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THE FUTURE OF FRANCE.

ONE of the members of the Government of the National Defence, Eugène Pelletan, was one day developing this thesis to me, with all the spirited brilliance and imaginative eloquence which distinguish him: that just as in gambling "*qui perd gagne*," so in modern wars the vanquished draws more advantages from his defeat than the conqueror from his victories. "In fact," he said, "whence dates the present greatness of Prussia? From Jena, when she lay prostrate in the dust at the feet of Napoleon. Cut to pieces, exhausted by requisitions and contributions of war, ruined, almost effaced from the map of Europe, it was in the depth of her fall that she laid the foundations of the institutions which make her so powerful to-day. After 1815 France loses her new-made conquests, and even a slice of the conquests of Louis XIV.; she pays a milliard of francs to the Allies, a milliard to the *émigrés*. And this was the moment which saw the beginning of that period of literary renovation, of scientific activity, of parliamentary life, of industrial development, which gave France the preponderating part in the affairs of Europe. In 1848 Piedmont is crushed by Austria. It forthwith concentrates itself, reforms itself, establishes liberty, and, thanks to the prestige of its liberty, annexes Italy. Russia is beaten in the Crimea; *elle se recueille*, according to the well-known phrase of her First Minister; she recognises the causes of her weakness, and, to remedy it, she emancipates her serfs, covers herself with an immense net-work of iron roads, and appears to-day stronger than she ever was. Austria triumphed over Hungary and Italy in 1849, and never was she so feeble as after her success. She was beaten in 1859 and 1866, and her reverses deliver her from theocracy and despotism, and win for her the enjoyment of every liberty, and the sympathies of all Europe."



There is much truth in this position of M. Pelletan's. It leads us back to the principle which is admitted by Christianity and all systems of education, that chastisement is wholesome, and punishment the condition of improvement. Be that as it may, the examples of contemporary history are well calculated to make France of good cheer. I do not know who uttered that harsh phrase, *Finis Gallie*. It only depends upon France herself most strikingly to give the sinister prophecy the lie. The year 1870 may become for her the date of a complete renovation, and the beginning of a new era of sober glory and real progress. Jules Favre has said that perhaps she had need of trial to cleanse her from her pollutions. A bath of blood is a horrible metaphor. In reality it may be a source of restored youth, but only on condition that she endeavours to draw from events the lessons they contain, and is rational enough to turn them to her own good. Let us see, then, what these lessons are, by which France is bound to profit on pain of death.

Whence comes it that Germany has so rapidly and completely overcome France, which is equally populous, more rich, and more warlike? Every one answers, it is because Germany had compulsory instruction for all, military service for all, the *Schulpflichtigkeit* and the *Dienspflichtigkeit*. It was said before at Sadowa in 1866, it is not the needle-gun which has conquered, but the schoolmaster. This is still more true in 1870, as the chassepot was worth incomparably more than the *zundnadelgewehr*. We cannot declare it too loudly: it is ignorance that has lost France. Ignorance in diplomacy, which, knowing neither the history nor the language nor the tendencies of Germany, deceived the Emperor as to the attitude likely to be assumed by the different states. Ignorance in the generals, who had never studied either the organisation of the Prussians, or their tactics, or their progress, or the lessons of the campaign of 1866, or the quality of their leaders. Ignorance in the officers, who, accustomed to fight against Arabs, have been constantly surprised, confounded, bewildered in their own country. Ignorance in the soldiers, who, considering the German as a brute to be driven with the butt-ends of their muskets, lost all their self-possession when confronted by men as brave as themselves, more familiar with the ground than their own captains, and with skill enough to make a far more intelligent and deadly use of an inferior weapon. Ignorance without bound or limit in a press, which cried "*à Berlin*," as if it were a mere question of a military promenade.

The most formidable corps in the French armies was, it used to be said, the Turcos and the Zephyrs. They met men in spectacles, coming from universities, speaking ancient and modern languages, and writing on occasion letters in Hebrew or Sanskrit. The men in spectacles have beaten the wild beasts from Africa. In other words,



intelligence has beaten savagery. Are we to be surprised at this, when we know that war like industry is becoming more and more an affair of science?

