francs a year on keeping up its own schools. But it is so heavily taxed for the 'school palaces' which have been put up, and for the public schools, that it has materially reduced this outlay, though it still expends a large sum in various ways for the advantage of the children of its own workmen attending the public schools; and still keeps up certain religious schools, especially for the little children and the girls.

One of these schools for little children which I visited at St.-Waast, kept by the Sisters, was a model. The little creatures, ranged in categories according to their years, were pictures of health and good humour, as they sate in rows at their little desks, or marched about, singing in choruses. One exercise, through which a number of them, from six to eight years old, were conducted by two of the Sisters, might have been studied from a fresco by Fra Angelico representing the heavenly choirs, and gave the most intense delight evidently to the singing children as well as to the smiling and kindly Sisters. There is a large church, too, at St.-Waast and a *cité ouvrière*. [Pg 305]

The commune, I believe, formerly was a part of the wide domain of the famous Abbey of St.-Waast which grew up near Arras over the burial-place of St.-Vadasius, to whom after the victory of Clovis over the Germans at Tolbiac in 495 the duty was confided of teaching the Frankish king his Christian catechism. He had a tough pupil, but he taught him, so well that King Clovis conceived a great affection for him, and got St.-Rémi to make him bishop, first of Arras, and then of Cambrai.

At the time of the Revolution the great abbey near Arras, which bore his name, was one of the richest of the religious communities which, according to the very important *Avis aux députés des trois ordres de la province d'Artois*, so thoroughly and instructively analysed by M. Baudrillart, held among them in 1789 two-thirds of the land of that province. M. Baudrillart's analysis of this *Avis* shows conclusively that a judicious and systematic overhauling of these ecclesiastical properties was absolutely necessary; but it also shows conclusively that the people of Artois who desired this wished to see it done decently and in order. They had a strong love of their provincial independence. Even Maximilian Robespierre, who was then bestirring himself in public matters at Arras, addressed his first political publication, which he called a 'manifesto,' not to the people of Artois, but to 'the Artesian nation.' This from the future executioner of the French federalists is sufficiently edifying as to the great 'national' impulse to which we are asked by a certain school of political rhapsodists to attribute that outbreak of chaos in France called the 'great French Revolution.'

What the Tiers-Etat of the great and solidly constituted province of Artois really wanted before 1789 is clearly set forth in this remarkable *Avis*. They did not want the 'Rights of Man,' or the [Pg 306] downfall of tyrants, or any vague nonsense of that sort. They wanted a more fair and equitable system of taxation, and a better system of agriculture. They had some practical ideas, too, as to how these things could be got, for they knew that these things had been got in England. 'The Englishman of our times,' they said, 'gets an income of 48,000 pounds from a square mile of land, whereas the Artesian can hardly get 12,000 pounds from the same area. Yet the soil of Artois is in nowise inferior to that of England. The enormous difference can only be attributed to the encouragement and the distinctions which the English Government bestows upon agriculture, and to the better system of the English administration.'

This passage reads almost like an extract from the diary of Arthur Young, and it is noteworthy that Arthur Young at this same time, while he was commending in his diary the admirable quality of the deep, 'level, fertile plain of Flanders and Artois,' also expressed his opinion that 'nowhere in the world was human labour better rewarded than there.' Taken together, however, the *Avis* and the diary of Arthur Young prove that the leaders of the Tiers-Etat of Artois in 1787 were neither radicals nor revolutionists, but practical men, who wished to see the value of their property improved, and the natural advantages of their province more adequately developed. To this end they thought it necessary that the constitution of the Provincial Estates should be reformed. Thanks to a combination, as the *Avis* declares, of the municipalities of the towns with the *noblesse* and the higher order of the clergy, the *curés*—'that most interesting class of men who are alone in a position to make the needs of the people understood and to work for their relief—were entirely excluded from the Provincial Estates in 1669, as were also the farmers, who [Pg 307] alone can supply the means of perfecting our agriculture.'

'Here,' said the *Avis*, 'is the true cause of the prostration of our rural interests.' They proposed to apply a remedy by recasting the representation in the Provincial Estates, and giving 'two deputies out of three to the rural population.'

This having been done, so that agriculture might get in Artois the voice which the author of the *Avis* believed it to have in England, they then proposed a reconstruction of the system of taxation.

On this point they inclined to adopt, from the South of France, the system of paying the taxes not in money but in kind. The system of the tithes, too, needed a complete overhauling, not with the mere object of abolishing the tithes, but in order that the gross inequalities which the *Avis* sets forth as existing, in regard to the impact of the tithes, both territorial and personal, might be done away with, and the support of religion put upon a sound basis. This led naturally to a demand for the release of great areas of valuable soil in Artois from the control of religious communities, like the Abbey of St.-Waast, not a few of which were no longer in a condition to put these possessions to the best uses, either for the Church or for the country. In Artois, as in French Flanders, the extent of these ecclesiastical domains which had once been an advantage to the people, is admitted to have become disadvantageous to French agriculture with the decline of the feudal aristocracy and the growth of the royal power. Short leases only were granted in general by the Church and the monasteries, and under these short leases the farmers hesitated to improve their holdings.

The authors of the *Avis* desire that it may be made possible to obtain leases of even twenty-five years which should not be treated by the Treasury as an 'alienation' of the property leased. With [Pg 308] such leases, they say, 'the farmer would not hesitate to lay out money upon his land, because he would feel sure of getting the benefit of the outlay. This,' they add, 'is one of the principal means which the English Government has employed in bringing agriculture to the state of perfection in which we now see it in that monarchy.'

As the greater part of the *cahiers* of grievances prepared by the Tiers-Etat of Artois for the States-General of 1789 have been lost, this *Avis* is of great value, as setting before us the real objects of that order in Artois. The *cahiers* of the Artesian *noblesse* and the clergy for the States-General are all preserved, and in respect of the general objects to be aimed at in the States-General, these *cahiers* go much farther than the *Avis*. They seem to show that in Artois, as throughout the kingdom, the *noblesse* and the clergy were much more enamoured of what are now called the 'principles of 1789' than were the body of the agricultural population.

The *noblesse* and the clergy of Artois wished to see the States-General called at regular intervals, like the English Parliament. They wished the Provincial Estates to be maintained and to be convened annually, and they wished a provincial administration to be established under a system which should give the Tiers-Etat a representation equal to that of both the other orders united, and in which decisions should be reached not by a vote of the orders collectively, but by the members of the whole body voting individually, so that a measure as to which all the members for the Tiers-Etat should be of one mind, might at any time be carried if they could secure the adhesion of even a small number of the members from either of the other orders. Clearly it was [Pg 309] not necessary, in the case of Artois, that the Tiers-Etat should be declared to be 'everything,' in order that justice might there be done to the wishes and the interests of the Tiers-Etat! And if not in the case of Artois, why in the case of any other French province?

The *Avis* shows that in Artois before 1789 the representatives of the Tiers-Etat had confidence in the liberality and the common sense of the *noblesse* and of the clergy, and that they were disposed to consider all the abuses there needing reformation in the spirit of practical compromise which had presided over and made possible the development of liberty and of progress in Holland and in England, but of which no traces are to be found in the chaotic history of the 'National Assembly' of 1789. The authors of the *Avis*, for example, point out, in dealing with the questions of the tithes and of the seignorial dues in Artois, that it is the unequal and irregular impact, above all, of those impositions to which most of the evils flowing from them must be imputed; the ill-feeling they engender between the farmer and his landlord or his pastor, the bad blood they breed between the different orders. If the charges of one sort and another upon one field of a farmer's holding amounted, as was sometimes the case, to one-fifth of the value of the crop, while upon other fields of his holding the charges amounted to no more than one-thirtieth of the value of the crop, the farmer not unnaturally gave his chief care to the fields which were least heavily encumbered, without much troubling himself as to their agricultural merits relatively to the other fields.

But while the authors of the *Avis* earnestly desired to see all this changed, and called for the most complete revision and re-organisation of the agricultural system in Artois, they raised no [Pg 310] philosophical clamour against privileges as privileges, and they had sense enough to see that no community could afford to bring about the abolition of the most obnoxious 'privileges' at the cost of any flagrant violations of the Rights of Property. 'Whatever may have been the origin of these rights,' say the authors of the *Avis*, 'their antiquity has made them property to be respected in the hands of those who possess it. To deprive these owners of these rights would be an injustice and an act of violence of which no citizen can possibly dream. The privileged orders must be asked to divest themselves of their privileges.'

Here is a recognition of 'vested interests' for which we may look in vain from the motley mob of the 'National Assembly' into which the States-General of 1789 so rapidly resolved, or—to speak more exactly—dissolved, themselves! With men of the Tiers-Etat, in a province like Artois, who could see things so plainly and state them so fairly before the convocation of the States-General, what became the French Revolution, plunging the whole realm into anarchy, might surely have been made a reasonable and orderly evolution of liberty. Such a document goes a good way in support of the contention that with ordinary firmness, consistency, and courage on the part of the luckless Louis XVI., the convocation of the States-General in 1789, instead of leading France, as it actually led her, through a quagmire of blood and rapine, into what George Sand felicitously called the 'merciless practical joke of the Consulate,' and the stern reality of the despotic First

Empire, might easily have resulted in converting the absolute monarchy of Louis XIV. into such a limited and constitutional monarchy as France really enjoyed under Louis XVIII. The pathway to the Inferno of the Terror was really paved with the good intentions of the king. [Pg 311]

Beyond St.-Waast lies the considerable town of St.-Amand-aux-Eaux, to which General Dumouriez transferred himself, on the pretence of taking the waters there, while he was working out his plans for saving France by marching on Paris and upsetting the Assembly. The plans miscarried mainly through his own fault, but it is a curious vindication of the patriotism of Dumouriez in making them that, while he was explaining to the lunatics in Paris, in January 1793, the absurdity of attempting to overthrow the English power in India, and the German empire in Europe, before feeding and clothing their armies on the frontier, de Beurnonville, whom Dumouriez was destined to seize and arrest at St.-Amand, was himself writing from the headquarters at Sarrelouis to Cochon Lapparent at Paris that everything was going to the dogs, and that the Government was mad about chimeras. 'We think of nothing,' he said, 'but giving liberty to people who don't ask us to do it, and with all the will in the world to be free ourselves, we don't know how to be!'

St.-Amand now has a population of ten or twelve thousand souls. Part of the Anzin property lies within the communal limits, but the place is a busy place and has industries of its own. It is connected with Anzin and with Valenciennes by a steam tramway, and I went there with M. Guary one fine summer morning to see what is left of the once magnificent Benedictine monastery of the seventeenth century, which was the great feature of St.-Amand a hundred years ago. A picture preserved in the collection at Valenciennes gives a fair notion of the extent and magnificence of the abbey, the demolition of which has been going on from 1793 to this day. M. Guary remembers the stately ruins as much more extensive in his youth than they now are, and [Pg 312] as the good people of St.-Amand have very recently allowed the local architect to put up, under the very shadow of the exquisitely beautiful belfry still standing, one of the most dismal and commonplace brick school-houses I have seen in France, it is to be presumed that a few more years will see everything pulled down, and replaced, perhaps, by a miniature reproduction in steel and iron of the Eiffel Tower.

Before the deviltries of 1789 began, the marketplace of St.-Amand must have been one of the most picturesque in Northern Europe. The market is still held there, and the place was full when we crossed it of peasant women and peasants, carts laden with vegetables, tables set out with all manner of utensils, with fruits, with knicknacks. All was bustle and animation. It was the old picture, save for the uncomely modifications of our modern costume. But of the splendid architectural frame in which that picture once was set, how little now is left!

Beside the lofty belfry, one of the most graceful seventeenth-century buildings now to be anywhere seen, a few arches of one of the cloisters and one of the great abbatial gatehouses converted into a town-hall! The Vandal Directory of Chauny dealt more rationally with Prémontré than the 'patriots' of St.-Amand with their superb abbey. Had they preserved it, their town would now have possessed not only an architectural monument of interest and importance, but ample space and the best possible 'installations' for all its public uses and offices.

Like all the Benedictine abbeys, St.-Amand was a home of letters and of arts. What remains of its noble library is to be found, as I have said, in the collection at Valenciennes. Of the treasury which the abbey contained in the way of sculpture, painting, brass and iron work, carving in [Pg 313] wood, no such account can be given. Such of these as escaped destruction were looted, sold, and dispersed. There is a tradition, well or ill-founded, that some exceedingly fine sixteenth-century monuments executed by Guyot de Beaugrant, the sculptor of the matchless chimney-piece which, in the Chambre Échévinale at Bruges, commemorates the expulsion of the French under Francis I. from Flanders, were brought here and set up in the abbey. If so, no trace of them remains. In the gatehouse, of which the local authorities have taken possession, a few fine old books, relics of the abbatial library, are still kept, and the vaulted chapter-room on the upper floor, used now as a council chamber, contains four interesting *dessus de porte* painted here by Watteau. The subjects are scriptural, of course; but as, in spite of all her efforts, the obliging damsel who acted as our cicerone could not possibly manage the blinds and sashes of the lofty window in the octagonal room which they adorn, it was impossible to make out to what period of the artist's career they belong. Upon one of them—the 'Woman taken in Adultery'—we got light enough thrown to show that its colouring is admirable. It can hardly have been painted while Watteau was at work in Paris on his endless reproductions of the then popular St.-Nicholas, but must probably have been executed after his study of Rubens in the Luxembourg, and his failure to win the first prize at Rome had opened to him his true path to fame, and carried him into the French Academy of Fine Arts as 'the painter of festivals and of gallantry.'

The fine old church of St.-Amand has fared better than the abbey. It has been judiciously restored, and the third Napoleon made it an historical monument. Despite the Radicalism of the place, we found it thronged with people of both sexes—the men, indeed, almost in a majority— [Pg 314] attending a high mass. It was rather startling, as we emerged from this service on our way back to Anzin, to come upon a large cabaret which bore for its sign the words, in glaring gilt letters, 'Au Nouveau Bethléhem, Estaminet Barbès.' Whether this is the conventicle of a sect of believers in the revolutionary Barbès I could not learn. But it is just possible that the Barbès, whom it celebrates, may be the enterprising proprietor of the place, and that the sacred name he has given it is a relic of that familiar use of holy things which never scandalised the good people of the Middle Ages, particularly in Flanders and in France. Does not the best old inn in the comfortable town of Châlons-sur-Marne to this day bear the name of 'La Haute Mère de Dieu'?

I have already said that the miners of Anzin have been practically enjoying all the advantages of co-operation, while the 'true Republicans' of M. Doumer have been 'studying' and going to sleep over that 'beautiful and generous idea.' As a matter of fact, the 'Co-operative Society of the Anzin Miners,' now known in commerce as 'Léon Lemaire et Cie of Anzin,' was founded, I find, even before the Co-operative Association of the Glass-workers at St.-Gobain.

It was organised in 1865, two years before the passage of the Imperial law affecting co-operation.

M. Casimir Périer, a son of the Minister of Louis Philippe, and the father of the present Republican deputy of the same name, was then a director of the Anzin Company. He had seen what M. Doumer fantastically imagines to be the purely French and republican 'idea' of co-operation carried out in England, the 'beautiful and generous idea,' as even every French schoolboy ought to know, being of English and not of French origin. [Pg 315]

M. Périer had been particularly struck by the great success of the Rochdale experiment—an experiment begun and carried out, as Mr. Holyoake has set forth at length, by weavers, who, being nearly at the end of their tether, and worn out with distress, had associated themselves into a company under the name of the 'Equitable Pioneers of Rochdale.' He looked thoroughly into the history of this experiment, and having convinced himself that the 'beautiful and generous' idea might bear as good fruit at Anzin as at Rochdale, he went to work in earnest, got the society organised, accepted the honorary chairmanship of it, and set it on its feet on February 21, 1865. M. Cochin took the same matter up at St.-Gobain, and in 1867 the Imperial law, about which M. Doumer and his 'true Republicans' have been cackling and dabbling for ten consecutive years, was enacted, and the co-operative associations became legally constituted bodies. The statutes which now govern the Anzin Association were adopted on December 8, 1867, and the Association was formally launched.

The authorities at first could not be made to understand that a co-operative association was not a mercantile speculation, and for some time the Anzin Association was compelled to pay a regular fee for a licence, or 'patent,' as it is called in France. This exaction, however, was long ago given up.

Under the original statutes the profits derived from the sale to the members of the Association, and to them only (a rule never departed from), of all the goods purchased by the Association, were to be divided into a hundred parts. Of these, seventy parts were to be distributed at the end of each year to the members, proportionally to the sales and deliveries made to each of them. Twenty parts were to be set aside for a reserve fund; and the remaining ten parts were to be used by the governing committee chiefly in paying the salaries of the manager and employees of [Pg 316] the Association.

Such was the success from the outset of the Anzin experiment that within six years, at a general meeting held on April 24, 1872, the Association adopted a resolution suspending the payment over into the reserve fund of the twenty parts of the profits set aside to be so paid, and ordering these twenty parts also to be paid over to the members semi-annually. The reserve fund had already reached proportions which made it unnecessary and even undesirable to increase it.

The Association was originally constituted for a term of twenty years, from December 10, 1867. At a general meeting held on March 27, 1887, its life was prolonged for another twenty years, or to December 10, 1907.

It might edify M. Doumer as to the nationality of the 'beautiful and generous' idea which his 'true Republicans' find it so difficult to 'study,' if he would take the trouble to visit this Anzin region. He would find the establishments of the Association currently known by the English name of 'stores.' I found one of them flourishing in every commune which I visited in the vicinity of Anzin; at St.-Waast, where the experiment was first made, at Denain, where during the past year it has been found necessary to establish two stores instead of one—at Anzin, at Fresnes, at Thiers, at Abscon, at Vieux-Condé! The Association, indeed, which began in 1865 with fifty-one members and a subscribed capital of 2,150 francs, now conducts no fewer than fifteen 'stores,' and now consists of no fewer than 3,118 families.

The capital of the Association, originally fixed at 30,000 francs, in 600 shares of fifty francs each, was increased by a vote of a general meeting in April 1882 to 250,000 francs. The 'firm-name' is now 'Lemaire and Company,' the present manager being M. Léon Lemaire, who can use this [Pg 317] 'firm-name' only for the affairs of the Association. The manager (or *gérant*) is elected at a general meeting to serve for three years, but he is always re-eligible. His salary is fixed by the governing committee, and the amount of it is charged to the general expenses. The governing committee has power also to present the manager, if it thinks proper, with a certain sum each year taken from the ten parts of the profits which are set apart by the statutes of the Association to be used for such purposes by the Committee. All the persons employed by the Association in various capacities are taken, as far as is found compatible with the interests of the business, from among the families of the members. This is particularly the case with regard to the young girls, of whom forty-eight are now employed in the different drapery and mercery stores, and an excellent practice has been adopted of calling in a certain number of girls when there is a special pressure of business to serve for a short period, these girls being regularly registered, and thus constituting a sort of reserve corps, from which the permanent employees are taken as vacancies are made.

The operations of the Association cover all manner of commodities excepting butcher's meat, it

having been found that there are insuperable difficulties in the way of dealing in butcher's meat over so wide an area. These difficulties do not exist in the case of what the French call *charcuterie*. A central pork butchery has been established just outside the *octroi* at Anzin, and the business done in that line now averages about 30,000 kilogrammes a year, the difference per kilogramme between the buying and the selling prices averaging about eighteen francs. It is the iron rule of the Association never to sell at a figure beyond the average ruling retail prices in the shops, it being quite clear that if it should now and then be necessary, in order to cover the [Pg 318] Association, to sell at prices equivalent with the shop prices, the members would still have a real advantage in the eventual distribution of the profits.

It is impossible to examine the statutes, and the rules adopted under them, without being struck by the precision, clearness, and efficiency of the methods prescribed to keep the accountability of all the different agents of the Association within easily definable limits, and to simplify, in the final adjustment, the necessarily complicated accounts of so many stores dealing with customers many of whom must, from the force of circumstances, be allowed a credit of a fortnight as cash. The proof of all such methods, of course, is the net result. In the case of the Co-operative Association of Anzin this proof is conclusive in favour both of the methods and of the men by whom they have for now more than twenty years been administered.

The operations of the Association for the first semester of its existence closed on February 22, 1866, with sales amounting to 71,020 fr. 10 c., and with the payment to the members of an 8 per cent. dividend, amounting in all to 8,228 francs. From that day to this, the semi-annual dividend has never fallen below eight per cent., excepting for the half-year ending August 22, 1868, when it was declared at 7½ per cent. By August 1872 it readied 12 per cent. and stood there for three semesters. It then fell to 10 per cent., and stood there from February 28, 1874, to August 28, 1878, when it rose to 11. By August 31, 1879, it rose to 12, and by February 29, 1884, to 13 per cent., at which figure it has stood ever since down to February 28, 1889, with two exceptions—August 31, 1884, when it rose to 14, and February 28, 1887, when it fell to 12¼.

The total amount of sales made to the members between February 1866 and February 1889 was [Pg 319] 38,864,999 francs; and the total amount of dividends paid to the members during that period has been 4,585,557 fr. 69 c., showing an average dividend during these twenty-three years of 11.80 per cent.

It appears to me that this is a very good account rendered of a very good stewardship, and involves, for the workmen interested, a number of useful practical lessons on the true relations of capital to labour, including the relations of their own capital to their own labour. There are now about 800 Co-operative Associations of Consumers in France; but the Anzin Association is by far the most important of them all. As the existing associations are estimated to consist on an average of 550 members each, we have 440,000 heads of families, and a total presumable population, therefore, of not far from 2,000,000, more or less successfully availing themselves of the co-operative principle in France. The net profits vary greatly in the returns of these associations, from 1 to 14 per cent. The Co-operative Coal Association of Roubaix shows a net profit of 21 per cent., and the Co-operative Bakery of the same busy and thriving city a profit of 23 per cent. But the Anzin Association not only covers more ground than any of the rest: it covers it in a more equably satisfactory fashion. During the past year, on an employed capital of 156,150 francs, it made sales amounting to 2,303,836 francs, with a gross profit of 450,497 fr. 61 c., and a net profit of 310,106 fr. 30 c. Each man had spent an average of 738 fr. 28 c., and received a net profit of 99 fr. 45 c. In other words, every holder of a 50 franc share paid for his share out of a single year's net profit, and pocketed 49 francs to boot!

As indicating the scale of comfort attained in their daily life by these miners and their families, it is of interest to glance over the schedule of the goods and commodities supplied by these co- [Pg 320] operative stores, it being premised that the stores do not keep or sell what are regarded as 'articles of luxury,' so that in these schedules we have the present scale of the necessaries and comforts of ordinary life among the more industrious and thrifty of the French working-classes. That even in the seventeenth century the French artisans, and the more prosperous of the French peasants, lived much more comfortably than one would infer from the pictures usually painted even by such historians as Michelet, who, with all his theories and all his imagination, took more trouble than M. Thiers to keep within hailing distance of the facts, would seem to be shown by the inventories and the wills of artisans and peasants disinterred during the last quarter of a century from the local archives of Troyes and other important towns.

Here, in the Anzin district, to-day, we find these co-operative stores supplying to 3,000 families of the working-class 12,000 metrical quintals or bales of the finest quality of wheat flour, 3,000 of these going to the houses of the members, and 9,000 to the bakery of the Association, which turns out, on an average, 1,100 loaves, of 3 kilos each, per day. With this bread the members take from the stores annually 110,000 kilos of the best butter, 50,000 kilos of coffee, 37,000 kilos of chicory, 4,000 kilos of chocolate, 13,000 Marolles cheeses from the land of Brétigny—where Edward III. was scared by a tremendous thunderstorm, which made him 'think of the day of judgment,' into giving peace to France and liberty to her captive king—200,000 kilos of potatoes, 6,000 kilos of prunes d'Enté, 11,000 kilos of rice, 15,000 bottles of wine, 12,000 bottles of vinegar, 33,000 bottles of spirits of various sorts, 45,000 kilos of salt, 6,000 boxes of sardines, 100,000 kilos of maize and corn, 34,000 kilos of bran, 90,000 kilos of sugar, 20,000 kilos of [Pg 321] beans, 30,000 kilos of ham, sausages, and other products of the pork-butchery. That butcher's meat, which, for the reasons I have mentioned, the stores cannot supply, plays a large proportional part in the obviously good dietary of these families, may, I think, be inferred from

the fact that the stores annually dispose of 10,000 pots of the best French mustard, and of 1,000 kilos of white pepper. Vegetables and fruits are supplied in abundance by the country, and in many cases by the allotments of the workmen themselves, while beer, as I have said, is everywhere abundant and cheap.

That the miners and working-people of Anzin are well lodged and well fed may be considered to be beyond a doubt. Let us now see what they do in the way of clothing themselves, and of furnishing their houses.

They buy from the stores annually 30,000 francs'-worth of kitchen and household utensils, which are both well made and cheap in all this part of France, 600 kilos of mattrass wool, 4,400 yards of sheeting, 500 wool and cotton blankets and bedspreads, 9,000 towels, 44,000 pairs of sabots, 10,000 pairs of shoes, 4,600 caps and hats, 2,200 pairs of stockings, 3,700 shirts and 6,000 mètres of shirting, 17,000 mètres of *piqué*, 2,000 undervests and 2,000 mètres of flannel, 6,000 handkerchiefs, 52,000 mètres of linen goods, 17,000 mètres of lustrines; 7,200 mètres of merinos, 7,000 mètres of muslins, 14,000 mètres of *Indiennes*, 57,000 francs'-worth of mercers' wares, 24,000 mètres of calicoes, and, finally, 3,100 yards of velvet. When we remember that this is the annual outlay for keeping up the household wardrobe, not the original outlay in establishing it, it seems to me that the workpeople of Anzin ought to be, and indeed one need [Pg 322] only walk and drive about the region to see that they are, at least as well clothed as they are housed and fed.

Umbrellas even have come to be regarded as 'necessities' here, and the stores annually supply 1,300 of these useful but essentially fugitive articles. The men are clothed by their village tailors and bootmakers chiefly, so that the masculine wardrobe is represented in the accounts of the stores less extensively than the feminine. But the Anzin miners nevertheless annually invest in scarves and cravats to the number of more than 4,000. Each man on going into the employ of the company receives, as I have said, a complete mining outfit, the cost of which is not defrayed out of his wages. But the miners annually buy, on an average, 500 new mining-suits for themselves.

Tables, chairs, bedsteads, bureaux, well made and often handsome, are to be had in all these communes at very low prices; and I went into no house in any of them which did not seem to me well equipped in these particulars. Engravings, coloured and plain and lithographs, are to be found in them all, and though the people are obviously not much addicted to literature, I found in one miner's house at Thiers quite a collection of books, and most of them good, sensible, and instructive books, installed in an upper chamber, in which the housewife said, her 'man' liked to sit and read when it was too hot out of doors in the garden.

This good dame, by the way, was of the opinion that 'the house gives you the character of the wife,' and that 'the conduct of the husband depends upon the character of the wife.' Her own 'man' was evidently an excellent and orderly person, so I considered it a legitimate compliment to assure her that I entirely agreed with her. [Pg 323]

I hope, for the future of France, that she may be right. For there seems to be a tendency here, as there certainly is in other parts of France, to insist on sending their girls to the religious schools, even when they allow their boys to attend the lay schools, where they are exposed to having the 'true Republican' deputies and functionaries of the time get up—as M. Doumer did the other day, at the opening of a new lay school in the Aisne—and propound the doctrine that 'morals have nothing to do with religion.'

The lay schools are attended, for example, in Anjou by 22,451 boys, and only 3,562 girls: while the free congreganist schools are attended by 25,360 girls, and only 5,232 boys.

Adding the number together, this gives us a total of 30,592 children in the religious, as against 26,013 in the anti-religious or irreligious schools of one province.

If my good housewife at Thiers is right as to the influence of the character of the women in France upon the conduct of the men, there is hope in these figures, which I am assured pretty fairly represent the state of things in Flanders as well as in Anjou, with the difference that the proportion of boys attending the religious schools is probably larger in Flanders than in Anjou. M. Doumer's doctrine that 'morals should be taught independently of religion' certainly did not commend itself to all his constituents. The *Journal de St.-Quentin*, commenting upon it, plainly said, 'The verdicts of our assize courts show us every day the result of the atheistic instructions recommended by M. Doumer and the rest of the Masonic Brothers. The truth simply is that if some remedy be not soon found for the situation created by these people, who are as stupid as they are mischievous, in a few years we shall be obliged either to decuple the gendarmerie, or to [Pg 324] allow every citizen to go about armed with a revolver, in order to protect himself against our much too liberally emancipated young scolos!'

Curiously enough this voice from St.-Quentin in France substantially echoes another voice from another St. Quentin in California—the seat of the State Penitentiary in that young and active and opulent American commonwealth. In California the plan of giving instruction in morality, independently of religion, has been tried much longer than in France, and certainly in circumstances much more favourable to its success. The result, as set forth in an Official Report of the resident director, cited by Mr. Montgomery, ex-assistant Attorney-General of the United States, in his treatise on 'The School Question,' is that, while the illiterate convicts in the California penitentiary, at the date of the report, numbered 112, against 985 who could read and write, '*among the younger convicts they could all read and write*'.

I have already spoken of many of the advantages offered by the Anzin Company to its workmen and miners, as amounting really to a kind of participation in the profits of the company. This, I think, must be admitted to be clearly the case with regard to certain regulations affecting workmen's pensions, established here by the governing council of the company in December 1886.

These regulations are to affect workmen who contribute to what is known as the 'National Retiring Fund for Old Age.' This fund was established originally in 1850 under the presidency of Louis Napoleon. It was re-organised by a law passed in July 1886, and by a decree issued in December 1886. It is under the guarantee of the State, and is administered by a committee co-operating with the Ministry of Commerce. Its object is to enable working-men and others to secure annuities up to the amount of 1,200 francs a year, at or after the age of fifty, by the [Pg 325] payment of small regular assessments on their wages. The smallest sums are received by the fund, which of course is managed on principles not unlike those of the great life insurance companies. A running account is kept with the treasury to meet the current expenses of the fund, but all the rest of the money received by it is invested in the French public funds, or in securities guaranteed by the State. No part of the compound interest received by the fund is deducted to meet the expenses of administration. It all goes to the account of the depositors, the current expenses being met by the Deposit Fund, which manages the Retiring Fund. If at any time before that fixed for his enjoyment of the retiring pension, the depositor should be made incapable of work by some illness or accident, he is at once put into possession, without awaiting the age fixed in the original agreement, of a pension or annuity proportioned to the amount of his actual payments and to his age at the time when the incapacity is medically and legally established.

Every year a certain amount is voted by the Chamber as a subvention to this fund, and out of this annual appropriation these 'premature pensions' may be increased by the committee in charge of the fund. This is a sort of practical State socialism beyond a doubt. But it is at least as respectable as the expenditure made in this year's budget of 6,500,000 francs, or about one fifth of the whole amount of the French naval pension list, on annuities of indemnification 'to the victims of the *coup d'état* of 1851,' the *coup d'état* of 1851 having been simply a collision between the Legislature of that year, trying to suppress the Executive, with the Executive trying to suppress the Legislature, with the result that the Executive carried the day, and that the [Pg 326] French people, by an overwhelming majority, approved the victory of the Executive.

Why the socialistic principles at the bottom of the National Retiring Fund for workmen should not be extended to others than working-men it is not easy to see. The French pension-list is now very heavy. It figures in this year's budget at nearly a hundred millions of francs, exclusive of the military and naval pensions, which amount to about one hundred and twenty-five millions more, and without counting the *débits de tabac*, which are in fact a kind of pensions used freely by deputies and other functionaries of influence to reward services of all sorts. Of these about two hundred were given away in 1888, the list filling five pages of the huge reports of the Finance Ministry.

The National Retiring Fund for Old Age is managed by a high committee of sixteen, which must include two deputies, two state councillors, two presidents of mutual aid societies, and one manufacturer. Workmen who choose to avail themselves of the fund may break off and renew their payments into it as they like, and increase or diminish the amount of their annual deposits without affecting by any interruption the value of their previously acquired interest in the fund. Deposits may be made in the name of any person at or after the age of three years, so that a father may in this way, if he likes, form a small property for his children. The authorisation of the father, however, is not required to validate deposits made in the name or for the benefit of a child, unless these deposits are made by the children themselves, in which case they merely show the authority of their parents as guardians until they have attained the age of sixteen. Married women may make deposits independently of their husbands, but unless these deposits are gifts to [Pg 327] them, they are held to be equally the property of the husband and wife where these are not legally separated. In case of the absence either of the husband or of the wife for more than a year, a justice of the peace may authorise the deposit of money to the exclusive benefit of the partner on the spot. Deposits of one franc are received from one person, but in no case can one person deposit more than one thousand francs a year. The capital deposited may be alienated to the fund or reserved. In the latter case the capital may be returned, but without interest, to the representatives of the depositor in case of death. Any reserved capital may be alienated for the purpose of increasing the income at a certain age, to be named by the depositor when he signs the alienation.

The pension incomes are guaranteed by the State. They become payable at any full year of age selected by the depositor between fifty and sixty-five years. After sixty-five the pension-income is paid to the depositor from and after the first quarter-day following the deposit. Up to 360 francs the pension-incomes are not liable to be seized for debt. If they accrue from a capital presented to the depositor the donor may have them declared unsellable to their full amount.

Funds deposited in the National Sayings Bank may be transferred in whole, or in part, to the National Retiring Fund for Old Age.

Under the conditions of this fund an annual alienated deposit of 10 francs, begun at the age of thirty years, will secure the depositor at fifty an annuity of 28 fr. 62 c., at fifty-five of 47 fr. 89 c., at sixty of 81 fr. 43 c., and at sixty-five of 145 fr. 97 c.

The regulations adopted by the Anzin Council in 1886 are intended to duplicate the results of this

system of the National Retiring Fund for the benefit of any workman who chooses to make himself a depositor in the National Fund to the amount of 1½ per cent. of his annual wages. [Pg 328]

Suppose, for example, a miner earning 1,500 francs a year chooses to deposit in the National Retiring Fund 22 fr. 50 c. a year. Upon verification of this the Anzin Company will pay into the same fund for him annually an equal sum. This would give the miner who began his deposit of 22 fr. 50 c. a year at the age of thirty, a pension-income at the age of fifty of 128 fr. 74 c., or just about the pension-income which he would draw at the age of sixty-five from the National Fund if he began a payment of 10 francs a year into that fund at the age of thirty-two. A miner who began his annual deposit of 22 fr. 50 c. in the National Fund at the age of twenty-one, taking advantage then of the regulations of the Anzin Council, would enjoy at fifty a pension-income of very nearly 250 francs a year.

Under the Anzin regulations, the two payments made by and for the workmen concerned are inscribed in an individual bank-book which becomes his property. The sums paid in by the company are alienated, and to the exclusive advantage of the workman, while he is left at liberty to alienate or reserve his own payments. If he is married, of course his personal payments are held to be made one-half for the benefit of his wife.

In the case of subterranean miners, the company will begin to carry out this system as soon as they enter its service, and without regard to their nationality. In the case of the surface workmen, they must be eighteen years of age, and must have been in the service of the company for at least three years without interruption. The reasons for the difference are obvious.

The payments of the company cease at fifty years, but the workman is not obliged to draw his pension-income then, as by continuing his personal payments he can put it off, thereby increasing it until he attains the age of 55, 60, or 65. [Pg 329]

To meet the case of miners drawn into the army, the company, as long as the miner so drawn and returning to its service shall remain in its service, will pay in fractions, and within a period equal to that of his military service, into the National Fund for his benefit a sum equal to the percentage he would himself have paid into the National Fund upon his wages, calculating them as being the same during the period of his military service that they would have been had he remained there at work in the mine.

In the case of a workman who falls ill or is injured, the company, if he is a member of a mutual aid society, which will make his personal percentage payments for him, will pay itself an equal sum during his illness or incapacity for at least one calendar year. After that each case must be separately dealt with.

Furthermore, and in addition to these general conditions, the company will grant to workmen long in its service, who shall have made their regular payments to the National Retiring Fund under these regulations, when they give up work, supplementary pensions calculated at the rate of 3 francs a year for fifteen years of service for the miners, and of 1 fr. 50 c. a year for fifteen years for the surface workmen. These supplementary pensions are doubled for married workmen, so that they may amount to 90 francs a year for miners, and to 45 francs a year for surface workmen.

On the whole, I think the miners of Anzin knew what they were about when they stood aloof from the 'strike' in the Pas-de-Calais. To do this was to aid the 'strikers' themselves much more effectually than by joining in the strike. For surely the spectacle of such an orderly prosperity as exists at Anzin, the result of equitable relations maintained for years between Capital and Labour, is the strongest possible argument in support of the reasonable demands of Labour. But what are the reasonable demands of Labour? [Pg 330]

It appeared from an inquiry made by the 'Society of Mineral Industries' after the great strike of 1883, that, out of ten coal-producing companies in the North of France which maintained Assistance Funds for the miners, the Anzin Company alone did this entirely at the expense of the company. The nine other companies reported a joint revenue of 821,133 francs in 1882 for these Assistance Funds, of which amount the workmen furnished 603,097 francs. The outlay for 1882 exceeded the revenues and amounted to 849,839 fr. 49 c. But, in addition to the 603,097 francs furnished by the workmen to these funds, the nine companies in question expended themselves, in pensions, medical service, school subventions, free fuel, hospitals and other contributions to the welfare of these 32,849 miners and workmen, no less than 2,942,694 fr. 91 c. So that while the workmen expended on an average 3 per cent. of their wages in maintaining Assistance Funds, these nine companies (excluding Anzin, where no demand was made on the workmen) expended for the benefit of the workmen and their families an amount equal to 9 per cent. of the wages paid by them, and to 24 per cent. of the interest and dividends paid to the stockholders. On the average the companies thus spent about 50 c. for every ton of coal extracted.

Could labour reasonably demand more than this of capital?

