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THE STRENGTH AND THE WEAKNESS OF THE THIRD FRENCH REPUBLIC

SIÈYÈS was asked what he had done during the Reign of Terror. His answer was, 'J'ai vécu'—'I have kept myself alive.' Ask the Third Republic for proof of its strength, and its reply is, 'I have kept alive for more than thirty years.' The achievement is no small one. The Monarchical Constitution of 1791 lived, nominally at least, for two years (1791-1792). The First Republic in all its varying forms, each of which marked a revolution, dragged out a precarious existence for less than eight years (1792-1799). The rule of Napoleon lasted, though not without interruption, for fifteen years. The restored Bourbons kept on the throne for sixteen years (1814-1830). The Orleanist Monarchy endured with difficulty for eighteen years (1830-1848). The Second Republic lived for less than three years (1848-1851). The renovated Imperialism of Louis Napoleon just equalled the eighteen years of the Orleanist *régime* (1852-1870). The Third Republic, if we exclude the years of disorder, intrigue and ambiguity which elapsed between 1870 and 1875, has already stood its ground for thirty-five years. This list of dates, stated broadly, is dry reading; but it has immense significance. The Third Republic shows a vital force unknown to any other French Constitution which has been framed during the last 120 years. The importance of this fact is enhanced by two considerations. The first is that the Republic has faced the gravest perils. The failure of the Republicans to save France from the German invaders, combined with all the horror excited by the massacres and the cruelty as well as by the ruthless, even though necessary, suppression of the Commune, might well have been as fatal to the Third as were the insurrection of June 1848 and its consequences to the Second Republic; the monarchical Conservatism of 1871 might have proved as irresistible as the Imperialism and the Conservatism of 1851. The popularity and the plots of General Boulanger, the discreditable close of Grévy's second Presidency, and the bitter animosities aroused by

the Dreyfus case prove that the Republic has once and again stood in danger of destruction. The second consideration is that, since the Republic in 1875 became the formally acknowledged Constitution of France, it has neither been overthrown for a moment, nor been compelled to use those violent means of defence which are as deadly to the moral authority of any Government as even the appearance of weakness. The Republic has never had recourse either to that state of siege which is organised martial law, or to that even more terrible procedure known in the Jacobinical slang of the great Revolution as ' veiling the statue ' of liberty or of law. The Commonwealth of France has weaknesses, but it has hitherto preserved both order and liberty.

The Republic has done more than merely exist. It has displayed that capacity for connecting itself with the permanent institutions of the country and for gradual development, to which Englishmen attach an even exaggerated importance, and sum up in the often misunderstood formula that the Constitution of England has not been made but has grown. Here at least English prejudice or experience coincides with scientific principle; things that grow are alive. Let me dwell for a moment on the two closely connected features of the existing French Constitution which I wish to make clear. The Republic is indeed from one point of view the creation of yesterday. We all know that had the audacity of French monarchists been greater or, as a foreign critic may well believe, their patriotism been less than it proved to be in reality, they might have forced on France a Bourbon or an Orleanist restoration which assuredly was hateful to a large portion of their fellow-citizens. Yet the Republic from another point of view rests on foundations laid during a century of arduous conflicts. One example illustrates the meaning and the truth of this assertion. Universal suffrage is an institution open to much criticism, and does not in itself possess any special sanctity. Its creation in 1848 might be considered little more than an accident. For universal suffrage was proclaimed by a Provisional Government, and that Government itself was elected by a mob of ruffians whose names are unknown, and was, as an Englishman would think, endowed with no moral right to revolutionise the electoral system of the country. But a change due in part to the temporary influence of a politician, Ledru Rollin, whose name is hardly remembered even by Frenchmen, has stood the test of time. Rash would be the innovator who, with the experience of the last sixty-two years before him, tried to abolish or undermine a mode of expressing the will of the nation which answers to the ideas of equality that have sunk deep into the minds of the French people. The Third Republic, at any rate, is the final consecration in France of universal suffrage. The French Commonwealth rests

then on a principle which, while it corresponds with national conceptions of equality, secures the support of those small landowners who are the most conservative element of French social life.

The Republic, again, has provided solutions, which are certainly ingenious and may possibly be final, of some political problems which have hitherto overtaxed the skill of constitution-makers. The makers of the existing Constitution have, in the first place, shown that it is possible to combine Presidential with Parliamentary government, or, in other words, have created an elected official who in his relation to Parliament fills the position of a constitutional king. This achievement has been long found a matter of extraordinary difficulty. The Fathers of the American Commonwealth created a powerful President, but they have not ensured harmony between the action of the elected Legislature and the elected Executive of the Republic. They gave up, whether consciously or not, the chance of forming that Cabinet which under a constitutional monarchy, is, as Bagehot years ago pointed out, the link which binds inseparably together the Parliament and the national Executive. The French statesmen of 1848 had before their eyes the experience both of England and of America. They were Parliamentarians. They intended the country to be ruled by a Parliamentary Cabinet. Their experience and their ability did not preserve them from tragic failure. They created, indeed, a strong President. For well-nigh three years he thwarted the action of the Legislature, and terminated a period of intrigue and conspiracy by the destruction of the Republic. And the victory of the President was sanctioned by the votes of the people. The Imperialism of Louis Napoleon was avowedly the protest against Parliamentary government. The founders of the Third Republic learned at least one lesson from the events of 1848 and the *coup d'état* of 1851. They gave to the President of the Republic a position of high dignity and a fixed, though limited, tenure of office, but they placed the election of the President in the hands, not of the people, but of the Houses of Parliament meeting together as one National Assembly. The experiment has turned out a singular success. Parliamentary government, as understood in England or as practised under a constitutional monarch, *e.g.* in Belgium, may not turn out in the long run the form of constitution best suited for France; but following, probably unconsciously, suggestions to be found in Bagehot's works, French statesmanship has proved the possibility of working a scheme of Cabinet government without setting up an hereditary monarchy, and has created a President who in reality performs the functions of a constitutional king. The President is, to use an expression taken from Bagehot, the 'ornamental' head of the Government. He further discharges the