Who does not know the immense sacrifices that Germany has made for the advancement and diffusion of knowledge; spending, for instance, twenty thousand pounds sterling at Bonn in a chemical laboratory, forty thousand at Heidelberg in a physical laboratory? Little Wurtemberg devoted more money to superior instruction than big France. A thing unheard of, France made the very fees of the university students a source of revenue. She gave without counting it, more than a couple of millions of pounds sterling (between fifty and sixty million francs) for the new Opera, and she refused forty thousand pounds for school buildings. Last year on the deck of the steamer which was conveying us to the inauguration of the Suez Canal, M. Duruy, the one man of merit who ever served under the imperial government, told me the tale of his griefs in the ministry of public instruction. He wanted to introduce compulsory education; the Emperor supported him; he had all the other ministers against him. He had organized fifteen thousand night schools for adults; it was with difficulty that he succeeded in carrying off forty thousand pounds against the fatuous resistance of the Council of State. There was the whole system of public instruction to re-organize, and he could get nothing. They preferred to employ the gold of the country in maintaining the ladies of the ballet, in building barracks and palaces, in gilding monuments, the dome of the Invalides, the roof of the Sainte Chapelle. It was in vain that men like Jules Simon, Pelletan, Duruy, Jules Favre, cried out year after year, "There must be millions for education, or France is lost." The Government was deaf. It denied nothing to pleasure, to luxury, to ostentation. It denied everything to education.

The calamities which ignorance is causing to France during the war, are not to be compared to those with which she is menaced in peace. The one, cruel as they may be, are transitory; the others are abiding. By universal suffrage France has placed the decision of her destinies in the hands of masses who are completely incapable of discerning their true interest, and still less what is demanded for the safety and prosperity of the country. Carried away by the Napoleonic legend—the worst malady that can taint a nation—universal suffrage has thrice with genuine enthusiasm placed absolute power in the hands of the hero of Boulogne, and, obeying the préfets, has invariably elected men who were profoundly mediocre, but wholly devoted to the personal power. Everywhere and always despotism has been the natural fruit of ignorance. Now that the blind multitudes will no longer be able to vote for the Man of Sédan, we have to fear that they will choose the most extreme



representatives of the opposite opinions, Socialists, Legitimists, Ultramontanes, phrenetic Conservatives, who by the desperate violence of their struggles will make men long for order, even at the price of liberty.

Let the example of France serve at least for a lesson to other nations. Nothing is more fatal to the emancipation of the lower classes themselves, than to give them the vote before they have sufficient enlightenment to use it with discrimination. Would you establish despotism, either directly by the prestige of a great name, or indirectly by passing through a stage of anarchy, then give the suffrage to the ignorant masses.

With compulsory instruction, there must be universal military service. I should like, for my own part, not the Prussian system, which constitutes too heavy a burden, but the Swiss system combined with that of Prussia.<sup>1</sup>

Universal service is suitable for democratic nations, witness all the republics of antiquity. It forms an army that is truly patriotic, it braces character, combats that softness which is gaining on us, prepares an immense force without large expense, and inculcates discipline and obedience, qualities worthy of little esteem under a despotic government, but indispensable under a free government. The army must become the adult school for every citizen. It was thus that Germany recovered her valour and strength. We ought to look in the pages of Madame de Stael for what the Germans were at the beginning of the century; soft, gross, sluggish, without impulse, without patriotism, an inert mass that Napoleon kneaded at his will in his hand of iron. It was Scharnhorst's reform which made those men of the Landwehr, who before Metz let themselves be slaughtered on the spot rather than give ground. Exercise, gymnastics, marches, manœuvring, swimming taught to all, the regular cultivation of physical strength, added to the cultivation of intellectual strength—these are the things that transform nations.

England, too, ought by the side of its permanent *corps d'élite* to make service in the militia general. The Englishman of the well-to-do-class gives himself a moral and physical education which is perhaps worth more than that which the continental bourgeoisie receives; but the workman in the manufactories, and still more the

(1) I have explained the advantages of this system in a work recently published on the subject of Germany, *La Prusse et l'Autriche depuis Sadowa*. M. Buloz having asked me to study on the spot the consequences of the war of 1866, I set forth in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* the following conclusions. The unity of Germany is inevitable. If France does not show herself hostile, she will act for the advantage of freedom. If France declares war, she will act for the advantage of militarism and Prussia. In any case France ought to make haste to secure compulsory instruction, and universal military service, as the duties of the citizen. I held up for imitation, also, the local formation of the army by province and district, as in Prussia.



labourer in the fields, decidedly needs to undergo at least the system of the Swiss army.

