

## BOULANGER AND BOULANGISM.

FEW leaders of movements—for Boulanger must be regarded as a leader, and Boulangism as a movement, even though no one probably can tell whether he leads or towards what is the movement—few leaders of movements have so consistently adhered to the policy of “masterly inactivity” as has the victorious candidate for the Department of the Seine. The General has had, not a paucity, but a plethora of policies from which to choose. And the temptations for making a choice must have been all the greater since, in the present restless state of French affairs, a following would have been obtainable whatever the choice. Monarchy in the abstract, Orleanism, Bonapartism, the Republic, “*la revanche*” in the shape of a bold dash for the re-capture of Elsass-Lothringen (the very Germanized change of the name of the lost provinces stinks in the nostrils of all Chauvinists), the Panama Canal, Egypt, Tonquin, Tunis, a Russian Alliance,—any one of these, or of a dozen others, Boulangism might have taken for its fulcrum, and about it moved enormous masses of the people. With one or two of them certainly it has coquetted. One of the placards displayed by the Panama Canal share-and-bond-holders ran, “Electors of the Seine! General Boulanger voted for us; let us all vote for him!” A recent telegram also states that the General has advocated greater French activity in Egypt. But on the whole Boulanger has preferred the vague and thoroughly non-committal one of “Revision of the Constitution,”—or as he, with a perfect audacity of indefiniteness, said to a representative of the *London Standard*, “A policy of appeasement, honour, and progress.”

In this General Boulanger has shown his astuteness. He had no fear of his adherents, he did fear his opponents; his object, therefore, was, not so much to provide a battle-cry for the former, as to show no front to the latter. He has not attacked openly, he has lain in ambush. The only way to meet this strategy was for his enemies to invent his battle-cry for him and to assail him for its unfitness. This they have done by averring that he aims at the Dictatorship of France,—“Caesarism!” they cry. Even here General Boulanger’s tactics are superior to theirs. He neither affirms nor denies this, with the result that it frightens no one, nor does it fill any with enthusiasm—it simply falls unnoticed.

It presents a curious spectacle does the present state of France. One man without a policy, and, as the *London Times* points out, “without a bayonet or a sabre behind him,” is the acknowledged mouthpiece of a score of electoral districts. And to what opinions is he to give utterance for them? None—at least they are content to accept absolute silence. Were there now existing in France some unparalleled commercial depression seeking legislative relief, were there any political tyranny, if a foreign foe blatantly menaced the nation, if the lower classes were ground down, if in fact any great principle of national progress were jeopardized by those against whom the partisans of Boulangism array themselves, no explanation would be needed of the marvellous electoral victories that his party has won. But France seems singularly free from any specific disease of this kind. No Ireland is a thorn in her flesh, no enormous war equipment drains her purse, no army Bill rouses her youth’s ire, no Socialism eats into her vitals—and of such things one or other of all her European compeers complain. Not even is the character of the existing Government of the country called in question. Boulanger himself is definite in his expressed determination to uphold the Republic—this is the one point upon which he is definite.

But the latest phase the contest has taken on is the strangest of all. M. Floquet has accepted his antagonist’s battle-cry, has brought in a measure for the revision of the constitution, has actually demanded urgency for it, and has been defeated, the General himself scouting the idea of a revision of the constitution by the present chamber—he demands a Constituent Assembly. These things are utterly inexplicable, as most things connected with French politics are—witness the incomprehensible rush of events that took place just a century ago. One thing only is plain, the present Government has been placed in the dock (the charge against it has not been specified, however, be it remembered; it naturally, therefore, declines to plead), and General Boulanger insists upon an “honest, respected and respectable government”; “this,” he says, “is my cause, which is that of the nation.”

Thus, then, for the present, Boulanger and Boulangism stand. All France, all Europe, is “awaiting developments,”—and so, doubtless, is the General.

ARNOLD HAULTAIN.

## LONDON LETTER.

I SUPPOSE there is not a more interesting spot in all London than the dingy chapel at Whitehall, scene of the last act in the life of a most unhappy Prince; but whenever I have chanced to stray out of the clatter of Parliament Street into the lonely square room I have never found any sight-seer before me. Rubens’ painted figures fly and stride across the ceiling and nobody heeds their queer antics. James I., staring about him from the bracket over the doorway, finds, I am sure, the days uncommonly long and dreary, and both the king on the roof and the king over the entrance seem to wake from an apathetic dream whenever anyone comes to disturb the solitude of the famous Inigo Jones banqueting house. The cold white light falls on the old-fashioned pews, on the scarlet altar