Under the leadership of deputies like MM. Basly and Camélinet, backed by the revolutionary press of Paris, the miners in another part of France, at Decazeville, went on 'strike' in January 1888. They began by brutally murdering M. Watrin, one of the best managers in the country. They kept the whole region idle and in terror for three months and a half. They inflicted great loss on the company and disturbed all the industries of France. They themselves lost 630,427 francs of wages. The company finally granted an increase of wages representing only 1½ per cent. of the wages sacrificed by the strike. The Municipal Council of Paris, which had fomented [Pg 331]

the strike, magnificently gave the miners 10,000 francs of money which did not belong to them. All the Radical press together subscribed 70,000 more. The Decazeville charities gave 2,231! And the next year all the miners testified that they had been quite content with the wages before the strike, and gave a banquet to the chief engineer! [Pg 332]

CHAPTER XII

IN THE NORD—*continued*

LILLE

Thanks to Louis XIV., French Flanders became politically French more than two centuries ago. But it still remains essentially Flemish. The land has a life and a language of its own, like Brittany or Alsace. The French Fleming is rarely as haughty in his assertion of his nationality as the French Breton; but when a *Monsieur de Paris*, or any other outer barbarian, comes upon a genuine *Flamand flamingant*, there is no more to be made of him than of a *Breton bretonnant*, standing calmly at bay in a furrow of his field, or of the bride of Peter Wilkins enveloped in her graundee.

Even in the great and busy cities of Lille and Roubaix, the Flemish tongue holds its own against the French with astonishing pertinacity. But if French Flanders is still more Flemish than French, the Flemings, I believe, are very good Frenchmen, just as I imagine the most enthusiastic Welshmen of Mr. Gladstone's beloved little principality, would be, after all, found, at a pinch, to be very good Englishmen.

Architecturally, their ancient Flemish capital, Lille, now the chief town of the great Department of the Nord, is decidedly more French than Flemish.

The seven sieges it has sustained have left it quite bare of great historic monuments, and during the past thirty years millions of francs have been spent upon its streets, squares, and boulevards, with the result of giving it the commonplace and comfortable look of a growing quarter of Paris. [Pg 333] Its famous old walls have been improved off the face of the earth; and I am glad to say that few if any of the noisome cellars seem still to exist in which, when I first knew the place, not so very long ago, thousands of its industrious working people used to dwell like troglodytes.

Marlborough's cannon spared the fine seventeenth-century Spanish Lonja, and there are traces still to be discerned about the modernised mairie of the ancient palace of Jean Sans Peur and Charles the Fifth. But there is no Flemish building here comparable with the Hôtel de Ville and the Beffroi of Douai. Of old Flemish customs and traditions, however, there is no lack in Lille, and I came upon a curious proof of the vitality of its local patriotism. This was the regular publication, in the most widely circulated morning newspaper, of a series of carefully prepared articles on the archæology and antiquities, the legends and the archives of the old Flemish capital. One of the editors of this journal showed me in his office a collection of these articles, reprinted from the newspaper, and now filling some twenty volumes.

I spent my first midsummer morning at Lille in the Musée which has been installed in the Hôtel de Ville. The Wicar collection of drawings there, I need hardly say, is of itself a 'liberal education' in art. During his long residence at Rome in the Via del Vantaggio, the Chevalier Jean-Baptiste Wicar wasted neither his time nor his money. What treasures were then to be picked up by such a man—for Wicar died not long after the Revolution of July 1830! Where he found his Masaccios, Robert Browning told me that he knew; but where did he find that incomparable bust in wax which charms with all the mystic feminine grace and more than all the feminine beauty of the [Pg 334] Mona Lisa? Possibly M. Carolus Duran may be able to throw light upon this; for he was one of the earliest beneficiaries who profited by the fund which the Chevalier Wicar founded for the purpose, as he says in his will, of 'giving to young men, natives of Lille, who devote themselves to the fine arts, the means of sojourning at Rome for four years, under certain conditions.'

The Chevalier Wicar was a good Catholic, and he gave to his fund the title of the 'pious foundation of Wicar.'

I suppose that under the Third Republic this monstrous recognition of an unscientific emotion would have sufficed to vitiate the scheme, in which case France would have lost the artistic achievements of M. Carolus Duran.

The house in the Via del Vantaggio I believe still makes a part of the 'pious foundation,' and the municipality of Lille has very sensibly added a yearly sum of 800 francs to the 1,600 francs allotted under the will of the Chevalier Wicar to each beneficiary, together with a travelling outfit of 300 francs.

Coming back from the Musée to breakfast in my very comfortable hotel near the *gare*, I found there awaiting me M. Grimbert of Douai, who had most obligingly come over to show me what the friends of religion and of liberty are doing in Lille to prove that the religious sentiment is not 'dead' in this part of France, and that the Christians of French Flanders do not intend to let their children be 'laicised' into the likeness of M. Jules Ferry and M. Paul Bert, without an effort to prevent it.

The Department of the Nord has long been conspicuous in France for the number and the excellence of its educational institutions. The statistics collected by M. Baudrillart show that it stands side by side, in this respect, with the Department of the Seine. Of the 663 communes [Pg 335] which make up the Department of the Nord, only three in 1881 were without a school. The department contains 1,680,784 inhabitants. Of these, considerably more than one-third, or 680,951, live in the 17 cantons and 129 communes of the arrondissement of Lille, which includes of course the city, and here we find 340 public schools, 1,038 classes for instruction, and 116 free educational establishments. Over against this organisation of education must be set a very notable development of intemperance. I do not infer this from the extraordinary amount of beer-drinking which goes on in the Nord, to the extent, according to M. Baudrillart, of 220 bottles a year to every man, woman, and child in the department, against 170 in the Ardennes and 153 in the Pas-de-Calais. For, after all, it may be doubted whether habitual drunkenness is much more common in beer-drinking than in wine-drinking countries; and there can be no question, I think, that it is much less common in countries in which wine is abundant and cheap, than in countries in which wine is an imported luxury. But the consumption of alcoholic liquors is apparently on the increase in this great department.

At the beginning of this century, long before Lille and Roubaix had begun to draw into their factories such great numbers of the rural population as now yearly throng into these prosperous cities, a prefect of the department, M. Dieudonné, declared that it was not an unusual thing to see workmen in Lille who worked only three days in the week and spent the other four in drinking corn brandy and Hollands gin. At that time the workpeople of the sister city of Roubaix had a much better reputation, while of the rural populations of French Flanders Dr. Villermé then affirmed, after a careful study of their habits, that nothing was to be seen among them of the [Pg 336] 'debauchery and the daily and disgusting drunkenness prevalent in the large towns.'

Persons familiar with the rural aspects of the Nord assure me that this can no longer be said with truth of the rural farm-labourers. It is, probably, more true of the farmers and of their families than it was fifty years ago, but it is, unfortunately, also less true than it then was of the rural labourers. The number of small cabarets has quadrupled during the last quarter of a century in the arrondissement of Douai alone, which contains 6 cantons, 66 communes, and 131,278 inhabitants, the majority of them occupied in agriculture; and, taking the whole department, it appears that the consumption of spirits represents an increase of 100 per cent. in the average consumption of pure alcohol in the last forty years. It rose from 2.52 litres, in 1849, for every man, woman, and child, to 4.65 litres, in 1869, and it is now estimated to reach 6 litres, which would represent an annual consumption of about 16 bottles of brandy at 42 degrees, for every man, woman, and child in the department. I did not happen to see any drunken women or children in the department, but M. Jules Simon, in his work, *L'Ouvrière*, gives an uncanny account of feminine drunkenness at Lille, where there are special cabarets, it seems, for women. I believe no special estaminets have yet been set up there for women addicted to tobacco, and, indeed, I do not know that the civilisation of French Flanders has yet reached the point of treating the question 'whether women ought to smoke' as a practical question, worthy the grave attention of savants and philosophers. Possibly, if England, like France, had enjoyed the advantage of sixteen changes in her form of government, and of three successful foreign invasions, during the past century, questions of this sort might now subtend no greater an arc in [Pg 337] England than they now subtend in France. And it certainly ought to interest Englishmen to know that the example of England is freely cited in Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing, and other centres of Flemish life and activity, to support the 'noble and military' amusement of cock-fighting, to which the good people of these regions are extraordinarily addicted. A law was passed against this practice under the presidency of Prince Louis Napoleon in 1850, and many attempts have since been made to suppress it—but with small success. A Republican prefect of the Nord, some years ago, actually wrote to the President of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals that he would not hesitate to 'enforce the provisions of the law against cock-fighting whenever the practice seemed to be likely to become too general!' I do not know that I ever stumbled on a more delightful recognition of the Eleventh Commandment of demagogism, '*vox populi vox Dei*!' Naturally, with such encouragement as this, the sport of late years has been assuming, I am told, a recognised place among the amusements of the people. Fighting-cocks go into the arena as champions of the towns in which their owners dwell; and if the feathered Achilles of Roubaix does the feathered Hector of Tourcoing to death, the spectators not unfrequently take up the quarrel, divide into two camps, and have it out handsomely on the spot. These things I note because they tend to show how difficult it is to develop an ideal civilisation in a few years by the simple process of forbidding men to teach, or to believe in, the existence of a Divine Ruler of the Universe.

For the same reason, and without unduly dwelling upon it, I may here record the statement made to me by an editor of an influential journal in Lille, that in no city in France has the evil of juvenile prostitution taken such root as here. When I expressed my surprise at this, the French [Pg 338] law as to the *détournement de mineures* being at least as stringent as the English, he replied: 'How can you expect such a law to be enforced under this Government?' and he then went on to show me in an old file of his journal an account, now some years old, of the adventures of a deputy from Versailles in the Palais Royal at Paris. 'Our Republicans,' he said, 'are firm believers in the great principle of the solidarity of all the party with all the haps and mishaps of every member of the party.'

A more confirmed pessimist, by the way, than this journalist I have not seen in France. He was quite convinced that the Republicans would show a majority in the seven circumscriptions or

districts of Lille at the elections in the autumn, and he criticised very severely the attitude of the Catholics at Lille in regard to politics. 'They are excellent people,' he said, 'but they think too much of the souls of the people and not enough of their votes.'

I ventured to suggest that perhaps the picture which he had himself set before me of the moral condition of the city of Lille, at least, might be thought to afford some excuse for this preoccupation of the Catholics with the spiritual rather than the political interests of the people.

But to this he would not listen for a moment.

'No, no!' he said; 'the first thing to be done for the souls of the people is to get rid of these fellows at Paris! Are they not paganizing the country? Here is this new law which is demoralising the army. Why do they wish to force the seminarists into the service? Is it not avowedly because they think this will stop the recruiting for the ranks of the clergy? Why are they attacking the foundations of the magistracy? Is it not because the French magistrates stand between them and [Pg 339] the rights of the French clergy as French citizens? How far off are we from a revival of Danton's beautiful doctrine that, in order to consummate the regeneration of society, all conditions imposed upon the eligibility of citizens to act as judges ought to be immediately abolished, so that a tinker, or a butcher, or a bootblack, or a chiffonnier might be made a French magistrate just as well as a trained student of the laws? As you know, one of the first things Danton, as Minister of Justice, did was to carry through the Convention his famous decree making this doctrine law in France!

'I am worn out,' he said, 'with trying to make our good people here understand that they must go into the battle-field of politics and put these fellows out of power at Paris if they mean to prevent France from falling into absolute anarchy once more. I cannot make them move, and I believe we shall be beaten in all the seven districts of Lille.'

I am glad to say the event proved that my pessimistic friend was by far too pessimistic. Of the seven seats to which the arrondissement of Lille is entitled, four were carried by the Monarchists —in two cases without an attempt seriously to contest them; and if the seven candidates had been voted for on a single list, that list would have been elected by the arrondissement.

The Monarchists threw in the whole arrondissement 53,135 votes, the Opportunist Republicans 31,019, the Radicals 9,191, and the Socialists 1,011. So that the Monarchists had a clear majority of 11,814 votes over all the factions of the Republican party put together. In one district of Lille, the 1st, the Boulangists threw 4,376 votes. If we put these down, which we have no right to do, as Republican votes, the Monarchists still show a clear majority of 7,438 in the whole arrondissement of Lille, and, as I have said, if the representation of France by arrondissements [Pg 340] were really a representation by arrondissements and not by circumscriptions, the seven hundred thousand people of this great and prosperous department of North-Eastern France would now be represented at Paris not by four Monarchists and three Republicans, but by seven Monarchists. This may serve to show how exceedingly unsafe it is to assume that the nominal party complexion of the majority in a Chamber elected as the present French Chamber has been really gives foreign observers anything like an accurate notion of the state of public opinion and the drift of popular feeling in France at this time.

A friend to whom I am indebted for an analysis made with great care of the electoral results, not in this very important department alone, but throughout France, points out to me the exceedingly significant difference between the majorities given to the Monarchists and to the Republican deputies. In the 4th District of Lille, for example, M. des Rotours, the Monarchist candidate, received 10,555 votes, being the largest poll by far given to any candidate in the whole arrondissement, and not one vote was thrown against him. In the 6th District the Republican candidate was declared to be elected by no more than 199 majority in a total poll of 14,833 votes. In the 3rd District the Monarchist was elected by a majority of 1,441 votes, in a total poll of 16,081 votes. In the 5th District the Republican was returned by a majority of 281 votes in a total poll of 15,321 votes. In the 7th District the Monarchist was returned by a majority of 237 in a total poll of 14,463 votes. In the 1st District of Hazebrouck the Monarchist was returned by a majority of 6,861, in a total poll of 11,129 votes, and in the 2nd District of Hazebrouck by a majority of 5,269 in a total poll of 10,291! [Pg 341]

Hazebrouck is an essentially Flemish town of some 10,000 inhabitants, and the arrondissement, which comprises 7 cantons and 53 communes, contains 112,921 inhabitants, is absolutely Flemish. The early sixteenth-century church of St.-Nicholas at Hazebrouck, with its lofty and graceful spire, was begun about the time of the first voyage of Columbus, and is one of the most beautiful extant Flemish buildings of that time. The people of this arrondissement and their neighbours in the arrondissement of Dunkirk were almost as famous before 1789 as the Dutch for their skill as florists and their success in developing all manner of eccentric varieties of roses, tulips, primroses, and pinks. I do not know that they ever managed to produce a blue rose, but they came very near it, and at the present time their rich and level country is gay with cottage gardens. They are given to sociability also, for the arrondissement possesses, I am told, at least one cabaret for every 70 inhabitants. But then the cabarets in the department at large average 1 to every 61 inhabitants, and in the thoroughly agricultural arrondissement of Avesnes they number 1 for every 38 inhabitants. In the arrondissement of Avesnes, a property of from five to twenty hectares is called a small farm. In the arrondissement of Hazebrouck, a farmer cultivating from six to fifty hectares passes for an agriculturist of the middle class. The people are prosperous, and their hostility to the Republic seems to have its origin chiefly in the intolerance and extravagance of the Government. This is the case too, apparently, with their neighbours in

the arrondissement of Dunkirk. The 1st District of Dunkirk elected a Boulangist Revisionist by a solid vote of 7,821 against 4,806 votes, given not to a Government Republican but to a Radical, while the 2nd District of Dunkirk elected a Monarchist by a majority of 5,036 votes in a poll of 11,168. [Pg 342]

In the face of such figures as these it seems to me that the friends of religion and of liberty in the Department of the Nord hardly merit the reproach put upon them by my pessimistic journalist at Lille of lukewarmness in the political battle of 1889.

Neither he nor any one can well accuse them of lukewarmness in any other matter affecting the interests either of religion or of liberty. And I cannot help hoping that my Northern pessimist may perhaps have over-estimated the prevalence of juvenile prostitution in Lille as much as he certainly underestimated the devotion of the Monarchists of Lille to their political flag. His gloomy prognostications as to the issue at the polls were probably enough inspired by his thorough knowledge of the extraordinary preparations made by the authorities for manipulating the returns. On this point he gave me some particulars which appear to be borne out by subsequent events. It is curious for example to learn from the analytical table to which I have already referred in connection with the elections at Lille, that of the 164 Government candidates returned as elected at the first balloting of September 23, 87 were returned as elected by majorities of less than 1,000 votes, while of the 147 Monarchists returned as elected on the same day, only 48 were returned as elected by majorities of less than 1,000 votes. Of the 164 Republicans, 20, or about one in eight, were returned as elected by majorities of less than 200 votes; while of the 147 Monarchists, only 11, or about one in thirteen, were returned as elected by similar majorities. When we remember that the machinery of these elections was absolutely controlled by the prefects under instructions from M. Constans, the Minister of the Interior, which were not made public, this circumstance is certainly very significant. Some of the details [Pg 343] sent me by my analytical correspondent make it still more significant. In the 2nd District of St.-Nazaire, for example, the Monarchist candidate was elected without a competitor, receiving 16,084 votes. In the 1st District of St.-Nazaire the Government candidate was returned by a majority of no more than 6 votes, the returns giving him 8,458 votes to 8,452 for his Monarchist opponent. This margin is almost as suggestive as the majority of 9 votes by which M. Razimbaud, a Government candidate for the district of St.-Pars, in the Department of the Hérault, was declared three days after the balloting of October 6 to have been returned over his Monarchist opponent, the Baron André Reille. In this same Department of the Hérault, the Prefect and the Councillors-General returned M. Ménard-Dorian, the Government candidate, as elected, at Lodève, over M. Leroy-Beaulieu, the distinguished political economist, by a majority of 67 votes. In this case it seems a certain number of votes thrown in one commune for both candidates were set aside, to be annulled for informality. When the returns went up to the Council for revision, the informal votes cast for M. Leroy-Beaulieu were declared invalid, the informal votes cast for M. Ménard-Dorian were declared good and valid, and M. Ménard-Dorian was proclaimed to have been elected. The Committee of the Chamber reported against the seating of M. Ménard-Dorian, and tried to have this report accepted, but as I write the Chamber has not accepted it, and the odds are that M. Leroy-Beaulieu, who, though a Moderate Republican, has made himself obnoxious to the Government by telling the truth about the financial condition of France, will be kept out of the seat which it is tolerably plain that he was elected to fill. [Pg 344]

It is difficult for an Englishman, even for an American, to understand the cynical coolness with which things of this sort are done in the French Republic of the present time, and not very easy to understand the apathetic way in which, when done, they are accepted by the French public. There seems to be little doubt that in England of late years ballot-boxes have been 'stuffed' only by the stupidity of the voters, and not by the ingenious rascality of the political managers. I wish I could with an easy conscience say the same thing of my own country. But even in the United States deliberate tampering with the returns of a political election has not, I think, been practised since the evil days of Reconstruction at the South with the calm disregard of appearances shown by the Government managers during the legislative contest of this year, 1889, in France; and certainly there has been nothing known in the Congress of the United States, since the days of Reconstruction, at all comparable with the systematic invalidation by the majority in the French Chamber of the elections of troublesome members since it assembled on November 12. In the cases of General Boulanger and of M. Naquet, the latter of whom resigned his seat in the Senate to stand as a Boulangist candidate for the Chamber, this invalidation was carried out openly as a party measure and precisely in the spirit of the famous or infamous resolution which Robespierre made the 'Section of the Pikes' adopt, to the effect that the electors of Paris must be protected against their own incapacity to choose 'true patriots' by having the 'true patriots' chosen for them. If this be one of the 'principles of 1789,' it must be admitted that the Third Republic is consistently and courageously acting upon it. It has undoubted advantages, but it has a tendency, perhaps, to put in question the value of what are commonly called [Pg 345] representative institutions. Strike out of the theory of representative institutions the right divine of the people to choose the wrong men, and what is left of it?

At the close of the election of September 22, 1889, in Paris, the major of the 2nd or Clignancourt District of the eighteenth arrondissement of the Department of the Seine declared that General Boulanger had received 7,816 votes out of 13,611 cast, and that he was therefore elected. Of his competitors, one M. Joffrin, described as a 'Possibilist,' had received 5,507 votes; M. Jules Roques, a Socialist, had received 359 votes, and for a citizen bearing the gloomy but respectable name of M. Cercueil, or 'M. Coffin,' one vote had been cast. Obviously General Boulanger was the man whom a majority of the voters of Clignancourt desired to represent them. If General

Boulanger for their own sake could not be allowed to represent them, why not M. Cercueil? They certainly did not choose M. Cercueil to represent them. But as certainly they did not choose M. Joffrin to represent them.

What really happened? The Prefect of the Seine, on hearing the result at Clignancourt, notified the Minister of the Interior, and orders were at once given to correct this egregious error into which the voters of Clignancourt had fallen as to what their true interest required. It was probably found that an 'informality' had occurred in certain communes, and that through this 2,494 votes must be annulled. News of this discovery was instantly sent to the Parisian newspapers. As it was supposed that they would give M. Joffrin a plurality of the votes to be recognised, sundry newspapers actually printed the name of M. Joffrin at the head of the list of candidates in the place usually accorded by a really enlightened press to the elect of universal [Pg 346] suffrage. Unfortunately the official calculator is not of the blood of Bidder. It was found at the last moment that enough votes had not been 'annulled' to put M. Joffrin at the head of the poll, so that his name actually appears in sundry Parisian morning papers of September 23, first indeed in position, but over against it are recorded 5,500 votes, while the name of General Boulanger comes second with 5,880 votes! Clearly an awkwardness! In the *Journal des Débats*, which is a serious Republican journal of character, the election of General Boulanger by 7,816 votes was quietly announced, with a postscript to the effect that 'the Prefecture of the Seine' gave a different result, 'arising from the circumstance that in certain sections 2,494 votes bearing the name of General Boulanger had been asserted to be null and void,' and that, therefore, there would be a second election, or 'ballottage,' on October 6!

There could hardly be a more pregnant commentary than this upon the candid admission made by the most respectable and influential Republican journal in Paris, the *Temps*, on October 17, 1885, that these 'second elections,' or 'ballottages,' are simply a device by which the Central Government at Paris is enabled to 'correct' the errors perpetrated by the voters of France at the elections which precede them. 'To learn the true sentiments of the country,' said the *Temps*, 'we must consult the elections of the 4th. On that day *universal suffrage was allowed* to choose freely between the opposing parties and policies. The vote of to-morrow will not be as clear and precise, for it will be determined by *tactical necessities and by all sorts of combinations*.'

Perfectly true! But, this being true, what becomes of 'popular sovereignty' and of the divine quality of the rights derived from universal suffrage as contrasted with rights derived from inheritance, or, for that matter, with rights derived from a dice-box or the shuffling of a pack of [Pg 347] cards? Considering what the usual origin is of 'tactical necessities' in politics, and what forces determine political 'combinations of all sorts,' is it going too far to say that the odds, so far as public interests are concerned, are in favour of the dice-box or the pack of cards—provided the dice be not loaded or the cards specially packed?

Some years ago, in my own country, a well-known Austrian dined with me one night, just before he sailed for Europe after a tour in the United States. We spoke of a public man just then filling a very responsible position at Washington, to which he had been named after a severely contested and very costly election. 'I thought him a very pleasant, intelligent man,' said my Austrian guest, 'but it struck me that you spend too much time and trouble and money on getting just such men into such places. We get very much the same calibre of men for the same kind of work much more economically and easily by the simple process of marrying a prince to a princess.'

What I have seen and learned this year of the working of the electoral machinery in France under the Third Republic inclines me, as I have already said, to think that the Catholic children of light in Lille and in French Flanders generally may be doing better work both for Religion and for Liberty than my pessimistic journalist was disposed before the elections to believe. If they had given more time and thought and money to 'tactical necessities' and 'political combinations,' and less to the social and spiritual interests of the land in which they live, the results even of the elections might perhaps have been less satisfactory to them. For, as I have shown, the strength of the Monarchist vote in this region proved to be much greater than my pessimist thought it would [Pg 348] be; and the Republicans of the Third Republic did a deal of canvassing for the Monarchists by making it very hard for men who love religion and liberty to vote for Republican candidates.

Lord Beaconsfield's saying, that the world is governed by the people of whom it hears the least, is certainly not less true of the Catholic Church than it is of the world. The Catholic stock in French Flanders is as vigorous and full of sap as in Belgium or in Holland. It is interesting to hear educated people talking glibly in London or Paris about the decay of the Christian religion in the same breath in which they profess their unbounded admiration of the heroism of Father Damien. It was through no act or wish of Father Damien that the world at large came to know his name, or to take account of a work which was done not to be seen of men. He was simply a Flemish Catholic, doing what he believed to be the will of God.

Throughout the broad rich plains of the great Department of the Nord, and in its crowded busy towns and cities, this Catholic faith is everywhere to be seen and felt—to be felt rather than to be seen in its fruits of charity, self-denial, and devout self-sacrifice.

Nowhere in France is public charity, I am told, so extensively and efficiently organised, and the demands upon public charity are exceptionally great. The department is very rich and very prosperous, but it contains, like all frontier regions, a large floating population; and one of the best-informed men I met in Lille, a large landed proprietor in one of the wealthiest communes of the department, told me that there are probably more families or tribes of hereditary mendicants scattered over French Flanders than are to be found in any other French province.

These are not nomads addicted to wandering off into other regions, but rather a kind of Northern lazzaroni. They do a little work occasionally, but as little and as seldom as possible. They are inveterate poachers, and the more industrious of them are habitual smugglers. In their way of prosecuting this industry, however, they show their fine natural instinct for avoiding labour. The most profitable trade they drive is in tobacco. This they get over the frontier from Belgium, and to get it they train a certain breed of dogs. They tie parcels of tobacco around the throats of these dogs, and then proceed to have the dogs well thrashed by one of their number dressed in the Custom-house uniform. A few lessons of this sort suffice to develop in the dogs a strong association of ideas between the odour of tobacco and the thwacks of a cudgel, and a dog well educated in this way may be trusted, after he has got his cargo in Belgium, to reach his master's den unvisited by the French *douane*. Baudrillart confirms this account. He puts the number of habitual applicants, largely from this mendicant class, for public relief in the department at from two hundred to two hundred and fifty thousand a year. Out of the 662 communes in the department there were only twenty in 1888 without a 'Bureau de Bienfaisance,' and the department spends five millions of francs a year on its charities, independently of nearly twice that amount expended upon hospitals, asylums, dispensaries, and the like, by private benevolence. Under the French law, private donors can found charities to be attached to the public 'Bureau de Bienfaisance,' and administered by the public officers, and one of the many evil effects of the war declared against Catholic France by the Third Republic is that it affects such charities very seriously. [Pg 349]

Even under the Empire trouble came of the occasional division of one commune into two or more communes, a question then arising as, for example, in a famous case of the communes of St.-Joseph and St.-Martin in the Loire, about the division between the poor of the two communes of three hospital beds left to the 'Bureau de Bienfaisance' of the original commune of St.-Martin. It was easier for the military saint himself to divide his cloak with the shivering beggar than for the commune which bore his name to divide three beds into two equal portions! At Lille, two or three years ago, a lady, Mme. Austin Laurand, the widow of M. Laurand, in accordance with her husband's will, gave 30,000 francs to the 'Bureau de Bienfaisance' of the city, the income thereof to be applied, under the supervision of three commissioners, to encouraging habits of thrift among the apprentices of Lille. Two hundred bank-books of five francs each are annually given to apprentices in the first two years of their apprenticeship, and the rest of the income is to be given in prizes each year to those of the bank-book holders who shall be shown to have been the most careful and thrifty in managing the results of their labour during the year. [Pg 350]

A law passed in 1874, before the 'true Republicans' of Gambetta and Ferry came into power, provides for a medical inspection and record of newly-born children, and this law puts infants, whenever it may be found necessary, under proper hygienic conditions. It has been nowhere so energetically carried out as in the Nord. Of course, such a law as this flies directly in the face of the great gospel of the 'survival of the fittest.' But though that gospel was introduced to Paris on the stage as one of the curiosities of the Centennial Exposition of 1889, it has made little progress as yet in Catholic France. Even at the theatres in Paris, I am glad to say, the popular instinct still regulates the *queue* on principles quite inconsistent with the Darwinian maxims of 'every man for himself,' and 'the devil take the hindmost.' It will be an evil day for invalids and cripples bitten with the drama when the 'struggle for life' comes to be logically developed into the right of the strongest men to get first to the ticket office! [Pg 351]

Throughout the Department of the Nord, primary schools exist for the children who are taken in charge at their birth by public benevolence, and those to whom they are confided are obliged to see that the children attend these schools from the age of six to the age of twelve years.

Under the influence of the Church acting upon the naturally sociable and gregarious temperament of the Flemish race, mutual aid societies have become very numerous of late years in the Nord. A hundred and fifty-two such societies now exist in the arrondissement of Lille alone. These numbered, in 1888, 7,249 honorary members and 35,270 paying members, and their assets were stated at about 3,000,000 francs. Only 3,649 women, however, were enrolled on their lists. Is this a confirmation, I wonder, of the theory entertained by Mr. Emerson and other philosophers, that woman is not a 'clubbable' animal?

Putting this aside, however, for the moment as a more or less 'academic' question, it is of interest to note the very considerable development during the last few years of the principle of association among the working-men and producers of France, under the influence of the Church and of Conservative public men like M. Welche, one of the extra-parliamentary Ministers of the Marshal-Duke of Magenta, who did good service here at Lille as Prefect of the Department of the Nord, and who has made the French law of 1881 affecting 'professional syndicates,' so useful throughout the agricultural world of France. [Pg 352]

It is one of the organic statutes of the Society of 'Foreseers of the Future,' or 'Prévoyants de l'Avenir,' that all political and religious discussions are forbidden at the meetings of the society.'

This society was established at Paris on December 12, 1880. On February 23, 1881, it was authorised to act as a 'Civil Society,' by the Minister of the Interior and the Prefect of Police. Its object is to 'ensure to all its members who shall have co-operated in maintaining it for twenty years, the first necessaries of life.' I shall not attempt here to go in detail into the statutes and organisation of the society. Suffice it to say that the statutes are brief, clear, and sensible, and that the organisation appears to be eminently practical. The members, to the number of whom no limit is set, the only indispensable condition being that they shall be in good health and actively

employed in some trade or calling, pay an entrance fee of two francs, and a monthly due of one franc. This monthly due must be paid in advance, and a fine of 25 centimes is imposed for every month in arrears. Each member receives a book containing the statutes, which establishes his title to its benefits, and for which he pays 50 centimes. Donations may be received, and under the authority of the officers entertainments may be given, the profits of which go to the general fund. Any respectable person, no matter what may be his calling, may become a member, if he has attained the age of fifteen years, and women are not excluded. 'Having the same duties,' say the statutes, 'they have the same rights,' but, despite this, it is provided that women who are members shall not be fined if they fail to attend the general meeting on the second Sunday in January in each year, whereas men in the same case shall be mulcted in the sum of one franc, [Pg 353] unless they shall have previously by letter excused themselves.

Every member at the expiration of twenty full years of membership shall be entitled to his share of the interest earned during the twentieth year of his membership by the property of the society, the funds of which can only be invested in the three or five per cent. funds of the French nation. His regular contribution to the society will still go on, but he will receive his share of the interest earned thereafter regularly every three months. Should a pensioner die, the year's interest due to him shall be paid over to his heirs or assigns. The pension cannot be transferred or alienated, and the relations of a pensioner have no claim upon the amount of the payments made by him to the society. Should a member become an invalid, incapable of work, after fully paying up his dues to the society during five years, he may demand to be kept upon the books as a full member, and as such he will be entitled to his pension at the end of twenty years. The society can only be dissolved by a unanimous vote of the members at a general meeting; and if so dissolved the members must choose another society as nearly as possible resembling this, to which the property of the dissolved society shall be transferred.

The funds for current expenses of the society can never exceed 1,500 francs. This society, as I have said, was founded in 1880. Its success has been really phenomenal.

On January 1, 1882, it comprised 757 members, and its capital amounted to 6,237 francs. On January 18, 1886, it consisted of 15,008 members, and had a capital invested in French consols of 361,003 fr. 99 c. On April 1, 1889, it numbered 59,932 members, divided into 340 sections, and it [Pg 354] possessed an invested capital of 1,541,868 fr. 26 c.! Of course the Tontine principle enters into the system, and it would be interesting to compute the probable pensions in 1902 of so many of the 757 persons who were members of the society in 1882 as may then be living to claim their share of the interest then earned by the then capital of the society. The minuteness, precision, and practical common sense with which the statutes of this organisation have been drawn up and provision made in its regulations against all the probable difficulties to be encountered in carrying it on, gives one a very favourable notion of the business capacity and of the character of the French working classes. No conditions as to sex or nationality are imposed upon membership, the only necessary qualification being that the person applying to be admitted shall be actively employed in some way, be domiciled in France, and be sixteen full years of age. It strikes me that organisations of this sort are more likely to promote a practical solution of the Labour question than combinations to secure the passage of laws fixing the number of hours for which a man shall be allowed to work.

The Church has taken an active part in fostering the development of these mutual aid societies throughout this great department, and particularly in Lille and Roubaix. The disasters of the Franco-German war gave a great impulse to them. These disasters did more to strengthen and deepen than all the vulgar violence of the pseudo-scientific and pseudo-literary atheism of parliamentary Paris has yet done to weaken the religious sentiment in France, and the French Catholics cannot be cited to illustrate Aubrey de Vere's noble saying that 'worse than wasted weal is wasted woe.' [Pg 355]

I spent a most interesting morning at Lille with M. Grimbert in visiting the buildings and the collections of the great Catholic University which has been founded here to meet the assault of M. Ferry and his allies on the higher education in France. This Catholic University has been endowed and is maintained entirely by the private liberality of the Catholics of the Department of the Nord, and by the revenues it derives from the students who attend its courses. It is a thoroughly equipped university of the first rank. The Rector, Monseigneur Baunard, is a Roman prelate, and of the two vice-rectors, one is a prelate and the other a canon. These, with the Deans of the Faculties, and five professors elected from the corps of instructors, constitute the Academic Senate. The Administrative Council comprises the Archbishop of Cambrai, the Bishop of Arras (to the benevolence of one of whose predecessors France is indebted for the education which enabled Robespierre to avenge upon the Church and upon his country what in one of his letters he calls 'the intolerable slavery of an obligation received'), the Bishop of Lydda, the Chancellor of the University, and the Rector. The Theological Faculty comprises a dean and nine professors; the Law Faculty a dean, the Comte de Vareilles-Sommières, and thirteen professors. One of these gentlemen, M. Arthaut, was so kind as to receive M. Grimbert and myself, and to show us over the whole institution. The Medical Faculty comprises a dean, Dr. Desplats, and twenty-three professors; the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters, a dean, Dr. Margerie, and seven professors; the Faculty of Sciences, a dean, Dr. Chautard, and nine professors.

The buildings of the University now occupy two sides of an immense square in one of the finest quarters of Lille, and when fully completed will occupy the whole square. As they now stand they [Pg 356] are by far the most striking edifices in Lille, and would do honour to any city in Europe. The area covered by them, I should say, is larger than that covered by the University of London, and

certainly, from the architectural point of view, they need fear no comparison with the London establishment. The library, which is admirably arranged, already contains about 80,000 volumes, and the apparatus of the scientific schools is admittedly better than that of any institution in France. The outlay already made here exceeds 11,000,000 fr., or about 240,000*l.* sterling, all of which has been contributed freely by the Catholics of this region.

On the face of things it appears to me that the existence of this University is somewhat inconsistent with the notion that 'the religious sentiment is dead in France.' The classes are now attended by between four and five hundred students, for whose accommodation three 'family houses' have been already built, in which students are lodged at an expense of from 1,000 to 1,400 fr. a year, and when the academic buildings now in process of construction are completed, more than a thousand students can be thus lodged. Two dispensaries, a Maternity Hospital, under the charge of Sisters of Charity of St.-Vincent de Paul, together with the large Hospital de la Charité, are directly connected with the clinical service of the medical faculty, and are so administered as to render the most important services to the industrious population of the city. The Electrical Department of the Faculty of Sciences is particularly well equipped, and one of the assistants in charge of this department, who showed us some improvements recently devised here in the working apparatus, surprised me by the extent and minute accuracy of his information as to all the most recent progress made in the applications of electricity to [Pg 357] machinery, and to the arts on both sides of the Atlantic.

I was not surprised, however, to learn from M. Arthaut that the astonishing prosperity of this great institution is viewed with extreme dissatisfaction by the authorities at Paris, and particularly by the University of France, which has been confirmed again under the Third Republic in the monopoly of academic privileges, of which it was very sensibly deprived by the Assembly under the Government of the Marshal-Duke of Magenta. By way of expressing this dissatisfaction with dignity and emphasis, the Government of the Third Republic actually forbids free Catholic universities to use the title of universities. M. Ferry's Article 7 not being yet law in this best of all possible French Republics, Catholics cannot be prevented from spending their own money in founding institutions which are really universities. But, at all events, they can be forbidden to give any one of them the title of a university, that being reserved for the State establishment, which, from Paris, extends its academic sway all over France.

I called the attention of M. Arthaut to the fact that a great Catholic University has been this year founded in the capital of the Republic of the United States, and that the President of the Republic, himself a Protestant, not only attended the ceremonies of the foundation, but made a brief speech, in which he expressed his best wishes for its progress and prosperity. 'That, I am afraid,' said M. Arthaut, 'is a kind of republic which we are not likely to see established in France.'

To measure the significance of this Catholic work in behalf of liberty and religion here at Lille, it must be borne in mind that the very men who are building it up with such splendid liberality and [Pg 358] enterprise are compelled by the iniquitous laws of the Third Republic to bear their own share as taxpayers in supporting here at Lille another academic institution of a similar scope, but of less importance, under the direct control of the University of France, from all share in the administration of which religion and the ministers of religion are as rigidly excluded as that refugee of the First French Revolution, Stephen Girard, intended they should be from the college which he founded at Philadelphia. Of course the same thing is true of the Catholics all over France. Out of their pockets must come nine-tenths of the enormous sum, as yet quite incalculable, but certainly running far up in the hundreds of millions of francs which is still to be expended by the Third Republic upon its 'scholastic palace,' and the ever-increasing army of 'lay teachers,' male and female, whom it is yearly turning out of the educational institutions of France to seek the employment which a vast majority of them cannot possibly hope to find in the public schools, the lyceums and 'faculties' of the nation.