France will certainly go as far as the Prussian system. This it will effect most easily, because the only thing to do will be to call its military instincts into activity. But that is not enough. It must eradicate certain traditions which have brought nothing but misfortune, and which come from the Empire and the Revolution. The most popular writers of France, Thiers, Béranger, in old days, and Victor Hugo, Quinet, have sung the glories of the Empire in every key. The old soldiers have made out of it in the country districts a real religion, of greater potency than the old one. The universal idea was that France had lost her natural frontiers, her legitimate preponderance, and that she was bound to regain it at all cost.<sup>1</sup> In the *France Nouvelle* we see Prévost Paradol, one of the most enlightened friends of true freedom, reduced to despair, because he perceives that by the end of the century there will be seventy millions of Germans, ninety millions of Russians, one hundred and sixty millions of Anglo-Saxons, and only forty-five millions of French, because the last have less room and produce fewer children. The Radicals in the time of Louis Philippe wished to force that clear-headed and peaceful king to make war, now against Russia for Poland, now against England for the affair of Pritchard, now against Europe for Mehemet Ali. If Louis Philippe resisted all electoral and parliamentary reform at the risk of a revolution, it was because he feared the accession of the Radical party, which would have dragged him into war. What France ought to understand is the truth, which the English alone at the present day, I believe, clearly perceive, that to maintain any preponderance whatever, or even the balance of powers, in the presence of the economic forces actively at work all over the world, is as chimerical as to insist on arresting the motion of the earth. Nothing can prevent America a century hence from having two hundred millions of Anglo-Saxons; and if Russia after emancipating her serfs gives them instruction and liberty, she will grow in the same proportion, though more gradually. Are England and France to exhaust themselves in ruinous wars and vain intrigues to oppose what is inevitable? Besides, are nations happy and glorious by reason of their number and their military preponderance? No; for who has rendered mightier services to humanity than Athens and Judæa? Which are the states most to be envied to-day? Are they not Switzerland and Belgium, or perhaps San Marino and Andorre? France must destroy to the very roots her dreams of military supremacy and reminiscences of imperial glory; must cast to the winds the relics of that fatal genius

(1) See on this point a truly prophetic article by Mr. Cliffe Leslie, *The Future of Europe foretold in History*, Macmillan's Magazine, Sept. 1, 1860.



who led her to Waterloo, and by the power of his name to the Second of December and Sédan; must christen over again her bridges of Jena, Austerlitz, Magenta, her boulevards of Sebastopol and Trocadero, her streets of Rivoli and Castiglione; must obliterate from her books and her monuments whatever can infect youth with the mischievous thirst for military glory; must comprehend that the interest and duty of a country do not consist in a balance with its neighbours, but in spreading among all ranks of its own inhabitants comfort and instruction.

If France obstinately insists on being stronger than Russia and Germany in its armies, and stronger than England and America in its fleets, enormous taxes will have to be imposed on industry. Industry will complain more violently than in past times of not being able to compete with the foreigner. They will return to protection, and all economic progress will be stopped. It is time for France to adopt the same external policy as England. Instead of carrying her flag into the four quarters of the globe, as the Emperor boasted quite recently, she ought to devote all her strength to make the people fit to exercise with judgment the electoral rights that have been prematurely confided to it.

The foreign policy of the last French Government has been nothing but a series of contradictions. There are two policies, either of which is intelligible. The first consists in being bent on imposing an universal influence or supremacy abroad, and consequently in keeping as far as possible all neighbours in a condition of weakness, division, and dependence. It would then have been the business of France vigorously and frankly to oppose the unity of Italy first, and the unity of Germany next. This is the old policy, defended with so much talent and eloquence by M. Thiers, when he uttered that terrible and prophetic sentence, "*Vous n'avez plus une faute à commettre.*" This policy is unmistakable, and it is futile. For it cannot prevent the concentration of forces collected by the march of ideas and economical interests, though it may retard them. Thus it is certain that if the French Government had not favoured Italian unity, German unity would not have been effected so soon. There is another policy which consists in not meddling with the affairs of other nations, and which finds matter for satisfaction when one of them reaches national unity conformably to its wishes, and acquires more coherence, more wealth, more enlightenment, more strength of every kind, because commerce allows every one to profit by it, and because the felicity of all mankind is augmented by it. This is the true modern policy—that which England now pursues. Unhappily, Napoleon III. followed both policies alternately, in such a way as to lose all the advantages and reap all the inconveniences of both one and the other. He only favoured the development of new nationalities, to make them his enemies. He declares war against Russia, and goes to



Mexico to sustain the Latin races against Anglo-Saxon preponderance; a policy of equilibrium which makes two powerful foes. He fights for Italy, but withholds Rome, and makes himself detested by the Italians without satisfying the Ultramontanes. Weakening Austria, he prepares the triumph of Prussia, whom he favours directly in 1866; he proclaims the theory of great agglomerations. Then immediately afterwards he turns towards Austria, visits the Emperor Francis Joseph, raises the famous barrier of the Main, disquiets and menaces Prussia, then believes himself bound to attack the state whose greatness he has helped to secure with his own hands. It is hard to imagine a policy more surely adapted to lead to the gulf.