really important duty of selecting a Parliamentary Ministry. In this matter he imitates far more closely the constitutionalism of England than ever did any French king. The President plays a real part in the selection of a Premier or even of the Cabinet. But his aim is to select Ministers who may command the support of Parliament, whilst Louis Philippe's whole effort, crowned for a time with success, was to ensure that Parliament should always follow the Premier who had the support of the King. French statesmanship has, in the next place, created for the first time in the history of France a Second Chamber which at once possesses a certain real authority, and also acts in harmony with a Chamber of Deputies elected by universal suffrage. The Republic, lastly, enjoys a Constitution which, owing to the peculiar way in which it may be changed, is flexible enough to work easily, and rigid enough to check alterations which may not meet the permanent will of the nation; and this Constitution has produced or contributed towards many beneficial results. It is now possible in France to change the head of the State without the least risk of revolution. Eight presidential elections have taken place; on at least three occasions they occurred during a dangerous crisis. But there was no more disturbance than when in England one Cabinet makes way for another, or when on the death of the King the Crown passes to his heir. Real Parliamentary government has, further, been substituted for governments which, under whatever name, were in no true sense parliamentary, for their power was limited by the fear or the occurrence of revolution. The parliamentary system has its grave faults. But, after all, wherever it truly exists it has one saving virtue: it is government by discussion instead of government by force. If anyone objects that the constitutional devices which have favoured the success of the French Republic are the fruit of accident, and were in some cases inventions intended by their authors to bring about the restoration of a monarchy, a similar observation, we must remember, applies in its spirit to many features of the English Constitution. In truth, French statesmen have from experience learned at last the elementary lesson, taught by the history of England, that the success of constitutional government depends on the readiness of a people and its leaders to avail themselves of laws or institutions, however anomalous, which without working obvious evil meet the true wants of a given time.

The establishment of a true parliamentary system has produced a sincere effort on the part of the Legislature to deal with all the vital questions of the day, and thus to meet the wants of the people. This surely is the best sign which any government can give of its strength. In France, as elsewhere,

laws are constantly passed which had better never have been enacted. My contention is not that the legislation of the Republic is always wise or just, but that its continuous legislative action is a proof of energy, of force and of life. Consider two or three illustrations (whereof one might easily cite a score) of legislative activity. A Law of 1881 has revolutionised the Press law of France. It has given to the citizens of the Republic a freedom of the Press very like the liberty we have long been accustomed to in England. Every trace of a censorship has vanished. The publication of opinions in newspapers is treated as one of the recognised forms of public discussion, and is, for the first time in the history of France, restrained only in so far as may be necessary to prevent the Press from being used for purposes of libel, slander, or sedition. This new policy of freedom is, at any rate, a bold one and will generally receive the approval of Englishmen.

Nothing is better worth notice, again, than the Divorce Law of 1884. In its substance it approximates to the divorce law of England. Its originality and its boldness consist in two things : It introduces divorce into a country where opinion about the dissolubility of marriage has gone through marked variations. The Revolutionists of 1792 gave a legal extension to divorce which all but sanctioned the doctrine of free love. Under the First Empire this legalised licence underwent great curtailment. The Restoration of 1816 forbade the dissolution of marriage. In spite of changes of dynasties and constitutions, divorce remained unknown to French law for sixty-eight years (1816-1884). Its recognition met with two obstacles. The one was its condemnation by Catholicism, the other was the marriage law of France, under which husband and wife form, for purposes of property, a partnership ; so that the dissolution of a marriage by divorce affects the interest not only of the partners but of third parties who have dealt with the firm. Many arguments, good and bad, may be adduced both in favour of and against the allowance of divorce. The one certain fact in regard to the present divorce law of France is that it is the work, not of feeble rulers but of a Government capable of overcoming strong opposition.

The French Legislature, further, like the Parliament of England, has been called upon to meet the difficult problem of securing to workmen and masters that right of combination for trade purposes which seems from one point of view a mere extension of individual liberty, and at the same time of protecting individual freedom against oppression or even suppression by the power of combined numbers. The English Statute Book from 1800 to 1906, with its varying combination Acts, which begin in 1800 by securing inordinate powers to masters and end for the moment

by conferring inequitable privileges upon workmen, shows that English statesmanship has felt the perplexities of a problem of which it has not as yet provided an equitable solution. The French Law of 1884 regulates the whole position of professional associations, whereof trade unions are a mere subdivision. It gives to such unions very extended freedom; but may be thought by a candid critic to excel in two respects the modern combination law of England. The Law of 1884 gives no privileges to unions, as such, but brings them under general rules affecting all professional associations; and this law, as interpreted by the courts, discriminates with special care between combined action which merely carries the right of combination to its full extent, and such action so used as to destroy the legitimate freedom of an individual.

This very year a law of March 1910 lays down a scheme of old-age pensions, and one may fairly assert that in this as in other instances the Republic is free from the charge brought with the utmost vehemence against the Orleanist monarchy, of doing nothing or little for the benefit of the poor and the working classes.