On this point a Councillor-General whom I met here at Lille dwelt with very grave emphasis. 'We are educating here in France,' he said to me, 'hundreds of young men and young women every year under false pretences to enter a profession already overcrowded. For every post which now exists or which can be created within the next ten years in the educational system of these revolutionists at Paris, we are turning out at least a hundred applicants each year of each sex, who must necessarily be thrown upon the public. What will become of them? The young men will go into Nihilism, as young men of the same sort do in Russia; the young women will go upon the street. Only the other day at Paris, the Government advertised a competition for about 70 [Pg 359] positions in the telegraphic service. How many young women applied? More than 800! What is to become of the 730 unsuccessful competitors? And what right has the State to flood the market thus, in advance of the necessities of the country, and at the cost of the taxpayers, with male and female teachers, any more than with carpenters, or with surgeons, or with confectioners?'

One circumstance connected with the development of this great Catholic University at Lille (as an American I permit myself to give the institution its proper title) is of special significance. It is not the only institution of the kind which has been called into existence in France since the Third Republic began its war against religion in 1880. There is a Free Catholic institution at Lyons, which consists of three faculties under the administration of a company founded to receive and administer all sums given or bequeathed to organise the institutes. The Archbishop of Lyons is Chancellor of this institution, which has a dean and seven professors of theology, a dean and eighteen professors of law, with a secretary and librarian of that faculty, a dean and seven professors of letters, a dean and nine professors of science. There are similar institutions also at

Angers and at Toulouse. All of these are freely supported by the private subscriptions of Catholic France, as is also the great Catholic Institute of Paris in the Rue Vaugirard, so admirably conducted by Monseigneur d'Hulst, the Vicar-General of Paris. Thanks to the law of July 12, 1875, and to the stand made by the friends of liberty and religion when the law of March 18, 1880, was finally enacted, the students of the Faculty of Law in these Catholic institutes still have the right to present themselves with the certificates of their several institutes at the public [Pg 360] examinations for the diplomas of the baccalaureate, the licentiate and the doctorate in law, and for the certificate of capacity in the law, necessary to enable the successful candidates to practise the legal profession in France. To maintain the efficiency of the free Catholic institutions, the Catholics of France have spared during the last few years neither labour nor money. More than 17,000,000 francs have been contributed during that period to establish the Catholic educational system in Paris alone, and more than 2,000,000 francs are yearly subscribed there to keep it up. As I have already said, the University here at Lille represents an expenditure during the same period of more than 11,000,000 francs and a still larger prospective expenditure.

It would be interesting, if it were possible, to learn how much out of their own pockets the propagandists of unbelief have expended during this same decade upon the irreligious education of the children of their countrymen! Were the truth attainable, the amount expended by them would be found to bear to the amount received by them from their propaganda of unbelief much less than the proportion of Falstaff's 'pennyworth of bread' to his 'intolerable deal of sack!' While the Catholics of France have been giving millions to defend the right of the French people to protect the faith of their children, these men have been expending hundreds of millions of the money of Catholic taxpayers upon school buildings, the contracts for erecting which have been controlled by themselves for their friends; they have been finding places in the public educational service for their friends, dependants and allies, and they have been comfortably drawing large salaries themselves from the Treasury.

Set over against these incontrovertible facts, the fact, as incontrovertible, for which I am [Pg 361] indebted here to M. Grimbert, that of the millions expended in defence of liberty and religion here at Lille, a very large proportion has been contributed by one single Catholic citizen of this ancient Flemish city, who has consecrated his life and his fortune to his faith in the spirit of the earliest Christian times, and I think my readers will agree with me, not only that the religious sentiment is not dead in France, but that it never was more living and more active in France, nor more full of promise for the social and political regeneration of this great people.

I shall not run the risk of offending this good Catholic by naming him, though his name and his work are an open secret for every intelligent person in Lille. Suffice it that, coming of an old Flemish stock and bearing an old Flemish name, this citizen (the title of citizen means something respectable in these staunch old free cities) of Lille years ago insisted to his brother, who was his associate in the ownership and management of one of the largest commercial houses of this region, that they should take regularly into the partnership account of their business, for one-third of their annual profits, 'the work of God.' This was done; and from that day to this the proportion thus set apart of their profits has been regularly devoted to the service of the Church and of charity. But this is not all. The brother, of whom I speak with the reticence and the reverence due to a type of character not absolutely common in this age of the Golden Calf, has systematically limited his own personal expenses during the whole of these years to a few thousands of francs, devoting all the rest of his income to religious and benevolent objects.

I should really like to see a calm business-like estimate made of the economical advantages likely to result to a country from extinguishing at an expense of several hundreds of millions of francs a [Pg 362] year the faith which gives birth to characters such as this.

I visited, in one of the suburbs of Lille, the extensive manufactories of another well-known house, the heads of which have worked out and established an excellent system of 'mutual assistance' among their employees, and built up a large and well-ordered *cité ouvrière* on a plan substantially resembling that of those which I saw at St.-Gobain and at Anzin. A house for young girls established by this firm, very near their main factory, struck me as particularly admirable. It is under the management of the Sisters of St.-Vincent de Paul, who fill the place with a pervading spirit of cheerfulness and animation, quite indescribable. The dormitories were the perfection of neatness. The gymnastic hall and the grounds were in apple-pie order, and as the lower part of the large and airy building erected by the firm for this domicile is used during the day as a kind of crèche by the married women who leave their young children here while they are busy in the factory, the whole place was alive with merry and laughing little imps. I heard of other establishments of the same kind at and near Roubaix on a still larger scale. These I unfortunately had not time to visit. Under the Empire in 1865 a few energetic citizens of Lille induced the municipality to guarantee five per cent, interest on a capital of 2,000,000 francs for the establishment of a company to construct, let and sell houses for working-men under certain conditions as to the isolation of each house and as to its proper ventilation and drainage. The rental of these houses can never exceed eight per cent, on the cost of erection, those of one story never to cost more than 2,400 francs, and those of two stories more than 3,000 francs, including [Pg 363] the cost of the land. The houses are built of brick with foundations and sills of Soignies stone. These were the original statutes, but the company is now allowed to build single-story houses on a larger scale with cellars, which may be rented for 400 francs a year or bought for 5,000 francs —a first payment in the case of purchase to be made of 500 francs, and after that the money to be paid in instalments of 40 francs a month over thirteen years. All the wells and pumps are supplied by the municipality.

The municipality also makes an annual grant in aid of a very useful charity, founded under the Empire, and largely developed by private gifts and legacies, called the 'Invalids of Labour.' This now secures pensions to nearly a hundred workmen, disabled by serious accidents incurred in their labour or through some effort to help others in peril. It also gives temporary assistance in less severe cases. But the most characteristic institution which I found flourishing at Lille has a history worth telling. It strikingly illustrates the development under the old *régime* in France and Flanders of those public works of benevolence of which we are so often and so audaciously asked to believe that they had no existence before the benign 'principles of 1789' bedewed the hearts of men, and it not less strikingly illustrates the demoralising and destructive influence upon all manner of sound and useful establishments throughout France of the headlong and reckless administration of public affairs by the successive 'governments' of the First Republic.

In the year 1607, on September 27, a worthy Catholic citizen, Bartholomew Masurel, *bourgeois et manant* of the city of Lille, came before two notaries, and declared 'that to succour the poor people of Lille in their necessities, and also for the salvation of his own soul and the souls of his predecessors and successors, he wished to establish a *Mont-de-Piété*, where money loans should be made without usury or interest, and not as they were made by the Lombards.' [Pg 364]

To this end Bartholomew Masurel gave, by a donation between living persons, and irrevocable, to take effect after his death, all his lands, fiefs, and houses which he owned at Lille, and in his country place, and the value of which might be estimated at a hundred and fifty thousand *livres parisis*, or in money of our day nominally 300,000 francs. In fact, the gift, I am told, represented about half a million francs of our days.

But the good '*bourgeois et manant*' could not hold out till his death against the appeal which the sight of 'the poor people of Lille in their necessities' daily made to his kindly heart. So in 1609 he agreed with the Mayor, that he would turn over all these possessions at once to the magistrates to be applied to the purpose he meant to effect, the magistrates agreeing to secure to him an annuity out of the funds of the city of 1,200 florins, or about 1,562 francs of our time. Thereupon he went to work with the authorities to found his charity. From his statutes we learn that foundations of this kind were then common in French Flanders. He models them, as he says, upon 'those of similar foundations in our neighbouring towns and elsewhere.'

No loans were to be made except to '*manants et habitants de la Ville Taille et Banlieue de Lille*,' and only to 'poor and necessitous persons who, not being able to gain their livelihood, were forced to borrow money;' nor were loans to be made to 'persons prodigal, of evil life, and accustomed to squander their goods.' For this due order was to be taken by the magistrates. At first the loans were limited to 24 florins (30 francs) to one person; the lowest sum loaned being 20 patars, or 1 fr. 25 c. of our times. So well had Bartholomew Masurel organised his charity, and so many good Christian souls swelled its funds by gifts and bequests, that within a year the maximum loan was raised to 50 florins, in 1669 to 100 florins, and in 1745 it was fixed at 120 florins, or 150 francs. At this figure it stood when the First Republic began its experiments. The fund was then known as 'the true Mont-de-Piété,' and was carried on under letters patent granted in 1609 by the Archduke Albert of Austria. When Lille became French in 1667, Louis XIV had to recognise and confirm all the rights and titles of this benevolent institution. [Pg 365]

It had rendered great service to the industries of Lille during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the growth of the funds enabling the managers to lend sums to weavers on their goods when trade fell off, and so relieving them from the necessity of parting with them for less than their value. Just before the Revolution the Masurel Fund amounted to 455,454 francs, of which 256,627 francs were in cash or in loans, and the rest in state funds and houses, yielding a revenue of 8,307 francs.

On January 23, 1794, the National Convention coolly ordered that all 'objects of necessity deposited in any Mont-de-Piété for an amount not exceeding 20 francs should be at once restored without payment to their owners, and all such objects deposited for amounts below 50 and above 20 francs on payment, without interest, of the amount beyond 20 francs!'

This 'liberal' legislation had been preceded on August 24, 1793, by another act of spoliation which ordered 'the payment of the capital of all sums at interest to be made in *assignats*, and the conversion of all the debts of the Communes, and of the suppressed public organisations throughout France into State debts. [Pg 366]

In consequence of these measures the whole property of the Masurel fund was found in 1803, when Napoleon began to overhaul the chaos to which the lunatics and plunderers of the Republic had reduced France, to amount to no more than 10,408 francs in real estate. This was the way in which the 'principles of 1789' developed the benevolent institutions of France, and introduced a new era!

The authorities of Lille had the good sense and forecast thereupon to suspend the operations of the true *Mont-de-Piété*, and to set about restoring the fund as far and as fast as was possible. The Christian institution of Masurel had fared better than the 'Lombards.' This latter establishment had to be formally closed in 1796, as it was then found to have no more than 86,000 francs in its treasury, and this in *assignats*!

In 1857 the Prefect of the Nord reported that the Masurel fund might be safely devoted anew to the purposes of its founder. It then amounted to 249,644 fr. By an imperial decree of 1860, all that remained of the property of the 'Lombards' was amalgamated with the Masurel fund, and the

institution was put under the direction of the official Mont-de-Piété of Lille, but with a separate system of accounts, and began its operations again on the lines laid down by its founder in 1607. It has since worked so well that the maximum of the loans reimbursable, without interest, has risen from 30 francs in 1860 to 200 francs.

In 1869, the maximum being 100 francs, the number of engagements and renewals was 10,933—the money loaned amounted to 75,460 fr. 50 c., in loans averaging 9fr. 14 c., and the capital of the fund to 257,231 fr. 27 c. In 1888, the maximum being 200 fr., there were 16,000 engagements and renewals, the loans amounted to 136,663 francs in average loans of 8 fr. 54 c., [Pg 367] and the capital of the fund to 334,726 fr. 57 c.

Of the 'similar foundations in other towns' which moved the pious emulation of Bartholomew Masurel nearly three centuries ago, how many, I wonder, still exist!

And with them how many other monuments of the Christian civilisation of Flanders and of France were 'improved' off the face of the earth by the 'regenerators' of 1792?

It was not by accident that I learned of the Masurel Mont-de-Piété; but when I went to the Municipal Secretary to ask him for some official account of its condition and its operation, that courteous functionary looked at me for a moment with astonishment and then said, 'I am delighted to give you what you want, and I assure you that, with one exception, you are the only foreigner who has ever asked for this information in the last seven years! The other was the English Protestant clergyman here in Lille, who happens to live or has his chapel, I am not sure which, just opposite the Mont-de-Piété!'

I ought not to speak however of the Masurel foundation as 'unique.' I hope there may be many more men like the good Bartholomew Masurel in our time, and in other countries besides France, than we wot of. But the only modern institution of a kindred spirit with this of which I have any present cognisance began its career in England only fifteen years ago, and was founded curiously enough like the Masurel fund by men of the Low Countries. This is the 'Koning Willem's Fonds,' of the Netherlands Benevolent Society of London. At a dinner given at the Cannon Street Hotel on May 12, 1874, to celebrate the twenty-fifth year of the accession of King William III under the presidency of the Dutch Minister in England, the Count de Bylandt, the guests in a glow of loyalty [Pg 368] and good-fellowship proposed to raise a contribution to be spent in the purchase of some handsome memorial of the occasion. A happy inspiration came to the Chairman, and he suggested to his countrymen that the best of all possible memorials of such an occasion would be to establish a fund for the relief of poor and worthy Netherlanders in London and to give it the name of their King. The suggestion was adopted by acclamation, and the result the 'Koning Willem's Fonds,' from which, as I find by examining its statutes and its records, gratuitous loans, precisely identical in their object and under conditions not essentially different, are made to deserving Hollanders in London.

The 'fonds' is connected with a society doing the usual work of all such foreign benevolent societies in London. But it is a special fund, and as I learn from the Annual Report of the Society for January 1889, it has so far been administered with entire success, and with the result of enabling not a few honest and industrious Hollanders stranded in London to make a fair and prosperous start in life. That the fund is administered in the true practical spirit of the old Low Country benevolence, and its advantages appreciated as they ought to be, appears from the statement made by the Treasurer, Mr. Maas, in the Report for 1889, that the number of loans is increasing and the number of donations decreasing. In 1888 371*l.* were loaned as against 185*l.* in 1887, and 247*l.* given away as against 382*l.* in 1887. I observe, too, that the Lord Mayor of London, Sir Polydore de Keyser, gave at this annual meeting as his reason for joining the society which administers this fund that it had the courage to spend 251*l.* in excess of its assured income rather than send away the good which came to its door to be done. [Pg 369]

CHAPTER XIII

IN THE MARNE

REIMS

No city in France has more to lose and less to gain from the triumph of the Third Republic over historic France than this ancient, rich, and royal city of Reims.

The triumph of the Third Republic on the lines laid down by M. Challemel-Lacour in 1874 and re-affirmed at the elections of 1889, means the extinction of the religious sentiment in France. To extinguish the religious sentiment in France would be to empty the history of Reims of all its significance. It would be to filch from the city of St.-Rémi and of Clovis, of Urban II. and of Jeanne d'Arc, its great name—a robbery that surely would not enrich the Third Republic, but that would leave Reims poor indeed!

Of course it is possible that the laicised, unbaptized, and atheistic French citizen of the future may come to regard the hegira of M. Gambetta from Paris to Tours in a balloon, and the occupation of Tonkin, as events of greater importance to mankind than the creation of France by Clotilde and Clovis, or the rescue of France from conquest and dismemberment by the pious

peasant-girl of Domrémy, or the rolling back of Islam from the domination of the world by Urban II. Heaven forbid that I should assume to set any limit to the things which a truly scientific unbeliever is likely to believe!

But while men still abide in the thick darkness of the Catholic faith, or even in the penumbral twilight of Protestant Christianity, I do not see how Reims is to be one bit the better, materially or morally, for the extinction of the religious sentiment in France. [Pg 370]

The arrondissement of Reims contains very nearly 200,000 people, of whom considerably more than one-third inhabit the city itself. A very large proportion of these are employed in the numerous factories which flourish here, and many more in the various industries connected with the incessantly growing commerce in those sparkling wines which have made the name of this ancient province synonymous with luxury and gaiety in the remotest corners of the world. Though Épernay is the real headquarters of this commerce, two or three of the most important houses connected with it are, and long have been, established at Reims, and some of the most remarkable of the vast cellars excavated in the chalk, in which these sparkling wines are stored throughout the Department of the Marne, are here to be seen. Here too, at least as well as at Épernay or Châlons, acquaintance may be made, at the right time and in the right places, with certain vintages of Champagne which seldom or never find their way into the channels of trade, not so much because of their rarity and high cost as because of their exceeding delicacy. It is almost impossible, for example, to find even at Paris the finest quality of the red *vin de cave* of Bouzy. This is illustrated by the fact that the only samples of this exquisite wine sent to Paris for the Universal Exposition of 1889 were those sent by Bouché Fils at Mareuil-sur-Ay, and these represented only three vintages, the earliest being that of 1884. The daintily aromatic bouquet of this wine is seldom unaffected even by the short railway journey to the capital. Of course I know that by speaking of this or of any other still wine of Champagne, I put myself under the ban of Mr. Canning's famous declaration, so often cited by Lord Beaconsfield, that 'the man who says he likes still champagne will say anything.' Nevertheless what I have written, I have written—and I shall not take it back. This the less, that I cannot allow myself even to enter upon this theme of the vineyards of the chalky Marne and the cellars of Champagne. Were I to do this, I should have a tale to unfold, much too long, and involving too many points of controversy with the accepted gastronomic authorities in my own country, in England, and in Russia, to be brought within the compass of this volume. Suffice it that the great wine-growers of Champagne do not seem to me to be infidels, or to neglect the due provision of their own households in their philanthropic anxiety to promote the convivial happiness of the four quarters of the globe. The extent to which the syndication of vineyards for the production of the wines most in demand in one or another part of the world, has been developed of late years in Champagne is a noteworthy phenomenon. Not less noteworthy is the growing attention paid throughout this Department of the Marne of late years to scientific methods in agriculture, and the steady improvement in the condition of the rural population. [Pg 371]

Whether a similar improvement can be shown in the general condition of the urban population is not so clear as might be wished. That within certain limits such an improvement has taken place, is however undeniable; and this is of great interest, because it is distinctly due to the energy and decision with which the challenge flung down to the Christianity of this historic Christian heart of France has been taken up by the Catholics of Reims.

In the course of a most interesting visit which I made in August to the Cardinal Archbishop of Reims, His Eminence was good enough to put me in the way of measuring for myself the work done among the factory people of this region by a great Christian organization, the centre and pivot of which was established here, but which is mow extending itself all over the country. Most assuredly there is nothing in the story of this work to indicate either the approaching death or the decay of the religious sentiment in France. [Pg 372]

This work rests, like all great works, upon certain principles. But these principles were worked out, not through any theoretical inquisition into the possibilities of society, but through a direct personal practical experience of the relations between an employer of labour and his employees. It is known now throughout France as the work of the 'Christian Corporations,' and it includes, as a part of its machinery, the 'Catholic Workmen's Clubs,' which are increasing and multiplying throughout France. Its founder, M. Léon Harmel, is at the head of an important manufactory at the Val-des-Bois near Reims. This manufactory was established here half a century ago by the father of M. Harmel, and the great social work which the son is now doing is the coming to fruit, after many years, of the virtues and the experience of his father. The Ardennes is the northernmost of the four Departments into which the wise men of 1790 divided the ancient province of Champagne, and M. Harmel, the father, had inherited a manufactory in that department. This he gave up to his brother, and removing to the Marne in 1840 he founded here the establishment of the Val-des-Bois. He was a devout and sincere Catholic, and he had lived all his life among a quiet and Catholic population in the Ardennes. He found himself surrounded in his new home by a totally different people. His new employees were amazed when they saw him attending mass at the parish church on Sunday. A few of their wives and daughters went there irregularly, but the men, as a rule, were 'total abstainers.' [Pg 373]

M. Harmel made no attempt to preach to his people otherwise than by his example. But the employer being regarded, in the light of modern progress, as the natural enemy of the employee, this example had little effect. M. Léon Harmel tells a delightful story of his father's first success in inducing some of his workmen, with whom he had fallen incidentally into conversation on the subject, to go over to Reims in the early morning at the beginning of Lent, and confess to an

excellent priest there who was one of his friends. He spake with the men separately, and said nothing to any one of them of his conversations with the others. Meeting one of his converts on his return, M. Harmel asked him about his experience. 'Ah, sir!' the man replied, 'it is all very well, but I shall never be caught there again!' 'And, pray, why not?' 'Why I thought I was the only man going to confess. I saw no one when I went into the confessional, and the good priest was very good, and I was glad I went. But when I came to commune in the church, there were three of my comrades! How I looked at them, and how they looked at me! It will be all over the factory to-night, and we four will have no peace for six months! No! I shall not do this again!'

The manufactory prospered. If the example of M. Harmel availed little against the public sentiment of the workpeople educated in utter indifference to all religion, in the way of inducing them to attend to their religious duties, his unvarying justice and benevolence, his readiness to succour and to advise them in all straits, and his unobtrusive devotion to his faith, at least exerted a wholesome effect upon their general conduct; and the factory of the Val-des-Bois earned a high reputation for its freedom from flagrant scandals and disorders. But this did not [Pg 374] satisfy M. Harmel. After twenty years of single-handed and uphill work, he determined to seek help. On February 28, 1861, he established three Sisters of St.-Vincent de Paul in a small house which had been a wayside inn, and set about Christianising his people in earnest. There was no pomp or parade about the matter. The good Sisters were quite content to establish an asylum for the little children in what had been the stable of the inn, and to open their school in two little upper chambers. Two Jesuit Fathers came and devoted a month to a regular mission. Processions were organised and lectures given, some in the factory, others at the little inn. The novelty of the enterprise excited the attention of the people, and when a decided movement at last of interest in the mission made itself clearly felt, M. Harmel took advantage of it, with the help of the Sisters, to form Christian associations, first among the young girls, then among the young men, and then among the workmen themselves. The first young girl who gave an effectual impulse to the work, was a girl selected by the Sisters, with their usual sound instinct, because they found her capable of absolute devotion to a not by any means estimable mother, and to a decidedly reprehensible sister. She was a peasant-girl, brought up in a disorderly family, by no means choice or refined in her language; but the Sisters, for whom she conceived a great affection, saw that she was generous, fearless, and determined, and that was enough.

With the girls, with the young men, with the workmen, no sort of direct or indirect pressure was ever for a moment employed. The associations which they formed were managed by themselves, M. Harmel, the priest whom he finally brought to Val-des-Bois, and for whom he built a chapel, [Pg 375] and the missionary brethren, giving advice and aid only when and as it was asked. One excellent workman, who had been in the factory for many years, and who was much esteemed by M. Harmel, was asked one day by the priest why he had never taken any interest in the religious associations. 'I do take an interest in them,' he replied, 'and they are doing a great deal of good. I don't feel moved to join them, but I do them a great service often. Many a time in the cabarets I hear a man say, "Oh, the papa Harmel is a good man, no doubt; they are right to call him there 'the good father.' He is all that, but nobody can get any work there unless he is a little saint!" Then I get up and say, "Don't talk like a fool! You see me; I have worked for 'the good father' thirty-five years. I have never done my religious duties, but nobody treats me the worse for that! That shuts them up!"'

One great obstacle, at the outset, to the success of these associations, out of which the 'Christian Corporations' were eventually to grow, was the hostility of the elder married women to the 'Enfans de Marie,' and the other societies of young girls. They objected that these societies broke up the Sunday balls, and when they were asked whether these Sunday balls did not lead to a good many scandals, they replied, 'Oh, young people must amuse themselves; we used to amuse ourselves!' They insisted too, that the girls would neglect their home duties to attend mass and the meetings of their new societies. One particularly recalcitrant dame made her husband's life a burden to him, because he not only encouraged his daughters in going to the Sisters, but actually went to mass himself. Finally, one day the poor man came to see the Sisters. He was evidently much exercised in his mind, and showing the Sisters a small sum of money he had, he said, 'I [Pg 376] have saved this up to bring my old woman to a better mind, and I want you to help me.' They asked him how. 'Why, you see, all the trouble comes because she don't know you, and won't know you, and thinks everything wrong about you. Now if one of you will just take this money, and buy her a new Sunday gown, and take it to her as if it was a gift you wanted to make her, that will bring her all right, I know, and we shall have peace in the house!'

What Sister could resist such an appeal? The pious fraud was perpetrated, and the worthy dame gave way along the whole line!

This working population of Val-des-Bois, when M. Harmel began his work among them, it will be seen, was a fair type of the average working populations of France in those parts of France where the influence of Radicalism has been most potent, and the influence of the Church weakest. There is another factory in the same commune now. There are sixteen others within a radius of three French leagues, and the city of Reims, with its population of nearly a hundred thousand souls, is within half an hour of the place. All the disturbing currents of socialism, of agrarianism, of indifferentism play about and upon the place constantly. The Sunday ball is an institution still. The influence of the local authorities during the last ten years has been thrown against the Catholic associations, and therefore, from the nature of the case, in favour of dissipation, debauchery, and disorder.

To see his work prosper in a soil so unpropitious and amid such hostile circumstances might well

have quickened the faith of a man much colder and more sceptical than M. Harmel.

In 1861, as I have said, not one workman could be found at Val-des-Bois who dared to go to mass. [Pg 377] In 1867, at the request of forty of his workmen, M. Harmel assisted them in drawing up the statutes and arranging the programme of a Catholic Working-Men's Club. The initiative came from them. No pressure of any sort or kind was put upon them to take it. It was the free outcome of the influence exerted upon them by the example of the Harmel family and by the religious and charitable work which the Sisters and the priests had been doing at Val-des-Bois. Within a year the club doubled its membership. When the invasion came, in 1870, it was an established institution.

'M. Harmel planted his Christians at Val-des-Bois,' said to me one of the most interesting men I met at Reims, 'as our vine-growers in Champagne plant their vines. It is one of the mysteries of our viticulture that the grapes which yield our most delicate and exquisite wines of Ay, all sparkle and sunshine, can only be made to yield those wines when they are planted in our poorest and most chalky soil, and in regions where the climate is so ungenial that the plants have to be set as closely as possible together in the ground. We really huddle them together, as we do sheep in the hurdles in winter, to keep one another warm. This M. Harmel did with his converts. He taught his workmen to associate more closely with one another, he brought their minds and their hearts together, and let them act one upon another. He lived and moved and had his own being among them like a father, and in this way insensibly they came by degrees to regard each other as members of a family. He has always felt, and his whole life has shown it, that the "Declaration of the Rights of Man," whatever the motives of its authors may have been, put the weak of this world at the mercy of the strong, and set Capital free to deal with Labour as a mere matter of [Pg 378] bargain and sale. The dominant idea in his mind has always been, as it was in the mind of his father before him—the "good father" of Val-des-Bois—not how to get the most work out of his workmen, but how best to do his own duty to his workmen, thinking that the best way to get them, on their part, to do their duty to him. All this, you see, is quite mediæval and Christian, not in the least modern and scientific! But has the modern and scientific way of looking at the relations of capital and labour, so far, been what may be called a great success? Do we seem to be in the way of organizing a solid modern society on the principles of the "struggle for life" and of the "survival of the fittest"? Certainly these principles are a logical outcome of the "Declaration of the Rights of Man," and of such legislation as that which in 1791 shattered to pieces at a blow the whole ancient and Christian organization of industry in our unhappy land of France! As certainly too, they are admirably fitted to secure either the complete subjugation of labour by capital or the relapse of France and of Europe into barbarism. Is not universal suffrage a natural and easy weapon of capital in any "struggle for life" with labour? Is it not clear that, in losing the notion of duty to his employer, the workman has necessarily lost the idea also of duty to his fellow-workmen? "Every man for himself" is the motto of modern democracy, and do we not see that the syndicates of workmen which it was the object of the Radicals to establish by their law of March 1884 concerning "professional syndicates," in order to facilitate and promote "strikes," are only kept together and made to work by sheer terrorism? What is the sanction of the measures ordered by such syndicates excepting the fear in which every member goes of his fellow- [Pg 379] members? Does not that take us a long way on towards savage life? Does not that tend directly to build up a subterranean machinery of despotism which will be at the service of the shrewdest head and the longest purse whenever any real and decisive issue arises between organised capital and organised labour?

'Look at the part which money played in our first unhappy revolution!

'It is the most instructive part of that whole sad history, and yet, for a hundred different reasons, it is the part which from the beginning has been most obscured by a miscellaneous conspiracy of silence. Some day perhaps it will be possible to get a true life written of Le Pelletier de Saint-Fargeau, the millionaire Mephistopheles of Philippe Égalité. The hand that struck him to death in the very centre of the scene of his long machinations, there in the Palais Royal, with his vote, dooming the king to death, still as it were on his lips, did not strike at random. There was no such bit of dramatic justice done in those dark days as the killing of that man in that place between the giving of that vote and the murder of the king that followed it next day!

'But the story cannot be written yet. They were much more concerned about the death of Le Pelletier next day in the Convention, you will see if you look into the true records of the session, than they were about the murder of the king, which was then going on in the Place de la Révolution. They gave him—why not?—(the most active of them and the deepest in the plot were his property, bought and paid for)—they gave him a national funeral, and made his heiress—the greatest heiress she was in France—the ward of the nation.

'It was quite another vision he had in his mind for her! I will show you some day a curious letter of hers written after she became a duchess, about the Empress Joséphine. It is very instructive. [Pg 380] She grew up a lovely, untameable, unmanageable young person, made a love-match, as you know, and with whom you know, broke her husband's heart, got a divorce and married again. To go into all this now would disturb the peace of families in no way responsible for her career or for the plots and schemes of her father. It would be like "flushing" the ghost of that monster Carrier who drowned the poor and the priests at Nantes, only to plague his descendants. His son was an excellent person who very properly changed his name. The most malicious thing I ever knew one woman say of another, was said of one of his grand-daughters at a foreign court by another Frenchwoman, jealous of her social success. "She is very charming, no doubt; but look at her mouth, and you will see she has carious teeth—*des dents Carrier*!" But when, if ever, the truth

about that dark episode of Le Pelletier and his schemes is told, it will be seen how much more gold and private ambitions had to do with the final fatal drift of things after the destiny of France fell into the swirl of Paris, than all the howlings and ravings of the philosophers and the patriots. What happened in the last century will happen again whenever and wherever human society ceases to be held together by the idea of Duty. It is not the discontent of Labour which makes me most anxious as to the future. It is the egotism of Capital, educated and encouraged into egotism by the false doctrines of what is called Liberalism in this country, and provoked into egotism by the equally egotistic discontent of Labour. What I most value in the work of M. Harmel is the courage and precision with which he has from the first insisted upon the Duty of the employer to the employed. You have seen, of course, his *Catéchisme du Patron*?'

The Cardinal Archbishop had given me a copy of this book, which is really one of the most [Pg 381] remarkable contributions ever made to the practical study of the relations between Capital and Labour. In it M. Harmel has condensed, in the catechetical form of questions and answers, his lifelong experience in the work of ascertaining and fulfilling all the duties incumbent, from the point of view of Christian duty, upon the capitalist who employs the labour of his fellow-men in putting his capital into use and making it profitable. It would be very interesting merely as a theory of the true relations between Labour and Capital. It is more than interesting as the ripe expression of an experiment faithfully and successfully carried out by a man of resolute will and great practical ability for more than a quarter of a century in a field which, when he entered upon it, was certainly one of the most unpromising in the world.

The 'Christian Corporation' was an established institution, as I have said, at Val-des-Bois, in 1870, when the war with Germany broke out. In 1871, after the storm of the invasion had been followed by the horrors of the Commune of Paris, the principles on which the industrial family at Val-des-Bois had been organised began to attract attention all over France. A club of Catholic working-men was opened at Paris in 1871, and a movement began in earnest for extending these institutions throughout France. It made rapid progress. In September 1874 a great disaster occurred at Val-des-Bois. The factory buildings took fire during the night of the 12th of that month, and despite the efforts of the whole population they were all in ashes when the morning broke. Before noon of the next day M. Harmel announced to his workmen that he had leased, at no small sacrifice of his immediate pecuniary interests, another factory at some distance from the Val-des-Bois, called La Neuville, and that the 'Christian Corporation' of Val-des-Bois might at [Pg 382] once be transferred thither, and carried on as before until the reconstruction of its original site. The tidings of this calamity brought substantial succour from Catholic clubs all over France, from Marseilles to Nantes, and from Bordeaux to Lille. More than a hundred clubs were represented in this outburst of sympathy, and the disaster led, not indirectly, to a formal approval of the work in a brief issued by His Holiness Pius IX. on October 2, 1874.

In 1878 there were more than four hundred clubs in France, with a membership of nearly a hundred thousand persons. Concurrently with the development of these clubs a movement went on for establishing an organisation of honorary members, not belonging to the working classes, who should co-operate with the clubs in promoting the principles represented by the 'Christian Corporations.' In 1875 a parliamentary inquiry was made into the condition of Labour in France; and on behalf of the committee which conducted this inquiry, the deputy, M. Ducarre, who drew up the report, declared it to be the opinion of the committee that all the syndicating movements of modern times point to the necessity of re-establishing the corporate system of labour which was destroyed by the First Republic in 1791. The language used in this Report is worth citing.

'All the remedies suggested for the existing state of things,' said M. Ducarre, 'may be summed up in this conclusion; there must be an end of the isolation of the individual labourer. This must be replaced by the action of collectivities, associations, or syndicates, whose duty it shall be to watch over the interests of every calling. In a word we must go back to the system of corporations of the trades, *maîtrises*, and *jurandes*, under which labour was so long carried on in [Pg 383] France.' This Report found no favour in the eyes of the Radicals because it aimed at a good understanding and practical co-operation between Labour and Capital. Nine years afterwards, on March 21, 1884, a law was carried through the French Parliament authorising the establishment of 'professional syndicates.' The object of the Republicans, then as now controlling a majority of the Chamber, in passing this law, was to strengthen the trades unions as against the employers of France. The law, it will be observed, was passed at the time when a syndicate of miners in the North, which had no legal right to exist before the passage of the law, was actively promoting, under its leader, M. Basly, the great strike at Anzin of which I have spoken in a preceding chapter. But while the law of March 1884 legalised 'syndicates' of this aggressive, and in the nature of things tyrannical, type, it also necessarily legalised precisely such Christian corporations as those contemplated in the Report of 1875, and long before organised on the lines laid down by M. Harmel. A great and visible responsibility was thus thrown upon the employers of France and upon what are called the upper classes generally in that country. It was clear that, if they would energetically and systematically throw themselves into the work of bringing about a reconstruction of social order on the principles of co-operation and sympathy as opposed to the principle of antagonism between Capital and Labour, the law of 1884, intended to widen, might be effectually used to close the threatening breach between the employers and the employed. There seems to be little doubt that down to that time the promoters of the Christian Corporation movement in France had made greater headway with the working classes than with the employers. A Report presented in 1885 by the general committee of the Catholic clubs of France [Pg 384] to the French bishops states this very plainly. This report was signed by the Marquis De La-Tour-du-Pin-Chambly, who from the beginning of M. Harmel's experiment at Val-des-Bois had been one

of his most earnest and active coadjutors, by the Comte de la Bouillerie, Treasurer of the General Society, by the Comte de Mun, and by the Comte Albert de Mun, the moving spirit now of the whole work, who resigned his commission in the army to devote himself to it, and who went up from the Morbihan to Paris as a deputy in 1885, elected by 60,341 votes, to demand not only the restoration of the monarchy but a property restriction upon the suffrage. In 1889, under the *scrutin d'arrondissement* readopted by the terrified Republicans to defeat 'Boulangism,' Count Albert de Mun was re-elected without opposition for the 2nd division of Pontivy. In no part of France is the passion of equality stronger than in the Morbihan; and the contempt of the people there for 'universal suffrage' is extremely instructive.

'Of the Christian Corporations,' says this Report of 1885, 'as of the working-men's clubs, it is proper to say that never in any place or at any time has any obstacle been offered to them by the working classes. On the contrary, there is plainly going on among the working classes, under the influence of the deplorable crises which affect the industrial world, an instinctive and ever-increasing movement towards this association of common and professional interests, the notion of which is suggested by the natural sentiment of right and wrong, as well as by some confused memory, obscured by revolutionary doctrines, of the traditions of Labour in France, which predisposes the working-man to seek safety in a return to the old system of the Corporations. A similar feeling exists among the employers, who desire, though they too often despair of seeing, a [Pg 385] closer union of interests between themselves and their working-men. Wherever the movement languishes, one of the chief causes will be found to be the apathy, the discouragement, and the frivolity of the upper classes.'

In the case of great factories like that of the Val-des-Bois, the Christian Corporations naturally are sufficient unto themselves. There the employer and the employed between them constitute a small world, which can take care of itself and carry out the numerous subsidiary features of the system, such as the promotion of domestic economy, the establishment of savings-funds, the organisation of festivals and of courses of instruction, without relying much, or at all, upon any co-operation from without. It is in the development of the system for the benefit of working-men who are isolated in their work, or employed in small establishments, that the co-operation of the upper classes is needed; and while I incline to think that there is still much ground for the strong language on this point employed in the Report of 1885, there appears to be no doubt that a great improvement has taken place during the last three or four years. In 1884 the efforts of the Cardinal Archbishop of Reims, the Bishop of Angers, and of other energetic prelates, secured the active participation of the Holy See in the promotion of this work. In February of that year a pilgrimage to Rome of members of the Catholic Clubs of France was organised. The pilgrims were received in special audience by Leo XIII., and he gave his Papal approbation and benediction to the work in a very remarkable address which produced a deep and widespread impression throughout Catholic France. Similar pilgrimages were made in 1887 and in 1889. [Pg 386]

One very important effect of this has been to bring about a better understanding between the parochial clergy of France in general and these steadily increasing lay organisations. It is in the nature of things that the clergy should be slow in giving their unreserved aid to any movement, no matter how admirable in itself, which involves a good deal of extra-clerical activity in matters religious. This was illustrated in the attitude of the English Protestant clergy towards Wesley and Whitfield, and there are some curious coincidences—of course absolutely undesigned—between some of the methods of the great and powerful Protestant sect of the Wesleyans and those of M. Harmel's Catholic Clubs.