France finds herself drawn towards the old policy of equilibrium by her dynastic traditions and her aspirations after the supremacy of Europe; towards the modern policy of non-intervention abroad and development at home, by the opinion of the more clear-sighted of her publicists. It is slightly late now to turn to the first; let her then resolutely adopt the second, and above all remain constant to it. If after the plébiscite Napoleon had disarmed, declaring that he intended to interfere no more in the domestic affairs of Germany, he would have forced Prussia to disarmament, for the South would never have accepted the Prussian military burdens, and already in the Northern Confederation the Diet was crying for economy. All alarm disappearing on the side of France, the pacific movement would have been irresistible. It was the writers and other men who thrust France into an attitude and a policy of aggression, that prevented her from triumphing over her rival by peace and liberty.

There is another difficulty which republican France will have to meet, in the regulation of the relations between the Church and the State. The Liberal party thinks that the time has come for abolishing the Concordat, suppressing the budget of worship, surrendering all rights of interference in ecclesiastical affairs, in a word, for establishing, as in the American Union, the free church in the free state. The best reasons may certainly be invoked in favour of this project, but if the Catholic clergy see in it an attempt upon its rights, will the Republic resist the attack that will resound without a day's cessation in forty thousand pulpits and eighty thousand confessionals? If, to reduce them to silence, recourse is had to the severity of the law, here would be a persecution of religion as in 1793, and we know the dangers of that. One must be a Catholic and live in a Catholic country to appreciate the perils of such a situation. In a Protestant country people can form no idea of them. Let us take a recent example. M. Esquiros, a mild and moderate person, as everybody who knew him in England can testify, decrees at Marseilles the expulsion of the Jesuits. A cry is raised on all sides that this is an odious violation of liberty. Without doubt, such a step is terribly inopportune at a moment when there is so much need



for assistance from all quarters to drive the enemy from the country. But this is what his partisans say by way of justification. The Jesuits teach ultramontane doctrines; these doctrines condemn absolutely all modern liberties; if, then, the entire youth of the country is formed by them, these liberties will be annihilated. We have thus to make our choice between the liberty of the Jesuits to-day, and the liberty of France to-morrow. We will not hesitate to sacrifice the first to the second.

This reasoning must have some semblance of foundation, as the Swiss, who are a sensible and calm people, have made the ostracism of the Jesuits one of the clauses of the Federal pact. This will seem narrow and intolerant, even to the party which calls itself advanced. That party no longer disturbs itself about these religious questions. We have gone past them, it thinks. The yoke of old superstitions has been shaken off. These dogmatic wrangles are only ancient triflings, which have lost all importance. Yet there is a fact, which ought to make those reflect who insist on seeking no lessons except from the observation of facts. Whence comes it that free institutions appear never to take root or to succeed in any Catholic State, either in Europe or America? Here are the reasons. First, in Catholic countries education is singularly neglected. In France, the most advanced Catholic country in this respect, the proportion of the uninstructed is about one third. This ignorance arises from the circumstance that the exercises of religious worship require no knowledge of reading, and that the clergy, afraid of the effects of too much light upon their dogmas, show very little disposition to encourage the diffusion of knowledge. Secondly, the Pope, henceforth infallible, condemns as a heresy and a plague freedom of worship, freedom of the press, the whole of the existing organisation of society. Those who defend the system known as that of 1789, are thus led to wage against the clergy a war that is defensive, but unrelenting. As it is impossible to attack the clergy without touching religion, the religious sentiment is violently shocked. Now as this sentiment is still the only basis of morality, that in turn is lowered and relaxed. Relaxation of morals has invariably led to enfeeblement of character. Now without morals and without character, liberty is impossible. A state divided against itself cannot stand, say the Scriptures. How specially true that is, when the division concerns the very foundation of moral life.