cloth, on the upturned face of the verger who conscientiously points out the various excellencies of these yards of canvas upon which, long ago, the great Flemish master expended his skill. No stained glass shines from those glaring panes; to the East no glow of flowers, no sparkle of wax-light; not a touch anywhere of the splendour with which the name of the Whitehall palace is associated. What a different place indeed is this grim Protestant church to the scented little Catholic chapel, described by John Inglesant, which it superseded. Our voices echo right to the bleak desert of gallery which runs round the upper range of windows. Look up at His Majesty surrounded by Peace and Plenty, Religion and Justice as drawn by Rubens’ swift sure hand, and you see the tawdry brilliant allegory which as in a dream King Charles must have noted as for the last time he passed through this room with its soldier groups, its handful of dismayed Cavaliers. Listen to the murmur of Juxon’s prayers, the King’s brave, steady accents, his loyal servants’ farewell. Outside the crowd surges in the yard round the tall scaffold guarded by armed men. The snow alights and melts on the sawdust, on the block, on the cloaks of the stern Roundheads pacing up and down this frosty morning. Then there is a stir and murmur, and lo in a second of time King Charles becomes but a memory, a name. . . . Here are the bare walls; reconstruct for yourself that horrid tragedy which for every good Jacobite made of the 30th of January a day of mourning.

The verger, full of pleasant information, lounges against the Royal pew, and soon dismissing Whitehall Chapel from his mind as a subject too depressing to discuss when the wind is in the south east, and the rain pelting against the glass, tells us of the years he has spent in service with what he emphatically calls the Best Families. He has seen much of High Life, he says, and he brightens into rapid speech as he sketches Hardwick Hall for me, where his sister has been house-keeper these thirty years, and tells me of a wonderful velvet cloak, once worn by Queen Mary’s enemy, Bess of Hardwick, and now under the care of his sister who has to see that no moth attacks this precious relic of the past—her most important charge, seemingly, except for a few weeks in each year when my Lord arrives with a shooting party. Our conversation is rather of the Mrs. Nickleby order, for one moment he is speaking of the absurd smallness of the Sunday congregation here, and in the next we go off at a tangent on the restlessness of the streets, and how there are only two comparatively quiet hours in the twenty-four (from one to three at night) and even these in the Season are as noisy as any of the others. I listen to detailed accounts of weddings which took place in the Ducal household in which he had the honour to serve for many years, and I can testify to the affectionate respect with which he spoke of his employers and their joys and sorrows. It’s twenty years since the Bishop of London gave him this appointment, but so conservative is he that even yet he is not reconciled to the two comfortable living rooms close to the porch, poor exchange, he thinks, for the country house quarters where his days have previously been spent. He grumbles a little at his present life, at its solitariness, at the fogs which frighten him, at the rain which dirties his windows, at the sunshine which scorches his plants. But his interest in the Present revives before I leave as he points with pride at two fat cats fast asleep in the comfortable kitchen with its groined roof, and his interest in the Past is strong enough to enable him to show me where, in what is now his scullery, some one in the time of Charles II. has cut names and dates, and to take me to the roof of the chapel for a view of the very vane consulted by the cowardly James previous to his flight in 1688. The spectacle of the great British capital at our feet, drenched though it is with rain, is an inspiring one, and he tells of many alterations he remembers, and of how, in ’37, he used to take the water at what was still known, even then, as Whitehall Stairs. Gossiping, we tramp down the bare oaken stairs of the Banqueting House, staying to wind a cuckoo clock we meet on one of the landings, waiting a moment in the gallery to examine the fine organ built by Father Schmidt and to get a nearer and better view of Rubens’ work, and then, by way of the grand staircase, we arrived at the small door facing into the side street and so out into Life again. “Not a many come here,” says the verger as a parting speech. “It’s very dull sometimes, and my predecessor he was found in the Thames one day just below Lambeth.”

We don’t boast of many good statues in London, and the best of them all, to my mind, is hidden away at the back of the chapel where few know where to find it. It is by Grinling Gibbons, and is of James II., King of England, Scotland and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, who stands in the garb of a Roman soldier trying to look valiant. My companion, who is learned, sketches the history of this monarch. “To be quite honest, the weak brother is the worst of mankind,” he says, quoting from Stevenson; and we leave the bronze king to digest this epitaph at his leisure.