The Methodist 'class-leader,' for example, reappears in a modified form in the *zélateurs* and *zélatrices* of the Harmel Clubs and fraternities. These are members, working-men and working-women, who are willing to devote themselves to promoting religious sentiments and practices among their comrades, and who hold regular meetings to consider and work out the best and most practical way of doing this.

It is not surprising that in many cases the curés should have looked with a little uneasiness upon the development of such a system until it had been fully considered and formally approved by the highest authority in the Church. Of its efficacy from the point of view of M. Harmel there can be no doubt.

Something not wholly unlike the 'exclusive dealing' which contributes so much to the strength of Methodism in America has also been established for the benefit of the members of M. Harmel's Christian Corporation. This is 'exclusive dealing 'of an honest and honourable sort, and must not be confounded with the rascally 'exclusive dealing' known in Ireland as 'boycotting.' It combines a system of 'privileged purveyors' with an accumulative savings fund. [Pg 387]

The firm of Harmel Brothers, acting for the Corporation, makes contracts with tradesmen at Val-des-Bois—grocers, butchers, bakers, and the like—by which the tradesmen bind themselves to sell certain wares to members of the Christian Corporations, and to them only, at a fixed discount below the lowest current rate of prices—the wares to be of the best quality, under a penalty—and the lowest current rate to be fixed by an average taken from the current rates as given to Harmel Brothers by four dealers in such wares in the city of Reims, of whom two are to be named by them and two by the 'privileged purveyor.' Each member of the Corporation receives certificates, of one franc, ten sous, or ten centimes in value, from the office of Harmel Brothers, and these are taken by the 'privileged purveyor' in payment at their face value.

For him they are each week cashed in money at the office of Harmel Brothers. If the members prefer to pay the 'privileged purveyor' in cash, or in orders upon their wages, the sums so paid

are inscribed on the account of the Corporation. When the weekly or fortnightly accounts are made up, a certain percentage of the differences between the current market-price of the purchases made and the actual price so paid by the purchasers goes to what is called the 'Corporation profit,' the residue of the difference being paid over to the member with his or her wages. The 'Corporation profit' is a savings fund. Each member has a book showing—with his or her number, and with the full name of the head of the family to which he or she may belong—the amount of this fund standing each quarter to his or her credit, with interest at 5 per cent.

This can only be drawn out by the member, on leaving the employment of the firm, in case of illness or incapacity, or at the age of fifty years. [Pg 388]

An actuary's estimate shows that the share of the Corporation profit accruing to each member in twenty-five years on an annual estimated average Corporation profit of 70 francs a member, with five per cent. interest, would be 3,300 francs. And this, be it observed, will have cost the member nothing, being simply a result of the union of employer and employed in a corporate dealing with the purveyors. In 1879 the annual budget of a hundred families at Val-des-Bois, earning among them 249,242 francs, showed an actual 'Corporation profit' of 91,319.05 francs, which ought to have been much larger had Val-des-Bois then possessed more than one butcher, baker, grocer, and tailor. These hundred families comprised 496 members, 279 of them employed in the factory and 217 occupied at home.

During the last ten years, and especially since the passage of the law of March 1884, the scope of these Christian Corporations, not only at Val-des-Bois and at Reims, but all over France, has been considerably extended. Many of them have now the character of true guilds, as at Poitiers, for example, where there is a Corporation of the Builders under the invocation of St-Radegonda, another—Our Lady of the Keys—founded upon a syndicate of clothiers, and a third, of St.-Honoré, founded upon a syndicate of provision-dealers. At Lille I found a typical Corporation, that of the spinners and weavers, known as the Christian Corporation of St.-Nicholas. This was founded in May 1885. This Corporation admits workmen and workwomen, employees and manufacturers, belonging, either by residence or by connexion with the industry named, to the commune of Lille or to one of the adjoining communes. It had last year a membership of 887 persons, of whom 26 were master manufacturers and 37 employees, the rest being workmen and workwomen. Five [Pg 389] large firms were represented in it. The Syndical Council was made up of a syndic employer, a syndic employee, and a syndic workman from each of these firms, and of a syndic workman, M. Courtecuisse, representing the members who were employed in other establishments. The directing bureau consisted of seven members, including the chaplain. It was presided over by one of the great manufacturers of Lille, M. Féron-Vrau, and the two vice-presidents were M. Edouard Bontry, of the house of Bontry-Droullers, and M. Courtecuisse already named.

This Corporation, under the law of 1884, can own the buildings necessary for its meetings, its libraries, and its lecture-courses; it can establish among its members special savings funds, mutual assistance and pension funds; found and conduct offices for information bearing on the business of its members, and it may be consulted, under Article 6 of the Law of 1884, on 'all difficulties and misunderstandings and questions arising out of its specialty.' This provision—specially intended by the authors of the law to arm the 'strikers' of France against French employers—may thus, it will be seen, be turned quite as effectually to purposes of concord and harmony as to purposes of discontent and strife. The Corporation of St.-Nicholas may receive gifts and legacies in aid of its Corporation funds and purposes, and generally take an active part, like all these Corporations, as was pointed out by Leo XIII. in his 'Encyclical of April 20, 1884,' in protecting, under the 'guidance of the Faith, both the interests and the morals of the people.'

It already has within its sphere of action a Confraternity of Our Lady of the Factory, comprising 548 members, a Mutual Aid Society with 218 members, an Assistance Fund with 409 members; and a Domestic Economy Fund, the principle of which is that certain dealers make a discount on [Pg 390] their wares to members of the Corporation which is certified to by them in counters of different values. These counters are receivable by the Corporation in payment of the assessments and subscriptions of the members.

The steady development of these institutions during the last four or five years has led to the organisation by them of a complete general system of administration, provincial and national. The Corporations are grouped not by departments but by provinces.

Provincial assemblies are held, by which delegates are named to attend an annual general assembly at Paris. At the general assembly of 1889, held on June 24, 350 delegates were present, and the session of the assembly was opened by the delegation from Dauphiny, the chair being taken by one of its members, M. Roche, in virtue, as he explained to the crowded audience in the large hall of the Horticultural Society in the Rue de Grenelle, of his descent 'from a representative of the Estates of Dauphiny in 1789.' The work of the assembly was divided between four committees, one on moral and religious interests, one on public interests, one on commercial and industrial interests, and one on agricultural and rural interests.

From this it will be seen that the principles of the movement are being systematically applied to the whole field of active life in France. The general maxim of the organisation is the sound, sensible, and military maxim, of St.-Vincent de Paul, 'let us keep our rules, and our rules will keep us,' and I think there can be no doubt that the French freemasons, and the fanatics of unbelief generally who have launched the government of the Third Republic upon its present course, will find this new Christian organisation of Capital and Labour a troublesome factor in the political field. [Pg 391]

We have seen what came in Germany of the *Cultur-Kampf*, and there are curious analogies between the work and the spirit of the Catholic Clubs in France to-day, and the ideas of Monseigneur von Ketteler, which gave vigour and vitality to the great 'party of the Centre,' in the contest with the Chancellor. Where the giant of Berlin had the wisdom to give way, the pigmies of Paris are likely to persist until they are crushed. For they have burned their ships, as the Chancellor never burned his, and they are dogmatists, while he is a statesman. He sought to control and use the Catholic Church in Germany. Their object is, as one of the ablest Republicans in France, Jules Simon, long ago told them, to supplant a State Church of belief by a State church of unbelief. In America and in England when men talk of 'religious freedom,' they mean the freedom of a man to profess and practise his own religion. What the Third French Republic means by 'religious freedom' is freedom from religion. Their legislation has tended, ever since 1877, not indirectly nor by implication, but directly and avowedly, to establish in France a state of things in which, not Catholics only, but all men who profess any form of religion, shall be treated as Protestants were in France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, or as Catholics were in Ireland under William III. This is the meaning of M. Gambetta's war-cry 'Clericalism is the enemy.' The phrase was his, but the policy was announced by his party long before he invented the phrase in 1877. It was distinctly formulated in 1874 by a Republican leader much better equipped for dealing with such questions than M. Gambetta, who was the Boanerges not the Paul of the French gospel of unbelief.

On September 4, 1874, M. Challemel-Lacour, in a remarkable speech, laid it down as a fundamental principle of the Republican policy that the State should so control all the higher [Pg 392] branches of education as to secure what he called 'the moral unity of France.' It was on this principle that Napoleon in 1808 had re-organised the University of France. M. Challemel-Lacour unhesitatingly called upon the Republicans to adopt it. If Catholics or Protestants or Israelites were allowed to found universities of their own and confer degrees and diplomas, what would become of the 'moral unity of France'? The duty of the Republicans was to protect and develop this 'moral unity.' So long as one Frenchman could be found in France who believed anything not believed by every other Frenchman, so long this 'moral unity' would be imperfect. The French Liberals of 1830 obviously made a great mistake when they put 'freedom of education' as a right of Frenchmen in the charter. M. Guizot, the great Protestant Minister of Louis Philippe, obviously made a great mistake when he established the principles of free primary education in 1833. The Republicans of 1848 obviously made a great mistake when they proclaimed 'freedom of education' as a Republican principle. The Jacobins of 1792 were the true 'children of light,' and they alone understood how really to achieve the 'moral unity of France,' M. Challemel-Lacour did not say this in so many words; but he did say in so many words that he objected to see any bill passed which should establish 'freedom of education,' and permit clerical persons to found universities, because, 'instead of establishing the moral unity of France, this newfangled liberty would only aggravate the division of Frenchmen into two sets of minds moving upon different lines to different conclusions. The young men educated in these universities,' he said, 'will become zealous apostles of Catholicism. The more ardour they put into their proselytism the [Pg 393] more antagonism they will excite!' At this passage in M. Challemel-Lacour's extraordinary speech, according to the official report, a member of the Right broke in with the very natural exclamation, 'And why not? Is not that liberty? liberty for all?' To which M. Challemel-Lacour discreetly made no reply, but went on to say, 'Instead of establishing our moral unity, you will heap up combustibles in the country until shocks are produced and perhaps cataclysms!'

This is the doctrine of the worthy Lord Mayor in 'Barnaby Rudge' who querulously exclaims to Mr. Harwood when that gentleman came to him asking for protection against the Gordon rioters, 'What are you a Catholic for? If you were not a Catholic the rioters would let you alone. I do believe people turn Catholics a-purpose to vex and worrit me!' 'Moral unity' would have saved the good Lord Mayor a great deal of trouble. 'Moral unity' would have kept things quiet and comfortable throughout the Roman Empire under Diocletian, and throughout the Low Countries under Phillip II. and Alva, and throughout England under Henry VIII. The Jacobins of 1792 did their best to organise 'moral unity' in France with the help of the guillotine, and of the Committee of Public Safety and of the hired assassins who butchered prisoners in cold blood.

Here, at Reims, in September 1792, while Marat 'the Friend of the People' and Danton the 'Minister of Justice' were employing Maillard the 'hero of the Bastile' and his salaried cut-throats to promote public economy and private liberty by emptying the prisons of Paris, certain agents of Marat made a notable effort in behalf of the 'moral unity of France.' To this effort the melodramatic historians of the French Revolution have done scant justice. Mr. Carlyle, for [Pg 394] example, alludes to it only in a casual half-disdainful way, which would be almost comical were the theme less ghastly. 'At Reims,' he observes, 'about eight persons were killed—and two were afterwards hanged for doing it.' The contest of this curious passage plainly shows that he imagined these 'eight persons' (more or less) to have been "killed" by the people of Reims, roused into a patriotic frenzy by the circular which Marat, Panis and Sergent sent out to the provinces calling upon all Frenchmen to imitate the 'people of Paris,' and massacre all the enemies of the Revolution at home before marching against the foreign invaders. That the 'people' of Reims thus aroused should only have killed 'about eight persons' really seemed to him, one would say, hardly worthy of a truly 'Titanic' and 'transcendental' epoch. There is something essentially bucolic in the impression which mobs and multitudes always seem to make upon Mr. Carlyle's imagination. Of what really happened at Reims in September 1792 he plainly had no accurate notion. He obviously cites from some second-hand contemporary accounts of the transactions there this statement, that 'about eight persons were killed,' because, as it happens, we have a full precise

and official Report of the killing of all these persons, with their names and details of the massacre, drawn up on September 8, 1792, by the municipal authorities of Reims and signed by all the members of the Council General. Had Mr. Carlyle seen this Report, it would have shown him that Marat, Panis and Sergent knew what they were about when they sent out their famous or infamous circular, just as Marat and Danton knew what they were about when they organised the massacres of September in the prisons of Paris. The 'people' of Reims had no more to do with the killing of 'about eight persons' in the streets and squares of this historic city in September [Pg 395] 1792 than the 'people' of Paris had to do with the atrocious butcheries at the Abbaye and Bicêtre and La Force and the Conciergerie. Mr. Carlyle ought to have learned even from the 'Histoire Parlementaire' of Buchez and Roux, which he seems to have freely consulted, that 'the days of September were an administrative business.'

What actually happened at Reims in September 1792 is worth telling. It does not prove, as Mr. Carlyle almost dolefully takes it to prove, that in the provinces the 'Sansculottes only bellowed and howled but did not bite.' It does prove that when they bit, they bit to order, and under impulses no more 'Titanic' or 'transcendental' than those which in our own time lead active politicians to invent lies about the character of their opponents, and to manufacture emotional issues on the eve of a sharp political contest.

The subsidised Parisian insurrection of August 10, 1792, prostrated the monarchy, but it did not found the Republic. It was the death knell both of Pétion and of the Girondists, who had been most active in secretly or openly promoting it. The Constitution having been torn into shreds, power became a prize to be fought for by all the demagogues and all the factions in Paris. The Legislative Assembly fell into the trough of the sea. The sections of Paris supported Marat in calmly laying hands on the printing-presses and material of the royal printing-office, and converting his abominable newspaper into a 'Journal of the Republic.' He was voted a special 'tribune of honour' in the hall of the Council. On August 19 he openly called upon the 'people' to 'march in arms to the prison of the Abbaye, take out the prisoners there, especially the officers of the Swiss Guard and their accomplices, and put them to the sword.' This was an electoral [Pg 396] proceeding. The members of the National Convention were then about to be chosen. Under a law passed by the expiring legislature, electors of the members were first to be chosen by the voters on August 26, and the electors thus chosen were to meet on September 2, and choose the members of the Convention. It was in view of this second and decisive election day that Marat and Danton settled the date at which the great patriotic work of 'emptying the prisons' should begin, and it was in view of this day also that the circular already mentioned of Marat, Panis and Sergent was sent forth to all places at which a lively administration of murder and pillage would be most likely to conduce to the choice by the electors of deputies agreeable to the authors of the circular.

The electors for the Department of the Marne chosen on August 26 were to meet in Reims on September 2, and choose the Deputies for that department to sit in the Convention.

In Reims Marat had a faithful personal ally in the person of the Procureur-Syndic, the most important national functionary in the city. This man, Couplet, called Beaucourt, was a disreputable and apostate ex-monk who had married an ex-nun. His position, of course, gave him a great influence over the least respectable part of the population, and with Marat and Danton at his back in Paris he cared nothing for the mayor and the municipal authorities. From August 19 to August 31 he kept issuing incendiary placards and making inflammatory speeches in Reims. On August 31 he received an intimation from Paris that a column of so-called 'Volunteers' was in motion for Reims, and that he must have things ready for them. To this end he caused the arrest of the postmaster, M. Guérin, and of a poor young letter-carrier named Carton, on a charge of [Pg 397] sequestrating and burning 'compromising letters' which ought to have been turned over to him and the 'justice of the Republic.'

On the morning of the election day there marched into Reims the expected 'Volunteers,' who carried banners proclaiming them to be 'Men of the 10th of August.' Couplet received them and feasted them. They broke up into squads and went roaring about Reims denouncing 'the aristocrats' and demanding 'justice upon all public enemies.' They finally broke open the prison, and dragging out the unfortunate postmaster, cut him to pieces in front of the Hôtel de Ville. Some courageous citizens contrived to smuggle out of their reach the young letter-carrier, and took him for safety into the hall of the Municipal Council.

There the murderers followed him, excited by a speech from the Procureur-Syndic, who knowing that no trial had been had, did not scruple to say that 'nothing could excuse the unfaithful letter-carrier.'

The town officers tried to get Carton out by a back door, but Marat's murderers were too quick for them, and the poor youth was torn to pieces. While this was doing the Procureur-Syndic provided another victim. He arrested on some pretext a retired officer of the army, M. de Montrosier, ex-commandant of Lille, then in the house of his father-in-law, M. Andrieux, one of the first magistrates of Reims. M. de Montrosier being taken to prison, the Maratist mob broke again into the prison, dragged him out, killed him, and carried his head all over Reims on a pike. Meanwhile a detachment went out to a neighbouring village in quest of two of the canons of Reims, who had taken refuge there, brought them back to the city, and shot them dead in the street. Night now coming on, the apostles of the 'moral unity of France,' many of them by this [Pg 398] time being exceedingly drunk, kindled a huge bonfire in front of the Hôtel de Ville, flung into it the mutilated corpses of their victims, and towards midnight laying hands upon two priests, MM.

Romain and Alexandre, threw them into the flames! Another band during the evening broke into the venerable church of St.-Rémi, and tearing down the shields and banners which for fourteen centuries had hung above the tomb of the great Archbishop who made France a Christian kingdom, brought these to the bonfire and consumed them.

During this day of horrors, the electors of the department had been in session. As the news reached them of what was going on in the streets, one thought came into the minds of all the decent men among them, to get through as fast as possible and quit the city. At the first ballot 442 electors were present. At the seventh only 203 remained. Of these 135, being the compact 'Republican' minority, gave their votes on that ballot to Drouet, the postmaster's son of Ste-Ménéhould, Mr. Carlyle's 'bold old dragoon,' who stopped the carriage of Louis XVI. at Varennes. He was one of the special adherents of Marat, and a most vicious and venal creature, as his own memoirs, giving among other matters an account of his grotesque attempt to fly down out of his Austrian prison with a pair of paper wings, abundantly attest. He escaped the guillotine, and naturally enough turned up under the empire as an obsequious sub-prefect at Ste-Ménéhould. The whole of the elections, which in normal circumstances would have occupied at least three days, were hurried through before midnight of the first day.

Couplet, called Beaucourt, was satisfied. But so were not the 'men of the 10th of August,' They got their pay of course, but they wanted more blood. At 9 A.M. the next morning they seized the [Pg 399] venerable curé of St.-Jean, the Abbé Paquot, and dragged him before Couplet, insisting that he should take the constitutional oath. Couplet tried to explain that the time for taking it had expired on August 26. But the courageous Abbé, looking his assassins in the face, said to them: 'I will not take it, it is against my conscience. If I had two souls I would gladly give one of them for you. I have but one, and it belongs to my God.' He had hardly uttered the words when he was struck down and cut to pieces. Almost at the same moment another priest more than eighty years of age, the curate of Rilly, refusing to take the oath, was hanged upon the bar of a street lantern before the eyes of the Mayor of Reims, who tried in vain to disperse or control these *sans-culottes*, who, according to Mr. Carlyle, 'howled and bellowed, but did not bite.'

By this time the news came of the surrender of Verdun to the Prussians, and the tocsin began to sound from the great bells of the cathedral. The citizens of Reims suddenly took courage from the sense of the national peril, not to fall upon and slay helpless and unarmed prisoners, but to make head against the murderers and scoundrels who were domineering over their city. The local National Guards began to appear, and were shortly reinforced by a column of Volunteers from the country armed to meet the invaders. The Mayor took command of them and marched to the Hôtel de Ville. There they found that one Chateau, an agent of Couplet, had been secretly denounced by his employer as a spy and promptly hanged by the Parisians on the same lantern-bar from which the night before they had hanged the aged curé of Rilly. His dead body had been flung into the still blazing bonfire kept up all night with woodwork from the pillaged churches of [Pg 400] Reims. The champions of 'moral unity' had also laid hands on the wife of this wretched man, and were on the point of throwing her alive into the flames when the Mayor and the troops appeared. The order to 'charge bayonets' was given and the whole brood of scoundrels thereupon broke and fled in all directions.

All these details, with others too loathsome to be here reproduced, are, as I have said, taken from an official *procès verbal* drawn up at Reims on September 8, 1792, and signed by every member of the Council-General. This record was produced when in 1795, after the fall of Robespierre had opened the way for the great reaction which finally made Napoleon master of France, the tribunals of the Department of the Marne took steps to bring to justice such of the assassins of 1792 as they could lay hands upon. On the 26 Thermidor, An III., two wretches, one a newspaper-vendor and the other a slopshop-keeper, were condemned to death and executed for the murder of the Abbé Paquot and of the curé of Rilly. Two others, a glazier and a shoemaker, were condemned to six years in the chain-gang.

The evidence on which these assassins were convicted in 1795 had then been for two years in the hands of the municipal authorities at Reims. But during these two years France had been the football of the employers and accomplices of these assassins. The municipal authorities had been powerless to prevent these murders, which were committed in the public streets and under the protection of the Procureur-Syndic of the department, the official representative at Reims of the 'Minister of Justice,' Danton, at Paris. They were equally powerless to punish them.

The Mayor of Reims was fortunate to escape denunciation at Paris for his attempt to save the [Pg 401] lives of some of the victims. That was an offence against the 'moral unity' which the First Republic tried to establish.

There was a heroic Mayor in those days at Lille named André. When the Duke of Saxe-Teschen with his wife, a sister of Marie Antoinette, appeared before Lille at the head of an Austrian army and demanded the surrender of the place, Mayor André, who was a Republican but not of the 'moral unity' type, replied that he had sworn to keep the place, and he would keep his oath. With the help of the Ancient Artillery Corporations of the old Flemish city (Corporations of which the 'Honourable Artillery Corps' of London and of Boston are offshoots), Mayor André did keep his oath and kept Lille. The Minister Roland, the respectable confederate of the virtuous Pétion, sent him promises of help, but no help. Why? Because Mayor André had taken the lead in a masculine protest of the honest people of Lille against that ruffianly invasion of the Tuileries by the mob on June 20 which the virtuous Pétion, Mayor of Paris, and his respectable confederate Roland had for their own purposes promoted. So Mayor André got words and no troops. But Lille took care of

herself; bore a tremendous bombardment for days without flinching, and finally, in the early days of October, saw the Saxon Duke and his army march away, Valmy having opened the eyes of Brunswick to the utter futility and fanfaronnade of the French emigrant noblesse and princes, who had drawn up for him and persuaded him against his own better judgment to sign the too famous and fatal proclamation with which he heralded the Austro-Prussian advance into France. Mayor André having thus saved the grand North-eastern bulwark of France, his services had to be in some way recognised. But in what way? Paris voted that Lille had deserved well of the [Pg 402] nation, which was obvious enough; also that Lille should get a million of francs towards repairing damages, which million of francs, I am assured, never reached Lille; also that a grand monument should commemorate the valour and constancy of Lille. But the grand monument was never erected until half a century afterwards, when King Louis Philippe took the matter up, and carried it through.

With the proclamation of the Republic in September 1792 it ceased to be meritorious in Mayors and other municipal personages to protect life and property, repulse foreign invaders and punish domestic criminals. Varlet, the self-appointed 'Apostle of Liberty,' the man with the camp-chair and the red cap, whom Carnot, the grandfather of the present President, actually insisted that the Assembly should welcome to its floor, gave the keynote of the new order of things. 'We must draw a veil,' he exclaimed, 'over the Declaration of the Rights of Man!' And a veil was indeed drawn over the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Here at Reims, as elsewhere, proscriptions and confiscations were the order of the day. The glorious Cathedral of Reims itself, the Westminster and Canterbury in one of France, was in continual peril. Nothing really saved it and the Archi-episcopal palace but the religious and patriotic reverence of the people of Reims for the memory of Jeanne d Arc. In that Archi-episcopal palace the peasant girl of Domrémy, the Virgin saviour of France, had been lodged. In that Cathedral she had stood, her banner in her hand, and watched the solemn consecration of her mission and her triumph. The emissaries of plunder and murder from Paris shrank from driving the Rémois to extremities on that issue. But they desecrated the building and defaced it as much as they dared. [Pg 403]

I am told that Robespierre during his dictatorship interfered to put a stop to the vandalism of his disciples here, and that we owe to him the preservation of the magnificent groups which still exist of statues representing scenes in the life of the Virgin Mary. The groups above the head of the Virgin on the double lintel had already been dashed to pieces when he was appealed to. The groups below, still unharmed, afford unanswerable proof that the sculptors of this part of Europe in the thirteenth century must have been familiar with the best traditions of their art. If Robespierre preserved these, we may forgive him not only for sending his dear Camille Desmoulins and his detested Danton to the guillotine, but even for replacing the shattered groups of the Nativity, the Presentation, and the Death of the Virgin with this inscription of his own devising: 'The French people believe in the existence of God and in the immortality of the soul!' Under the First Consul this inscription gave place to the Latin dedication now visible.

Pillaging he did not prevent, perhaps could not. One wizened old reprobate, Ruhl, got himself great Republican *kudos* by persistently putting about a legend that he had successfully stolen the sacred ampulla, from which St.-Rémi had anointed Clovis King of France, and had dashed it to pieces in public. That he did indeed dash in pieces publicly a flask of glass is, I am assured, indubitable. But not less indubitable is it that he did not dash in pieces the sacred ampulla. Ruhl was a bit of a scholar, and his legend was obviously suggested to him by the traditional story of the Frankish warrior who smashed a sacred vase at Soissons, and whose own head the stalwart King Clovis afterwards clove in twain with his battle-axe on the Champ de Mars in requital of the deed. Curiously enough, it was written that the head of Ruhl should likewise in the end be [Pg 404] smashed, as it was by himself with a pistol at Paris, May 20, 1795, to save it from the guillotine!

All the churches of Reims did not escape so well as the Cathedral. St.-Nicaise, 'the jewel of Reims' and the masterpiece of a famous architect of the thirteenth century, Hues Libergiers, whose name is preserved in that of one of the chief streets of Reims, was pillaged and then pulled down, the materials and the site being sold at a 'mock auction' to Santerre, the enterprising brewer, who 'pulled the wires' of all the patriotic emotions of the Faubourg St.-Antoine from the outset of the Revolution, got himself thereby made a general, and in that capacity conducted Louis XVI. to the scaffold, where, as all the world knows, he ordered the drums to drown the last words of the King. He was an incorrigible and indefatigable speculator, and while he drove a roaring trade at Paris in beer, he was always on the look out for demolished churches and convents in the provinces. Napoleon took his measure promptly, subsidised and used him to good purpose. Hearing once that there was a ferment brewing in St.-Antoine, the Emperor sent an officer to Santerre. 'Go and tell that fellow,' he said, 'that if I hear one word from the Faubourg St.-Antoine I will have him instantly shot.'

The 'Titanic' and 'transcendental' Faubourg remained as mute as a mouse!

In no French city are the memories of the Revolutionary orgie more offensively out of key with the actual aspect and the great associations of the place than in Reims. Whatever may have been the ways of the working people here forty years ago, I have always been struck by their quiet and orderly demeanour, as well as by the general air of prosperity and animation which pervades the [Pg 405] city. Its grand Cathedral, the most consummate type which exists of the great ogival architecture of the thirteenth century, stands, the archæologists tell us, on the spot where the Romans planted their citadel sixteen centuries ago. Like a citadel, it dominates the whole city to-day; a fortress no longer, like the Roman citadel, of armed force, but of faith, charity, and hope. Seven centuries have not shaken the solidity of its massive fabric. They who built it 'dreamt not of a

perishable home.' But only a year ago a serious dislocation appeared in the framework of the stupendous rose-window over the grand entrance, and this, with other unsatisfactory symptoms observable here and there in the building, lend colour to the theory that the great chalk bed upon which the Cathedral stands may have been affected by the percolation of water from some deep trenches which, it seems, were dug near the northern and southern towers at the entrance of the Cathedral, during the year 1879, and unfortunately left open during the very inclement winter which followed.

This is a rather alarming theory, particularly if it be true, as it is said to be, that since 1880 the towers have perceptibly come out of plumb.

Fortunately the see of Reims is now in the charge of a prelate who fully appreciates the value to art and to civilisation, as well as to France and to the Church, of this magnificent edifice. When he came here from the bishopric of Tarbes, his first episcopate, in November 1874, one of the earliest steps taken by the present Cardinal Langénieux was to get a full report on the condition of the Cathedral from M. Millet, the accomplished successor of M. Viollet-le-Duc in the great work of the conservation and restoration of the historical monuments of France. M. Millet, on August 25, 1875, reported that the flying buttresses needed immediate attention, and that 'the [Pg 406] gables and vaults of the western façade were seriously damaged, so that the rain water was penetrating the masonry and threatening the destruction of the numerous statues and sculptured ornaments of the grand western portal.' This portal, as every traveller knows, is simply matchless in the world. The Archhishop thereupon invited four of his personal friends, all at that time members of the Ministry—MM. Dufaure, Léon Say, Wallon, and Caillaux—to Reims, to see for themselves the state of the Cathedral. They came and inspected the building, and after their return to Paris prepared a bill, which became a law in December 1875, appropriating a sum of 2,033,411 francs in ten yearly instalments to the restoration of the Cathedral. The work began at once under the direction of M. Millet, who unfortunately died in 1879.

It was prosecuted after his death by another able architect, M. Brugère, and is now in the hands of M. Darcy, who has shown by his work at Evreux and St.-Denis that he is no unworthy successor of Viollet-le-Duc. The appropriation made in 1875 has been expended, but I am glad to find, on looking into the Budget for 1890 of the Ministry of Public Worship, that a sum of 301,508 fr. 26 c. is still available for the works at Reims. This budget, by the way, is an instructive document. It shows that the whole outlay of the State in France upon all objects connected with public worship and religion in France and Algiers, excepting the service of the chaplains in the army and the navy, amounted in 1889 to a little more than one franc per head of the population! The whole expense in connection with the Catholic Church, the Calvinist and Lutheran confessions, the Israelitish religion and the Mussulmans, was no more than 45,337,145 francs, a [Pg 407] sum less than the amount annually expended by the Protestant Episcopal Church of the single State of New York upon keeping up its churches, colleges, and clergy! What proportion this sum bears to the present annual income of the Church property confiscated under the first Republic it would be interesting to ascertain. A Protestant friend of mine in the south of France, who has made some investigations into this subject, tells me that it cannot possibly represent above *ten per cent*. of the present actual product of the former property of the Church. Of the whole sum, 228,000 francs were spent on the civil servants of the ministry. There are seven sub-chiefs of bureaux in this ministry, all of them now doubtless good atheists, who receive salaries of from 3,400 to 5,400 francs a year. The highest salary paid to a Protestant pastor even in Paris is 3,000 francs, or 120*l.* a year. The curé of Notre-Dame de Paris receives 2,400 francs, or less than 100*l.* a year. There are 580 curés of the first class who receive from 1,500 to 1,600 francs a year; 275 curés of the second class receiving 1,500 francs a year, and 2,527 curés of the third class receiving from 1,200 to 1,300 francs a year. The thirty-one clerks in the Ministry receive from 1,800 to 4,500 francs a year. The Vicar-General of Paris receives no more than 4,500 francs a year. The Archbishop of Paris receives, like all the other archbishops, 15,000 francs, or 600*l.*, a year, which is the salary paid to the Director of the Ministry! The Grand Rabbi of the Central Consistory receives 12,000 and the Grand Rabbi of Paris 5,000 francs a year, and the salaries paid to the Israelitish ministers of religion range from 2,500 down to 600 francs, the latter amount being less by 300 francs than the wages of the servants in the Ministry. The Muftis and Imams in office receive from 300 to 1,200 francs a year. All these salaries, with the outlay on the construction, rent, or maintenance of buildings of all kinds used for religious purposes, pensions, [Pg 408] and travelling expenses, are comprised in the total appropriation of 45,337,145 francs, or a little more than 1,800,000*l.* for the year 1889. During the same year 12,760,745 francs were appropriated for the Fine Arts service. I do not say that the sum thus devoted to the Fine Arts out of the pockets of the taxpayers of France was at all too large. But I do say that it is out of all proportion large as compared with the sum voted out of the pockets of the taxpayers to the maintenance of religious institutions, which an overwhelming majority of the people of France regard, and rightly regard, as essential to the stability of law and order. Furthermore, this Budget of 1889 shows the spirit in which the fanatics of 'moral unity' are prosecuting their war against all religions in France. In 1883 the Government's budget amounted to 53,528,206 francs. Here we have a reduction within six years of more than 8,000,000 francs. In 1883 M. Jules Roche, now a deputy for the first district of Chambéry and an ally of M. Clémenceau, proposed to reduce the Budget of Public Worship to 4,588,800 francs! The Third Republic, it will be seen, is getting on towards the proposition of M. Jules Roche—a proposition which clearly combines everything that is most open to objection in a legal connection between the State and religion with everything that is most odious and dangerous in an open war of the State against religion.

During these six years the leaders of this war against religion have never dared to draw up a

statistical account of the strength of the various religious bodies in France. In 1882 one of their followers, M. Alfred Talandier, on February 13, rashly proposed that a table should be officially prepared of the state of religious opinions in France; but the managers of the cause of 'moral unity' were too wily to walk into that trap; they quietly stifled the proposition. It really might be a little awkward, even for a Parliamentary oligarchy with a strongly-bitted Executive well in hand, to confront, let us say, 37,500,000 of Catholics, Protestants, Israelites, not to mention the Mussulmans in Africa, with a proposition to abolish a Budget of Worship amounting to a little over a franc a head, for the purpose of reducing France to a complete 'moral unity' of absolute unbelief in God and in the immortality of the human soul! [Pg 409]

Cardinal Langénieux took possession, as I have said, of the Archi-episcopal See of Reims in November 1874. Seldom has the right man been put into the right place more exactly at the right moment. It was in September 1874 that M. Challemel-Lacour unfolded the Republican programme of war to the knife against all religion. In September 1874, too, as I have mentioned, the burning of the factory at Val-des-Bois called out a general demonstration of sympathy from the Catholic working-men's clubs all over France, which attracted public attention to the movement; and in October 1874 Pius IX. issued a brief recognising its importance and earnestly commending it.

The new Archbishop of Reims was exceptionally fitted by his training and his experience to promote such a movement.

He was a Benedictine of the school of Cluny, bred in the traditions of that illustrious Order, to which, without exaggeration, it may be said that we owe almost everything that is best worth having in our Western civilisation. For upon what does human society rest in the last resort if not upon the two great pillars of the rule of St. Benedict—Obedience and Labour? As a priest, the new Archbishop had successively and successfully administered two of the most important parishes in Paris, one in the workmen's quarter of the Faubourg St.-Antoine, the other in the quarter of the noblesse, in the Faubourg St.-Germain. [Pg 410]

After a single year passed in the Episcopate at Tarbes, that pleasant city on the Adour which all the winds of the Pyrenees have not yet quite disinfected of the memory of Barère, he was translated to this great historic see in the prime of his vigour. For fifteen years he has so ruled it that the Christians of Reims and of the Marne now seize with delight upon every opportunity of manifesting their incorrigible indifference to the 'moral unity of France.' You meet workmen in the streets going about their work with religious medals openly displayed. The churches of Reims are filled with men on great Church festivals. Taking all the districts of the Marne together, the Revisionists and Monarchists at the elections of 1889 outnumbered considerably the Government Republicans. These latter polled 35,046 votes in the Marne, against 40,287 polled by the former. The Radicals, who are very strong in the first district of Reims, polled 11,037 votes there against a Revisionist vote of 9,230. Do not these figures show, what I believe to be the truth, that the 'true Republican' policy of reducing France to 'moral unity' by trampling on the traditions and coercing the consciences of the French people is steadily dividing the French people into two great camps—the camp of the Social and Radical revolution and the camp of the Monarchy? That there was no necessity for this is illustrated by what I have said as to the relations between the Cardinal Archbishop of Reims and the Republican Ministers of 1875 who came here on his invitation, and then took steps to secure the preservation and restoration of the Cathedral. One of these Republican Ministers, M. Léon Say, who is largely responsible for clothing the present Government with the power which it abuses, has just been signally humiliated by the present Government and the dominant majority. [Pg 411]

In the second district of Bergerac in the Dordogne, the Monarchist candidate for the Chamber, M. Thirion Montauban, received 6,708 votes, against 6,439 given to his Republican competitor. I took a special interest in this election, because M. Thirion-Montauban is the present proprietor of the house of Michel de Montaigne, which came into his possession through his marriage with the daughter of M. Magne, the eminent Finance Minister of Napoleon III. I made a visit there late in the summer, and found him busy with his canvass, on lines of respect for personal liberty and the right of men to think their own thoughts as to life and death, which would have commanded the cordial sympathy of the great Gascon sceptic. The tower, the study, the bedroom of Montaigne are preserved by him with religious care. The inscriptions on the walls which John Sterling copied so lovingly half a century ago are there still, and if indeed there be a life of faith as Tennyson says, 'in honest doubt,' the Pyrrhonist seigneur who thought before Pascal that the true philosophy was to laugh at philosophy, would not find himself a stranger in his old haunt to-day because its lower hall has been consecrated as a chapel.