Again, consider that the clergy, having in their hands the women, the children, and the peasants, thus dispose of a force that is enormous, incalculable. It must therefore be extremely difficult to found on a solid base any régime which the Roman Church attacks with all the forces at its command. If the Republic in France lasts, we shall see renewed, with more violence than ever, that ancient



struggle between the principles of the Revolution and those of the Catholic Church, which has already been the cause of so many disasters, and cost so much blood. This struggle seems to be henceforth without an issue, now that the Pope has declared that the two principles are as irreconcilable as good and evil, darkness and light. France being no more prepared to renounce Catholicism than to renounce modern principles, it is impossible to foresee all the difficulties which will grow out of this conflict.

Will France remain a Republic? Scarcely any one believes that it will, except the most enthusiastic among the republicans. Yet this would evidently be the best thing she could do. To begin with, it is the régime *qui divise le moins*, as M. Thiers said in 1848. Next, now that there is a claimant the more, the Prince Imperial, the dangers which would menace any restoration would be greater than ever. The new sovereign would have against him not only two or three evicted pretenders, but the whole body of republicans, who would never forgive him for having once more immolated the Republic. He would thus have to contend with the most active and resolute men in the whole nation. He would be obliged to retain both universal suffrage and the freedom of the press. Now, would even a prince of the family of Orleans, full of merit as that family may be, be able for long to make a stand against these engines of demolition? He would speedily have against him the majority of the electors in the large towns, and would find himself in consequence brought down to the position which ruined Napoleon III., that is to say, compelled to adopt rigorous measures of repression at home, or else to seek a diversion abroad. We should then again have a period of some score of years of intestine discord, followed by a new turning up of the ground; and this would have to be again and again recommenced.

The difficulty of establishing monarchy in France depends on several causes. Firstly, royalty no longer possesses prestige, and no longer inspires respect. Now, as Mr. Bagehot has well shown, this is one of the essential conditions of all hereditary power. Secondly, royalty has had so little success, and has fallen to pieces so often, that it appears to offer no more guarantees for stability than a republican presidency; and, under these circumstances, it has this particular drawback, that, instead of the crisis of a presidential election every four years, the nation has the far graver crisis of a revolution every fifteen or eighteen years. Thirdly, the sovereign, naturally seeking to strengthen himself by the conservative elements, is obliged to give his hand to the clergy. As the most enlightened and the most energetic men in the country are hostile to clerical influence, they will not be slow to declare war against the sovereign. This is what destroyed Charles X. Fourthly, the young men are



attracted to the Republic because it recalls the glories of Rome, of Athens, and of the French Revolution, with which their imagination is inflamed. Fifthly, it is repeated on all sides that the irresistible progress of democracy must lead all over the world to the Republic; and the sight of the prodigious prosperity of the American Union makes people suppose that Europe would enjoy the same felicity, if she adopted the same institutions. Finally, as they see the horrible war, accursed by all the peoples, into which Napoleon's quarrel with the King of Prussia about the Spanish throne precipitated two great nations, a great many persons of decidedly conservative principles have come to detest monarchs and the monarchic system.

In face of the numerous and weighty difficulties attending the establishment of monarchy in France, people persuade themselves that the country would act wisely in keeping the régime into which the storm drove it, even though the men who are its representatives should not accomplish the heroic task which they undertook, the expulsion of the foreign enemy. But in their choice of a government, nations are determined not by theoretical considerations, or by long-sighted care for the future, but by the necessities of the moment. To-day, more than ever, a government is bound to preserve order and security enough for industry and commerce to go on, and place within the reach of the millions of labourers who live on wages the means of winning their daily bread. Once, in antiquity and in the middle ages, societies could support a strong dose of anarchy, because the relations of exchange being very limited, the circle of production and economic consumption was not easily disturbed. Now that the division of labour, the use of machinery, and the intervention of credit, have so peculiarly complicated the whole social mechanism, anarchy rapidly brings ruin for the masters, and famine for the workmen. Then the first invoke an iron hand for the restoration of order; the second, on the contrary, expect a remedy from revolutionary measures, which augment still further the contraction of credit, the universal want of confidence, the suspension of business. These profound divisions provoke civil wars, which in Rome and Greece, as in the Republics of the Middle Ages, have always caused despotism to be regarded as the single harbour of refuge.

In France after 1848 nearly everybody, willingly or unwillingly, rallied round the Republic. By the mouth of Lamartine it was declared in words of seductive poetry, that she brought into the world peace among nations, harmony among classes. France and Europe were filled with hope. But behold, the social question rises up in the midst. The workmen cry for the *droit au travail* and the organization of labour. Louis Blanc, Considérant, Pierre Leroux, Proudhon, constitute themselves the organ of these demands, which could not



possibly have any practical issue. In June the violent dissolution of the national workshops causes blood to flow in torrents. All the old royalists and the peasants are seized with panic. The Red spectre fills them with the most insane alarms; and they all throw themselves with ignoble precipitation into the arms of the nephew of a tyrant, who had destroyed France in 1815.