The most noteworthy piece of recent French legislation is the Separation Law of 1906. It is a tremendous effort to effect complete separation between the State and the three religious bodies—Catholics, Protestants, and Jews—to which the State has for more than a century given recognition and pecuniary aid. This policy of disestablishment—to use an English though not quite accurate term—is marked by several noteworthy features. It is intended to transfer the existing places of worship in France to bodies (*associations cultuelles*) of what in England we should call 'trustees,' who are to hold, *e.g.*, Roman Catholic churches for the use of Catholics, and for the purpose of carrying on therein Catholic worship in accordance with Catholic doctrine and customs. The law contains nothing of that obvious persecution by which the Revolutionists of the eighteenth century aimed at making the Catholic Church the servant of the State, and ultimately ruined all their plans for establishing an equitable relation between Church and State. But of course, as we all know, the Separation Law of 1906, though it proposes to secure for the exclusive use of Catholics every church now used for Catholic worship, from Notre Dame at Paris down to the smallest church in the most out-of-the-way corner of France, has not been found acceptable by the Pope and therefore by French Catholics. It is manifest that under the Separation Law the question whether the Church trustees, if one may so describe an *association cultuelle*, carry out the terms of the trust will be left for decision to the Council of State—the highest of French administrative courts. Such an arrangement, as English ex-

perience teaches us, might lead to a decision by a lay body of what Catholics would consider a question of theology. The question whether this is or is not a valid ground for rejecting what an Englishman might think an equitable plan of disestablishment is one on which a Protestant can hardly pronounce an impartial opinion. It is an inquiry at any rate which it is not necessary here to answer. My whole object is to show that the Separation Law, be it fair or unfair, practicable or impracticable, is not a kind of legislation one can connect with the idea of weakness.

The success or strength of the Republic is balanced by apparent failures or weaknesses. These may be brought under three heads :

(1) The Republican Constitution has failed as yet to obtain the final acceptance of the whole nation.

The Third Republic is assuredly not supported by the whole of the French people in the sense in which the monarchy of England is supported by the vast majority of Englishmen, whatever be their politics or their religion, or in which the Federal Government of Switzerland is supported by all the citizens of the Confederacy. It would be unfair to compare the Parliamentary Republic of France which has existed for between thirty and forty years with the Parliamentary Monarchy of England which may, even in its present form, claim to date back at lowest to 1689. Compare therefore in point of stability the unitary French Republic with the Federal Republic of Switzerland. The Swiss Constitution came into being in 1848. It was the outcome of a civil war between cantons which had long been divided by differences of religion, of social life, and of history. On the defeat of the Sonderbund by the Federal army a foreign observer might naturally expect that Switzerland would be for years the scene of successive revolutions. This forecast has been entirely falsified by events. The Swiss Constitution has undergone changes, but they have been carried out by the most strictly legal and constitutional methods. The Swiss Executive has shown extraordinary sagacity in both the internal government of Switzerland and in the conduct of its foreign policy. It has displayed a dignity and continuity of action certainly not surpassed by any popular government in the world. A small body of Conservatives or reactionists have stood apart from the public life of their country, but the Swiss Republic enjoys as much stability as any Continental State.

No one can make the same assertion with regard to the French Republic. France is, indeed, no longer, according to a phrase current in 1871, 'a Republic without Republicans.' The Third Republic is even more truly than between 1871 and 1875 the form of Constitution which least divides the people of France. It

is, as far as a foreigner can judge, supported by a party who form the majority of the country. But a party, however powerful, is a different thing from a whole nation. The reasons, too, which prevent the full and hearty acceptance of the Republican Constitution by the whole of France lie very deep in the history of the nation. One cause is the intense opposition between the attitude of different classes of Frenchmen towards religion or theology. An eminent statistician, who probably was not much interested in the literature of fiction, well said 'Novels never lie.' He meant that they told you more of the social life and feelings of a country at a given date than did serious works filled with historical research or with elaborate statistical tables. To appreciate this dictum a student should read one after another *La Verité* of Zola and *L'Etape* of Bourget. Each book is written with a serious object. The author of each desires to guide France into the paths of prosperity and, as he deems, of righteousness. The one writer teaches, or rather preaches, that national salvation depends on such an utter repudiation of every theological belief and symbol, as involves the removal of the Cross from every schoolroom and from the precincts of every court of law. The other preaches that the renovation of France depends upon the acceptance of every dogma of Roman Catholic theology. The author of *La Verité* stands in dread of the influence of every kind of priest, whilst the author of *L'Etape* wishes every young man of talent to take as his guide a philosophic traditionalist who may bring him back to the beliefs or superstitions of the Middle Ages. With divinity this article has no concern. Who can doubt, however, that both Zola and Bourget have zealous followers? But—and this is the only matter we need here consider—who can believe that enthusiasts inspired by the anti-theological agnosticism of Zola and zealots burning with the enthusiastic Catholicism of Bourget can easily combine together in loyalty to one and the same Republic? Hostile ideals lead inevitably to hostile policies. The Dreyfus case was the outward sign of the inward discord which in France endangers the existence of popular government.