The opponents of M. Thirion-Montauban behaved throughout the contest with extraordinary violence, and on one occasion put him into serious personal peril. However, he was elected. When the Chamber met in November his election was contested. M. Léon Say took an active part in maintaining the validity of the returns which gave the seat to M. Thirion-Montauban, and the evidence in the case was overwhelmingly in his favour. Nevertheless after the Report of the Committee was made, the majority of the Chamber coolly invalidated the choice of the electors, and seated the candidate who had not been elected. It was an open secret that this was done quite as much to punish M. Léon Say as to exclude M. Thirion-Montauban. [Pg 412]

Intolerant as the 'true Republicans' are towards their political opponents, they are still more intolerant towards those 'false Republicans' who hesitate at framing the policy of a French Republic in the nineteenth century upon the principles which led to the Revocation of the Edict of

Nantes. Were Socrates alive and a Frenchman, he would stand no chance for a government chair of philosophy in a competition with the little atheist Aristodemus, and were David Hume to reappear at Reims, where he got his early schooling, he would certainly find himself treated by the authorities as no better than a Catholic.

The irreligion of the Third Republic is a dogmatic irreligion. Bayle would find no favour in its eyes, because protesting, as he said he did 'from his inmost soul protest, against everything that was ever said or done,' he must of course protest against the Nihilism of M. Marcou and M. Paul Bert.

Unfortunately for the 'true Republicans,' it is essential to their success that with the religious faith they should also abolish the patriotic traditions of France. M. Jules Simon, a Republican and a Republican Minister of Public Instruction, has found himself compelled to denounce in the clearest and strongest language the deliberate attempt which these 'true Republicans' are making 'to teach the children of France that the glory of France began with 1789, and that it was never so great as under the Convention.' [Pg 413]

Stuff like this is actually taught in the schools into which it is the object of the present French Government to drive by statute all the children of the country.

'These men,' says M. Jules Simon, 'who proscribe the name of Jesus Christ and forbid it to be mentioned in the schools of France, on the pretext that public education must be neutral in such matters, do not hesitate to have children compelled to attend schools in which they are taught that Louis XIV. was a tyrant without greatness or ability, and that Louis XVI. was an enemy of his country justly condemned and executed.'

Of the great historic France—the France which aided the American colonies to establish their independence, after contesting with England the dominion of North America and of India for more than a century—the France of Montesquieu and of Rabelais, of Henri IV. and Sully, of François I. and St.-Louis, of Chivalry and of the Crusades, the coming generation of Frenchmen, if these fanatics can get their way, will know no more than their Annamite fellow-citizens in Asia. It is not surprising that a Government controlled by such men with such objects should have amnestied the criminals of the Commune. The *pétroleurs* who destroyed the Tuileries and the Hôtel de Ville were only trying in their practical way to abolish the history of France before 1789.

Here at Reims the history of France, I think, will die very hard. No one could doubt this who visited the Department of the Marne in the month of July 1887.

When the 'moral unity' men began their sinister work in 1880, the Cardinal Archbishop of Reims was earnestly urging upon the Holy See the beatification of the great French pontiff, Urban II., the disciple, friend and successor of Hildebrand, and the canonisation of Jeanne d'Arc, 'that whitest lily in the shield of France, with heart of virgin gold.' [Pg 414]

On July 14, 1881, Leo XIII. confirmed the beatification of Urban II. and fixed of course the date of his death, July 29, as his place in the calendar of Church festivals. In July 1882 a solemn Triduum appointed by a Papal Rescript was celebrated with extraordinary pomp in the Cathedral of Reims.

Two Cardinals, one the special Legate of the Pope, more than twenty bishops, several abbots of the great Benedictine Order of which Urban II. was a member, and hundreds of the clergy from all parts of France, were present. The Cardinal Legate was attended by Monsignor Cataldi, so long and so well known to all foreigners in Rome as the master of the ceremonies to the Pope. The Cathedral was crowded. 'What I should like to know,' said a quiet shrewd master workman who described to me the effect produced by the scene in the Cathedral, 'what I should like to know is why the Catholics of Reims have not the right upon such occasions to escort the Legate of the Head of the Church from the railway station to the Cathedral with a procession and with music and with banners? Is that liberty I ask you?'

The question seems to me natural enough, particularly as I see that only the other day the Freemasons at Grenoble were permitted to force themselves, marching in a body with all their regalia and their emblems, into the funeral procession of a Prefect who was not a member of their order at all, and against the protest of the Bishop of Grenoble, who had been asked by the family of the dead man to give him the burial rites of the Church. That the Freemasons like other citizens should attend the funeral as individuals the Bishop was ready to admit, but he not unnaturally declined to acquiesce in the deliberate parade on such an occasion of a body openly and undisguisedly hostile to Christianity in all its forms. [Pg 415]

Without a procession, however, the Triduum of the great Pope of the Crusades was a great success in 1882. It led to the organisation of a movement for erecting a magnificent monument to the memory of Urban II. at his native place. Châtillon-sur-Marne, one of the loveliest little towns in the valley of the Marne, situated about twenty miles from Reims. Early in 1887 this monument was completed, and on July 21 in that year it was unveiled with a solemn ceremonial in the presence of the Cardinal Archbishop of Reims, of the Papal Nuncio at Paris, and of many French bishops, among them the great orator of the Chamber of Deputies, Monseigneur Freppel, Bishop of Angers. He delivered a most impressive discourse on the significance of the Crusades, every sentence of which was weighted with pregnant allusions to the actual condition of religious liberty in France. These allusions were curiously emphasised by the absence of the Bishop of Orléans, detained at his post in the city of 'Jeanne d'Arc' by the sudden 'laicisation' of the schools in his diocese!

The day was what a perfect day in the summer of Northern France can be. The scene might have been planned by a poet or a painter. There are other Châtillons in France more famous in history, and held in higher honour therefore by those useful men the makers of guide-books, than Châtillon-sur-Marne; and it is in the nature of all castles to stand on picturesque sites, as of great rivers to flow by large towns. But neither the Châtillon which saw the birth of the Admiral de Coligny, nor the Châtillon which saw Napoleon throw away his sceptre with his scabbard, stands more beautifully than the quiet little town which nestles on its green plateau beneath the still [Pg 416] majestic ruins of the château in which the great Pope of the Crusades was born. It overlooks, in the verdant valley of the Marne, the ancient priory of Binson, superbly renovated now, and restored in great measure through the zeal and energy of the Benedictine Archbishop of Reims. Around it sweeps a great circle of green and wooded hills, dotted over with fair mansions and lordly parks. For this province of Champagne is a land of wealth as well as of labour.

From a shattered tower of the old feudal fortress floated side by side the flags of France and of the Holy See. Beside the ruins rose, sharply defined and well detached against the summer sky, the colossal statue of Urban II. upon its lofty pedestal of granite. About it were arrayed in a pomp of colour and of flowing vestments, the host of ecclesiastics drawn together to do homage and honour in the sight of all men to the illustrious French pontiff, whom the Church found not unworthy in days of great stress and sore trial to take up and carry forward the work of his friend and teacher and predecessor, Hildebrand. One need not be a Catholic to recognise the debt of mankind to Gregory VII., of whom, dying in exile and in seeming defeat at Salerno, Sir James Stephen has truly said that he has 'left the impress of his gigantic character upon all succeeding ages.' One need only be a moderately civilised man of common sense to recognise the debt of mankind to Odo de Châtillon, known in the pontificate as Urban II. Wherever in the world the evensong of the Angelus breathes peace on earth to men of good-will, it speaks of the great pontiff and of the Truce of God which he founded, that the races of Christian Europe, suspending their internecine strife, might unite to roll back into Asia once for all the threatening invasion of [Pg 417] Islam.

But the thousands upon thousands of people of both sexes and of all conditions in life who filled the vast plateau of Châtillon on that summer day in July 1887, and hailed with tumultuous shouts the monument of this great Frenchman and great Pope, visibly took a more than historic interest in the occasion. They were moved not only by those 'mystic chords of memory' of which President Lincoln knew the social and political value much better than the French fanatics of 'moral unity,' but by a vivid consciousness of the present peril of their country, their homes and their faith. Once more, as in the eleventh century and in the eighteenth, France needs to-day 'an invincible champion of the freedom of the Church, a defender of public peace, a reformer of morals, a scourge of corruption.'

This was the true significance of this memorable scene in the Marne. It was in the minds of that whole multitude, and it stirred them all with a common impulse when the eloquent Bishop of Angers, after sketching in a bold and striking outline the career of Urban II., thus drove its lesson home:—'Urban II. and the Popes of the Middle Ages have made for evermore impossible any return to the pagan theory of the omnipotence of the State. Ah, no doubt, despite that signal defeat, despotism will return to the charge. More than once in the course of the ages we shall see fresh appeals to violence against a power which can defend itself only by appealing to moral authority. We shall see, as we saw under Henry of Germany, emperors, kings, and republics strive to forge chains for the Church by their laws and their decrees. But the memory of the heroic struggles of the eleventh century will not pass out of the minds of the people. Canossa will [Pg 418] remain for ever an inevitable stage in the progress of every power which undertakes to suppress religion and the Church.'

This festival of Urban II. fell in the week which includes the anniversary of the coronation of Charles VII. at Reims in the presence of Jeanne d'Arc, and the Cardinal Archbishop availed himself in July 1887 of this circumstance to crown the manifestation at Châtillon by a solemn commemoration in the Cathedral at Reims of the triumph of the peasant-girl of Domrémy. He was a schoolfellow at St.-Sulpice and has been a lifelong friend of Gounod, and upon his suggestion the great French composer produced for the commemoration his Mass of Jeanne d'Arc. He came from Paris himself to superintend the execution of the music. Simple, grand, choral, in the manner of Palestrina, music of the cathedral, not of the concert, I must leave my readers to imagine what its effect was beneath those vast and magnificent arches which had looked down four centuries ago upon the Maid of Orléans kneeling with her banner in her hand before the newly-anointed King who owed his crown to Heaven and to her, and praying that, now her mission was fulfilled, 'the gentle prince would let her go back to her own people and to tend her sheep.'

I do not think it would be easy to convince anyone who that day witnessed the profound and silent emotion of those assembled thousands in the Cathedral of Reims that the religious sentiment is either dead or dying in France! In the evening of the same day the Cathedral was thronged again, and thousands of men stood there for an hour, as I saw men stand in Rome last year under the preaching of Padre Agostino, to listen to a very remarkable sermon from one of the most eloquent preachers in France, Canon Lemann of Lyons. In the course of this sermon the [Pg 419] preacher incidentally, but with an obvious and courageous purpose, dwelt at some length upon the energy with which Urban II. had denounced and repressed the 'false Crusaders' who, under cover of the uprising of Christendom against the infidel, fell upon, persecuted, and massacred the Jews in Europe. This quiet and earnest protest against the 'Jew-baiting' tendency which is

showing itself in France, as well as in Germany, was plainly understood, and as plainly commanded the sympathy of his hearers. This was the case also with his admirable treatment of the international aspects of the story of the Maid of Orléans. There was not a trace of Chauvinism in his citation of the simple and downright message sent by the Pucelle to the English before Orléans. 'I have been sent by God to throw you out of France.' Out of France she did throw them. 'In this,' said the preacher, 'Jeanne d'Arc did a great service to England as well as to France. The fair-haired nation of the North had fought side by side with France, Cœur de Lion with Philip Augustus, in the Crusades. When, therefore, the destined queen of the seas sought to establish herself as a Continental power in the heart of Europe, the Lord put in her way that grain of star-dust from Domrémy, forced her back to her vocation, and bade her content herself with being sovereign on the ocean.'

I spoke of this allusion to the Jews with a most accomplished ecclesiastic who dined at the Archi-episcopal palace. He was very much pleased with it. 'One of the most mischievous things done,' he said, 'by the present Government is that it is certainly fomenting—I cannot say whether ignorantly or wilfully—a great deal of popular hostility to the Jews by giving important official positions to men who, though Israelites by blood, are in most cases no better Israelites than they [Pg 420] are Christians. Very nearly half the préfectures in France are filled by such persons. When, as is too often the case, they carry out offensive and tyrannical measures against the Catholic schools and congregations in an unnecessarily offensive and tyrannical manner, it is very easy, as you must see, for hasty or malevolent persons to persuade the people that they do this because they are Jews, and as Jews hate the Christians. I know that the best Israelites in France regret this as much as I do. The policy of this Government is aimed as clearly at the extinction of the Jewish as of the Christian faith; at the Grand Rabbis as mercilessly as at the Archbishops of France.'

This same ecclesiastic gave me some particulars of the virulence with which the anti-religious war is waged. He told me of one case of recent date in Paris in which the authorities of a hospital neglected for two days to pay any heed to the entreaties of a poor patient that they would send for a priest to attend him, the doctors having given him to understand that for him the end was near. The chaplains, it will be remembered, have been expelled from all the public hospitals. Finally some person in charge of the place, more humane than his fellows, sent out to a Lazarist house in the neighbourhood and asked the Lazarists to send a priest. The priest came. He was received very rudely, kept waiting a long time in an ante-room, and when he was finally conducted through the wards to the dying man, all sorts of vulgar and foolish jeers were uttered about his mission as he passed along; and it was with the greatest trouble that he finally succeeded in imposing some sort of decent respect for the death-bed of this poor sufferer upon the hospital attendants.

'This is the spirit,' said the priest who told me the tale, 'of the Commune, or rather of those [Pg 421] Communards who murdered the hostages. These murderers simply put this spirit into deeds instead of words. They made the name of the Commune so odious that when Victor Hugo in 1876 proposed a general amnesty of the condemned Communards, the Chamber rejected it without taking a vote.

'In 1880 the same general amnesty was proposed, and the Chamber adopted it by a very large majority. Do you wonder that thoughtful men look with horror on the current which is carrying us in such a direction as that? At this moment two men of high personal character, Admiral Krantz and M. Casimir Périer, are lending their support to a Government which represents this current, and yet Admiral Krantz and M. Casimir Périer have recorded their deliberate conviction that the men who clamoured for an unconditional, indiscriminate amnesty for the Communards were simply abusing the name of clemency for the rehabilitation of crime.

'Look again,' he said, 'at the spirit in which the laicization of the schools is conducted. There are a hundred families we will say in a village. Ninety-nine of these families are Christian families, not families of saints—I wish I knew such a village as that!—but Christian families. Go into their homes, and you will see the crucifix hanging in the chambers, religious prints upon the walls. One family is a family of atheists. I suppose the case, for as a matter of fact I know no such family. But I will suppose it. There is a school in the village, and in that school there hangs a crucifix, the gift of some pious resident. Ninety-nine fathers and mothers of the village desire that crucifix to be respected. One father and one mother (a bold supposition this!) desire it to be removed. The authorities send in a man who plucks it down, before the children, and throws it [Pg 422] out of the door. I simply state what has happened over and over again! Is there any respect for equal rights—for the rule of the majority, for freedom of conscience in such proceedings? Take the case of the Virgin of Béziers. In that ancient city stood two statues of the Virgin, one in bronze and one in marble. The civil authorities called upon the Church to suppress them. The Church authorities of course declined to do this. Thereupon the civil authorities take the money of the taxpayers and expend it in depriving the city of these two monuments. Suppose the Turkish authorities were to do a thing like this in a town full of Christians under their dominion, what would all the civilised world say about the Turks?

'And it is done in a French city by Frenchmen either to carry out their own self-will or to exasperate and insult their fellow-citizens, or for both reasons at once!

'Still another case you can see for yourself at Domrémy. There under a pious and patriotic foundation to which Louis XVIII largely contributed the home of Jeanne d'Arc, religiously preserved in its original state, was confided to the keeping of some Sisters. They dwelt in a neat edifice constructed on the grounds purchased to secure the house of the Pucelle, and there the

children of Domrémy and the neighbouring communes came to school and were gratuitously taught. Only the other day the local authorities were instigated, I know not by whom—perhaps by the friends of M. Ferry at St.-Dié, which is not very far off—to "laicize" instruction in Domrémy. To this end they turn the Sisters out, put the home of Jeanne d'Arc under the charge of a lay guardian, who has to be paid by the State, of course, tax the commune to pay a lay teacher, and make the school a lay school at the very door of the home of the village maiden to whose religious [Pg 423] faith France owes her freedom and her national existence!'

I made a visit to Nancy and the Department of the Meurthe et Moselle not long after I had this conversation in Reims. The Mother Superior of the great Sisterhood of Christian Doctrine at Nancy confirmed this amazing story of the performances at Domrémy, and gave me many particulars of the petty persecutions to which the Sisters who conduct schools all over France are subjected. The schools are open at all hours to the invasion of Inspectors, who magnify their office too often in the eyes of the children by treating the teachers (lay as well as religious) with the sort of amiable condescension which marks the demeanour of an agent of the octroi overhauling the basket of a peasant-woman at a barrier. If a Sister has a religious book, her own property, lying on her desk, it is violently snatched up, and the children are invited to say whether it has been used to poison their young minds with religious ideas. 'In short,' said the Mother Superior very quietly, 'our Sisters are really much better treated in Protestant countries than in Catholic France.'

Domrémy-la-Pucelle is a typical agricultural village of Eastern France. It is in the Department of the Vosges and in the verdant valley of the Meuse. I drove to it on a lovely summer's morning after visiting Vaucouleurs, where the Pucelle came before the stout Captain Robert de Beaudricourt and said to him, 'You must take me to the King. I must see him before Mid Lent, and I will see him if I walk my legs off to the knees!' This interview began her marvellous career.

From certain articles in newspapers about a drama of *Jeanne d'Arc*, now performing at Paris, I gather that Jeanne's moral conquest of France which preceded and led to her material victory [Pg 424] over the English invaders, has at last been satisfactorily explained by the scientific believers in hypnotism! Of this I can only say, with President Lincoln on a memorable occasion, 'for those who like this kind of explanation of historical phenomena, I should suppose it would be just the kind of explanation they would like.'

The country between Vaucouleurs and Domrémy is agreeably diversified, well wooded in parts, and rich in fair meadow-lands. At Montbras a little old lady dwells and looks after her affairs in one of the most picturesque château of the sixteenth century to be seen in this part of France, machicolated, crenellated, and dominated by lofty towers. We passed, too, through Greux, a small village on the Meuse, the dwellers in which were astute enough to get themselves exempted by Charles VII from all talliages and subsidies 'by fabricating documents' to prove that Jeanne d'Arc was born there. The incident is curious as going to show that the 'downtrodden serfs' and 'manacled villeins' of the middle ages had their wits about them, and could take care of themselves when an opportunity offered, as well as the 'oppressed tenantry' of modern Ireland. Domrémy, which is no bigger than Greux, neither of them having three hundred inhabitants, straggles along the highway. The houses are well built—the church is a handsome, ogival building of the fifteenth century, restored in our day, but quite in keeping with the place and its associations. Within it, under a tomb built into the wall, lie the two brothers Tiercelin, sons of the godmother of Jeanne, who bore their testimony manfully to the character of the deliverer of France, when the Church was at last compelled to intervene in the interest of truth and justice between the French Catholics who had worshipped her as a 'creature of God,' and the English [Pg 425] Catholics who had burned her as an emissary of the Evil One.

Almost under the shadow of the church tower stands the house in which Jeanne was born and bred. A charming, old-fashioned garden, very well kept, surrounds it. If when you leave the church you pass around by the main street of the village, you soon find yourself in front of a neat iron railing which connects two modern buildings of no great size, but neat and unpretending. Entering the gateway of this railing you see before you, shaded by well-grown trees, one or two of which may possibly be of the date of the house, the quaint fifteenth-century façade of the house of Jacques d'Arc, and his wife Isabelle Vouthon, called Romée because she had made a pilgrimage to the Eternal City. A curious demi-gable gives the house the appearance of having been cut in two. But there is no reason to suppose it was ever any larger than it is now. Probably, indeed, this façade was erected long after the martyrdom of Jeanne. Over the ogival doorway is an escutcheon showing three shields, and the date, 1480, with an inscription, '*Vive Labeur, Vive le Roy Louys!*' This goes to confirm a local tradition that the façade was built at the cost of Louis XI., who understood much better than his father the political value to the crown and to the country of France of the marvellous career of the peasant girl of Domrémy. The date of this inscription is particularly significant. In 1479 was fought the battle of Guinegate, which was lost to France by the headlong flight of the French chivalry from the field. Louis XI. turned this disaster to good account. He made it the excuse for founding, in 1480, his regular army of mercenaries, liberating the peasants from the burden of personal military service to the lords, and drawing to himself the power of the State through taxation. '*Vive Labeur, Vive le Roy Louys!*' [Pg 426] was a popular cry throughout France in 1480; for Labeur in those days meant what it means now in the *Terra di Lavoro*—the tilling of the fields. One of the three shields above this doorway has a similar significance. It is a bearing of three ploughshares. With it are emblazoned on the house of the Pucelle two other shields, one bearing the three royal fleurs-de-lys of France, and the other the arms granted to the family of the heroine—*azure*, a sword *argent* pommelled and hilted *or*,

and above a crown supported by two fleurs-de-lys. With these arms, as we know, the family took the name of De Lys. The name, the arms, and the inscription over the doorway were a perpetual witness to the peasants of Champagne and Lorraine of the unity of interests established by King Louis between the spade and the sceptre. With the help of an inspired daughter of the people, King Charles had driven the English into the sea, and delivered the land. With the help of the people, King Louis had broken the power of Burgundy, and put the barons under his foot. '*Vive Labeur, Vive le Roy Louys!*' I do not wonder this skilful craftsman 'of the empire and the rule' lamented on his death-bed in 1483, at Plessis-les-Tours, that he could not live to crown the edifice he had so well begun. We in England and America know him only in the magic mirror of the Wizard of the North. But France owes him a great debt. He was cruel, but in comparison with the cruelty of Lebon, of Barère, of Billaud-Varennes, his cruelty was tender mercy, He was a hypocrite, but his hypocrisy shows like candour beside the perfidy and the cant of Pétion and of Robespierre, while in the great 'art and mystery' of government he was a master where these modern apes of despotism were clumsy apprentices. [Pg 427]

The interior of the house of Jeanne is probably in the main what it was when Jeanne dwelt here with her parents, her sister and her brothers. The ground floor contains a general living-room, the large chimney-place of which may perhaps be of the time of Jeanne, and three bedrooms, one of which, a chamber measuring three mètres by four, and lighted only by a small dormer window looking out upon the garden, tradition assigns to Jeanne and to her sister. Here, the people of Domrémy believe, the maiden sate almost within the shadow of the old church-tower, and heard the voices of St. Catherine and St. Margaret, and Michael the Archangel, patron and defender of France, mingling with the sound of the church bells, and calling upon her to arise, and leave her village home and the still forests of Domrémy and her silly sheep, and go out into a world of war and confusion and violence, and rally the broken armies of her people, and lead them, like another Deborah or Judith, to victory.

That Jeanne heard these voices or believed she heard them, the documentary evidence unearthed by Quicherat abundantly proves. It proves, too, that she was cool, clear-headed, self-possessed, thoroughly honest, and absolutely trustworthy in every relation of life. This being her character, what did she do? She made her way from her solitude in Lorraine to the court of the King at Chinon, with nothing but her faith in her voices and her mission to sustain her; put herself into the forefront of the battle of France, threw the English back into England, and saw the successor of St.-Rémi put the crown of Clovis upon the head of a prince whom nobody but herself could have led or driven to Reims.

If anybody in Paris or elsewhere knowing all this feels quite sure that Jeanne did not hear the voices which she believed herself to have heard, he certainly is to be pitied. It may do him good [Pg 428] to consider in his closet what Lord Macaulay has said in a certain celebrated essay concerning Sir Thomas More and the doctrine of Transubstantiation.

A man may intelligently believe or disbelieve in the reality of the voices heard by Jeanne, but no man who intelligently disbelieves in them can need to be told that his disbelief rests upon no better scientific ground than the belief of the man who believes in them.

To take the home of Jeanne d'Arc out of the keeping of devout women who share the faith of Jeanne, that faith which, well or ill founded, unquestionably saved France, was simply a stupid indecency. In the keeping of the Sisters the home of Jeanne was a shrine. In any other keeping it becomes a show.

The essential vulgarity of the performance is bad enough. But a sharp-witted Domrémy man who took me on to Bourlémont in his 'trap' assured me, in a matter-of-fact way, that in the village the chief mover in the affair was commonly believed to have got a good *pot-de-vin* for securing the position of keeper of the house for a person of his acquaintance. This may have been a bit of village scandal, but such performances naturally breed village scandals. Whether it was or was not a 'job' in this sense, it certainly marks as low a level of taste and education as the pillage by Barère and his copper 'Syndicate' of the historic tombs of France at St.-Denis in 1793.

Some years ago all France was incensed by a nocturnal desecration of the statue of Duguesclin which stands at Dinan in the very lists in which five hundred years ago the Breton hero met and vanquished 'Sir Thomas of Canterbury.' The indignation of France was righteous, and if there was any foundation for the popular impression that the outrage was perpetrated by some English [Pg 429] lads on a vacation tour, no language could well be too strong to apply to it. But I did not observe that any Parisian journalist alluded at that time to the way in which the ashes of Duguesclin himself were treated in 1795 at St.-Denis, by Frenchmen decked in tri-coloured scarves! It did not even occur to them to remember how long ago and by what hands the column of the Grand Army was pulled down in the very heart of Paris!

While the force of Philistine fatuity can no further go than it has gone in the 'laicization' of the home of Jeanne d'Arc, I ought to say that the actual keeper of the place seemed to me to be a decent sort of fellow, not wholly destitute of respect for its traditions and its significance. The house and the garden are neatly kept. In the centre of the main room stands a fine model in bronze of the well-known statue of Jeanne d'Arc, by the Princess Mary of Orléans, with an inscription stating that it was given by the King, her father, to the Department of the Vosges, to be placed in the house where Jeanne was born. Commemorative tablets are set here and there in the walls; and in one of the modern buildings in front of the house a collection is kept of objects illustrating the life of the Pucelle.

The most interesting of these is a banner given by General de Charette, to the valour of whose Zouaves the French are indebted for one of the few gleams of victory which brighten up the dark record of 1870 It was at Patay that in June 1429 the English, under Sir John Fastolf, for the first time broke in a stricken field and fled under the onset of the French, led by the Maid of Orléans, leaving the great Talbot to fall a prisoner into the hands of his enemies. And at Patay, again in December 1870, the German advance was met and repulsed by the 'Volunteers of the West,' that [Pg 430] being the name under which the silly and intolerant 'Government of the National Defence' actually compelled the Catholic Zouaves to fight for their country, just as they forced the Duc de Chartres to draw his sword and risk his life for France as 'Robert Lefort.' These puerilities really almost disarm contempt into compassion. At Patay in 1870 the Zouaves saw three of their officers, all of one family, struck down in succession, two of them to death, as they advanced on the lines of the enemy, bearing a banner of the Sacré-Cœur, which had been presented to General de Charette by some nuns of Brittany only a few days before the battle. The banner, now at Domrémy, is a votive offering of General de Charette and his Zouaves in commemoration of the field on which they were permitted thus, after four centuries, to link the piety and the patriotic valour of modern France with the deathless traditions of Domrémy, of Orléans, and of Reims.

This little museum contains, too, a picture given by an Englishman, of Jeanne binding up the wounds of an English soldier after the repulse of one of the English attacks. The soil has risen about the house of Jeanne, and this may have made the interior seem more gloomy than it once was. But the house is well and solidly built, and if it may be thought a fair specimen of the abodes of the well-to-do peasantry of Lorraine in the fifteenth century, they were as well lodged relatively to the general average of people at that time as those of the same class in Eastern France now on the average appear to be. Charles de Lys in the early seventeenth century seems to have been a man of note and substance. But the parents of Jeanne were simply peasant proprietors. At the entrance of the village church there is a statue of Jeanne, the work of a native artist, in which she appears kneeling in her peasant's dress, one hand pressed upon her heart [Pg 431] and the other lifted towards Heaven. And in a little clump of fir-trees near her house stands a sort of monumental fountain, surmounted by a bust of the Pucelle. The house itself remained in the possession of the last descendant of the family, a soldier of the Empire named Gérardin, down to the time of the Restoration. Some Englishman, it is said, then offered him a handsome price for the cottage, with the object of moving it across the Channel, as an enterprising countryman of mine once proposed to carry off the house of Shakespeare to America. Gérardin, though a poor man, or perhaps because he was a poor man, refused. The department thereupon bought the house, the King gave Gérardin the cross of the Legion, and he was made a *garde forestier*.

Upon the expulsion of the Sisters from the home of La Pucelle, some of the most respectable people in the department at once organized a fund, and built for them a very neat edifice in the village in which they are now installed. Fully four-fifths of the children of the country round about, I was told, still attend their free school. 'Ah! Sir,' said a cheery solid farmer of Domrémy to me, while I stood waiting for my 'trap,' to continue my journey, 'it does not amuse us at all to pay for the braying of all these donkeys! Do you know, it costs Domrémy, such as you see it, twelve hundred francs a year, this nonsense about the Sisters and the house of La Pucelle! And to what use? What harm did the Sisters do there? It is not the Pucelle who would have put them out, do you think? In the old time Domrémy paid no taxes because of the Pucelle. Now because of the Pucelle we must pay twelve hundred francs a year for what we don't want!'

Some of my readers may thank me—as the guide-book gives no very accurate information on the [Pg 432] subject—for telling them that Domrémy-la-Pucelle may be very easily, and in fine weather very pleasantly, visited from Neufchâteau on the railway line between Paris and Mirécourt. Neufchâteau itself is an interesting and picturesque town. It suffered severely from the religious wars, but two of its churches, St. Christopher and St. Nicholas, are worth seeing. There are two very good statues of Jeanne d'Arc, and the Hôtel de la Providence, kept by a most attentive dame, is a very good specimen of a small French provincial inn. There a carriage can be had for Domrémy, and with a luncheon-basket a summer's day may be most agreeably spent between Neufchâteau and the little station of Domrémy-Maxey-sur-Meuse, at which point, about three miles beyond Domrémy-la-Pucelle, you may strike the railway which leads to Nancy. The old capital of Lorraine, though not nearly so trim and well kept as it used to be, is still one of the most characteristic and interesting cities in France.

Very near Domrémy-la-Pucelle, a resident of the country, M. Sédille, has built, on a fine hill overlooking the valley of the Meuse, a small chapel adorned with a group representing the Maiden kneeling before her Saints and the Archangel. This chapel stands on the place where, as tradition tells us, Jeanne first heard the heavenly 'voices.' It was then in the heart of a great forest, long since thinned away. It now commands a wide and beautiful view of a finely varied country. There, driving from Bourlémont on a lovely summer afternoon, I found a young pilgrim from the Far West of the United States doing homage to the memory of the Maid of Orléans. He had made his way here from Paris and the Exposition. 'I got enough of that,' he said, 'in about three days, with the help of a French conversation book.' His method was to look up a phrase as [Pg 433] nearly as possible expressing what he wanted to say, and then to submit this phrase in the book to his interlocutor. 'How do you find the plan work?' I asked him. 'Oh, very well,' he replied; 'the French are so very obliging. I'm afraid it wouldn't work as well the other way, on our side of the pond.' His worship, not of heroes, but of heroines, was most simple and downright. 'I consider Joan of Arc,' he said, 'the greatest woman that ever walked the earth, and next to her Charlotte Corday. And these miserable Englishmen burnt one,' he added scornfully, 'and these miserable

Frenchmen guillotined the other. I don't wonder this Old World is played out if they can't treat such women better than that!'

He was charmed with the story of Adam Lux (caricatured by Mr. Carlyle), who (like André Chénier) invited death by his defiant homage to Charlotte Corday. 'Well now, I suppose,' he said, 'that if there had been fifty more men in Paris then as brave as that Adam Lux, they could have taken all those cowards and murderers and chucked them into the Seine!' He rejoiced over the Bishop of Verdun's projected monument to Jeanne, and I sent him to Châtillon by telling him that the statue of Urban II. stands third in height among the religious monuments of Europe after the Virgin of Le Puy and the St.-Charles of Arona.

Bourlémont before the Revolution must have been one of the finest châteaux in France. It stands superbly on the plateau of a lofty hill. The park which surrounds it is very extensive and full of noble trees. The château was sacked and pillaged, and one great wing destroyed. This the Prince d'Hénin is now rebuilding on the original scale, and in the most perfect keeping with the stately and picturesque main body of the edifice. The whole of the interior, with the great hall and the [Pg 434] chapel, has been restored and refurnished with admirable taste. Carved oak wainscotings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, antique armoires and cabinets and tables, mediæval tapestries—nothing is wanting. But the thoroughness of the reconstruction emphasizes the wanton folly and wickedness of the devastation which made it necessary.

The Princesse d'Hénin of the Revolutionary time narrowly escaped the guillotine. She was one of many women of rank and worth who owed their lives to the courage and ability and generosity of Madame de Staël. After taking refuge in Switzerland, Madame de Staël organised a complete system for bringing away her imperilled friends from Paris. She gathered about her a small corps of clever and determined Swiss girls. These she sent one by one as occasion served, or circumstances required, into France, equipped with Swiss passports. On reaching Paris one of these girls would find a lady waiting to escape, change wardrobes with her, give her a Swiss passport properly viséd by the Swiss representative in Paris, furnish her with money if necessary, and set her safely on her way to the Cantons. When news came that she had arrived, the Swiss damsel in her turn would get a new passport from her Minister and return to Switzerland. Of course, such a system as this could not have been carried out so successfully as it was without more or less co-operation on the part of the 'incorruptible' Republican functionaries in France, and there can be little doubt that, under the régime of the scoundrels who made up the Committee of Public Security—Lebon, Panis, Drouet, Ruhl, and the rest—a regular traffic in passports and protections went on during the worst times of the Terror. It is remembered to the credit of an unhappy woman, who was born in the town of Vaucouleurs, and for whom nobody [Pg 435] finds a good word, Madame Du Barry, that she deliberately gave up the certainty of securing her own escape from Paris, in 1793, in order to save Madame de Mortemart. The Duchesse de Mortemart was in hiding on the Channel coast, when Madame Du Barry, for whom a safe-conduct under an assumed name had been bought from one of the Terrorist 'Titans,' insisted that this safe-conduct should be sent from Paris to the Duchesse. The Duchesse used it and reached England in safety. Madame Du Barry remained to perish on the scaffold, leaving her goods and chattels to be stolen by the ruffians who sent her to the guillotine, just as the goods and chattels, the money and equipments and horses of the Duc de Biron were stolen by the Republican 'General' Rossignol, his successor.

Domrémy is in the electoral district of Neufchâteau, and the elections of 1889 do not show that the 'laicization' policy has given the Republican cause a great impulse in this region. The Monarchist candidate in the Neufchâteau district received in September 1889 6,571 votes, and the Republican 6,590. This is one of the microscopic majorities which were so common in 1889, and which conclusively show what a difference in the general result was made by the open pressure of the Government on the electors. The Department of the Vosges sends up six deputies to the Chamber. In 1885 it sent up a solid Republican Deputation, including M. Méline, who was so conspicuous in 1889 in the matter of General Boulanger and M. Jules Ferry, the standard-bearer of 'laicization' and irreligion. In 1885 the Deputies were chosen by the *scrutin de liste*. The Republican majority shown by the vote for M. Méline was 6,949 on a total poll of 87,635. M. Méline, who headed the poll, received 47,292 votes. His Conservative opponent received 40,343. [Pg 436] In 1889 the elections were made by the *scrutin d'arrondissement*. Five Republicans, not six, were chosen, and the defeated Republican candidate was no less a person than M. Jules Ferry himself! The first district of St.-Dié gave him 6,192 votes, and elected a Monarchist to replace him by 6,403 votes. It is not easy to overestimate the significance of this change. Probably enough the majority will emphasize it by 'invalidating' the election of the Monarchist!

A comparison of the total votes in the Vosges of the two parties in 1889 with those of 1885 is instructive. In 1885 the strength, of the two parties respectively (the Conservatives not having then openly declared for the Monarchy) was, as I have said, 47,292 and 40,343. In 1889 the Republicans polled in all the districts of the department 47,116 votes, and their opponents 42,124. Here we have a falling off of 176 votes in the highest Republican strength against an increase of 1,781 in the highest Opposition strength, or, in other words, a falling off of 1,957 votes in the aggregate Republican majority, together with the defeat in his own district of the recognised leader of the Republican Government party. And yet the total of the votes polled rose from 87,635 in 1885 to 89,240 in 1889. The inference is obvious: that the Monarchists are on the upgrade, and the Republicans on the downgrade. If, with such results in such a region and in the face of such a contest as that of 1889, the Monarchists do not in the long run win, it will clearly be nobody's fault but their own! [Pg 437]

CHAPTER XIV

IN THE CALVADOS

VAL RICHER.

Perhaps the most striking illustration that can be given of the true nature of the contest now waging between the Third Republic and France, is the share taken in it by the family and the representatives of the great Protestant statesman, who, under Louis Philippe, laid down the lines in France of a truly free and liberal system of public education. In the matter of education France was undoubtedly thrown backward and not forward by the First Republic. The number of illiterates—that is, of persons unable to read and write—naturally increased between 1789 and 1799 as the educational foundations which existed all over the kingdom shared the fate of the religious and charitable foundations. There was an abundance of ordinances and decrees about public education. But the chief practical work done was to confiscate the means by which the ancient system had been carried on. Baudrillart mentions educational foundations made by the great abbeys as early as in the seventh century. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Councils of the French Church created in each cathedral chapter a special prebend, the holder of which was to look after the education not only of clerical persons, but 'of all poor scholars,' and this 'gratuitously.'