The pure republicans charge it as a crime to the socialists that they raised the labour question, because they thus overthrew the Republic. This reproach is not well founded. For, to begin with, this formidable question arose of itself, inasmuch as it was already fermenting in England, and as since then it has invaded every country on the Continent. Then again we do not know whether posterity may not see in that the principal, or it may be, the only merit of the revolution of 1848. The true criminals were the cowards who voted for Louis Napoleon, out of dread of communism; and their cowardice arose from their ignorance. If they had only reflected, they would have perceived that no country in the world is more safe against communism than France, where more than twenty million persons have a share more or less great of property. Unfortunately imaginary terrors are as dangerous as fears that have a foundation. But it is time for the French proprietors to fortify their nerves and open their eyes. A people which has not self-control enough to endure the discussion of social questions, ought to give up liberty, for henceforth these debates are destined to become more and more general and violent.

Unless the present war has the effect of depressing the working classes to a very singular degree, the Republic will not fail to call up the same problems as in 1848. They are the inevitable consequence of the rising conflict between the sentiments which Christianity has spread abroad, and the rights which the modern era recognises in the lower classes, on the one side, and the economic condition of these classes on the other. The Gospel abounds in ideas of equality. It brings good tidings to the poor, it promises them the reign of justice, it condemns the rich. St. Paul declares that he who does not work should not eat. All this is no more than an ideal, I admit; but it is an ideal which cannot but inflame those who have an interest in thinking it capable of realisation. Besides, modern constitutions recognise all men as equal, and accord to all the right of participating equally in the nomination of those who make the laws. Now what is the lot of the majority? Evidently it is not what the ordinary sentiments of humanity might make us wish that it should be, and there is no one who does not avow that in the interests of justice and the common weal, the share of those who furnish the labour ought to be greater than it is. This is what makes the workman seek in every way for some means of increasing wages, and



urges him to call for the intervention of the law, if need be, to secure that end. Unhappily no system has been discovered which can satisfy these aspirations, and if such a system were in existence in theory, it could not come at once into practice, because there can be no economic transformation which does not operate most slowly.

But one of the necessary effects of the proclamation of a Republic is that it excites the hope of the lower classes. The Republic appears to them as a promised land where milk and honey are to flow for the whole world, and where the workman's condition must receive amelioration necessarily and promptly. The people is the true sovereign. How should the sovereign be reduced to suffer privations? Is it not the people, then, who appoint the lawmakers, and so themselves cause the laws to be made? Why should not they impose laws, determining a more equitable distribution of the fruits of toil?

The difficulty that we are now pointing out is inherent in the very constitution of democratic societies. Throughout the interval from Aristotle to Montesquieu, all those who have gone to the bottom of political questions, have declared that without equality of conditions democracy cannot subsist, that it advances to its downfall as soon as ever inequality becomes too visible. Inequality breeds discontent in the classes which are least well off; they wish to apply a remedy by means of the law. Those who are better off resist. Civil war flames out, and from anarchy comes despotism. In 1857 Macaulay foretold that the United States would pass through this ordeal.

"The day will come when in the State of New York, a multitude of people, not one of whom has had more than half a breakfast, or expects to have more than half a dinner, will choose a legislature. Is it possible to doubt what sort of legislature will be chosen? On one side is a statesman preaching patience, respect for vested rights, strict observance of public faith. On the other is a demagogue ranting about the tyranny of capitalists and usurers, and asking why anybody should be permitted to drink champagne, and to ride in a carriage, while thousands of honest folks are in want of necessaries. Which of the two candidates is likely to be preferred by a working man who hears his children crying for more bread? I seriously apprehend that you will, in some such season of adversity as I have described, do things which will prevent prosperity from returning. Either some Cæsar or Napoleon will seize the reins of government with a strong hand, or your republic will be as fearfully plundered and laid waste by barbarians in the twentieth century as the Roman empire was in the fifth; with this difference, that the Huns and Vandals who ravaged the Roman empire came from without, and that your Huns and Vandals will have been engendered within your own country by your own institutions."<sup>1</sup>

(1) Letter from Lord Macaulay to Mr. H. S. Randall of New York, May 23, 1857.