Add to this peril the doubt whether parliamentary government has as yet taken deep root in the social life of the country. It has always been utterly incongruous with Napoleonic ideas, and men now living can easily recall the authority exercised for some eighteen years by revived Imperialism. Louis Philippe's constitutionalism was little better than a sham, and excited the moral disgust of a thinker so far removed from a democrat as Tocqueville. The electorate of the present day are admittedly apathetic in the discharge of their political duties. Not more than 50 per cent. of the electors go to the poll, whilst in England it is not uncommon that at a general election 80 or 85 per cent., and at times

even a larger proportion of the electorate, should cast their votes into the ballot-box. This difference between the two countries as regards the vigorous discharge of electoral functions is the more striking because the differences which divide English parties are far less, both in their extent and their violence, than the differences which transform French parties into hostile armies. It may further be suspected that government by means of parliamentary debate is hardly congenial to the genius of France. It is certainly not the natural outcome of French history. An English inquirer learns with astonishment that the permanent non-parliamentary and non-political official, who under the name of 'Under-Secretary of State,' 'Under-Secretary,' or 'Permanent Secretary' with us manages the business, though he does not determine the policy, of the office at the head of which stands a member of the Cabinet, is, speaking broadly, all but unknown to the Ministries of the French Republic. An attempt was made in the earlier years of the present Republic to introduce into different governmental offices a permanent and non-parliamentary Secretary who should keep an eye on the whole business of the office. The endeavour has on the whole ended in failure, and has been almost entirely given up. It did not, good judges say, harmonise with the French temperament. The parliamentary Minister could not brook the moral control exercised by a subordinate but experienced and permanent official: the permanent secretary could not acquiesce in carrying out a policy with which he did not himself agree. However this may be, an English observer must deem that France lacks an institution which does much with us to mitigate the obvious defects of an Executive which depends for its existence on the fluctuating fortunes of a political party. Here, as elsewhere, the Parliamentary Republic is still influenced or misled by Napoleonic traditions.

Reasons may also be adduced for the belief that the Legislature of the Third Republic is a less impressive body than either the Parliaments of Louis Philippe or the National Assembly which founded the Second Republic. It is admitted that the Chambers convened under the Orleanist dynasty were full of men of eminence. Casimir Périer, Guizot, Thiers, Molé, or Tocqueville are mere samples of the men whose eminence added distinction to the Orleanist *régime*. At the head of the Provisional Government of 1848 stood Lamartine, known by his fame as a man of letters, a poet and an orator. The National Assembly which met in May 1848 contained the leading parliamentarians of the constitutional monarchy, and an extraordinary number of men of eminence. The Legislature of the Third Republic has indeed done some good work, but its constantly changing Cabinets, though they have often had at their head men of ability and talent,

have not formed the kind of Executive which could captivate popular imagination. The system under which a statesman who has been Premier does not on passing from office lead the Opposition, combined with a mode of presidential election which habitually raises to the Presidency of the Republic some safe and sensible man who, were he an English member of Parliament, would be more likely to become Speaker of the House of Commons than to be appointed Prime Minister, prevents the rise to the highest posts in the Government of politicians whose brilliant talent or high authority might make them the admitted leaders of the nation. This absence of celebrated statesmen certainly renders French Parliaments somewhat uninteresting to ordinary Frenchmen, and delays the acceptance of Republicanism by the whole of the nation. Two other considerations tend in the same direction. The one is that, in the words of a Frenchman, 'Republicanism has ceased to be a heresy, but it has also ceased to be a faith.' This remark is full of significance. Throughout the civilised world, and not in France only, there prevails a singular scepticism as to the absolute value of Constitutions. Whoever will read Taine's elaborate though fragmentary *Les Origines de la France Contemporaine*, or Chardon's *L'Administration de la France*, will find that by a strange turn of fortune doctrines which were once deemed, in France at least, to be the anti-revolutionary paradoxes of Burke have come to be the common-places of French publicists. Few are the French authors who now believe that the proclamation of a Republic may in itself be the salvation of a country. Republicanism has ceased to be a faith; hence it can no longer gain for the French Republic the enthusiastic support of zealots to whom Republicanism was a creed. The other consideration is that the existence of bodies of Frenchmen who have hardly as yet accepted the Republic of itself throws the government of the State into the hands of a single political party. All Republicans, however great their differences among themselves, exclude from political office and, as some Frenchmen would say, from promotion to places in the Civil Service any man whom they deem to be a reactionist; and this exclusion in its turn prevents many genuine Conservatives from rallying to the Republic. A similar disastrous phenomenon was witnessed in England from the accession of the House of Hanover till 1760. As long as the fear of Jacobitism existed, the Whigs excluded from office every man who was a Tory and could be called a Jacobite, and Tories, just because they were excluded from office, kept up the cant of Jacobitism, and with more or less vehemence refused to accept the Revolution Settlement.

(2) The Republic suffers from the actual or threatened collapse of the whole governmental and administrative system of France.

This assertion is supported by the whole of Chardon's *L'Administration de la France*. He is no enemy of the Republic. He is a trained administrator; he holds a high place in the Council of State, which is the highest of French Government offices and is also the final Court of Appeal on all questions of administrative law; he avows his intense admiration for the Government department to which he belongs; he is neither a politician nor a professor; he entertains no extreme political or social beliefs; he has a deep, we might almost say an excessive, distrust for all political theories; he is, above all things, an official, and a most intelligent official. If he holds any definite political doctrine his creed may be summed up in Pope's well-known lines :

For forms of government let fools contest,
Whate'er is best administered is best.¹