In the fourteenth century lay foundations for free public education are found, one in particular of importance established by a rich citizen, Jean Rose, for promoting the general education of the people at Meaux, the diocese afterwards of Bossuet, who under Louis XIV. was so active in promoting 'the moral unity' of France from his point of view. [Pg 438]

The long English wars interrupted the development of education, and many instances are found during that dismal period in which persons who had bought legal positions had to employ professional scribes to do their writing. In the sixteenth century schools increased and multiplied all over France. Rich citizens founded them for 'the instruction of all the children,' as at Provins in 1509, and at Roissy-en-Buè in 1521. In the rural regions the schoolmaster often received his pay in grain; he was sometimes attached to some public office. In many places he taught the children only for six months in each year. In short, education was carried on in France at that time very much as it was in the rural regions of the United States down to the second quarter of the current century. In many French parishes of the sixteenth century the schoolmaster 'boarded around' in the different families of the parish, just as he did in New England. The religious wars again disturbed the development of education. At Nîmes, where the archives I found had been carefully investigated by M. Puech, more than a third of the artisans could read, write, and keep their accounts at the end of the fifteenth century. After the close of the religious wars, it was no uncommon thing to find fathers signing their names in a very clerkly fashion, while their sons were forced to 'make their marks,' as being unable to write. Like causes produced like effects at the end of the eighteenth century. Not content with disestablishing the Church, the legislative tinkers of 1791, by a law passed on June 27 in that year, struck out of existence at a blow all the great industrial associations and corporations of France. These had provided for the education of the children of their members for centuries; but all the educational foundations were swept away with the hospitals and the charities. The men who grew to man's estate between 1793 and 1813 in France grew up in greater ignorance than their fathers. [Pg 439]

The worst national effects of the Terror did not disappear with the disappearance of the guillotine. Before the fall of Robespierre, the guillotine had come to be a financial expedient. 'We are coining money on the Place de la Révolution,' said the estimable Barére to his colleagues, and he counted that a poor week's work which yielded less 'than three millions of francs' from the confiscation of the property of the victims. When under the Directory *fusillades* took the place of the too conspicuous guillotine, the confiscation still went on. The Directory did no more for education than the Terror had done. The five directors had other matters on their minds.

Barras, of whom a not unfriendly historian gently observes that, 'while he lacked no other vice ancient or modern, he was neither very vain nor very cruel;' Mr. Carlyle's 'hungry Parisian pleasure-hunter,' Rewbell, of whom his special friend and colleague, Laréveillère-Lepaux, amiably records in his Memoirs that 'his legs were too small for his body,' and that he had 'a habit of attributing to himself speeches uttered and deeds done by other people;' Letourneur, a corpulent rustic, whose excellent wife loudly exulted over her joy in finding herself 'eating stewed beef out of Sèvres porcelain,' and who, being asked when he came back from the Jardin des Plantes whether he had seen Lacépède, innocently replied: 'No; but I saw La giraffe!'—Carnot, 'Papa Victory,' of whom Laréveillère says that 'nobody could endure his vanity and self-conceit;' and, lastly, Laréveillère himself, whom Carnot in his Memoirs, published at London in 1799, compares to a 'viper,' and says, 'after he has made a speech he coils himself up again'—these were hardly the men to give their nights and days to reconstructing the educational system of France! [Pg 440]

Merlin (of Douai), Minister of Justice under the quintette, really ruled France for nearly five years. This was Merlin, author of the 'Law of the Suspects,' which Mr. Carlyle, though obviously in the dark as to its real genesis and objects, finds himself constrained to stigmatize as the 'frightfullest law that ever ruled in a nation of men.' Mr. Carlyle does not seem to have observed that the author of this 'transcendental' law, the aim of which was to convert the French people

into a swarm of spies and assassins, was not only one of the first of the Republican' Titans' to fall down and kiss the feet of Napoleon, but one of the first also to desert Napoleon, and embrace the knees of the returning King. On April 11, 1814, this creature, who had caused the Convention to reject a petition for a pardon presented by a man condemned for a crime, the real authors of which had confessed his innocence and their own guilt, on the ground that 'every sentence pronounced by the law should be irrevocable,' joined in a most fulsome address of welcome to the legitimate sovereign of France! His namesake Merlin (of Thionville), another 'Titan' whom Mr. Carlyle admires as riding out of captured Mayence still 'threatening in defeat,' was nimbler even than Merlin of Douai. On April 7, 1814, he wrote to King Louis begging to be allowed 'to serve the true, paternal government of France!' [Pg 441]

Concerning Merlin (of Douai), Barras, who made him 'Minister of Justice,' placidly says: 'Poltroons are always cruel. Merlin always hid himself in the moment of danger, and came out again only to strike the vanquished party.' Proscription and confiscation kept the Government which this worthy Republican directed much too busy to leave it any time for looking after the schools of France.

When at last Napoleon gathered up the reins, he postponed the interests of public education to other, and from his point of view more pressing, concerns.

The Concordat re-established the Church in France, but it did not re-endow the Church on a scale which would have enabled it at once to reconstruct its own educational system. In fact, the Concordat can hardly be said to have re-endowed the Church at all. Under the thirteenth article the Pope formally recognized the title of the purchasers of 'national property' in France to vast domains, the property through purchase, donations, or bequest of the Church, which had been made 'national property' only by the simple processes of exiling or murdering the owners and confiscating their estates. In consideration of this recognition, the State bound itself by Article XIV. of the Concordat to 'ensure to the bishops and the curates salaries befitting their functions,' and by Article XV. to 'protect the right of the Catholics of France to re-endow the churches.'

As to the 'rising generation' of the French people the government of Napoleon concerned itself much more with the conscription than with the reconstruction of the schools, and though the Churches, both Catholic and Protestant, took this work in hand very early in the century, it was necessarily with inadequate means.

Under the First Consulate a general law regulating public instruction was enacted, on May 1, 1802. Another was enacted shortly afterwards, and in 1808 appeared the famous decree of the [Pg 442] Emperor founding the University system of France. Heaven knows how many schemes for founding this University system had been elaborated and submitted to him before, only to be torn up as 'ideological.' Cuvier affirms that he drew up twenty-three such schemes one after another.

This decree of March 17, 1808, forbade the establishment of private schools without the authority of the Government, set up three degrees of public instruction, primary, secondary and superior, organised a body of Inspectors-General, and, in short, 'laicized' public education in France effectually as a machine to be controlled by the Imperial Government.

Under the ancient Monarchy, France possessed twenty-four Universities. The Convention suppressed them all at a blow on September 15, 1793. This was little more than three months after the Convention itself had been 'suppressed' and forced to kiss the hand that smote it by Henriot and his cannoniers on June 28, 1793. A law abolishing the freedom of education was to have been expected from an assembly itself enslaved by an oligarchy of rogues and assassins. And this law left nothing standing in France to impede the execution of the Imperial decree of 1808, the first article of which was:—'Public education in the whole Empire is exclusively confided to the University.' Another article ordained that all the schools in France should take as the basis of their instruction 'fidelity to the Emperor, to the Imperial monarchy, the trustee of the happiness of the people, and to the Napoleonic dynasty, the conservator of the unity of France and of all the liberal ideas proclaimed in the constitutions of France.' The theology of all the French schools was to be in conformity with the Royal edict of Louis XIV., issued in 1682. [Pg 443] Furthermore and expressly, 'the members of the University were required to keep the Grand-master and his officers informed of anything that may come to their knowledge contrary to the doctrine and the principles of the educational body in the establishments of public education!'

Here we have the 'moral unity' of France organized by Napoleon in 1808 on the lines in which the Third Republic has been trying ever since 1874 to organize it! Put the word 'Republic' for the word 'Empire,' the phrase 'scientific atheism' for the phrase 'propositions of the clergy of France in 1682,' and you have in the Napoleonic organization of public education the organization controlled by M. Jules Ferry. Of the two despotisms, the despotism of 1808 seems to me the more compatible with public order and public prosperity. With public liberty neither of them is compatible. Under the ancient Monarchy and the clerical system of education liberty existed. The Jesuits and the Jansenists, the Dominicans and the Oratorians and the Benedictines, had their different principles of education, their different traditions, their different text-books. Under the Imperial University, and still more under the University of the Third Republic, differences became disloyalties. Under the University of France in 1808 every young French citizen was to accept the Catholic faith as defined by the clergy of France in 1682, and true allegiance bear to the Napoleonic dynasty. Under the University of France in 1890, every young French citizen is to disbelieve in God and a future life, and true allegiance bear to the Third French Republic.

In 1808 as in 1890 the rights of freemen were first vindicated in this connection by the Catholic

Church. On April 9, 1809, the Emperor issued a decree that no one should be admitted to a Catholic theological academy without a bachelor's diploma of the University. The bishops came at [Pg 444] once into collision on this point with the Imperial prefects of 1809, as the bishops now came into collision on the decree of 1880 with M. Jules Ferry and the Republican prefects. The Imperial prefects of 1809 (not a few of them rabid Republicans in 1792) were merely the valets of the Emperor, as the prefects of 1890 are the valets of a Parliamentary oligarchy.

The Emperor carried his point. But when the Emperor fell, and the constitutional monarchy was restored, the University of France ceased to be an Imperialist training-school. M. de Fontanes, appointed grand-master by the Emperor in 1809, kept his place under Louis XVIII. To keep it he made the University 'clerical.' Under Napoleon the scholars in the public schools of France had been divided into 'companies.' M. de Fontanes in 1815 ordered them to be divided into 'classes.' Under Napoleon the hours of study and of play were announced by a drum. In 1815 M. de Fontanes ordered them to be announced by a bell. Under Napoleon the boys all wore a uniform. M. de Fontanes in 1815 ordered the uniforms to be no longer of 'a military type.' Then the French Liberals who had not dared to stir under the Emperor began to attack both the clergy and the University. But when the Revolution of 1830 brought these 'Liberals' into power, they ceased at once to attack, and began at once to engineer the Imperial machinery of the University. M. Thiers even proclaimed this machinery to be 'the finest creation of the reign of Napoleon!'

In 1833 the truest Liberal of them all, M. Guizot, struck a strenuous blow at this machinery of despotism. He could not deal with the University as a system, but he framed a law affecting 'primary education,' the principle of winch was that no man should be forced to send his child to [Pg 445] school, but that schools should exist all over France to which any man who pleased might send his children if he was too poor to pay for their education.

This principle of M. Guizot in 1883 was certainly not an outcome of the 'principles of 1789;' for it had been at the foundation of all the free schools of France during the middle ages, and under the absolute monarchy of Louis XIV. Talleyrand recognised it in his plan of 1791, which did not suit Condorcet and his 'ideologists.' It was not in the mere revival of this principle that the true liberalism of M. Guizot manifested itself. In the second article of his law this great statesman provided, in express terms, that 'the wishes of families should always be consulted and complied with in everything affecting the religious instruction of their children.' This was indeed a step far forward in the path of true liberalism. It was a distinct recognition of the rights of the family as against the encroachments of the State. It was the 'liberalism' not of the 'ideologists' of 1790, nor of the Third Republic according to M. Challemel-Lacour, but of the legislators who gave Lower Canada her equitable system of common and of dissident schools. It was the liberalism of those courageous men who, like Montgaillard, Bishop of St.-Pons, had dared, under Louis XIV., and after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, to protest in 1688 against imposing the Catholic communion by force upon the Huguenot ancestors of M. Guizot.

As Minister of Public Instruction under Louis Philippe in 1833, this lover of true liberty simply got enacted into law the principles which had led him as a brilliant and rising young man of letters in 1812 to refuse to adulate the Emperor, and which he had plainly and fearlessly set forth as the [Pg 446] necessary conditions of the constitutional government of France in his famous interview with Louis XVIII. three years afterwards.

Under M. Guizot's law of 1833, the primary schools of France were much more than doubled in number during the reign of Louis Philippe.

In the spirit of that law M. Guizot administered the affairs of France during his long tenure of official authority, and to him, more than to any other man, must be attributed the progress which France made under Louis Philippe in the direction of liberty, as Englishmen and Americans understand that much-abused word. That progress might never have been interrupted had the counsels of M. Guizot prevailed over those of M. Thiers with the aged monarch who trusted the one but yielded to the other, in February 1848.

Now that a parliamentary oligarchy has deliberately undertaken, in the name of the 'moral unity of France,' to undo all that was done between 1833 and 1848 for educational liberty in France and to protect the moral independence of Frenchmen, it is in the highest degree interesting to find the principles of M. Guizot energetically maintained by the heirs of his blood and of his name, not only here in the Catholic Calvados which gave the great Protestant statesman so staunch a support through all his years of power, and surrounded him with affection and respect down to the last days of his long and illustrious life, but in Southern France also, and in the home of his Protestant ancestors.

Val Richer will be a place of pilgrimage for lovers of liberty in the twentieth century, as La Brède is in the nineteenth.

But the genius of the spot is more purely personal in the home of Guizot than in the birthplace of [Pg 447] Montesquieu.

The stately rectangular library at La Brède with its thousands of soberly-clad volumes, standing as he left them on its shelves, annotated by his own hand; the manuscripts still unfinished of the 'Lettres Persanes; the grave silent cabinet, with his chair beside his study-table, as if he had quitted it a moment before you came—all these are eloquent, indeed, of the great thinker whose 'Esprit des Lois,' too rich in ripe wisdom to be heeded by the headlong and haphazard political 'plungers' of 1789 in his own country, illuminated for Washington the problem of constituting a

new nationality beyond the Atlantic.

But La Brède has also a positive physiognomy of its own which takes you back to ages long before his birth. The frowning donjon of the thirteenth century, the machicolated round tower, the moat with its running water, the drawbridge, the vestibule with its columns of twisted oak, even the grand salon with the stately courtiers and captains, the gracious dames and damsels of the family of Sécondat gazing down from the walls, all these distract the eye and the mind. The distraction is agreeable, but still it is a distraction. It leads you from the biographical into the social and historical mood. You are delighted as at Meillant or Chenonceaux with a corner of ancient France, marvellously rescued from the red ruin of the Revolution.

Val Richer, on the contrary, like Abbotsford, is the creation of the master whose spirit haunts the place. Like Abbotsford, it has an earlier history and older associations, but of these there are few or no material signs. Here stood the great abbey of which Thomas à-Becket once was abbot, and where he found a refuge during that exile from which, in his own words, he went back to England [Pg 448] 'to play a game in which the stakes were heads!' From Bures, near Bayeux, in this department, where Henry was then holding his court, the four knights followed the Primate to Canterbury, sternly bent on showing their lord that they were neither 'sluggish nor half-hearted.' Of the abbatial buildings which stood here then few traces are left. But the handsome modern mansion built here by Guizot rests, I believe, on the massive foundations, and certainly incorporates some of the solid masonry above ground of the ancient abbot's house. The drive to Val Richer from the singularly picturesque old Norman town of Lisieux, within whose cathedral walls Henry of England was married to Eleanor of Guienne, is beautifully shaded all the way with noble trees, and bordered on either hand with parks and gardens. No English county can show a more strikingly English landscape—for this is the mother-country of Norman England, though now one of the main pillars of the nationality of France. The Lady Chapel of the Cathedral at Lisieux, indeed, was founded in the fifteenth century by Cauchon, Bishop of Beauvais, in express expiation of the 'false judgment on an innocent woman,' by which, as he lamentably confessed in his deed of gift, he had sent the deliverer of France to the stake at Rouen.

The park, like the mansion of Val Richer, is the creation of M. Guizot. The monks of old had prepared the ground—for here, as everywhere, they kept alive the traditions of Roman landscape art. The parks which the Norman nobles made on both sides of the Channel were mainly devoted to the chase, like the 'paradises' of the Persians; but the monasteries possessed pleasure-grounds and gardens of all sorts. The beautifully broken and undulating surface of the park of Val Richer [Pg 449] attests, I think, the fashioning hand of human art at more than one point; and M. Guizot, by whom most of the fine trees which now adorn the place were planted, took advantage, with the skill of a professional landscapist, of all the opportunities it offered him.

I can well believe, with the most accomplished and appreciative of his English biographers, that the years which he passed here after his return from the exile into which he was driven by the unhappy interference of M. Thiers at the most critical moment of the disturbances of February 1848, were the happiest of his long and well-filled life.

The halls and corridors of the mansion are tapestried with books. The green secluded alleys, the gentle knolls, the glades, the spacious meadows of the park, recall at every step the younger Pliny's incomparable picture of his Tuscan villa. '*Placida omnia et quiescentia.*' 'A spirit of pensive peace broods over the whole place, making it not lovelier only, but more salubrious, making the sky more pure, the atmosphere more clear.'

People who imagine convulsions and cataclysms to be a necessity of political life in France, will find it hard to explain the relations which existed throughout his whole career from the time when he took part in forming the first government of Louis Philippe to the day of his death between this great Protestant statesman and the Catholics of the Calvados. These relations still exist between his representatives at Val Richer and the Catholics of the Calvados.

When the great Chancellor de l'Hôpital was using all his influence with Catherine de' Medici to prevent the outbreak of the religious wars of the sixteenth century, the Parisian rabble were set on by the satellites of the House of Guise to attack the house of the Sieur de Longjumeau in the [Pg 450] Pré aux Clercs, as being a place of meeting for the Huguenots. The Sieur de Longjumeau had no respect for the 'sacred right of insurrection,' and, getting some of his friends into his house, gave the people risen in their majesty such a thrashing that they speedily disbanded. Upon this the 'moral unity' men of that time induced the Court to banish the Sieur de Longjumeau to his estates, on the ground that 'the most incompatible thing in a State is the existence of two forms of religion.' This is the doctrine of the Third Republic to-day. France cannot live with a mixed population of believers and of unbelievers. All Frenchmen must be Atheists. The political history of the Calvados for the last half-century, and especially of this region about Lisieux and Val Richer, meets this 'moral unity' theory with a practical demonstration of its absurdity. The great Protestant statesman and his Catholic constituents at Lisieux lived and worked together for liberty and for law, not in 'moral unity,' but in moral harmony. In moral harmony his Protestant son-in-law, M. Conrad de Witt, through a quarter of a century past has lived and worked for liberty and for law with his Catholic constituents of Pont-l'Evêque.

The Catholics of the Calvados are not such intense Catholics as the Catholics of Brittany and Poitou. After the Norman rising of 1793 against the tyranny at Paris had collapsed so dismally in the ridiculous 'battle' of Pacy—a battle which began with the flight in a panic from the field of the vanquished Normans, and ended with the flight in a panic from the field of their victorious enemies the Parisians—the indignant Bretons and the Poitevins marched away to wage that

contest for their homes and their altars which has immortalized the name of La Vendée. The less impassioned Normans made terms and took things as they were. To this day what is called the [Pg 451] 'little Church' exists in Brittany, made up of peasants who regard the Concordat as an unworthy compact made with the persecutors and the plunderers of the Church of their fathers.

The feeling of the Norman Catholics after Pacy and the miserable failure of the Girondist resistance to the Mountain took the form of silent disgust with the Republic and all its works. The Norman heroine in whose heart this silent disgust named up till it made her the avenger of innocent blood upon the most noisome reptile of the Revolution, had ceased to be a Catholic before the shame of her country moved her to her glorious and dreadful deed. But if the Catholics of the Calvados are less intense, they are not less sincere, than the Catholics of Brittany or Poitou. It is no indifference in matters of religion which makes them co-operate so cordially with their Protestant friends and representatives. It is because they value their religion, and mean that it shall be respected, that they honour the memory of the great minister who held sacred and inviolable the right of the parent to be heard and obeyed in the matter of the religious education of his children. The two daughters of M. Guizot married two brothers, the heirs of one of the most illustrious names in the annals of European liberty. One of these brothers, M. Conrad de Witt, now lives at Val Richer, and administers his large agricultural property lying there in the commune of St.-Ouen-le-Pin. Many years ago he won the gold medal of the French Society of Agriculture, and for twenty years past he has been President of the Agricultural Society of Pont-l'Evêque. In 1861, under the Empire, his fellow-citizens made him a Councillor-General for the Canton of Cambremer, in the Department of the Calvados, and he has kept his seat in that body ever since, until he last year declined a re-election, and made way for the candidacy of his [Pg 452] nephew, M. Pierre de Witt. It was my good fortune to be at Val Richer when the election came off. The canvass had been carefully pushed; for, although the Republicans ostentatiously announced their intention not to make a contest in which they were sure to be beaten, M. Conrad de Witt and his nephew are not men to take anything for granted where serious interests are concerned. There were symptoms, too, that the Prefect of the Calvados, the Comte de Brancion, a newcomer (as all prefects now are in France, the average tenure of a prefect's official life since 1879 rarely exceeding eighteen months in one place), had been advised from Paris to show his zeal by contriving in some way to thwart, or at least to dampen, the victory of the nephew in July, as a preliminary to prevent the victory of the uncle in September. For M. Conrad de Witt was not only a Councillor-General of the Calvados, and Mayor of his own commune of St.-Ouen-le-Pin, he was sent to the Chamber of Deputies in 1885 as a Monarchist by the voters of the Calvados by a majority of 13,722 on a total poll of 89,064, and when he declined a re-nomination for the Council-General, he accepted a re-nomination for the Chamber.

It was delightful to see the zealous interest taken in these contests, not only by the family at Val Richer, but by all the countryside. The elections for the Councils-General were held on Sunday, July 28, 1889. All through the preceding Saturday scouts kept coming in to Val Richer with the latest reports as to the state of things in the various communes of the canton.

The tenor of these was uniform: 'There would be no contest; the only possible Republican candidate, a respectable physician who had some local strength in the commune in which he lived, founded upon his habit of gratuitously attending the poor of that commune, had positively [Pg 453] declined to enter the field.' 'All the same,' said one energetic volunteer from this very commune, 'we don't mean to let a single honest voter stay at home. We understand this game. They want to make out that we are lukewarm about the battle that is to come off in September. That won't go!'

'Furthermore,' said another stalwart, keen-eyed, fresh-faced young farmer, who might have passed as a Yorkshire yeoman, 'furthermore, I don't trust this Republican cock till he's dead! I believe he's shamming, but he shan't catch us asleep. This Prefect at Caen is as busy as the Evil One. He means to play us a trick.'

The shrewd young farmer was right. Early, very early, on Sunday morning, long before daybreak, indeed, there came hastening over to Val Richer from the commume of Bonnebosq, some miles away, a spirited young fellow, heart and soul in the fight, with the news that a story was putting about all over the canton that M. Pierre de Witt had decided, at the last moment, not to stand, and that, on the strength of this invention, the nomination of Dr. —— would be urged.

The polling had been fixed by the Prefect to begin in all the communes at 7 A.M., and to close at 6 P.M. No time was, therefore, to be lost in getting out a formal contradiction of this invention of the enemy, and the vigorous young volunteer from Bonnebosq had lost no time. He roused the candidate, got his instructions, and, before the polls were opened, his men were all over the canton at work. In the course of the day I drove over with M. Pierre de Witt to Bonnebosq, where we found the mother of this energetic young politician, a typical Norman mother, full of sense and fire, quietly proud of the activity and intelligence of her son, and quite as much in the day's work as he. 'Not a pretty trick,' she said, 'to play with Dr. ——. He ought to be ashamed of it—and [Pg 454] I am sure he is,' she added, with a droll twinkle in her eye, 'for it has turned out very badly! He will just be beaten like plaster. It would have been cleverer to behave like a decent man!' Bonnebosq had a very lively, cheery aspect on that Sunday afternoon. It is a busy prosperous little place, with about a thousand inhabitants. The village church, a new and very handsome French ogival building, most creditable to the architect, has just been built at an expense of several hundred thousand francs by a Catholic lady of the canton, and the people are very proud of it. It struck me that at Bonnebosq the outlook for a moral harmony between Frenchmen of divers religious communions contending together for equal rights and well-ordered liberty was decidedly better than the outlook for a 'moral unity' of France to be promoted by the

authoritative suppression of all private initiative in the education of the French people. The traditions of the Norman race do not tend kindly towards a system under which the individual is to wither that the State may be more and more!

As Mayor of the commune of St.-Ouen-le-Pin, M. Conrad de Witt had a busy day of it on Sunday, July 28. The holding of elections on Sunday is a tradition in France. Two elections were to be made—one of a Councillor-General and the other of a District Councillor. Under the laws of 1871 and 1874, these elections must be held in separate though adjoining buildings wherever this is practicable. Where the commune is too small to furnish these facilities, the two elections may be held in one place; but the votes for the two officers must be deposited in two different urns. These urns are placed upon a table, at which the Mayor of the commune presides with four assessors and a secretary, chosen by them from among the electors. As the electors have the day [Pg 455] before them, the Mayor and the assessors are kept close prisoners at their posts till the polls are closed. Nor is their work over then. As soon as the clock strikes 6 P.M. the doors of the bureau close. But the Mayor and the assessors must then proceed 'immediately' to examine and establish the results of the voting. They choose from among the electors present a certain number of 'scrutineers' knowing how to read and write. These scrutineers take their seats at tables prepared for the purpose. At each table there must be at least four scrutineers. The Mayor and the assessors then empty the urns and count the votes, the secretary drawing up a *procès-verbal* the while. If there are more or fewer votes than there were voters registered during the day as voting, this fact is stated and affirmed. Blank or illegible votes, votes which do not accurately give the name of the candidate voted for, or on which the voters have put their own names, are not counted as valid, but they are annexed to the *procès-verbal*. Votes not written on white paper, or which bear any external indication of their tenor, are included in the account as votes affecting the majority necessary to a choice, but they are not put to the credit of the candidate whose name they bear; so that, as a matter of fact, they tell against him. Moreover, if there are more votes found in the urns than voters registered as voting, the excess may be deducted from the number of votes given to the candidate who has a majority.

I asked a very bright ruddy farmer in a spotless blue blouse, who was watching the elections with great interest in one of the communes, what he thought of this provision. 'It is a very good reason for watching the mayors,' he said; '*dame*! a clever mayor who knows his commune, and has good loose sleeves to his coat, can slip in a good many votes in this way against the candidate who he [Pg 456] knows is likely to win!'

I told him that in my own country we guarded the palladium of our liberties (a queer palladium that needs to be guarded) against this peril by using glass globes instead of the 'urns' employed in France, which are in fact wooden boxes. The idea delighted him. He rubbed his hands together with a chuckle, and said 'That would be capital! That would bother them! But for that reason we shall not have your glass urns!'

When the votes have all been emptied out of the urns and verified and counted by the Mayor and the assessors, the Mayor distributes them among the scrutineers. At each table a scrutineer takes the votes up one by one, reads out in a clear voice the name of the candidate inscribed on each vote, and passes it to another scrutineer, who sees it duly registered, the Mayor and assessors the while supervising all the proceeding. In communes containing less than 300 inhabitants the Mayor and assessors themselves may scrutinise and declare the results.

As St.-Ouen-le-Pin falls just two short of this number, M. Conrad de Witt not only lost his luncheon but his dinner. He never got back to the château till ten o'clock at night.

The polling place in this commune was a small house opposite the village church. I walked over to it after breakfast through the fields and by lovely green lanes as deep as the lanes of Devonshire, with M. Pierre de Witt and one of his kinsmen. The mass was going on in the village church, and the singing of the choir seemed to me at least as fitting an accompaniment to the expression by the sovereign people of their sovereign will through bits of white paper—Mr. Whittier's 'noiseless snowflakes'—as the braying of a brass band, or the hoarse shouts of a more [Pg 457] or less tipsy multitude.

In the Protestant corner of this Catholic churchyard, under some fine trees, M. Guizot sleeps his last sleep in the simple tomb of his family. Here, again, I thought, was a moral harmony better than any 'moral unity'!

We had a merry and an animated dinner that night at Val Richer. Message after message was brought in from the nearest communes, all of one tenor. The Republican 'trick' had evidently exasperated the worthy Norman voters, and brought them up to the polls most effectually! By ten o'clock it was clear that M. Pierre de Witt was elected by a majority too large to be 'whittled' away, and that the surreptitious appearance of the Republicans in the field had served only to emphasize their political weakness. In the canton, Cambremer itself, lying at a distance of eight or ten kilomètres, and Beuvron only remained to be heard from. It was possible harm might have been done there. For a law passed under the Empire in 1852, and undisturbed for obvious reasons by the Third Republic, allows the prefect of a department to determine into what sections he will divide a large commune for the purpose, according to the law, of 'bringing the electors nearer to the electoral urn.' This opens the way, of course, to a good deal of what in America would be known as official 'gerrymandering.' The thing may be of any country. The name we owe to Mr. Elbridge Gerry, once Vice-President of the United States; who, when his party controlled Massachusetts, devised a scheme for so framing the electoral districts of that State as to get his scattered party minorities together, and convert them thus into majorities. An outline map of the

State thus districted was declared by one of his opponents to 'look like a salamander.' 'No! not like a salamander,' said another; 'it is a gerrymander.' [Pg 458]

Val Richer was full of little fairies in that bright summer weather. The Pied Piper of Hamelin must have passed that way, losing some stragglers of his army as he moved along. Wherever you strolled in the park you came unexpectedly upon little blonde heads and laughing eyes peering through the shrubbery, and saw small imps scampering madly off across the meadows. On the Sunday night of the election, music and mirth chased the hours away, till, just after midnight, a joyous clamour in the outer hall announced some event of importance. From the far-off Cambremer and Beuvron-sur-Auge a delegation of staunch electors had arrived to announce the crowning victory. Thanks to the distance and the 'sections,' the votes had been long in counting, but they had been counted, and not found wanting. One of these bringers of good tidings might have sat or stood for a statue of William the Conqueror preparing to make France pay dearly for the jest of the French King anent his colossal bulk. He was a man in the prime of life, but he cannot possibly have weighed less than 400 pounds. Yet he moved about alertly, and he had driven over in a light wagon at full speed (the Norman horses are very strong) to congratulate his candidate on the issue of a fray in which he had borne his own part most manfully. M. Pierre de Witt had received 1,042 votes as Councillor-General, against no more than 140 given to his medical competitor!

One bold voter had deposited a single vote for General Boulanger! 'Had there been any disturbances anywhere?' No, none at all. 'We cheered when we got the returns,' said the giant; 'we cheered for M. de Witt, and we cried "Vive le Roi!" They didn't like it, but they were so badly beaten, they kept quiet. I believe though,' he added, 'they would have arrested us if we had cried [Pg 459] "Vive Bocher!" That is more than they can bear!' and therewith he laughed aloud, a not unkindly, but formidable laugh.

M. Bocher, who was made Prefect of the Calvados by M. Guizot, and who is now a senator for that department, is, I am assured, the special *bête noire* of the Third Republic in Normandy. His long and honourable connection with the public service has won for him the esteem of all the people of the Calvados, while his thorough knowledge of the political history of the country and of his time, his cool clear judgment, his temperate but fearless assertion through good and evil report of his political convictions, and his keen insight into character, must give him long odds in any contest with the ill-trained and miserably-equipped political camp-followers who have been coming of late years into the front of the Republican battle.

They gave M. Bocher a banquet not long ago at Pont-l'Evêque, at which he made a very telling speech, and brought down the house by inviting his hearers to contemplate M. Grévy and M. Carnot as typical illustrations of the great superiority of a republic over a monarchy, and of the elective over the hereditary principle! The Republicans, he said, had twice elected to the chief magistracy an austerely virtuous Republican whom they had finally been compelled to throw out at the window of the Elysée, as 'the complaisant and guilty witness, if not the interested accomplice, of scandals which revolted the public conscience!' And whom had the elective principle put into his place, under the pressure of irreconcilable personal rivalries, and of a threatened popular outbreak? A man whose recommendations were his own relative personal obscurity and the traditional reputation of his grandfather! [Pg 460]

With M. Grévy and M. Carnot the Norman farmers have a special quarrel which gave zest to the caustic periods of M. Bocher. The all-powerful son-in-law of M. Grévy, M. Wilson, proposed in the National Assembly in 1872, and with the influence of M. Thiers, then President, succeeded in passing a law heavily taxing, and in an inquisitorial fashion, the domestic fabrication of spirits. This is an old and prosperous industry in Normandy. It is carried on, according to an official estimate made in 1888, by above five hundred thousand farmers in France; and in Normandy particularly, a land of apples and pears, it is a great resource of the farmers. They make here a liquor called Calvados, which when it attains a certain age is much more drinkable and much less unwholesome than most of the casual cognac of our times. After three years this very unpopular law was repealed in 1875, mainly through the efforts of M. Bocher. It had plagued the farmers more than it benefited the Treasury.

The *bouilleurs de cru*, as these domestic distillers are called, had made during the three years 1869-72, 1,199,000 hectolitres of spirits which paid excise duties. During the three years 1872-75 under the Wilson law the production fell to about 165,000 hectolitres a year. In the first year, 1875-76, after the repeal of the law it rose to 301,000 hectolitres.

The sale of crosses of the Legion, official contracts and other operations not consistent with that virtue on which alone Montesquieu tells us a republic can safely repose, made an end of M. Wilson and of his father-in-law. But the enormous Republican deficit kept on increasing, and in 1888, under the presidency of M. Carnot, the Republicans revived a project formed by M. Carnot when Minister of Finance, in 1886, for imposing upon the *bouilleurs de cru* anew the severe and [Pg 461] inquisitorial taxation of 1872. Under the law introduced to effect this, January 12, 1888, the whole of the buildings in which any part of the processes of this production may be carried on must be open to the tax-officers *at all hours of the day or night*. As many of the *bouilleurs de cru* are small farmers who use part of their houses for some of these processes, it may be imagined how bitterly they oppose such a law. They have no more love for tax-gatherers than the people of other countries have; but the English maxim that every man's house is his castle is a distinctly Norman maxim, and this menace offered to the sanctity and privacy of the domicile has profoundly exasperated the Norman populations. It is of a piece, they think, with the arbitrary

school system and with the elaborate contrivances devised to deprive the communes of the right finally to certify and give effect to the returns of their own elections. Above all, it is an interference with an ancient and customary right. 'What business have these lawyers and doctors at Paris,' said a farmer here to me, 'to be meddling with our usages and ways here on our lands in Normandy? Let them fix general taxes, and leave us to pay them in our own way!'

The war against the Church affects these Normans in the same way. It does not seem to rouse them into a kind of fanatical fervour, such as blazes up here and there in other parts of France, but it angers them as a disturbance of their settled habits and convictions. 'The Church,' said one of these Calvados farmers to M. de Witt; 'the Church is the key of our trade. They must not touch it!'

What he meant was, that on Sunday at the village church the farmers, after the mass, are in the habit of talking over all their affairs together. It is a kind of social exchange for men whose calling in life keeps them far apart during the week. [Pg 462]

Is it to be supplanted for the benefit of the France of the future by cockpits and cabarets, or courses of lectures delivered in 'scholastic palaces,' by spectacled and decorated professors, on the 'struggle for life,' and the 'survival of the fittest'?

The victory of M. Pierre de Witt in July was too complete to leave any pretext for meddling with its results of which the authorities liked to avail themselves. The law, however, gives abundant opportunities for such meddling wherever a plausible pretext can be found. After the votes of a commune have been verified and counted, two of the assessors start off at once with all the votes and papers for the chief town of the canton. The bureau of this chief town has power to 'verify and, if need be, remake the calculations which show the majority. It may modify the decisions of the communal bureaux as to the candidate to whom certain votes properly belong, may decide what votes are to be treated as entirely null, or to be counted in estimating the majority without being held as given to either candidate. It may also decide what votes belong to a candidate. It may also take away from the candidates elected, or claiming to have been elected, all votes found in the urn or urns in excess of the number of electors actually tallied as voting.'

The decisions reached by the bureau are next to be collated with the *procès-verbaux* of the communal bureaux—after which all the documents connected with the election, including the tally-lists of the voters, are to be sent to the prefect of the department.

When the legislative elections came on in September the authorities of the Calvados made desperate efforts to break the solid front of the Monarchist deputation from this department. In [Pg 463] the arrondissement of Pont-l'Evêque, where M. Conrad de Witt stood as the Monarchist candidate, the official interference against him was so open that the Prefect, M. de Brancion, did not hesitate to sign and circulate a letter intended to affect the elections, though by Article 3 of the law of November 30, 1875, regulating elections, all agents of the Government are expressly forbidden to distribute ballots, professions of faith, or circulars affecting the candidates. M. de Witt had cited to the electors a remarkable declaration made in the Senate by M. Léon Say as to the inevitable increase of local taxation which must be expected from the development and enforcement of the Government policy in regard to education.

M. Léon Say resigned his seat in the Senate last year that he might enter the Chamber, his friends having convinced themselves, on no very apparent grounds, that his appearance in the Chamber would rally around him the support of Conservative men of all shades of opinion, and make him master of the situation. He was a candidate in the Hautes Pyrénées. The quotation made by M. de Witt from his sensible speech in the Senate much disturbed the Republicans in the Calvados, and some official application was evidently made to him on the subject; for, without denying that he had said in the Senate what was imputed to him, he seems to have assured the Republicans of the Calvados that it was absurd to suppose he would so speak of the Government policy when he was standing as a Government candidate for election to the Chamber. This obvious but quite irrelevant statement was instantly circulated all over the department by the Prefect himself. As it was very easily disposed of, it did no great harm. But it is a curious illustration of the way in which these election matters are managed now in France. M. de Witt was triumphantly re-elected, receiving 6,972 votes against 5,189 in the arrondissement of Pont- [Pg 464] l'Evêque. The Monarchists also carried every other seat for the Calvados, making seven in all.

In 1885, under the *scrutin de liste*, the votes given to M. de Witt show a Conservative majority in the Calvados of 13,722 in a total poll of 89,064. In 1889, taking all the districts together, the Calvados showed a Monarchist majority of 19,868 in a total poll of 82,216. This gives us a falling off in the total poll of 6,848, and an increase in the Monarchist majority of 6,497 votes!

I called M. Conrad de Witt's attention, after the legislative elections were over, to an article in an English periodical by a French Protestant writer, M. Monod, in which the Monarchist majority of 1889 in the Calvados was attributed to the bad harvest of pears and apples. The veteran Protestant President of the Society of Agriculture in the Calvados smiled in a quiet and significant way, and simply said, 'Ah! I think we are more solid than that!'

So indeed it would seem!