In the United States the danger pointed out by Macaulay does not yet break out, because there is plenty of room there for all the world "*au banquet de la vie*," and because everybody there is either a proprietor or may become one, and in any case makes very large earnings. But sooner or later the trial awaits all civilised societies. Everywhere the suffrage is being extended until it becomes universal. After that the moment comes when the people wishes to use its right of law-making, to change the laws which regulate the distribution of wealth. Then the struggle bursts forth in which freedom perishes. The future seems to be this: either progress will produce a more perfect equality, and then free and democratic institutions will be established to consecrate and uphold it, or else the inequality will not be corrected, and will go on increasing as in the days of antiquity, and then there comes an end to freedom.

Many signs show that we ought not to despair. The working classes by means of better education will come by thrift and habits of association to take their share in industrial and landed property. The upper classes will facilitate this movement of emancipation by the suppression or reform of the laws which interpose any obstacle in the way of it. Only, even with the most favourable conditions, this movement will be very slow, exactly like that which has brought the bourgeoisie to the level that it now occupies, and woe to the country that would hasten it by violence. That would only retard it. Here is France's greatest danger at the present moment.

To resist the storm France possesses a sheet-anchor of safety, stronger than any other country has, save only the United States. This is the diffusion of landed property among a very large number of families. The solid mass of peasant proprietors offers elements of order that are invincible. But they are too ready to take fright, and to vote for a sovereign, were it a log or a stork, provided it promised order and tranquillity. This is what menaces the establishment of the Republic. Add to this, that the rich bourgeois in France have always had the greatest horror of free discussion, and that in 1830 they dispersed the Saint-Simonians, and condemned them to prison, because these reformers discoursed in public upon social questions. Will peasants and bourgeois have more courage to-day? We can only hope so.

The capital point is to ascertain what the inclinations of the workmen of the towns will be after the end of the war. In 1848 the workmen of Paris uttered a sublime and simple sentence, "*Nous mettons trois mois de gêne au service de la République.*" They hoped that three months would have sufficed to reorganise society and ameliorate their own condition.

If they have preserved the same illusions, as they will necessarily be deceived, grave disorders would have again to be feared, especially



in a country lying amid so many ruins. But it may happen, on the other hand, that the very misfortunes of the war will have the effect of calming perilous impatience, and preventing civil discord. The danger lies in a war of classes. Now hatred of the enemy unites all classes in a common sentiment, that is stronger and more absorbing than all the rest. How long this feeling will endure after the departure of the Prussians, that is the question. Would it not be idle to suppose that the voice of the foreigner might make itself heard in such a crisis, it is to the French bourgeoisie that the English press should address itself, to make it understand that the future of their country rests, not on military courage, but on civil courage. If the bourgeoisie does not take fright at a few local disorders, if it refuses to be alarmed by the harangues of a few dreamers, and the violences of a few energumens, if it calmly organises the conservative forces that are at its disposal, without invoking the aid of a master, then freedom may be established and consolidated. But if the bourgeoisie abandons itself to the same panic as in 1850, all is lost, and a new period of repression and adventure will open. It is of no avail to lay the blame on Socialism. Socialist ideas exist at the present day in every country. We must, therefore, learn to live with it, to subdue and to disarm it by justice and enlightenment, without rushing into servitude in order to escape from the sight of it.

The danger of a restoration would be all the greater, as that would necessarily assume a more or less pronounced clerical tinge. Several causes would contribute to such a result. In the midst of the confusion and disorder of other parties, the clerical party will grow and gain new strength, because it is organized, understands obedience and discipline, and has in each parish one or two organs, repeating by command of the bishops the same discourse and the same appeal to religious feeling. A man who is in trouble turns inwardly upon himself; he repents of his misdeeds, and seeks consolation from the faith of his childhood. This is what France will probably do. She will throw herself upon the Catholic faith, the only faith she knows, forgetting that it is Catholicism which has undone her, by making her unfit for the practice of liberty. The new sovereign will make a pact with the clergy, and it will be the clergy who dictate the conditions of the alliance. When all is falling into ruin, the Church remains standing, because it has its roots not in material interests which destruction is able to overtake, but in their religious sentiment, which it is the peculiar effect of disasters to exalt. If, at least, France could find repose in the restoration of the throne resting on the altar, even at the price of a portion of her liberties, I could conceive that the French, profoundly discouraged at so many vain attempts, might take refuge in such a port, unworthy as it might be to receive the noble vessel that hoisted the flag of 1789. But what



a vision, that a régime which Italy, Spain, Austria, have cast off, should burst forth into fresh life in the country of Voltaire. As soon as ever people had recovered from the profound dejection caused by their present calamities, the same spirit which produced the revolutions of 1789 and 1830 would once more begin to breathe, and would assail religion for making itself the prop of royalty, and royalty for giving its countenance to religion. There would be a new version of the Restoration, with these three enormous difficulties superadded—universal suffrage, freedom of the press, and the still fresh recollection of the Republic for the third time stifled in its cradle.