If ever, then, there was a man qualified by character and position to criticise fairly and intelligently the character of the French Administration, such a man surely is Chardon. He performs his work as censor with moderation, but assuredly with thoroughness and clearness. Let me note a few, and a few only, of his numerous and practical criticisms on the actual working of the Parliamentary Republic. The President, for example, thinks Chardon, has his utility. He really exercises a good deal of power in selecting the member of Parliament who is to be Prime Minister. He can exercise some influence over the Premier's choice of colleagues. But when this is done, much of the authority given him under the Constitution is merely nominal. It is impossible to doubt—though M. Chardon does not make the statement in so many words—that in his judgment the President ought in fact to exert more than he now does of his nominal authority. The Ministry is hardly a more satisfactory institution than the Presidency. Each Minister is overpowered with business that he cannot control and hardly understands. He signs every evening lots of papers of which he does not know the contents. The Parliament is filled with Deputies who, if in one sense respectable men, have few wide views and are slaves of their constituents, of whom they are afraid, and tyrants of the Ministers, whom they bully. Yet Chardon, with cynical candour, admits that the two Chambers, if not filled with men of very high talent, perform their work passably, pretty well represent the feelings and pre-

¹ He certainly wishes to see conferred on the Council of State authority to register publicly its approval or disapproval of every Bill (to use our English expression) laid before Parliament before it passes into law. This power would be inconsistent or very hard to reconcile with the authority possessed by an English Cabinet.

judices of ordinary Frenchmen, and constitute for practical purposes as tolerable a Legislature as France could produce. The Civil Service, again, suffers, according to our author, from some malady of which it is not easy for a foreigner to define the nature. When we come to the police and to the courts, things are worse. It is no exaggeration to say that, in our author's judgment, the French police, though containing excellent officials, is as a body utterly inefficient. A private citizen fails to obtain that protection of person and property which ought to be afforded to the member of every civilised State. Of the courts he gives a far from satisfactory description. He does not attack the character of the judges and other magistrates, but he assuredly alleges that they fail in many respects to render effective justice. They are impeded in their work sometimes by adherence to old forms, sometimes by the folly of juries. The working of the criminal assize courts is a scandalous absurdity. Their business decreases. Everyone knows that it is better to bring a criminal before a police court (*Tribunal correctionnel*) than before an assize court. In the one case the offender may meet with too light a punishment, but he will almost certainly be punished. In the other case he is likely enough to escape all punishment.

It is impossible here to go into further details. The one question we are forced to consider is whether the charges brought by Chardon against the whole administrative system of France can possibly be well founded? They seem to contradict the doctrine, forced upon the attention of two generations of Englishmen by Tocqueville, that France suffers from too much of her talent being drawn into the service of the State; for if this teaching be true, surely it follows that an immense amount of talent must be devoted to the service of the State. Chardon's revelations, further, are positively astounding to men—and there are still some living—who recall the Crimean War and remember the admiration then lavished on the administrative system of France. Yet both the authority of our writer and the nature of things suggest that his denunciations of governmental incapacity contain a large amount of truth. His complaints at bottom amount to this: The administrative system of his country is threatened with ruin by two defects. The one is the difficulty of adapting to the wants of a parliamentary and democratic Republic institutions created more than a century ago to serve the intelligent despotism of Napoleon. The other is that every wheel in the machinery of government is hampered by 'red-tape,' and also made to work ill by being turned from its proper purpose of serving the State to the very dubious end of favouring the interest, and enlisting the support, of Deputies or Senators or of their constituents. The Republican 'Barnacles' of France may well be as noxious as ever were the

aristocratic Barnacles of England, nor are they likely to be the less inefficient because their patrons are not Peers and Tories but middle-class Deputies or Senators and Republicans. France appears to be misgoverned by a gigantic Circumlocution Office. Such a state of things is perfectly conceivable. Arrangements which were once serviceable have got out of date; prefects, for instance, created to enforce the will of an omnipotent Consul or Emperor may have done much good in getting rid of the disorder and anarchy caused by the corruption and inefficiency of the Directory. But such prefects may now be thoroughly out of place under a parliamentary Republic which, if it is to prosper, ought to teach its citizens to take an active part in the conduct of public affairs. A parliamentary party which has enjoyed uninterrupted tenure of office for more than thirty years, even if it be not infected by corruption, is certain to abominate that gradual amendment of existing institutions which is necessary for their good working, but from a party point of view seems the mere disturbance of the best possible state of things in the best of all possible Republics. Revolution and reaction are equally the enemies of the rational reform which alone deserves the name of progress.

(3) The Republic, it is asserted, has fostered a decline in public morality.

Of the validity of such an allegation it is hard for a foreigner, or even a Frenchman, to form a sound judgment. The accusation inevitably comes from critics unfriendly to the existing state of things. No man, again, is a competent judge of the age in which he lives. The evils he denounces will generally be found, if he is possessed of exceptional common sense and equity, to have a real existence. But it needs more than sense and fairness to decide whether public vices are tending to increase or to decrease. The annals of England are on this point full of decisive instruction. The vices, both public and private, of Charles the Second and his Court are undoubted. The apparent decline of morality and religion after the Restoration has from the first attracted the attention of all moralists. The corruption of Walpole has become a by-word. The purchase and sale of parliamentary votes and seats at parts of the reign of George the Third is an indisputable fact. Yet, to a thinker who surveys the history of England from 1660 to 1860 as a whole, it becomes plain that public ethics slowly but gradually improved throughout each successive generation. The Restoration itself has been complimented by the description of an era of good legislation. The morality of Walpole and his followers rose above the ethical standard of the Restoration. In the early years of George the Third politicians were no doubt shocked at acts of baseness and

