

Political Situation in France

April 25.—(Can. Press)—The term of the present Chamber of Deputies being up this morning Poincaré has decided to call the country on May 11. He has not been without success because most of the members of the life of the Parliament until the spring of last election was fought on the issue of the foreign policy of France. As a result the elected had almost the same

policy—that of making Germany pay for the cost of the war. In other words each group had nominally some distinction but in reality no difference. The group, Republican Democratic Entente, the party of Poincaré had more than twice the number of followers of any other group such as the Republican Democratic Left, led by Mandel and Tardieu or the Radical and Radical Socialist group headed by Herriot. The patriotism of the moment, however, welded all groups pretty much into one party and whatever there was any danger of a group breaking away all that was necessary was for the Premier to reiterate the above policy and the group was in line again. If the Premier did not reiterate that pol-

ity to the satisfaction of the Chamber or seemingly was being drawn away from it, then another was chosen. And when all is said and done that is why Poincaré succeeded Herriot. The dominant foreign policy which has served both as a "point d'appui" and an election cry, during the past four years is now giving away to other issues and the groups are disintegrating from what other countries would understand as a national coalition. They are asserting their independence and dragging out the benefits which they held prior to 1914. In fact each group is jockeying for position. In outlining the new situation it is well to remember that Paris is not



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France and that urban France is not rural France. The town population of the country is about 19 millions but the rural inhabitants number over 21 millions with all the strength which implies in an agricultural nation.

The problems of exchange, the occupation of the Ruhr and reparations do not reach the rural districts in the same way as they do the towns, and so do an increase in taxes and a higher cost of living. Accordingly those are the two great issues which will have more influence on the rural voter than any of the others as to whether he will support the present government or not. It must be mentioned in passing that direct taxation has never been well received in France. The average citizen does not worry so much about what he pays provided that the incidence falls on such commodities as matches and tobacco, or even on rental value which does not indicate the income of the tax payers. The deputies seeking re-election have however just passed a law which increases taxation twenty per cent. When it is remembered that the same gentlemen have been assuring the rural voters during the past four years that the Germans would be paying it now, it will require some explaining, entirely aside from the merits of the impost, to square themselves with their constituents.

Of course the high cost of living has not affected the country as much as the town. The French farmer produces almost everything he has to eat. But manufactured products have increased in price and he finds that what he himself received for his own produce has not augmented in the same ratio. Indeed it has recently taken a decided fall. Rumor on the other hand has it that the city manufacturer has sold his goods abroad leaving his balance there to accumulate minus, of course, what he has had to pay for more raw material. Some of the newspapers have retorted that the farmer has done the same when he has sold his produce abroad and that is why food products have up to now increased in price. In any case the country holds that the manufacturer has not been paying the taxes he ought to have paid and the fact remains that the rural districts are confronted with a 20 per cent. addition to their contributions.

Exchange, the Occupation of the Ruhr, and Reparations however, are five issues in the French cities. Generally speaking the French manufacturer is not concerned so much over a reasonable fall in the franc as the French shopkeeper. The latter finds it increasingly more difficult to do business with the exchange down one day and up another. In regard to the Occupation of the Ruhr, there is now more willingness on the part of everyone to discuss the merits of it than before, although every Frenchman still holds to the Reparation policy. It is felt though that the last can best be solved by experts instead of politicians, and to that extent some progress has been made. The Dawes report commands at least respect.

This attitude of sweet reasonableness it must be admitted does not favor Premier Poincaré and his party so much as would appear at first sight. He has maintained himself in power largely through the rigidity of his foreign policy. Now that some of the urban communities are beginning to have doubts about the practical results of the occupation there is a weakening in the belief of the Premier. There is less desire to invest in him the power of making law by decree, or as it is known in the British Isles, by order-in-council. France in fact has passed through that stage in which a Mussolini was a possibility and only an extraordinary fall in the franc could bring it back again. It is this point of view which the Radicals and Radical Socialists under Herriot and Briand have capitalized and which they hope will induce the electorate to place Poincaré and his party in a minority in the coming election.

But it is necessary to get the right slant on the question which has brought about a parting in the ways of the main groups in the coalition block, as it is called.

It has been said that the various groups are getting back to their pre-war beliefs. When you have said that you have said everything. You not only go back to 1903 and the days of Combe, but you start in 1875 with the incipient differences between the Church and the State.

Premier Poincaré, although a mem-

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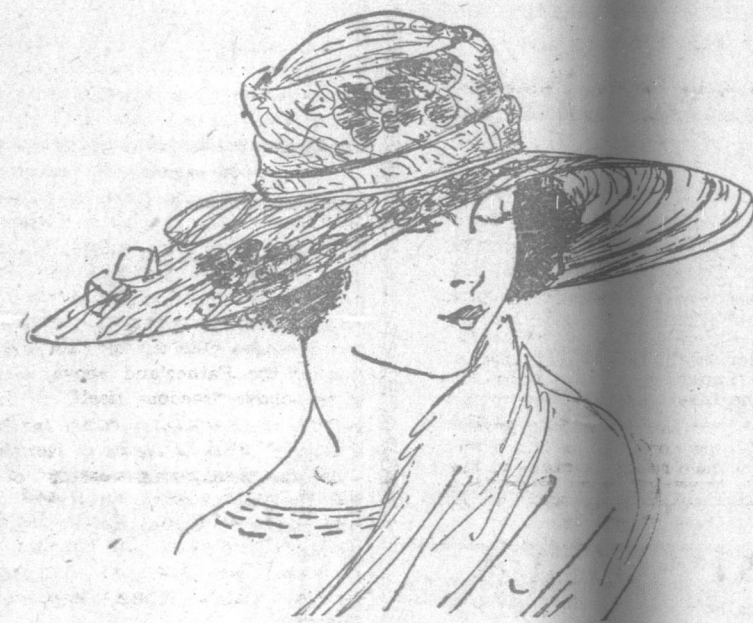
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Literally 1,000,000 of Berlin's 4,000,000 are inscribed as members. Since 1922 the number of members has doubled. The reason isn't aesthetic, but sheer want. Proper burial in Berlin has become a luxury which only the rich can afford.