Those who would again seek safety in despotism ought to understand that these constant changes of system exhaust the nation's moral forces, and make it doubtful of its own future. Prévost Paradol asked himself, even then with alarm, "Can this be the reviving symptom of an incurable disease which ravages our life, and is destined to put an end to our existence?" And, in fact, what is it but perpetual revolutions and the inability to constitute a government, which undermine Spain, Mexico, Peru, and most other Catholic countries? Each régime, as it is overthrown, leaves behind it partisans bent on restoring it by force, and thus civil war is always imminent. Respect for law and obedience to legal authorities, two essential conditions of all free government, cease to exist. The resources and the intelligence of the citizens, instead of being applied to the various tasks of progress, are consumed in sterile strife, and the longer this fatal state endures, the harder it is to emerge from it. These efforts, ever renewed and ever fruitless, to establish freedom, would throw France into a condition of deadly discouragement, and would perpetuate disorder and the spirit of rebellion.

"The more I observe," said M. Guizot, "the more persuaded do I remain that the republic, so noble a form of government, is yet the most difficult of governments." The remark is true, and we must admit that France is little prepared for the realisation of the republican régime. But the constitutional régime is hardly any easier, for that demands moderation and judgment on the part of the nation, and on the part of the sovereign much tact and self-denial. The Republic in France would have one advantage. The future would work for it. If it could endure ten years its stability would seem to be indefinitely assured, while at the end of the same time any possible dynasty would be almost certainly drawing near to its fall. The first years would be the most full of peril for the Republic, subsequent years for monarchy. Every one simply regarding the crown as a temporary possession, and considering it impossible for power to be hereditarily fixed in one house, it would be extremely hard to build the edifice of monarchy on such shifting sands as these. Difficulties for difficulties, it might be as well to resume the old motto of the Polish Palatine—*Malo periculosam libertatem quam tranquillam servitatem.*



But there is good reason for fearing that the bourgeoisie would adopt a less heroic programme.

Whatever the régime which ultimately carries the day, one reform will still be urgent, the reform of the press. The press, it is said, is the fourth estate. A mistake; it is the only estate, for it is the press which forms opinion, and public opinion is the true sovereign. Now, the French press is entirely below its mission. In the first place, with a few exceptions, the journals publish no news and no documents relating to foreign countries. The reader thus becomes accustomed to ignore what it ought to be indispensable to him to know, and to argue as if France were the only country in the world. The opposition papers attack everything that is done by the government, and the official papers are just as indiscriminate in their praise. The journals of the widest circulation are those which live on scandal and falsehood. In ordinary times, the harm done by this pestilent press is not perceived; but its ravages come into full light in times of crisis. One paper like the great English journals, as well informed and as honourably conducted, would be worth more to France than the finest fleet or the most powerful army. Among the books published in England, in France, and in Germany, the difference is not striking; between the English newspapers and those of other countries, the distance is enormous. They have assumed on the continent that it suffices to imitate the constitutional forms of the English Government. They begin to see that without a well-informed, reasonable, and influential press, these forms are not enough for the establishment of national freedom.

In fine, France may come forth from her present severe trial regenerated, as Prussia did from the disaster of Jena. But for this she will have to impose upon herself a stern discipline. She ought forthwith to devote to education what she used to give to pleasure and arms, to undergo the harsh law of compulsory military service, to purify her manners, to learn respect for the laws, and to establish a press capable of training opinion for the enjoyment of freedom. The consolidation of the Republic raises so many grave difficulties as to seem almost impossible; but a monarchical restoration, inevitable in case of civil war, and easy at first, could offer no guarantees of stability. It is time for France to brace herself up, if she would escape the lot of certain other Catholic countries, equally incapable of supporting a regular government, and of establishing free institutions, and lapsing from revolution into revolution in irremediable decay. We may hope that this will not be the destiny of the great people which has done so much to spread ideas of equality through the world, for that would be an irreparable disaster for the whole of humanity.

EMILE DE LAVELEYE.