The 'apple-blight' of the Calvados must obviously have extended into the neighbouring department of the Eure, or at least into the great and busy arrondissement of Bernay, which gave the Monarchist candidate in September 1889 the tremendous majority of 5,550 votes in a total poll of 12,772. Possibly, too, there may be some occult relation between this remarkable result

and the presence in this arrondissement of one of the most distinguished of living Frenchmen, and one of the most outspoken champions of the Constitutional Monarchy. An able man with a mind of his own, and the courage to speak it, is a force in any country at any time. In France at this time such a man is a determining force. The obvious weakness of the Monarchical party in France was touched by the Committee of the Catholic Association in their report to which I have [Pg 465] alluded in another chapter. It is the association in the popular mind of the monarchical idea with the traditions of Versailles and with the 'pomps and vanities' of what is ridiculously called '*le high-life*' of modern Paris. As a matter of fact, all that was silliest and most scandalous in the Court life of France in the eighteenth century was reproduced and exaggerated under the Directory. What is there to choose between Louis XV. doffing his hat beside the coach of Madame Du Barry, and Barras ordering Ouvrard to keep Madame Tallien in diamonds, opera-boxes, coaches and villas, out of the profits of public loans and contracts for the service of the 'Republic one and indivisible'? Formula for Formula (to speak after the manner of Mr. Carlyle), is not the Republican Formula of the two the more demoralizing, dismal, degraded, and altogether hopeless? What is called '*le high-life*' of Paris is neither Royalist nor Republican. It is merely shallow and vulgar, like the '*high-life*' of sundry other places ruled by governments of divers forms. But when young men born to names which in the popular mind represent the history of France show themselves as athletes in a Parisian circus, or appear as grooms on the carriages of *cocottes* in the Bois de Boulogne, their folly naturally damages more or less in the public estimation the principles with which the names they bear are associated.

Under the Empire the Legitimists, as a body, really played the game of the Emperor by holding themselves aloof from public life in all its departments, in accordance with the policy adopted by the Comte de Chambord. The inevitable effect of this policy was to widen the gulf between them and the body of the French people. It tended to bring about in France results like those aimed at [Pg 466] by the National League in Ireland, and to prevent a gradual and wholesome reconciliation between the heirs of the class which was exiled and plundered during the Revolution, and the heirs of the classes which eventually profited by the proscriptions and confiscations of that unhappy time. The disastrous war of 1870-71 did much to counteract the social mischief thus wrought. The French Legitimists came forward in all parts of France to the defence of their country. They were brought thus into contact with the people and the people with them. They ceased to be a caste and began to be citizens. The way was thus prepared, too, for that fusion of the two great Royalist camps, the camp of the Legitimists and the camp of the Orleanists, which has since taken place. A very intelligent young officer of Engineers, himself the heir of an ancient name, told me at Dijon that there are at this time more men of the old families of France on the rolls of the army than ever before since 1789. Instead of rejoicing in this as the wholesome sign of a growing moral harmony between all classes of Frenchmen, the leaders of the Republican party have been incensed by it. Doubtless they regard it as an obstacle to the development of their idea of 'moral unity.' Under President Grévy, the Minister of War actually drove one of the best soldiers in France, General Schmidt, out of his command at Tours by insisting that he should forbid his officers to accept invitations from their friends who lived in the châteaux which are the glory of Touraine, the traditional garden of France. Imagine a High Church secretary-at-war in England issuing an order that no officer in a garrison corps should dine with a Catholic or a Dissenter.

This was not a freak. It was a policy. It was in perfect keeping with an amazing attack made by the Republican press of Paris not long afterwards upon the then American Minister in France, [Pg 467] Mr. Morton, now Vice-President of the United States, for giving a dinner in honour of the Comte de Paris. The Comte de Paris and his brother, the Duc de Chartres, had served with distinction on the staff of the Commander-in-Chief of the Union armies in America. They were the sons of a French sovereign, with whose government the government of the United States had long held close and friendly relations. The Comte de Paris is the author of the most careful, thorough, and impartial history yet written of the American Civil War of 1861-65. Yet, for showing his personal and official respect for a French prince possessing such claims upon the respect of Frenchmen as well as of Americans, the diplomatic representative of the United States was assailed with coarse and vulgar violence in the columns of journals assuming to represent the civilization of the capital of France!

Some time after the incident to which I have referred at Tours occurred, I drove from St.-Malo to La Basse Motte, the charming and picturesque house of General de Charette, in the Ille-et-Vilaine, with the Marquis de la Roche-Jaquelein. The autumn manœuvres of the French army were then going on. On the way he told me among other things that the officers of a cavalry brigade encamped for two or three days in the neighbourhood of his château had been forbidden by their brigade commander to accept a dinner to which he had invited, not only them, but their commander also! The general in command of the cavalry division fortunately happened to arrive before the day fixed for the dinner, and, having been informed of this state of affairs, quietly authorized the officers to attend the dinner, and attended it himself. [Pg 468]

Can anything be more absurd than to attempt to naturalize a Republic in France by identifying Republican institutions with such tyrannical interference as this in the private and social relations of French officers and citizens?

The Third Republic has improved upon Cambon's piratical watchword, *Guerre aux châteaux; paix aux chaumières*. It makes war socially upon the *châteaux*, and it makes war religiously and financially upon the *chaumières*.

All this must bring out into clearer relief before the French people the unquestionable personal

superiority of the Monarchist over the Republican leaders and representatives. It is undeniable that an overwhelming majority of the ablest and most influential men in France, of all classes and conditions, are to-day in open opposition either to the policy or to the constitution of the existing Republic, or to both. Many—I think most of them—are agreed that the Monarchy must be restored if France is to be saved from anarchy and dismemberment. The rest of them are agreed that the Republic must be so remodelled as to become in fact, if not in name, a monarchy. In this condition of the country, the avowed Monarchists must inevitably draw to themselves the support of all who differ from them, not as to the end, but as to the means only. For the logic of events is steadily strengthening the verdict uttered by the Duc de Broglie three years ago on the Republican experiments, in a speech made by him before the Monarchist Union at Paris on May 29, 1887. 'All these political ghosts must go flitting by, but France will endure and remain, forced to pay the price of their follies in the form of interest on their loans!'

There is no war now between the Château de Broglie and the cottages of the Eure; certainly no war between the château and the town of Broglie. The town is bright, pretty and prosperous. The [Pg 469] park gates open into it as the park gates of Arundel Castle open into Arundel, but without even the semblance of a fortification.

The park is very extensive and nobly planned, with a certain stateliness rather Italian than English. The ground undulates beautifully, and from its great elevation above the river and the town commands in all directions the most charming views. The roads and walks are admirably laid out, the trees well grown and lofty. The château itself dates back, as to its earlier portions, to the Hundred Years' War. It was more than once besieged by the English, and some of the ivy-grown walls and towers which overlook the town take you back to Edward III. and the Black Prince. But the long façade and the main buildings are of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, during which the De Broglies made so much French history. Within, the spacious saloons, the grand vestibule and hall, and the delightful library are in perfect keeping with the traditions of a family which for generations has given soldiers and statesmen to the service of a great people. Of course the château has been much restored during the present century, but its general disposition is what it was in 1789, and, like that of all the French châteaux of the eighteenth century, it attests the friendly relations which must have existed before the Revolution between the *château* and the *chaumière*. The English mansions even of the time of Queen Anne are more defensible than these *châteaux*. The windows, of the sort which to this day are called French windows in England and America, are long windows opening like doors. On the ground floor they come down, indeed, nearly to the level of the lawn. It is perfectly obvious that no thought of a war of classes can have entered the minds of the architects who planned these [Pg 470] edifices or of the owners for whom they were planned. Yet the problems of government which we imagine to be of our own times had been hotly discussed and were hotly discussing when these edifices were built. The ideas, not of Villegardelle only, but of Proudhon, were put forth in germ by De la Jonchère in 1720, in his 'Plan of a New Government.' The Château de Broglie resembles a feudal castle of the fourteenth or even of the sixteenth century no more than it resembles a Roman villa of the first century. The magnificent liberality with which the Vicomte de Noailles, himself a younger son, gave away all the feudal rights and privileges of the *noblesse* on the night of August 4, 1789, has always, I am sorry to say, reminded me irresistibly of the patriotic ardour with which Mr. Artemus Ward devoted to the battle-field of freedom the remotest cousins of his wife. The evidence is overwhelming which goes to show that these feudal rights and privileges were practically no more oppressive in the France of 1789 than they were in the England of 1830. It is not even clear that the New York anti-renters of our time had not as good a case for ridding themselves of 'feudal' rights and privileges by storming the Capitol at Albany as the people of France for ridding themselves of those rights and privileges by storming the practically defenceless Bastille. The Bastille interfered no more with the liberty of Paris in 1789 than the Tower with the liberty of London. The only people in any particular peril of it were the 'black sheep' of the *noblesse*, as to whom even Jefferson, in the sketch of a charter of French Rights which he drew up in June 1789 and sent to Lafayette and the bookseller St.-Etienne, proposed that their personal liberty should be subject to a special kind of imprisonment at the prayer of their relations, or in other words to a regular 'lettre de cachet.' [Pg 471]

It is a curious illustration, by the way, of the incapacity of this National Assembly that in July 1789 its Committee for framing a Constitution actually invited a foreign envoy, Jefferson, to take part with them in their work. Jefferson had sense enough to decline the invitation; but what gleam of sense, political or other, had the blundering tinkers who gave it? The outcome of their gabble was that mob violence destroyed for Paris in the Bastille what London possesses in the Tower, an 'architectural document' of the highest authenticity and importance. To talk of French feudalism as having been overthrown by such men is absurd. If it had existed when they met, it would have very soon sent them about their business. But it did not exist when they met. The author of the curious *Précis d'une Histoire Générale de la Vie Privée des Français*, published in 1779, treats the whole subject of the private life, homes, manners, and fortunes of the French people expressly from the point of view of the great change which had come over them, 'since the abolition of feudalism.' The magnanimous achievement of the Vicomte de Noailles ought to rank in history with the victory of Don Quixote over the wine-skins, or with the revolutionary feat of that drum-major of the National Guard who slashed with his sabre the corpse of the unfortunate procureur-syndic Bayeux, lying battered to death in the Place des Tribunaux at Caen, on September 6, 1792, and whom the honest Normans of the Calvados afterwards kicked out of the city as 'fit only for killing dead men.'

Even in the châteaux of the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth we

get unanswerable architectural evidence to show a steady improvement in the social relations of [Pg 472]
the people with the noblesse. The Château d'Eu, for example, in the Seine-Inférieure, in which Louis Philippe entertained Prince Albert and Queen Victoria, and from which the Comte de Paris and his family were so lawlessly expelled in 1886, was a true fortress in the days when the Norman princes and their armies went and came between England and France, and Tréport saw many an armada. But in the fourteenth century we find Raoul de Brienne, Comte d'Eu, confirming to the people of Eu the immunity of their cattle, binding himself not 'to make any man work save for good wages and of his own good will,' not to requisitionise bread or wine but for money paid, not to seize any man's horses, and not 'to compel any man to seize and hale another man to prison except in cases of crime or of invasion.' When the great Duke of Guise rebuilt the château of brick in the sixteenth century, he put down most of the outer fortifications. Without these the château is as much a part of the town of Eu as Buckingham Palace is of St. James's Park. Catherine of Clèves, the widow of the great Duke of Guise, lived at Eu through her long widowhood in the friendliest relations with the good people of the town, while the architects were erecting for herself and her murdered husband, 'the nonpareil of the world,' as she called him (notwithstanding his admiration of Mme. de Noirmoutiers), the beautiful monuments which still adorn the collegiate church. Her daughter, the lovely and lively Princesse de Conti, gathered a gay and gallant company of friends about her, and lived an open-air life of hunting, promenades, and after-dinner 'games of wit,' upon the terraces, as unconcernedly at the end of the sixteenth century, I was about to say, as such a life could be lived here now. But I have to remember that at the end of the eighteenth century, and under the illumination of the 'ideas of [Pg 473]
1789,' the tomb of this Princess in the chapel of Ste-Catherine was broken into, and her bones flung about on the floor of the mortuary vault, while at the end of this nineteenth century the legitimate owners of the château which has replaced the home of Louise de Lorraine et de Conti have been driven into exile for no other crime but that of their birth by a Government which professes to be a Government of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.

In the middle of the seventeenth century the Château d'Eu, with the whole domain, was sold on behalf of the Duc de Joyeuse et d'Angoulême, the ruined heir of the Guises, to 'La Grande Mademoiselle,' the restless and ambitious daughter of Gaston d'Orléans, brother of Louis XIV. Her relations with the people of Eu were more than cordial. History concerns itself with her as the Bellona of the Fronde, and Court chronicles as the wife of that eminent scamp Lauzun. But at Eu she was the Providence of the poor and the helpless. She founded hospitals and charities of all sorts. The endowments of most of these were calmly confiscated during the Revolution. One hospital, so well endowed that, in spite of the *assignats* and of dilapidation, it still had a revenue of 10,000 francs, was suppressed in 1810, and the building turned into a barrack, despite the remonstrances of a worthy Mayor who still lives in the local traditions of Eu. This functionary confronted Napoleon more creditably than the Mayor of Folkestone confronted Queen Elizabeth. He received the Emperor and began his harangue. Presently he stammered, hesitated, and broke down. 'What!' said Napoleon, 'Mr. Mayor, a man like you!' 'Ah! sire!' responded the quick-witted magistrate, 'in the presence of a man like your Majesty, I cease to be a man like myself!' Another [Pg 474]
of the foundations of the 'Grande Mademoiselle' still exists in the chief hospital of Eu, now become the property of the town. The treasurer and the physician of this hospital, both of them citizens of the highest character, who have filled their respective posts for years, are outspoken Royalists. At the elections of last year they voted as usual with their own party. When the elections were over, the Prefect of the Seine Inférieure requested the Municipal Council of Eu to remove both of them. This the Councillors, though Republicans, declined to do. Whereupon the Prefect removed them by a decree of his own!

The Château d'Eu came into the possession of Louis Philippe through his mother, who was the daughter of the Duc de Penthièvre, and of whose admirable character and exemplary patience with her impossible husband Philippe Egalité, Gouverneur Morris paints so lively a picture. The Duke was so much beloved at Eu, where he habitually lived, that no personal harm came to him during the first years of the Revolution. He died at Vernon, on the eve of the Terror, and so was spared the pain of witnessing the excesses perpetrated at Eu as elsewhere, not only during that period but under the Directory. An accomplished resident of Eu showed me a decree of the Directory, issued in 1798, and ordering the people to meet on January 21: 'the anniversary of the just punishment of the last French King, and swear hatred to the Monarchy!' 'What has come of all that fury and folly?' he said. 'For years since then the people of Eu have not only "sworn," but shown, genuine affection and respect to two French Kings, Louis XVIII. and Louis Philippe. They didn't care much about Charles X., but they were contented under his reign. Eu owes the [Pg 475]
restoration of our noble churches and monuments to these kings, and to their representative the Comte de Paris. One of these kings brought the sovereign of England and her husband to visit Eu, and made us feel in our little Norman town that the great days of Normandy were not over. Of that fine collection of pictures and of portraits you have been admiring in the château, a great proportion belonged to the Duc de Penthièvre, and these, with many other valuable things in the château, were quietly taken out and saved when the robberies and blasphemies began here, by the Mayor of Eu of that day, who risked his life by doing that good deed. When the Comte and the Comtesse de Paris lived here, the park and the gardens were the pride and pleasure of the people. Those fountains are fed by water which the Comte de Paris had brought to Eu for the service of the town, and the town is served by it now. Every year Eu was filled with people who came and lived here because the Comte and the Comtesse de Paris were here. What good has their exile done to Eu? Here in Eu we know them. It is not they who are responsible for the local debt of Eu, of which we who have to pay it can get no account at all from our precious authorities, except in the form of a demand for more taxes!

'As to the last century, you are quite right. Here, in this part of Normandy, there were no such grievances then as we have now. There were troubles with bad roads and bad agriculture. There were quarrels about this right and that privilege. The curés didn't like the grand airs of the Church dignitaries. The squires (*hobereaux*) were conceited very often and ignorant and arrogant. We have not got rid of conceit and ignorance and arrogance, though, by cutting off the heads of a few squires a hundred years ago! No! as to Eu, at least, take my word for it, the [Pg 476] happiest day we can see will be the day when we can welcome back here the Prince and the Princess who lived so pleasantly and so usefully with us and among us, as King and Queen of the French! We are royalists here because we know the Comte de Paris, and know that he would do his duty as the king of a free people, and be something better than the tool of a swarm of needy and self-seeking adventurers. There is a strong feeling here, too, about the intolerant interference of those atheists at Paris with the rights of parents and with freedom of conscience. Yet we are not in the least a priest-ridden people. On the contrary! I can show you a commune where the people, vexed with the charges of their curé, have deliberately organized a Protestant chapel. They sent to the Consistory at Paris, and got a minister, and they are doing very well! What we want here is private liberty and public economy. The Republic gives us neither. The Monarchy, we believe, will give us both!'

Broglie in the Eure, like La Brède in the Gironde, and Val Richer in the Calvados, has associations of special interest to Americans. At La Brède was born a gallant grandson of Montesquieu, De Sécondat, who earned high promotion by his valour and his conduct in the American War of Independence, side by side with Custine, who took Speier and Metz for the Republic, and for his guerdon got the guillotine, and with Vioménil, who died bravely defending his King and the law in the palace of the Tuileries. Val Richer was the home of the great French statesman to whom we owe the best delineation of Washington we possess, and of whom Mr. Bancroft, the historian of the American Constitution, bears witness that, as premier of France, he unreservedly threw open to his researches all the archives of France in any way bearing upon the history of the United States. 'Nothing was refused me for examination,' he says, 'nor was one line [Pg 477] of which I desired a copy withheld.'

Broglie was the birthplace of another French soldier who learned in America to venerate the character of Washington, and whose life paid the forfeit under the first despotic French Republic of his loyalty to liberty and the law. Victor Charles de Broglie was a son of the veteran Marshal of France, 'cool and capable of anything,' whom Mr. Carlyle perorates about as the 'war-god.' As the Chief of Staff of Biron, in the army of the Rhine, he refused to recognise the usurpers of August 10, 1792, in a letter to his commander which is a model of common sense and military honour. Upon this letter Carnot, then a legislative Commissioner, or, in plain English, inspector and informer of the Convention, on duty with the army, made a report far from creditable either to his head or his heart. Victor Charles de Broglie was eventually guillotined. Taking farewell of his son, a child nine years old, he bade him 'never allow himself to believe that it was liberty which had taken his father's life.' The child grew to manhood and to fame, for ever mindful of this brave injunction. He was the Minister of Louis Philippe when the claims arising out of the lawless depredations of the First Republic and the Empire upon American commerce were finally recognised and settled by France, and Mr. Bancroft pays him a high and well-deserved tribute for the courage with which he insisted on keeping faith with the United States 'at the risk of his popularity and of his place.' Are we to think it a mere effect of chance, or only a coincidence, that the flag of the Constitutional Monarchy, as the sole alternative of anarchy in France, is supported by the descendants of Montesquieu, by the heirs of Guizot, and by the son of this Duc de Broglie [Pg 478] to whose courage and integrity France and America were indebted for the equitable settlement of an international dispute originally provoked by the vulgar folly and impertinence of the first French Republic and of the disreputable envoys, Genet and Fauchet, whom it sent one after the other to the United States with orders to appeal from the Government of President Washington to the American people?

It was by the 'Military Council' made up of officers trained in the school of the great Maréchal de Broglie, and not by the vapouring and venal demagogues of the Convention, that France was successfully organised to resist the Austro-Prussian invasion of 1792; and it was by the government of which the present Duc de Broglie was a leading member under the Maréchal Duc de Magenta, not by M. Gambetta and M. Jules Ferry, that the Third Republic was so administered when the fortunes of France were at their lowest ebb as to re-establish the finances, restore the credit, and renew the military strength of the French nation.

For now more than two centuries the name of De Broglie has been made historical in France, not by the favour of princes—for neither in the camp nor in the cabinet have the De Broglies ever been courtiers—nor yet by the applause of the populace, but by the personal ability, the personal character, and the public services of the men who have borne it. If ever a man died for his loyalty to liberty and the law, it was Victor Charles de Broglie in 1794. His son, the earliest and most faithful ally in France of Clarkson and Wilberforce in their long crusade against negro slavery, never sought, but accepted his place among the peers of France after the Restoration. Such was his absolute independence that his first act in the Upper Chamber under Louis XVIII. was to record his solitary but emphatic protest against the condemnation of Marshal Ney. His political [Pg 479] career recalls Seneca's theory of Ulysses—'nauseator' but fulfilling his Odyssey. He disliked but never shirked the responsibilities which were pressed upon him. It used to be said of M. Thiers that whenever Louis Philippe wished to get an unpopular measure carried, he contrived to make M. Thiers oppose it violently, upset the government upon it, come into power upon his victory, and then take the measure up himself and carry it through. The Duc de Broglie was not a

politician of this adroit and acrobatic type. His yea was yea and his nay, nay in politics as in private life. He kept aloof from the Second Empire, as his grandfather, Mr. Carlyle's 'War-god Broglie,' had kept aloof from the first. But he never fell into the Republican folly of pretending to regard the Second Empire as a tyranny imposed upon the people of France against their will. On the contrary, he saw things not as he wished them to be, but as they were, and so he said of the Second Empire, 'It is the government which the masses of the people in France desire and which the upper classes of France deserve.'

The sting of this saying was given to it by the acquiescence of the 'upper classes' in the blow struck by the Second Empire at the rights of property in France when it confiscated in 1852 the estates of the House of Orléans. This blow was aimed, of course, by Napoleon III. at the Monarchy of July; just as the blow struck by Napoleon at the Duc d'Enghien was aimed at the ancient monarchy. But in the one case as in the other, the iniquity of the blow affected the fundamental conditions of social order and peace in France. In the one case as in the other, an Imperial Government, assuming to be a government of law, committed itself to the most outrageous and despotic practices of the 'Terror' of 1793. In the charter of 1814, Louis XVIII. had [Pg 480] abolished confiscation. In the Charter of 1830, Louis Philippe had re-affirmed this abolition. By the decrees of 1852, seizing the property of the House of Orléans, Napoleon III. re-established confiscation. In principle these decrees of 1852 were no better than the Jacobin decrees of September 1793, which fixed the proportion of his own income to be enjoyed by every citizen in France. Réal, the chairman, as we should call him, of the Finance Committee of the Convention of 1793, who calmly divided the income of every citizen into three categories: 'the necessary' not to exceed, in the case of a bachelor, 1,000 francs a year; 'the abundant' not to exceed 9,000 francs, of which one-half should go to the State; and the 'superfluous,' the whole of which must be paid into the public treasury, was a good Jacobin when he made this classification. He lived to become a good Imperialist, and to accept from the Emperor the title of Count, with a very large 'superfluous' income, of which he made very good use for his own private pleasure and satisfaction. The question as to these decrees of 1852 was brought up before the National Assembly on September 15, 1871, by the Comte de Mérode, who, 'in the name of justice and of common honesty,' insisted that the Treasury should cease to receive for public uses the income of the private property of the Orléans family, illegally confiscated by the decrees of January 22, 1852.

The Government of the Republic at once responded that 'the responsibility of this act of spoliation belonged exclusively to its author; and the subject was referred to a Committee. This Committee reported in 1872 a law founded, in the plain language of the Committee 'upon that principle of common honesty which forbids' man to enrich himself at the 'expense of his [Pg 481] neighbour.' The Report states that of the 'fifty-one direct descendants then living of King Louis Philippe, not one, to their honour be it said, had addressed any request on the subject, either to the Government or to the Assembly.' It states also, that having examined the subject carefully, the Committee were unanimously of the opinion that it was the duty of France 'to restore to the owners of this property what belonged to them; no longer to keep in the hands of the State what had never belonged to the State.' The Committee, considering the frightful disasters brought upon France by the war of 1870-71, could not recommend, said the Report, 'that the Treasury should now undertake absolutely to repair the consequences of an act repudiated by France. What it recommended was, that the Orléans family should be put into possession of all that was left of its own property, not that it should receive back the equivalent of the sums already consumed and dissipated.' At that time the Treasury had alienated under the decrees of 1852 no less than 70,000,000 francs of this lawful property of the Orléans family, unlawfully seized and confiscated. The whole property, when seized in 1852, was estimated by the Committee of 1872 at 80,000,000 francs. Between 1853 and 1870 the Treasury had received and spent 35,892,849 francs from sales of this property. It had also received and spent, from the sale of timber cut in the forests belonging to the property, 18,601,019 francs. Putting this large sum aside, it is obvious that in the shape of property actually sold, to the amount in round numbers of 36,000,000 francs, between 1853 and 1870, and of the interest on this amount during the same time, the Imperial Government had really converted to its own uses 70,000,000 francs which did [Pg 482] not belong to it. Not one penny of these millions of francs was restored to its owners by the decrees of 1872. What the decrees of 1872 accomplished, with the approval of such extreme Republicans as M. Henri Brisson, was to put a stop to this public robbery of private owners. The Orléans estates not yet sold in 1872 were then estimated to yield an income of 1,200,000 francs. Before final action was taken by the Assembly, the Orléans princes voluntarily came forward and announced that they would accept no 'restitution' at the expense of the taxpayers of France of their property sold and alienated under the spoliation of 1852; and the text of the law as finally passed in 1872 expressly ordains that 'conformably to the renunciation offered before the presentation of the bill by the heirs of King Louis Philippe, and since renewed,' their unsold property, 'real and personal, seized by the State and not alienated before this date, be immediately restored to its owners.' As a matter of fact, therefore, under this law, the heirs of King Louis Philippe actually made the French Government a present in 1872 of many millions of francs, which belonged to them and did not belong to France or to the French Government. By doing this, they co-operated most creditably with every man of common honesty in the French Assembly in repairing the wrong done to every French citizen by the decrees of January 22, 1852, decrees justly described by M. Pascal Duprat in the Chamber, on November 22, 1872, as 'decrees of flat spoliation which had violated the sacred right of property, disregarded the fundamental rules of law, and profoundly wounded the public conscience.' However profoundly wounded the public conscience may have been by these decrees in 1852, the scornful words of the Duc de

Broglie attest that it suffered in silence and for twenty years made no adequate outward sign! [Pg 483]

This cool and caustic statesman was born and brought up in the Catholic Church. He married a Protestant lady, one of the most charming and brilliant women of her time, the daughter of Madame de Staël, and he was the intimate friend and associate throughout his public life of M. Guizot. His son, the present duke, grew up in an atmosphere of practical religious liberality. It was the law of 1875 restricting the State monopoly of the higher branches of public education in France which concentrated against the present duke, under the Maréchal Duc de Magenta, the whole strength of the anti-religious elements in France. It was not to prevent the restoration of the monarchy by men like the Duc de Magenta and the Duc de Broglie, whom he well knew to be incapable of conspiring for any object whatever, that M. Gambetta uttered his war-cry: '*Le cléricalisme c'est l'ennemi!*' It was to rally behind himself and his own associates in the Republican party the great army of the Socialistic Radicals in France. It was to make the Conservative Republic of the Duc de Magenta and the Duc de Broglie impossible, that the Parliamentary conspirators of 1877 conceived and carried out, under cover of this war-cry, their scheme for suppressing the Executive in France. They have, as I believe, succeeded. They have made the Conservative Republic impossible. What is the result? The result is that no alternative of anarchy is left to sensible and moderate men in France but the Monarchy.

This has been growing more and more apparent ever since 1885. In that year the Legislative elections were made under the *scrutin de liste*; and when the Government rallied after the shock of the first Conservative attack, almost all the seats left in peril by that attack were 'saved' at the [Pg 484] supplementary election by surrendering them to Radical candidates. In 1889, under the fear of Boulanger, the *scrutin de liste* was suddenly abandoned for the *scrutin d'arrondissement*, and the same thing happened again.

At the first election, on September 22, 384 candidates of all parties were chosen in the 83 departments of France. Of these, 164 were Government Republicans and 44 Radicals. At the second election, on October 8, the remaining 177 seats were filled. Of these, 66 were carried by the Government Republicans, and no fewer than 57 surrendered to the Radicals. In other words, at the first election the Radicals secured just about a quarter of the 208 seats carried by the Republicans. At the second election they secured very nearly one half of the 123 seats carried by the Republicans. So that the Radicals finally muster 101 out of the 331 Republican home members of the present Chamber, and are, therefore, practically masters of the situation so far as the Republic is concerned. They made this perfectly clear as soon as the Chamber met by insisting upon and securing the election of M. Floquet, a Radical of the advanced left wing, as President of the Chamber. Were the Radicals to withdraw their support from the Government on any issue, it would be left with 254 members to face a combined opposition vote of 229 members, which might at any moment be converted into a hostile majority by the action of less than a third of the Radicals. When we remember that these 101 Radicals are represented in the Chair of the Chamber by a leader who was locked up for a year in 1871 for his participation in the revolt of the Commune, and who voted in 1876 for the full pardon of the convicts of the Commune, it will be obvious, I think, that the Republicans 'have committed suicide to save themselves from slaughter.' [Pg 485]

M. Floquet, imprisoned in 1871 for complicity with the Commune, was made Prefect of the Seine in 1882 by the men who have since made M. Carnot President of the Republic. As President of the Chamber, M. Floquet, under the existing régime in France, is now the superior of M. Carnot. Can there be any mistake as to the meaning of this? In 1882, as Prefect of the Seine, M. Floquet maintained the closest relations with the Municipal Council of Paris. M. Ferry's bill making primary education obligatory, and 'laicizing' that education, finally became law on July 26, 1881. The war against God in the schools began at once vigorously, and nowhere more vigorously than in Paris. M. Paul Bert had insisted, in his Report of 1879, upon the importance of protecting teachers who were scientific and philosophical Atheists against the pangs their consciences would suffer were they obliged to read or to hear recited passages from 'what is called Sacred History, that is to say, a mixture of positive history, with legends which have no value except in the eyes of believers.' In this spirit of the peddler who tried to 'scrub out the blood-stains' at Holyrood the law of 1881 was conceived. How it was executed we learn from M. Zévort, a distinguished inspector of the Academy of Paris, and by no means a Catholic. In some places the authorities ordered the words 'Love God, respect your parents,' to be effaced from the school-house walls. In others, children were compelled to give up the Catechisms which they had brought with them to school, intending to go on after school hours to the parish church. In this same year M. Fournier stated in the Senate that persons appointed by the Minister of Public Instruction to distribute prizes in the schools had made speeches to the children in which they spoke of all religion as mere superstition. He cited one such orator as contrasting 'scientific [Pg 486] education, the only true education, which gives man the certainty of his own value and urges him onward to progress and to the Light,' with 'religious education which fatally plunges him into a murky night, and an abyss of deadly superstitions.' Another luminary of the State exclaimed in a burst of eloquence, 'Young citizenesses and young citizens! We have been accused of banishing God from the schools! It is an error! Nothing can be driven out which does not exist. Now God does not exist. What we have suppressed is only a set of emblems!'

These emblems were the religious inscriptions, and the crucifixes, taken out of the school-houses. Of these emblems the Prefect of the Seine, in 1882, carelessly observed in the course of an enquiry before the Senate, that the removal of them was 'only a question of school furniture!' And the Municipal Council of Paris, with which M. Floquet in 1882 so cordially co-operated, formally

adopted resolutions calling for the complete suppression in all the primary schools 'of all theological instruction whatsoever.' 'No one,' said one councillor, M. Cattiaux, with much solemnity, 'can prove the existence of God, and our teachers must not be compelled to affirm the existence of an imaginary being.'

With M. Floquet as President of the Chamber, M. Carnot and his Ministers are at the mercy not of the Radicals only, but of the Radical allies of the Commune. The French Monarchists to-day are fighting out the battle of religion and of civilization for every country in Christendom.

Though the Calvados was the chosen home of M. Guizot, it was not his birthplace. Like M. Thiers, whom he so little resembled in other particulars, M. Guizot was a son of the South. He was born [Pg 487] at Nîmes, in the Gard, a city rather Republican than Royalist by its traditions, even under the old Monarchy. His father was an advocate, and by the charter of Nîmes, which organized in 1476 the 'consular' government of the city, it was provided that the first consul of Nîmes should always be taken from among 'the advocates graduated and versed in the law,' the second consulate only being left open to 'citizens, merchants, and graduated physicians.'

As the fifteenth century is commonly admitted to have been a 'feudal' century, this provision attests the power of the robe as against the sword in a very interesting way, and at an interesting point in French history. The local nobility felt the slight put upon them very strongly, and made great efforts to have the system changed. These efforts were not successful till the end of the sixteenth century. In 1588 the Duc de Montmorency, Governor of Languedoc, issued a decree convoking the Council-General to consider the subject, and this assembly, after a stormy session, decided that 'the noblemen and gentlemen of the province should hold the first consulate alternately with the advocates.' The first nobleman of Languedoc who profited by this decision was Louis de Montcalm, an ancestor of the illustrious defender of Quebec. He became first consul of Nîmes in 1589, the year after the defeat of the great Spanish Armada against England. He was a Huguenot, and Nîmes in the days of the great Religious Wars had become a Protestant stronghold after its capture by the Huguenots on November 15, 1569. The Huguenot de Calvière, Baron de St.-Cosme, who took a leading part in that military adventure, was made Governor of Nîmes and a gentleman of the King's bedchamber by Henry of Navarre. [Pg 488]

As a Protestant and as an advocate, the father of M. Guizot naturally inclined to the Republican theory of Government in 1789. He very soon and as naturally opened his eyes to the abominations of the Republican practice, and in due course came to the guillotine under the Terror. To the day of her death his widow wore the deepest mourning for him, and his son, like the son of the murdered Victor Charles de Broglie, honoured his memory by an inflexible loyalty to the principles of justice and of liberty for which his father had died.

I was not surprised, therefore, to find M. Guillaume Guizot, the Protestant son of the great Protestant statesman, at his pleasant rural home near Uzès as earnest and active in the summer of 1889 in organizing the monarchical party for the Legislative elections, as the staunchest Catholics of the Morbihan or of Champagne. Uzès, which gives a ducal title to the family of Crussol, is a picturesque and interesting town, and its electoral district made a gallant stand for liberty and order in the elections. It gave nearly 9,000 Monarchist against about 11,000 Republican votes, and the returns of the whole Department of the Gard, when compared with those of 1885, show a marked change to the disadvantage of the powers that be. In the first place the total of the votes polled fell off more than 10 per cent. in 1889 from the total in 1885. In 1885, 110,786 were polled. In 1889, 97,828. In the next place the Republican votes in the whole department fell off in 1889 nearly 20 per cent. from the Republican total in 1885, or from 58,328 to 46,323. In the third place the Republican majority over the Monarchists fell off more than 60 per cent. from the majority in 1885, or from 5,910 to 2,062. In the fourth place the Monarchists in the first district of Nîmes had a majority of more than 1,500 votes over the Government [Pg 489] Republicans. And in the fifth place the Republicans, who in 1885 secured the whole delegation of six members from the Gard, in 1889 lost the seat for the second district of Alais, which the Monarchists carried by a majority of 1,305 votes over the combined strength of the Government Republicans and the Boulangist Revisionists. This district is a coal and iron-mining as well as a silk-growing district. It is fall of workmen, and it has been a point of attack for the Socialist and subversive leaders in France for many years past. All the traditions of Alais itself are strongly Protestant. The fortifications of the town were destroyed by Louis XIV. at the end of the seventeenth century, and at no great distance is the Tour du Bellot, the lonely spot which witnessed one of the most desperate conflicts between Cavalier and the royal troops. The slaughter of the Camisards, shut up in their burning tower, is a tale of horror still in the countryside. At Nîmes the memories of the long and merciless strife between the Catholics and the Protestants of Southern France are fresher still and more intense. M. Guillaume Guizot well remembers the bitterness of the passions roused at Nîmes by the local struggles between the 'two Religions' which followed the Restoration. His father was one day reasoning on the subject with a Protestant citizen of Nîmes, who suddenly pointed to a man passing on the other side of the street, and said: 'That man had a hand in the killing of my father here in the streets of Nîmes. How can you ask me to forget that?'

The Republicans of the Third Republic, bent on coercing France into a 'moral unity' of Atheism, are fast making both Catholics and Protestants forget such things in the imminence of a new and common peril to the liberties and the rights of both. The two daughters of M. Guizot, as is well [Pg 490] known, married two brothers, the heirs and representatives of the great Protestant and Republican family of De Witt. One of these brothers, M. Conrad de Witt, just re-elected a deputy for the Calvados, was my host at Val Richer. The other, M. Cornelis de Witt, the namesake of the

statesman for whom his illustrious brother the Grand Pensionary of Holland sacrificed his own life in a vain effort to save him from the brutal fury of an ignorant and frantic multitude at the Hague, has just been taken, in the full force of his energies and his great ability, from the love of his friends and from the cause of liberty in France. As a deputy and a member of the Government he took an active part in the re-establishment of the finances and the public organisation of France after the disasters of 1870-71. As a director of the great mines at Auzin, and as Vice-President of the Paris, Lyons, and Mediterranean Railway Company, he was in close and constant touch with the working classes of France and with the great material interests of a country which he loved as his ancestors loved Holland. This is not the place in which to speak of the personal gifts and graces which will keep the name of M. Cornelis de Witt green in the memory of all who knew him. But of his great qualities as a citizen, and of the judgment absolutely unwarped by passion or by prejudice which gave weight to all his political convictions, it is the place to speak. After a fair and serious experiment, in which he took his part loyally, at founding in France the 'Conservative Republic' of M. Thiers, he thought that outlook for the future completely and hopelessly closed; and as it was neither in the traditions of Netherlandish liberty nor in his own virile and courageous temper to acquiesce in the domination of a political oligarchy ready, like [Pg 491] Carrier and the Jacobins of 1792, to 'make France one vast cemetery rather than not regenerate it after their own minds!' M. Cornelis de Witt looked about him calmly for a way of escape.