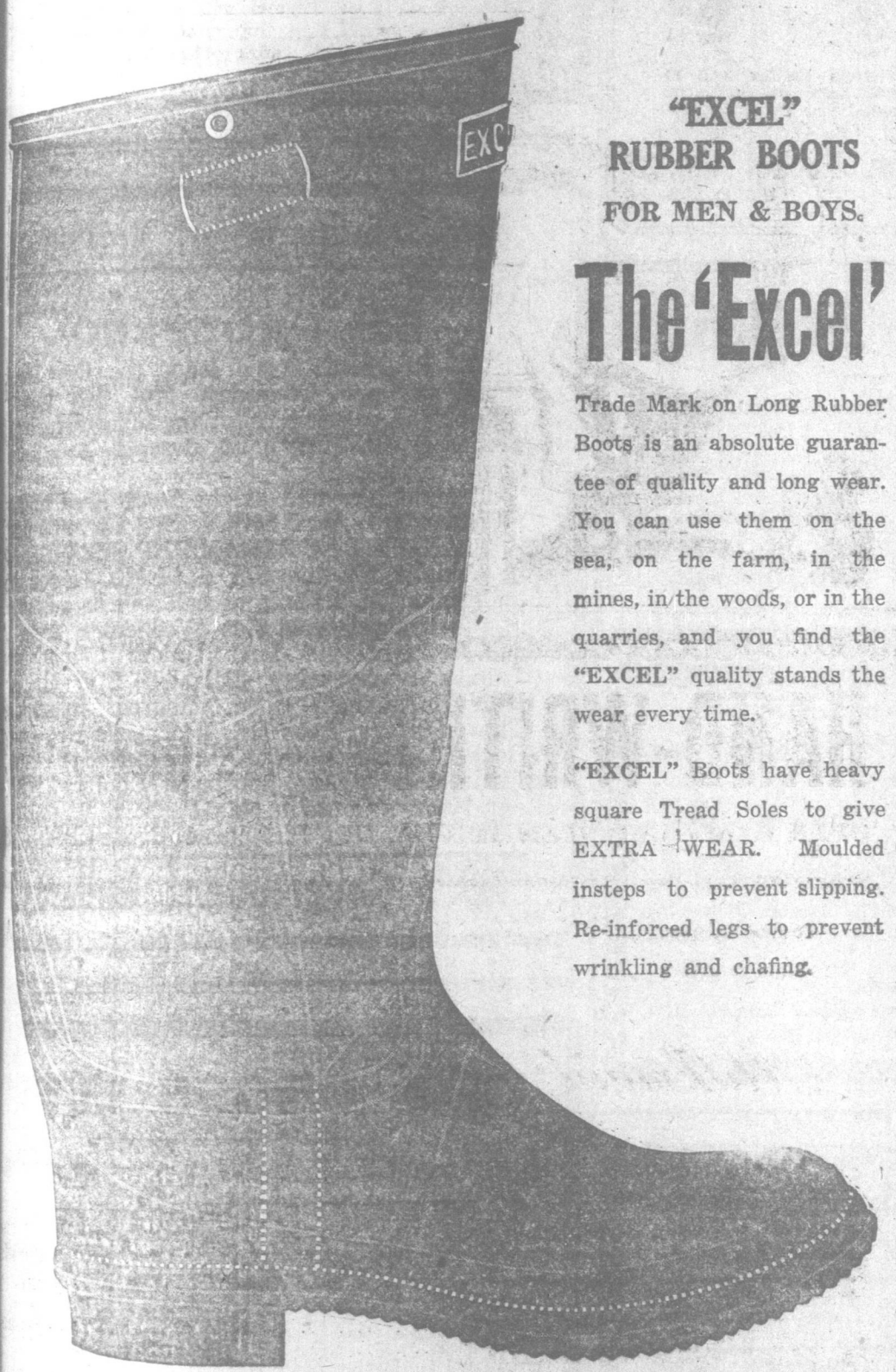
Even cremation costs about \$30. Hence numerous cremation candidates

are protesting that the price, which was fixed in 1911 intentionally high in order to discourage cremation, should be lowered. There is no prejudice against burning bodies now. Life in Germany has become too wearisome for the people to worry what happens after death.

"Abie's Irish Rose" will be staged at the Casino Theatre on Tuesday and Wednesday, May 6th and 7th, and "The Chinese Puzzle" on Thursday, May 8th, in aid of Mount Cashel Orphanage.—apr28.31

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