treachery which by Marlborough and his contemporaries were accounted necessary features of public life. The conscience of George the Third, however, during the first quarter at any rate of his reign did not prevent him from increasing his parliamentary influence by the administration of, to use his own expression, 'golden pills'; and members of Parliament assuredly were at times offered and accepted bribes which in 1800 would have been scorned by the most venal of parliamentary politicians. Even at the beginning of the nineteenth century the disinterested virtue of Chatham and of William Pitt excited not only admiration but astonishment. Peel or Palmerston would in 1850 have deemed it an absurdity or an insult to have been complimented on having held or left office with perfectly clean hands. Periods which to contemporaries may have seemed times of retrogression were then in the public life of England eras of gradual but assured moral development. Who, even among Frenchmen, could undertake to say whether during thirty years and more of settled government the public spirit of the country may not have greatly risen? There are some facts which excite the belief or the firm hope that this is so. Never probably was there a Minister whose personal and private character stood higher than that of Guizot. Yet the closing years of Guizot's power were marked by strange scandals. M. Teste, a former member of the Cabinet and President of the Court of Cassation and a high officer of the Legion of Honour, was found guilty of corruption. Cubieres, a Lieutenant-General and Peer of France, was convicted of being a party to this disgraceful transaction. Guizot himself admitted cognisance of political transactions in the now forgotten affair of Petit, which hardly admitted of defence. Lamartine could declare in Parliament, and declare as it turned out with truth, that the Government would perish by 'a revolution of contempt.' The feeling that the Orleanist *régime* was in some way or other tainted with corruption spread not only among politicians but among the mass of the people. No blame which the severest of censors could launch against the Third Republic could be stronger than the utterances of Tocqueville about Louis Philippe's whole system of administration. He was no democrat; he saw in the triumph of the mob on the 24th of February 1848 the ruin of liberty, which to him meant the temporary cessation of all true progress; but his *Reminiscences*² of 1848 give expression to his own personal relief that the moral baseness of the Orleanist *régime* had come to an end.

But even though there may be good grounds for supposing

² *Souvenirs de Alexis de Tocqueville* (1893 ed.), pp. 120-125. This most interesting picture of a most extraordinary era has hardly received in England the study it deserves.

that in France of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the tone of public life may have risen, as the tone of public life rose in England from the middle of the seventeenth till, at any rate, the middle of the nineteenth century, this gives no reason to assume that those who deplore or denounce defects of public life under the Republic are victims of a delusion. Their censures rest upon and call attention to a most important principle: The violence of even justifiable revolutions imperils reasonable liberty, while it lowers public morality.

I knew [writes Tocqueville] that though a great revolution may sometimes lay the foundations of a country's freedom, yet a succession of revolutions makes the growth in any country of freedom regulated by law an impossibility.³

The truth is [said the Duke of Wellington] I never rightly understood the characters at that period [*i.e.* the time of Marlborough] or made due allowances for them until I observed the effects which the Revolution in France had produced upon the minds of their statesmen. After such movements the principles of men become relaxed. They are then not so much attached to dynasties or to principles as their successors become afterwards even to party.⁴

The words of the great thinker and the great General apply only indirectly to modern France. No one would hardly venture to impute to any French statesman of to-day the turpitudes of Marlborough or of Talleyrand and his contemporaries. But the language both of Tocqueville and of Wellington reminds us that France has been passing through more than a century of revolutions, and must still suffer morally from this terrible experience. Yet to one who tries to balance the strength against the weakness of the Third Republic language of warning is also full of encouragement. More than thirty years of orderly government encourage the hope that the era of revolution is reaching its close, and that faults begotten by revolutionary habits will also decrease under the influence of settled order combined with extended liberty. The *j'ai vécu* of Sieyès contains, as applied to a State, no cynical defence of tergiversation or treachery, but the profound truth that capacity for existence means power of adaptation to the varying requirements of new circumstances, and that for a nation life is the surest evidence of strength.

A. V. DICEY.

³ *Ibid.* p. 94.

⁴ Stanhope's *Conversations with the Duke of Wellington* (third ed.), p. 157.

PAGEANTRY AND POLITICS

THE Conciliation Bill has come and gone ; gone, we may hope, to the limbo of departed Bills, for indeed it was a measure that pleased no one—the ghost of such a proposal will, we are assured, trouble us never again. But this much of good has resulted from its introduction to the attention of the House—it has shown once more how well-nigh impossible it is to frame any measure for woman suffrage which shall do justice to wives and mothers in all classes, and to the working woman. It has also evoked a very large number of most excellent speeches. For perhaps the first time woman's suffrage has been debated in Parliament with thought, courtesy, dignity, and a true sense of the importance of the issue to women themselves and to the country at large. All Englishmen should study the debate—for, strange as it may appear, though there is an instinct, there would seem to be no kind of reasoned conviction amongst men, as to the normal status of women, and the part they should play in the body politic apart from the functions of wife and mother.

Is theirs an educational, moral, persuasive power? or is it the power of the law, the policeman, and the sword? Both powers are necessary and valuable, but they cannot co-exist in the same person. You cannot at the same time persuade and compel, for persuasion immediately becomes a threat. It is no matter of wonder that the mass of women wish to retain the moral power which has always been theirs, and are more than willing to leave the administration of law with all its terrors to the other sex—the woman's attitude towards offenders is one of mercy and pardon, she seeks to mitigate punishment. We know how painful and impossible Queen Victoria felt it to be to sign the official document that condemned a murderer to death. That is the true woman's view, though women may theoretically agree that capital punishment is a necessity. Even Queen Elizabeth, who was of the nature of fierce women, and not over scrupulous, found it difficult to sign the death-warrant for Queen Mary, though her life had been conspired against by Mary, not once but over and over again.