As we walk briskly past Charles at Charing Cross, George III. in Cockspur Street, Duke of York on the site of Carlton House, up Waterloo Place into Regent Street, we settle two things to our satisfaction. One, an excellent notion, my companion means to treat of at length in the public prints when he has time. It is this: We suggest that as Whitehall Chapel has never been consecrated, and is almost entirely deserted except at the Maundy Thursday service once a year, it should be fitted as the showhouse for the national portraits, a matter easily arranged with the help of a few screens. Bethnal Green Museum is dying to get rid of these troublesome guests. If the pic-

tures were hung here they would attract visitors to a most interesting place, which the canvases would help materially to brighten. The usher told us that in the reign of Charles I. it was contemplated that certain panels should be filled with Vandyck, whom he spoke of as if he took the painter to be a species of Lincrusta Walton, or stamped leather. I think Inigo Jones would, therefore, approve of the picture element being introduced into this colourless fragment of the magnificent palace he meant to build. The other vexed question we solved (Out of which window did Charles walk to be executed?) is one of three that Disraeli always used to warn young people against asking unless they wished to be considered bores. And we answered it thus: Seeing that Sir Thomas Herbert was at the execution, his word should be taken as regards the breach in the wall, signs of which breach Jesse, the antiquarian, saw and speaks of when the chapel was being repaired in the early part of this century. At the time Pennant wrote, he says this passage still existed. If a window in the lower range had been used the Cromwellians would have stood in danger of a probable rescue of their victim; if the upper, the crowd would not have been able to see the face of the King, and there might have arisen doubts as to the certainty of the death of “the Man, Charles Stuart.” Ought we not to take as final the description by a truthful reliable person like the King’s Groom of the Chambers of a thing that he would hardly be likely to have “invented.”

As a proper finish to our afternoon I turned in to the Stuart Exhibition in the new gallery, where there is food for reflection indeed. Many of the hoarded relics, carelessly numbered and badly arranged, strike one as little better than “truck,” as *Huckleberry Finn* would say, and three-quarters of the pictures are vile, not to put too fine a point upon it, but the miniatures, autograph letters, missals, prints, jewels, arms and armour (by the way I hear sixteen pairs of pistols and about twelve claymores were sent by different people, all purporting to be those used by Prince Charles at Culloden) are worth studying. The numerous pieces of hair, after the first lock or two, did not appeal to me, and though I found no sort of satisfaction in square inches of tartan or tape, in velvet or ribbon, I yet discovered much in the galleries I should be very sorry not to have seen. There is all manner of bravery with which the Stuart cause was decorated, bravery which makes it so attractive to the young. But the remembrance of the worthlessness of the principal characters will intrude itself as we look at the gay banners, white cockades and roses, significant picturesque badges of a party who tried so often and failed. “They never loved man or woman, but they forsook them.” How was it possible to help those, unstable as water, who bore such a character as that? I think among the manuscripts those Council Notes from the Bodleian Library (notes preserved by some Boswell of the time after one of the Oxford Councils) should have been included. Do you remember those at which the book lying in the glass case under the library window is open? Charles II., taking a slip of paper, writes the following question in his broken-backed boyish scribble: “I would willingly make a visit to my sister at Tunbridge, for a night or two at farthest; when do you think I can best spare the tyme?” passing it to Clarendon, who answers: “I know no reason why you may not for a tyme (2 nights) goe the next week about Wednesday or Thursday, and return tyme enough for the adiournement which you ought to do the week following. I suppose you will go with a light trayne?” Charles then writes: “I intend to take nothing but my night bag,” to which Clarendon answers: “Good; you will not goe without 40 or 50 horses?” And Charles finishes with “I count that part of my night bag.” And I think among the books a certain copy of Eikon Basilike, about which I have just heard, should find a place. It once belonged to Charles I., who undoubtedly was the author of the volume, whatever the Bishop of Exeter may choose to say. “The binding is black with a gilt double line and beading round the margin,” writes E. K. P.; “in the centre is a gilt crown, with C. R. underneath it; the print large, the margins of the leaves black with age. It contains a portrait of the Prince of Wales, *natus* May 24, An. 1630, *etatis* sue 19 (curled hair and the George), and the frontispiece is an engraving of King Charles on his knees, a crown of thorns in his right hand, his gold crown on the ground at his feet. The title-page is in Greek letters; then “Eikon Basilike” in Roman letters. “The Portraiture of His Sacred Majestie in his solitudes and sufferings.” At the foot is a coat of arms with C. R. above it; royal Arms of England on the shield. Reprinted 1648. As we went through the outer hall, passing King Charles’ armchair and stool in which he sat in Westminster Hall during his three days’ trial, glancing at the needlework wrought at Tutbury by Mary of Scots, we heard odd speculations as to the relationship of all these royal folk one to the other. “As puzzling as Tussaud’s,” said one of the visitors with a sigh. “I don’t know now who Mary of Modena married, and who on earth was Henry, Prince of Wales?”

WALTER POWELL.

It is well known that Sir John Lubbock has shown how long insects may live when kept out of harm’s way. The greatest age yet attained by any insect, so far as is known, is that reached by a queen of an ant (*Formica fusca*), which lived in his care until August 8, 1888, when she must have been nearly fifteen years old. Another queen of the same species died at the advanced age of over thirteen years. He has now a queen of another kind of ant (*Lasius niger*), which is more than nine years old, “and still lays fertile eggs, which produce female ants.”