This way he found where the sagacious Netherlanders of the seventeenth century found it after the hard-won liberties of Holland had been prostrated by the mad revolt of a misled multitude against the Government of the Grand Pensionary, who had held his own against Cromwell and against Louis XIV., made Holland the first naval power of the world, and scared London with the thunder of the Dutch cannon in the Thames. Nothing but the restoration of the hereditary principle in the person of William of Orange saved Amsterdam and Rotterdam from falling at the end of the seventeenth century, as they fell at the end of the eighteenth, under the dominion of an invader. When the hereditary principle was again abandoned after the death of William of Orange, the domestic peace as well as the national prestige of Holland vanished with it, and though the Dutch people in the middle of the eighteenth century insisted upon seeing it for a time restored, the power of the Dutch Executive towards the end of the century was so much hampered and weakened by the local jealousies of the provinces, that in the Convention which framed the Constitution of the United States, Mr. Butler, who had travelled much in the Low Countries, successfully enforced the necessity of making the American Executive monarchical by a vivid description of the evils inflicted upon Holland by her departures from that principle. We took warning as to the perils of the Union from the example of the Low Countries, and as to the importance of the Executive from the example of Great Britain. There were many Americans [Pg 492] indeed in 1788, men of worth and of weight both in private and in public affairs, who rather than accept Edmund Randolph's plan of confiding the Executive authority to a triumvirate, would have given their adhesion to the seriously mooted project of making the American Executive absolutely hereditary, and inviting the Prince-Bishop of Osnaburg to accept the office.

The convictions of M. Cornelis de Witt are represented now with equal energy and determination in Normandy by his brother, M. Conrad de Witt, and by his son, M. Pierre de Witt, just elected a Councillor-General of the Calvados, and in Languedoc by his brother-in-law, M. Guillaume Guizot, and by his son, M. Cornelis Henri de Witt.

The home of M. Cornelis Henri de Witt, near Tonneins, in the Lot-et-Garonne, stands in the heart of a land of fruits and vines. From the terrace of his château of Peyreguilhot, the eye ranges over a fine expanse of the valley of the Garonne, which at no great distance from Tonneins mingles with the Lot beneath the promontory of Nicole. The landscape is rich in colour. Great fields of tobacco alternate with extensive orchards. It is a land to be seen in the season of blossoms. The world-famed prunes of Bordeaux come mainly from about Agen, and the pleasant little commune of Nicole probably draws a much larger tribute to-day from London, in exchange for its precocious apricots, than it ever paid to London when the Plantagenet eaglets were rending the eagle of Winchester. The old traditions of Guienne seem to be much less vivid than those of Normandy or Brittany. I have heard Bretons speak of the Duchess Anne as the Scotch Jacobites still speak of the Stuarts. But though Cœur de Lion is still a popular hero in the land of Bertrand [Pg 493] de Born, there is nothing there like the Provençal feeling in Provence. At St. Rémy, the beautiful birthplace of Nostradamus, a lively waiter in the excellent hotel of the 'Cheval Blanc,' taking me for a Frenchman of the north, contrived very skilfully to let me know that the Provençals do not hold themselves responsible for the failure of Northern France to repulse the Germans. 'If the Comte de Paris had not got the better long ago of the Comte de Provence,' he informed me, 'France would have been Provençal and not Provence French, and then things would have gone differently altogether.' But all Languedoc is as proud of its language as Wales. A youth who took me at Agen to see the shop and house of the 'barber-bard' was clearly of the opinion that the poetry of Lamartine and Victor Hugo would have been as fine as the poetry of Jasmin had they been so fortunate as to use his mother-tongue. 'The French language was a kind of Gallic patois mixed with German, while the true langue d'Oc, as I must know, was the language of the Romans.' This same philologist took me also to the little valley of 'Verona,' where he showed me not only a small vineyard, the property of Jasmin, but the house, the fountain, and the huge stone chair of Scaliger, 'a great philosopher descended from Julius Cæsar.' Joseph Scaliger, I believe, was really born in this house, which was given to his illustrious father by the Bishop of Agen; and Joseph with his own eyes saw some three hundred Huguenots burnt alive in Agen on the great Place du Gravier, where now the annual fairs of Agen are held under the stately elms.

The lands of the Lot-et-Garonne are full of memories of the English wars, of the Albigensian

crusade, of the long duel between the Church and the Calvinists. Tonneins, once a curious 'double city' of the middle ages, was destroyed in the seventeenth century by Louis XIII. for its [Pg 494] fidelity to the Huguenot cause. Nérac, where Jeanne d'Albret and the two Margots held their gay and gallant courts, and Henry of Navarre established his headquarters during 'the Lovers' War,' suffered as severely for the like cause under Louis XIV. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes sent its most industrious inhabitants into exile, not a few of them crossing the Atlantic to join the Huguenot colonies in New York and in the Carolinas. 'But the Revolution of 1789 did Nérac more harm,' said an intelligent tradesman of the picturesque little city to me, 'than the Revocation. The Revocation drove away many honest people from Nérac, but the Revolution brought here a great many rogues.' The country around Nérac is extremely fertile, and great prizes were to be picked up here during the decade of proscription and confiscation. The Garenne, one of the loveliest public parks in France, in which a beautiful fountain sparkles and murmurs beneath two lofty elms planted by Henry of Navarre and Marguerite de Valois, was actually bought during the First Consulate by the city for a little over five thousand francs, or two hundred pounds sterling. The war of 1791 against 'privileges' soon became in Nérac, as elsewhere in France, a war against property. The immediate effect of this was not, what we are constantly told it was, to increase the wealth of France by 'redistributing' it amongst the active and industrious classes. It was, on the contrary, to diminish the wealth of France by lowering the real value of property. This is clearly shown by the extraordinary pains which Napoleon took to enforce respect for the rights of property as soon as he grasped the supreme power in the State. But one comes everywhere upon striking local proofs of it. At Najac in the Department of the Aveyron, for example, the obliging [Pg 495] hotel-keeper will give you the key of one of the most magnificent ruined castles in Southern France, which, with its grand donjon, and all the massive circle of its walls and ramparts, was seized and sold, during the Terror, for *twelve francs*. The purchaser made a deal of money by converting the castle into a quarry, and when law and order were restored, he gladly parted with his very dubious title for the highly respectable advance on his investment of 1,500 francs. As a piece of successful 'gerrymandering' the Republican treatment of this Department of the Aveyron, by the way, in the elections of 1889, is worth mentioning. In 1885, under the *scrutin de liste*, the Aveyron was entitled to six deputies. It elected a solid Conservative representation. In 1889, under the *scrutin d'arrondissement*, the Government carved out seven seats for the Aveyron, and the electoral districts were so ingeniously framed as to secure two out of these seven seats for the Republicans—though the total of the votes cast in the department showed a clear majority for the Monarchists of 5,582!

We had a banquet of Mayors while I was at Peyreguilhot; not such a Belshazzar's feast as M. Constans gave at Paris to the thirteen thousand, but a simple and interesting gathering of about a dozen intelligent and active elective magistrates. Under a recent law all Mayors, except in Paris, are now chosen by the Councils, but the Government can revoke their commissions. Our guests at Peyreguilhot were all shrewd, quiet, active men of the country. 'We shall be beaten in September,' said one of them to me, 'because the Government employs men enough to beat us. Moreover, our farmers say, "Why vote at all, for the Mayors and the Prefect throw our votes out and cheat us?" Then, too, we must have a man to vote for before we can make them move. They [Pg 496] will not vote for the Monarchy as a principle. But give them a man who touches their imaginations and they will make him a Monarch.' They voted for Louis Napoleon as soon as they saw him take the Assembly resolutely by the throat. They would have voted, overwhelmingly, for Boulanger on September 22 had he suddenly reappeared in Paris, demanding a revision of the verdict of the High Court.

This is true, I think, not of the Lot-et-Garonne alone, but of all France. It has been signally illustrated since the elections of 1889 by what Stendhal would have called the rapid 'crystallization' of public sympathy around the young Duc d'Orléans when he suddenly appeared in Paris. The Government was completely bewildered and demoralized by this 'bolt out of the blue.' Instead of quietly reconducting the prince to the frontier with a reprimand for his inconsiderate and unconventional patriotism, it stupidly locked him up in a prison haunted by legends disgraceful to the Republic, proceeded against him with clumsy vehemence, gave him time to show himself to the French people, in the words of the Duc d'Aumale, as a '*pur sang*,' a straightforward, dashing young French prince demanding the right of performing his military duty to the State, had him condemned, tardily resolved to pardon him, and wound up finally by sending him to Clairvaux to placate the criminal bullies of the Commune!

What has been the result? It cannot be more exactly stated than in the words of the official organ of the Russian Empire at Brussels, *Le Nord*, a journal certainly not predisposed in favour of the House of Orléans by the success of the Orléanist Prince Ferdinand in Bulgaria. 'The appearance of this young exile,' said *Le Nord*, 'on the soil of France, not as a pretender or with political ideas, [Pg 497] but simply as a Frenchman coming to establish his moral rights as a citizen by claiming to be allowed to perform his civic duties, and this with a rare combination of youthful dash, irreproachable modesty, and skilful self-possession was admirably fitted to awaken, and it has awakened, the sympathy of all who are politically disinterested.'

This is strong language coming from the only great power in the world to which France can look as a possible ally in the present condition of Europe. It was emphasised by the ablest and most active of the French Imperialists, M. Paul de Cassagnac. 'To keep this young prince in prison is impossible. To do so would make him King of France within three years. To let him go, after keeping him for a week, is no longer a generous and magnanimous act. It is simply obeying the vigorous kick administered by the masters of the Government, the French people, who have been saying of the Orléans princes, "they won't move," and who now see a young Duc d'Orléans move

forward with a gay virility which has a flavour of Henri IV.! If the young Duc d'Orléans is as intelligent as I am told, and believe that he is, he wouldn't change places with Carnot to-day!'

Every 'ministerial crisis' which weakens the Government will strengthen the prestige acquired for the Monarchy by the young duke. He has won the women by his pluck, the fathers of families by his deference to the Comte de Paris, the Catholics by asking for a chaplain at Clairvaux, and the *chauvins* by his military ardour.

A friend of mine showed me in Paris ten days after the arrest of the prince a letter from Normandy, in which the writer said, 'Millions of francs would not have done what has been done by this simple act to revive and invigorate the monarchical party throughout this whole region.... [Pg 498] *Le petit conscrit* will be the prince of the people from this day forth. The gray-beards among the peasants shake their heads and say, "All the same, it is not such a nice thing, this conscription, and since he was out of it why run into it?" But the women reply, "Since our lads have to go in, it is plucky of the Comte de Paris to put his son in too!"'

To make a handsome young prince a martyr of patriotism in the eyes of the women and the conscripts of France, is a highly original way of blocking the progress of his father to the throne!

The Mayors at Peyreguilhot were all of one mind as to the fiscal conduct of the Republican Government. It was 'making life impossible for the agriculturists of all categories. The tax on the revenue of the land in the Lot-et-Garonne was levied still on a *cadastre* drawn up in 1837; so that lands now lying idle were taxed as they were taxed fifty years ago when covered with vines. Thanks to this system, forty-two departments in France pay more than their due proportion of this tax, and the others less than their due proportion. The Aude, which is a very rich department, producing, if you take good and bad years together, more than 20,000,000 francs of wine alone every year, pays a million of francs less, and the Lot-et-Garonne nearly a quarter of a million more, than its due share of this tax.'

M. de Witt confirmed these statements. The inequalities in national taxation, he tells me, are one of the crying grievances of France under the existing régime. Corsica, for example, pays only ninety-five centimes *per cent.* of revenue tax, while the Corrèze pays seven francs ninety cents, and there is one commune in the Gironde which actually pays ninety francs per cent. Besides the [Pg 499] people pay the door and window tax, the furniture tax, the *prestations en nature*, the permanent personal tax, and the octrois and the *centimes additionnels* levied for educational and other purposes.

The taxes levied as *centimes additionnels* for the Departments of France increased from 1878 to 1886 by 24,692,266 francs, and the taxes levied as *centimes additionnels* for the Communes (exclusive of Paris) by 34,246,647 francs, while from 1878 to 1885 the total of the debts of the Communes increased at the rate of 55,000,000 francs a year! The departmental loans during the same period increased no less than 95 per cent., or from 128,417,499 francs in 1876 to 249,188,700 francs in 1886.

Since the new Chamber met the air has been full of rumours of new loans, and of modifications of taxation. These modifications may ease the pressure on one point, but only by increasing it upon another point. No financier in France pretends to put the annual burden borne by the French people at much less than double the annual taxation of Great Britain. M. Méline, a Republican of the Republicans, admitted before the Chamber of Deputies on February 10, 1885, that the people of France were more heavily taxed at that time 'than those of any other country in the world.' He put the taxation of England at 57 francs a head, of the United States at 59 francs a head, of Germany at 44 francs a head, and of France at 104 francs a head.

And to-day the French people are more heavily taxed than they were in 1885. The mere general expenses of collecting the revenue of France are set down in the Budget for 1890 at 107,343,926 francs, or, in round numbers, 4,293,745*l.*; divided as follows. Direct and assimilated land taxes, 19,838,175 francs; registrations, domains, and stamps, 19,143,950; customs, 31,077,301; indirect [Pg 500] taxes, 37,284,500 francs.

M. de Witt represents the Canton of Castêl Moron in the Council-General of the Lot-et-Garonne, and he is Mayor of the Commune of Laparade. At the Legislative elections of last year, he contested the representation of the Nérac district with M. Fallières, the Minister of Public Instruction, and was defeated, receiving 6,484 votes against 8,967 given to the Minister. M. Fallières 'on the stump,' speaking with the authority of a Minister of 'Public Instruction,' actually assured the electors that to vote for M. de Witt was to vote to 're-establish seignorial rights, and to bring on a German or *Cossack* invasion!' One result of this was, that M. de Witt was burned in effigy near Tonneins after the election!

After the election of M. de Witt as Mayor of Laparade, he was accused before the tribunal at Marmande of 'corrupting' the electors of the commune. The accusation rested on 'conversations,' but the tribunal sentenced M. de Witt to a fine of a thousand francs, and several of his electors to smaller fines. They all appealed to the Court at Agen, where the case was pleaded by M. Piou, deputy for the Haute Garonne and one of the ablest barristers in Southern France.

It throws an interesting light on the present condition of political life in France, that M. de Witt, though the sentence of the tribunal at Marmande was not sustained, had eventually to pay a fine of 500 francs on the ground that he had been guilty of 'excessive charity' to an old man of 80, named Sauvean, who had long been a pensioner of his family! The wonder is that his commission as Mayor by the choice of his fellow-citizens was not revoked by the Ministry at Paris. Under the

Third Republic this is no uncommon thing. [Pg 501]

Early in the year 1889, M. Duboscq, Mayor of the commune of Labrit in the Landes, one of the many out-of-the way and charming places which in that part of France are associated with the memory of Henri IV., gave a dinner to M. Lambert de Ste.-Croix, the distinguished Monarchist leader, who died not long ago. For this offence—M. Lambert de Ste.-Croix having just then exasperated the Republicans beyond measure by a vigorous speech made at Dax on the Adour—M. Duboscq was actually suspended from his office by order of M. Floquet, now the President of the Chamber of Deputies! In reply to a question on the subject put by a deputy, M. Lamarzelle, M. Floquet calmly replied that lie had suspended M. Duboscq because, 'being a functionary of the Government, he had departed from the reserve proper in his position by inviting an opponent of the Government to dinner!' The Mayors of these communes, be it observed, are elected by the people, not appointed by the Government! So that under the practice of the French Republic, as represented by the present President of the Chamber, a Radical Mayor of Newcastle who should ask Mr. Gladstone to dinner ought to be 'suspended' at once by Lord Salisbury! This is municipal liberty in France under the Third Republic.

As the Legislative elections are conducted under the supervision of the Mayors, the object of such performances as these is obvious enough. At the same time with M. Duboscq, M. Davezac de Moran, Mayor of Siest near Dax, was also suspended by M. Floquet for the offence of allowing the meeting of the Monarchical Committees, at which M. Lambert de Ste.-Croix made his speech, to be held in his own house at Dax! 'If you think,' said M. Lamarzelle to the Minister, 'to frighten us with all this, you are mistaken. At your age Robespierre had got himself guillotined!' During [Pg 502] the Legislative elections of 1889 'the school-teachers, the postmen, the gendarmes, the highway supervisors and the labourers, were ordered to vote against the Monarchist candidates.' M. Delafosse, elected in the Calvados, publicly stated this in the *Matin*, and without contradiction. During the same elections the curés were officially forbidden to advise their people to vote for 'friends of religion,' and those who did so advise were fined after the election to the number of 300!

M. Cornelis Henri de Witt is one of the most active and indefatigable promoters of what are known as the 'Conférences du Sud-Ouest.' These are meetings of the Monarchists organised on a systematic plan, which take place at brief intervals throughout the great Departments of South-Western France under the superintendence of a society of which M. Princeteau, a very influential and intelligent citizen of Bordeaux, is the President. M. Princeteau, like M. de Witt, is not only an indefatigable organiser, but an extremely popular and effective orator; and it is a curious proof of the efficiency of the Conservative machinery in South-Western France, that at the Legislative elections of 1889 the Radicals and the Socialists completely disappeared as parties from the contest in the Gironde. Thanks to the *scrutin d'arrondissement*, several seats from that department which ought to have gone to the Monarchists were kept by the Government; but upon the total poll the Monarchists and Revisionists show 84,376 votes against 83,108 given to the Government Republicans. Under the *scrutin de liste* the eleven seats for the Gironde would pretty plainly have gone in 1889 to the Monarchists. In 1885 M. Cazauvielle, the leading Republican deputy, received 89,153 votes, or 6,000 more than the Republican total in 1889. As in 1889 the total poll amounted to 167,484 votes, and in 1885 to 162,286, it is clear that the [Pg 503] Republican strength fell off, and that the Monarchist strength increased in the Gironde between 1885 and 1889.

M. Princeteau told me that on July 14 he gave a fête in his grounds near Bordeaux to more than five thousand working people. While the fête was going on, a procession of Republicans with bands of music, bent on celebrating the fête of the Bastille, passed the grounds more than once with the obvious intent of drawing away some of his guests. This they completely failed to do. If the 'fête of the Bastille' was celebrated at Bordeaux as it was at Nîmes, this says as much for the good taste as for the sound politics of the Bordeaux workmen. At Nîmes on July 22, more than a week after the 'anniversary,' I found the city streets made perilous during the day and life made intolerable at night by such a clamour of chorus singers and such a clatter of fireworks as I had not supposed it possible could be got up beyond the domain of our own 'glorious and immortal' American Fourth of July. Several accidents were caused by 'serpents' and other fireworks, and when I asked a staid and sober citizen of this old Protestant capital why the law permitted such performances, he quietly answered: 'The law does not permit them. The authorities have formally forbidden them, but the authorities are elective, and they are more anxious to keep their places than to keep the peace.' To my question whether the extreme Radicals were very strong in Nîmes, he replied that nearly a fourth of the Republicans of Nîmes are avowed Socialists, mostly of the Anti-Boulangist Anti-Possibilist type. One of their candidates for a legislative seat announced his intention, if elected, to give some person, to be designated by his constituents, an order for one half of his legislative salary, to be drawn regularly, and applied 'by his committee to [Pg 504] political purposes.' His political programme included the formal abolition of the Presidency, annual legislative elections, the nationalisation of the soil of France, the abolition of the regular army, the socialisation of all the means of production, gratuitous and obligatory education on the same lines for all the children of France, and through all the degrees of education, and the suppression of the right to bequeath or to inherit property of any kind,' On the latter point a rather intelligent Socialist with whom I made acquaintance while I was visiting the fine Roman Amphitheatre at Nîmes, and whom I took to be a skilled mechanic, was very explicit. He thought property a 'privilege' and therefore inconsistent with equality. He spoke in an oracular fashion, and he probably belonged to the class known among French workmen, not as '*sublimes*,' but as *'les fils de Dieu*.' 'Of what use,' he said, 'is it to abolish hereditary titles if you allow a man of one

generation to give his son in the next generation the more serious advantage over his fellow of a property which he has done nothing and could do nothing to create?' I asked him if he agreed with St.-Just that 'opulence is an infamy.' He replied very seriously: 'Yes, I think if St.-Just said that he said the truth. Certainly I do not say that every rich man is infamous. That is another matter. But it is infamous that in a land of equality one man should have the means to give himself pleasures and execute achievements beyond his fellow-citizens.' He told me that he lived in Alais, where he said the Socialists of his type were much stronger than in Nîmes. The Legislative elections show that lie was right as to this. The Socialists carried the first division of Alais, throwing 7,205 votes against 2,425 Radicals and 4,218 Government Republicans. For the Government Republicans my friend of the Amphitheatre could find no words of contempt strong [Pg 505] enough. 'They are all whitewashed Wilsons,' he said, and then he dilated with much eloquence on the case of a certain M. Hude,'a great friend of Rochefort' he scornfully exclaimed, 'who is a great friend of Boulanger. *Ah! voilà du propre!* he is a wine-merchant, of course he is fond of the *pots-de-vin*' (the French phrase for bribes taken to promote jobs), 'and thus, when the chemical officers go to verify the quality of his wines, he calls in the Prefect of Police to prevent it, because he is a deputy!' He was particularly bitter, too, on the conversion by the Republicans of more than a thousand millions of francs lying in the savings banks into 3 per cent. funds. 'What right had they to do this?' he said indignantly. 'It was a trick to enslave the depositors!'

In the first division of Nîmes the Socialists showed no great strength at the elections of 1889. The Monarchists far outnumbered them, but they threw votes enough to make the election very close, the Republicans numbering 6,598, the Socialists 1,519, and the Monarchists 8,174, so that the latter won the day by no more than fifty-seven votes. That they won it is due to the cordial co-operation of the Protestants with the Catholics on the question of Religious Liberty in support of a Catholic, M. de Bernis, who had twice been condemned to imprisonment for 'assisting' Catholic teachers thrown on the world by the 'laicization' of the schools of Nîmes! This co-operation began in 1885. The Protestants of the Gard have quite as much at stake in this conflict as the Catholics. The Protestant Seminaries are cut down like the Catholic. The appropriations formerly made in aid of new Protestant parishes are made no longer. No sums are allowed for Protestant missionary work in outlying districts. The Protestant Consistories have been deprived of their right to nominate candidates for examination as teachers. The Consistories and the Councils of [Pg 506] the Elders are no longer allowed to receive and administer legacies for the relief of the poor, for hospitals or asylums. Formerly, where no manse existed in a commune, the Protestant minister was allowed a certain sum for lodgings. This has been stopped. In short, the Protestants, like the Catholics of France, find themselves treated by an oligarchy of irreligious fanatics as pariahs in their own country. The Protestants, like the Catholics, are driven into irreconcilable hostility against the Republic by a Parliamentary majority which treats all religious questions in the spirit of M. de Mortillet, Mayor of St.-Germain, and a Radical deputy for the Seine-et-Oise. In 1886 some speaker in the Chamber appealed in the course of his speech to the law of God. 'The law of God!' broke in M. de Mortillet; 'pray, what is God?'

The more completely this spirit of the Mayor of St.-Germian gets the control of the Republican party, the more obvious it becomes that the Republic must gravitate into Socialism.

As it steadily alienates from itself the vast multitudes of Frenchmen who are either religious men, or recognise the vital importance of religious institutions to the existing social order, it is compelled to court the alliance of the avowed enemies of the existing social order. This is strikingly illustrated in the political condition of the great Southern Department of the Bouches-du-Rhône. This department offers a most instructive contrast with the Calvados.

In the Bouches-du-Rhône, the Government Republicans were as badly beaten in 1889 as in the Calvados. But in the Calvados they were beaten by the Monarchists, and in the Bouches-du-Rhône by the Radicals and the Socialists. [Pg 507]

In the Bouches-du-Rhône the Radicals and Socialists threw 52,989 votes, the Government Republicans no more than 7,218. Marseilles, the greatest commercial city in France, a city of 'Republicans before the Republic,' with traditions which give dignity to its democratic tendencies, repudiated the Republic of M. Jules Ferry and M. Carnot as emphatically as the Monarchical Morbihan. Even the Boulangists were nearly twice as strong, and the Monarchists were more than twice as strong in Marseilles as the Opportunist Republicans. The Boulangists threw there 13,123, and the Monarchists 14,445 votes. The strength of the Boulangists gives zest to a terse verdict upon the '*brav' général*' which I heard delivered by a *cocher* in Marseilles on the eve of the famous January elections in Paris. Passing through one of the squares of the Mediterranean city, I observed two *cochers* engaged in an animated debate. One of them from his box exclaimed 'I tell you Boulanger is the only real man in France!' To which the other replied as vehemently, 'And I tell you that he is nothing but the dealer in a low political hell! *c'est un croupier de mauvais aloi!*' He may have picked up the phrase from the *Petit Marseillais*, which is one of the few really well-edited newspapers in France. But it was a notable phrase, and it expresses, I think, the opinion of the sincere Radicals and Socialists, not only as to General Boulanger, but as to the politicians, now his bitterest enemies, who were his original friends and 'promoters.' A very smart and outspoken Provençal Socialist who drove me on a delightful morning from the once royal and always delectable city of Arles to the majestic ruins of Montmajeur, and the unique and wonderful deserted fortress-city of Les Baux, set no bounds to his speech about the official Republicans. We met near Montmajeur a neat private carriage. 'That is the carriage of M [Pg 508] ——,' he said, as we passed on. 'He is an aristocrat—but I think he will be Mayor of Axles. We have had an aristocratic major who gave to the people, and a Republican mayor who took from

the people. I prefer the aristocrat, till we can make an end of all majors and all this rubbish of governments.' At the Legislative elections the Monarchists of Aries threw 8,540 votes, the Radicals 9,858, and the Government Republicans none at all. Of course the Radical members support the Government—but on their own terms. As these terms grow more exacting, the strength of the Monarchist reaction increases, and as the Monarchists grow stronger the Radical exactions become more imperious. The most active and earnest Monarchist whom I met in Marseilles, M. Fournier, assures me that the Marseilles Radicals are more intolerant of the Opportunists than they are even of the Monarchists.

As one of the largest employers of labour in Marseilles, M. Fournier is in constant touch with the working population of the Bouches-du-Rhône. He is an earnest and devoted Catholic, and he has encouraged the foundation of a Christian Corporation among the people employed in his works. These works were founded half a century ago, in 1840, for the purpose of turning to practical results the interesting discoveries then made by M. Chevreuil, the famous centenarian dean of French science, as to the nature and properties of fatty substances. At the outset these works were taken up with the manufacture of stearine candles; but as in the case of the glass works of St.-Gobain, the chemical processes employed in creating one particular product were soon found to yield other very different and not less valuable results. I shall not attempt to enter into the mysteries of saponification and distillation, which cease to be mysteries when they are followed [Pg 509] up from point to point through the extensive and orderly organisation of the Fournier Works; suffice it that at these works 600 men and 400 women are busily employed in turning every year 13,000 tons of African palm-oil, and of Australian, Russian, French, and American tallow into stearine candles, oleine, and glycerine. The output is enormous, amounting annually to 20,000,000 packets of candles of an average weight of 400 grammes a packet, to 3,300,000 kilogrammes of oleine, and to 1,200,000 kilogrammes of glycerine. How much of this latter product goes to the pharmacies and how much to the powder magazines of the world it is not easy to say. But it is easy to see that if the Bouches-du-Rhône get the better of the Calvados in the politics of France, there will be a serious falling off in the demand for altar lights and chamber candles, and a still more serious increase in the demand for nitro-glycerine!

The output of the Fournier Works represents about one-fourth of the whole stearine and glycerine production of France, and as paraffin has of late years largely taken the place of stearine in the famous Price Works in England, the Fournier Works are now doubtless the most important of their kind in the world. Thirty years ago the candles produced here were almost all exported; now the home consumption just about equals the exportation, a fact as to which the truly paternal Government of France takes pains to leave no doubt in the minds of the producers by taxing candles heavily as an 'article of luxury.' They are subjected to a régie like cigars, and to the octroi, and these imposts, M. Fournier tells me, now amount to about fifty per cent, of their value. A knowledge of this circumstance may, perhaps, divert the wrath of travellers in France [Pg 510] from the hotel-keeper, who claps a couple of francs for bougies into your bill if you pass half a summer's day in his house, to the Government which concerns itself much more actively with squeezing percentages out of the industries than with balancing the national budgets of France. Must not all taxes be paid by the ultimate consumer? What with these taxes and with the higher wage of labour in France, the stearine works of Marseilles find themselves taken at advantage by the energetic manufacturers of Holland. In the Fournier Works the average workman earns a daily wage of from 3 frs. 25 c. to 3 frs. 50 c.; the average workwomen, who do chiefly the clean and even pretty work of moulding the candles, making them up into packets, in large, very well ventilated and well ordered rooms, earn an average daily wage of 2 frs. 50 c. Both men and women work about ten hours a day. The 'eight-hours' doctrine of the political Socialists finds no more favour here with the real working people apparently than elsewhere in France. In Holland and Belgium and at Roubaix the average wage is about one franc less for both sexes.

The Christian Corporation of the Fournier Works is organised upon the principles, but not exactly upon the lines, of the Harmel system. It is formed by a union of five religious associations among the workpeople, made up of the men, the married women, the young men, the young girls, and the children. Character and conduct are the conditions of membership, and under the direction of a General Council in which the employers take an active part, the Corporation has founded and administers for the common benefit a Consumers' Society which maintains an economical kitchen with refectories, a recreation hall with a bar, (not limited to soda water, lemonade, and tea), and a circulating library. The statutes of this Society leave the members a wide range of liberty, and [Pg 511] the managers are chosen by the members. Of the profits five per cent first go to the reserve fund; dividends may then be declared of not more than ten per cent, on the capital stock of 10,000 francs, and the surplus, if any, forms a supplementary reserve. The economical kitchen is so well managed that it gives a customer (who must be employed in the works, but need not be a member of the Association) for 55 centimes, or a little more than fivepence, a bowl of soup, a large helping of meat and vegetables, half a pound of bread, and a third of a bottle of wine. A café-cognac (and the cognac good) may be had for 25 centimes more.

In August of last year, with the help of the owners of the works, a Musical Society was established, and the workpeople are furnished gratuitously with medical advice and medicines. To these, in the case of invalid workmen who have been for two years employed in the works, is added a weekly allowance of six francs during illness. The owners have also founded a savings bank which pays six per cent. on sums below 3,000 francs, and four per cent. on sums above that amount. These are open to all the workpeople employed in the works, whether members or not of the Christian Corporation.

In this fashion M. Fournier, and other devout and practical Catholics of the Bouches-du-Rhône are fighting the Republic by fighting the Socialistic Radicalism of which their department is the true headquarters, and to which the Republic has substantially surrendered. It is visibly an uphill fight in the Bouches-du-Rhône, and in South-Eastern France generally. But there is life in the convictions which nerve men to fight an uphill fight, and there is something in the fire and spirit of these militant Catholics of France which reminds one of Prudentius, the Pindar of Christian [Pg 512] Spain, celebrating fifteen centuries ago the believers who upheld so manfully the rights of conscience against prætors and prefects bent on converting them to the beauty of 'moral unity'—*quod princeps colit ut colamus omnes*!

When two men ride on a horse the man who holds the bridle is the master, and the Radicals hold the bridle of the French Government. The Radical Department of the Bouches-du-Rhône represents the Republic. The Monarchist Department of the Calvados represents France. If the Republic wins, the history of France before 1789 will be wiped out as with a sponge, and with it all the great qualities of the French people must disappear. Without an Executive, without a Past, and without a Religion, France would become the ideal nation of the Nihilists.

If France wins, if she recovers the Executive unity and stability essential to her life as a nation, recovers the historic sense of her national growth into greatness, recovers for every man, woman, and child in France the simple human right to believe and to hope, then the Republic must inevitably vanish, for with all these things the Republic has made itself incompatible.

If these were only my own conclusions, drawn from all that I saw and heard and learned in France during the year 1889, I might hesitate to adopt them as adequate and final.

But how can I hesitate, when I find these conclusions of mine not obscurely foreshadowed as impending in 1872 by Ernest Renan, and re-affirmed as imminent in 1882 by Jules Simon?

'The edifice of our chimæras,' cried Ernest Renan in 1872,[9] 'has melted away like fairy castles in a dream.

Presumption, puerile vanity, insubordination, feather-headedness, inability to grasp many [Pg 513] different ideas at a glance, want of scientific sense, simple and stupid ignorance, here is the summary of our history for a year!... The Opposition, which pretended to have revolutionary remedies for all possible ills, has found itself at the end of a few days as unpopular as the fallen dynasty. The Republican Party, puffed up with the fatal errors which for half a century have been current as to the history of the Revolution, and which imagined itself able to play over again a game won eighty years ago only through circumstances utterly unlike those of to-day, has learned that it was a lunatic taking visions for realities. The legend of the Empire has been slain by Napoleon III. The legend of 1792 has been done to death by M. Gambetta. The legend of the Terror (for even the Terror had its legend among us!) has been hideously parodied by the Commune.'

So cried M. Renan in 1872.

'Our worst disasters,' said M. Jules Simon in 1882,[10] 'have so far broken out only where great numbers of men are crowded together. Men begin with scepticism, from scepticism they go on rapidly to Nihilism, and from Nihilism to Social War. The labourer in the fields still has his faith; he still has his hope of another life; he has not yet unlearned the name of God. When he becomes a Nihilist we shall have the Commune in our cities, and beyond them the Jacqueries! It is impossible that the authorities should not see this. But the authorities obey the deputy, the deputy obeys the elector, and the elector obeys the agitator.'

'There will soon be only two parties left in France; the party of the dynamiters, and the party of the do-nothings. Whatever moderate Republicans are left must go over either to violence or to [Pg 514] indifference. Is it France alone which is thus threatened? It is the world. The Communists and the Fenians were not produced in France. But France attracts them.

'The liberty you pretend to be establishing is oppression. The neutral education you propose is the suppression of the human heart, of the human conscience.

'This "clericalism" which you declare to be the enemy, and which, when you are pushed to the wall, turns out to be Christianity—this "clericalism" which you attack and mean to exterminate, tell me, is this the power which lays your Ministers prostrate before your Deputies, and your Deputies prostrate before their electors? Is it "clericalism" which is stirring up Labour against Capital? Is it "clericalism" which preaches and supports "strikes"? Is it "clericalism" which manufactures dynamite and blows up houses? Is it "clericalism" which is transforming your literature into ribaldry and your theatres into brothels? Is it "clericalism" which shuts up your schools? Is it "clericalism" which transforms all the actions and relations of life into matters of contract and of calculation? Do you imagine that Christianity, if it be your enemy, is an enemy as terrible as Nihilism? And what other end but Nihilism can there be of your "neutral" obligatory schools and your atheistic laws? Already you go in fear of the very phrase which recognises the duties of man to God! You think it dangerous, you think it equivocal! You do not know that when you recoil before the name of God you abandon the traditions of France!

'Nay, you will not even hear now of man's duties to his country! This is another "dangerous," another "equivocal" phrase! You talk now in your programmes about the "civic duties" of man, for [Pg 515] when these are taught there will be no danger of confounding the Monarchical France before 1789, which we must learn to hate, with the Republican France which we must love and admire!'

Thus spoke Jules Simon in 1882.

The 'civic duties' of man brought France in 1792 to the 'Law of Suspects,' to the headlong and brutal demolition of the whole social edifice, to confiscation, and to the guillotine.

To what will the 'civic duties' of man bring France, and, with France, the civilization of Christendom, in 1892?

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FRANCE.

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FOOTNOTES

[1] This is the popular nickname of M. de Freycinet.

[2] This is a curious sidelight on English political history. 'Lord Bromley' was obviously Sir William Bromley, M.P., the bitter enemy of Marlborough, who earned the undying hatred of the Duchess by comparing her to Alice Perrers, the mistress of Edward III. In 1705 Harley prevented the election of Bromley as Speaker by re-publishing an account of the 'Grand Toure' written by him, and foisting into it notes intended to show that Bromley was a 'Papist.' Bromley was again a candidate for the same office in 1710, and Marlborough evidently hoped to get from St.-Omer documentary proof of the 'papistry' of his foe. The second Duchess of Hamilton came, I think, of a Catholic family, and may have thought she had a clue to these documents. The intrigue, however, failed, and Bromley was elected Speaker without opposition in November, 1710.

[3] M. Turquet ran in September in the first arrondissement of the Seine against M. Yves Guyot, and there was no election. At the election in October the Government proclaimed M. Yves Guyot elected by a small majority.

[4] At this time (October, 1889) there is a difficulty in New York about a good candidate for the seat vacated by the death of the late Mr. S. S. Cox, long a prominent democratic member of Congress, because the candidate must consent to an annual 'assessment' on his salary for political purposes. The French Government, I am told, collects these 'contributions' easily, the deputies 'recouping' themselves by patronage.

[5] 'Privileges' were, in fact, abolished only by Napoleon in 1804.

[6] The total revenue derived from the woods and forests of the State in France is set down in the Budget for 1890 at 25,614,300 francs, but the returns are 'lumped' and not given in detail. I am told that the forests around St.-Gobain yield about 400,000 francs of this revenue.

[7] That 'Pierre Piat' was a man of character as well as of substance appears from the fact that he was charged with seeing that his wife, the cousin of a rich and charitable lady of Chauny, Marie Martine de Feure, who died in 1400, should each year receive, under the will of this good dame, 'a large piece of linen cloth whereof to make shrouds for the poor who might die in the hospital of the Hôtel-Dieu at Chauny.' Obviously there was much better stuff for the making of a true republic among these good burghers of Chauny in the fifteenth century than was to be found among the shouting mobs of the Palais-Royal in the eighteenth.

[8] The venom of this old history recurs in the Revolution, poisoning the minds of three Lameths, concerning whom Mr. Carlyle indulges in much quite unnecessary and grotesque emotion.

[9] *La Réforme intellectuelle et morale.* Ernest Renan. Paris, 1872.

[10] *Dieu, Patrie, Liberté.* Par Jules Simon. Paris, 1882.

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