The debate on the Bill will help everyone to realise how important is the woman's part of moral force. We may trust that we shall never again hear that worn jest, to which Professor Oliver Lodge the other day put his name, of 'Paupers, lunatics and criminals,' with whom it would appear that he considers women are classed. Indeed, we rate ourselves more highly. I never before heard that it was a sign of foolishness to recognise your limitations: is it not rather the beginning of wisdom? And if the mass of women do not want the vote, is it not that they instinctively feel that their true life and work lie elsewhere than in government?

We admit that women have had some reason to complain of the way in which their demands have hitherto been treated politically. They have been led to hope for success when in truth success was never in sight. In the present Parliament members may be classified somewhat after this fashion:

(1) Those who strongly approve the woman's vote.

(2) Those who as strongly disapprove it.

(3) Those who are lost in the maze of a supposed logical necessity, but dread the consequences of the vote.

(4) Those who have no opinion either way.

(5) Those who have an opinion, but, like 'Brer Rabbit,' lie low.

(6) Those who are ready to make party capital out of it.

Outside the House the average citizen is often moved by the supposed logical necessity—and some men seem afraid to deny women anything they ask for, as if they were children clamouring for a new doll. The late Mr. William Cory put the true logic of the situation for us into a nutshell. 'Ladies, you cannot have the vote, because you cannot do the fighting.' The municipal vote may logically be ours, because we share the work and the responsibility with men. We do not sail the ships, or work the railroads, or conduct the finance, or fight by land or by sea. It is greatly to be regretted that the suffrage agitation has both directly and indirectly weakened the municipal part of the woman's movement. The standard of women candidates needs to be a high one; quality not quantity must be our motto. But it is melancholy to reflect how little the ordinary woman values her municipal vote. Often she does not know that she has a vote; when she does know she often refuses to be put on the register. 'It is too far to go,' 'It is not worth while,' 'There is never anyone of importance on district councils' are some of the excuses with which we are familiar. The emphatic 'I never sign anything and never vote,' evidently implying a deep moral purpose, is the despair of the canvasser. But if these things are true, and they are attested on all sides, why should the State give the parliamentary vote to women? It cannot be for the good of a nation to have a huge but

stagnant political force, which would be liable on occasion to spring into life and rush the polls.

It is remarkable that America has not yet given her women the municipal vote,¹ that vote which our countrywomen have for some years enjoyed, but which they neglect, although it gives them power over the rates, a considerable part of taxation.

It is remarkable also that America has not extended the political vote beyond the four Western States, where there is a sparse population, with a large preponderance of male voters. In Colorado many men and women voters desire that woman's vote should be taken from her. The suggestion, I hear, is freely discussed. American opinion appears to be that the four suffrage States are behind the others in social legislation.

Those noble, historic words, Liberty, Equality, have been constantly used and misused in this controversy. Liberty is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. Equality, in the sense of equality of rights, can never obtain as between men and women, because they have not equality of duties, and every right connotes a duty. If the word 'equality' must be used in the argument it should be thus : men and women have equal, but not identical, rights and duties.

It has been said that the extension of the suffrage to women is a foregone conclusion ; meaning thereby that, as the vote has been gradually extended to different classes of men in the past, such extension is now due to women. But the woman's vote is an entirely new departure, comparable to nothing in history, and the suggestion is made in the face of the organised opposition of women, driven to defend themselves and their rights and to protest against being turned into amateur politicians against their will, or governed by women who would only 'represent them but misrepresent them.' When the agricultural labourer was given a vote, were any protests heard from farm labourers?

Mr. Cecil Chapman, in a letter to the *Times* of the 11th of July, says 'that the absence of "the woman's point of view" is the root cause of inefficiency and injustice in the laws which I administer. . . . I know of no remedy except that of giving women the vote.' Some of us may think 'the woman's point of view' has undue predominance at present, but if Mr. Chapman truly desires to have the woman's view he can only get it from non-political women. It recalls Mr. Herbert Spencer's saying that he lived in boarding-houses that he might the more conveniently study woman. He was assured that they did not afford good opportunities for so delicate an investigation ! It is quite certain that the woman's view, at its best and highest, must be sought for in quiet places aloof from party compromises and struggles. We quite agree with him that it is a national

¹ It is said that in Kansas the Municipal vote has been given.

asset of untold value, but by its very nature it grows and flourishes under conditions special to itself in the complete freedom of the woman's life. Mr. Chapman also says that 'from his point of view it is a matter of no importance whether a majority or a minority of women desire the change.' Mr. Chapman would not use these words probably if he were sure of his majority, and we do not think the electors will agree with him. It is a view with which all tyrannies seek to justify themselves.

The political Pageant of the Women's March of the Ten Thousand was, everyone agrees, a beautiful and in some ways a pathetic display of energy, ingenuity, persistence, and lavish expenditure. But what solid impressions could it leave upon the spectator? 'Ce ne sont pas des pauvres alors?' came from a foreign observer. 'What can these women want more?' Liberty, money, leisure to organise, a great city given up to their use, police to protect them, *force*, in the shape of mere man, to carry the banners—such were the conditions of the March. Some of us can remember the march of the matchmakers from the East End to Westminster to protest against Mr. Robert Lowe's tax on matches. They arrived dusty, weary, and unkempt, but they carried a conviction of women struggling for their daily bread; their action was so unpremeditated and unexpected, made, moreover, in such simple good faith, that the tax was rendered impossible. There would be no need for them 'to march' to-day—there are many channels by which their wishes could become known.

Displays and pageants are dangerous things in politics, where we need brain power and cool, dispassionate deliberation. Our Scotch and Irish kinsmen constantly accuse us, as a nation, of sentimentalism; we think that, with women in politics, political advertisement and political pageantry might become frequent, and that appeal would be made not to the national sense of justice, nor to the powers of sheer reason and reflection, but to the emotion and sentiment of the people. There was one impression to be gained from the March of the Ten Thousand, and that was of the middle-class nature of the women's movement. It has always had that character from its beginnings until to-day. We may go further and say that the movement has been politically indifferent to the claims of the working woman; and yet if votes are necessary to defend the rights and redress the wrongs of women, the workers need them most. The Bills put forward by the parliamentary women have not been either just or generous to married women or to the single working woman. The then Prime Minister,² speaking on Mr. Dickinson's Bill, said 'it will enfranchise a small minority of well-to-do single women.' The same criticism has been made on the Conciliation Bill. We believe that two new

² Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman.

suffrage societies have been lately formed from the working women's point of view, perhaps stimulated by the strong feeling of many men on this subject. The political women have also constantly opposed legislation to protect and defend women's labour on the academic plea of the equality of the sexes. It was even once suggested by a lady speaker that if adult suffrage ensued—as it assuredly would—and women voters outnumbered men voters, the class of domestic servants might be deleted and left out in the cold. It was an unwomanly, ungrateful suggestion. Perhaps it was meant as a joke.

It is time now that the mass of women made themselves heard, and they must lift up their voices with no uncertain sound. The unfortunate male elector, bewildered by shows, pageants, and political advertisements, has almost come to believe that the majority of women want the vote. We must undeceive him. It is always assumed on the suffragist side that the majority is theirs, though I have never heard that they definitely made such a claim. The poor male elector may well be puzzled. The last census gave the number of women as 21,436,107—more than one million, that is, in excess of men. I once suggested that we might grant the suffragists the odd 436,107—a large assumption—and we have opposed to them the adult women out of 21,000,000. We must now ascertain the precise facts. How many women desire the vote, how many are hostile to it, how many indifferent? It will be difficult to carry a suffrage grant in the face of a large and hostile majority.

It is said that there are about 5,000,000 women workers. Now some 2,000,000 of these are domestic servants, a very large proportion of whom marry before middle life. Of the girls employed in factories the large majority in certain districts marry before they are twenty-one, and leave work, as do the married servants; so that the number of women workers is not a stable number as it would be in the case of men. How many of these women desire the vote? From a large country village the signatures of 1,123 women were sent to the anti-suffrage petition. They were mostly the signatures of working women, and collected by working women in large measure. It is often suggested that all working women desire the vote. That is not my experience. It is the educated woman worker in the towns that is the prime mover of the franchise movement. Many of these work because they must, some because they wish. Some are in search of novelty. A scion of a noble house once told me that he was so bored at his father's house 'with the footmen hurtling each other with the potatoes round the table that he got out.' There are women who have the same feeling. These restless spirits doubtless desire the vote, but are they representative of the mass of Englishwomen? It

will be time enough to talk of woman's vote when some millions of women ask for it. They have at present votes and representation in the matters of domestic legislation for women and children, with control of the rates. They cannot logically, in my opinion, ask for more.

I am permitted by the courtesy of Mrs. Beveridge, of Pitfold, Shottermill, to copy the

SHOTTERMILL PARLIAMENTARY VOTERS' POLL ON WOMAN SUFFRAGE

GUILDFORD DIVISION OF THE COUNTY OF SURREY.

Voters on Register, and Lodger claims allowed to July, 1910 . . . 289

Anti-Suffragists.

Voters whose wives poll with them	156
Voters whose wives poll for the vote	5
Voters whose wives take no part	23
Widowers and Bachelors	21
Voters' total against Woman Suffrage	205

Suffragists.

Voters whose wives poll with them	19
Voters whose wives poll against the vote	1
Widowers and Bachelors	2
Voters' total for Woman Suffrage	22

Balance of the Register.

Voters agreeing with their wives to take no part	44
Not polled through death, illness, removal, etc.	18
Total counting to neither side	62

Total Register 289

Voters' majority against Woman Suffrage 205—22 183

Women's majority on the register basis 157—24 133

Anti-Suffrage majority 316

We next offer information (of precise pertinence on July 11th) derived from a complete poll of the 260 Women Ratepayers in the six contiguous and residential parishes of Haslemere (122), Shottermill (36), Hindhead (31), Fernhurst (29), Lynchmere (22), and Grayshott (20).

Anti-Suffragist Widows, 61	Wives, 5	Spinsters, 40	. 106
Suffragist Widows, 29	Wives, 7	Spinsters, 34	. 70

Anti-Suffragist majority 36

The balance of the register (84) includes 50 who take no part.

We could supplement these figures by more from outside the register, but without the precision given by a through-and-through restricted poll.

ANNETTE SUSANNAH BEVERIDGE, M.R.A.S.
(Wife of Henry Beveridge, Indian Civil Service, retired).

HELEN CORTLANDT WHITEWAY
(Wife of Richard Stephen Whiteway, J.P.,
Indian Civil Service, retired).

Hon. Sec. and Hon. Treas. of the Shottermill Branch of the Women's
National Anti-Suffrage League.

July 11th, 1910.

We must multiply these polls and ascertain the facts as regards the women and the electors. If the facts are as we believe, their declaration will help the electors and serve to calm an agitation which we believe to be disastrous to the true work and influence of women themselves, and ruinous to the position of England among the great nations of the West.

ETHELBERTA HARRISON.

