

istry. Thus the crisis, as dangerous as it was, has been for the present tided over, and time is sure to work in favour of moderation and stability as it has often done before during the past twenty-five years.

It has become a settled conviction with many people that the French Republic is doomed, sooner or later, to be overthrown, either by some popular upheaval on the one hand or by some *coup d'état* of a would-be dictator on the other. It has been so often alleged that the French people are unfit for self-government, that every time a crisis is passed without disaster surprise is expressed. Those who predict such disasters, and those who expect them, leave themselves fairly open to the charge that they have not made themselves acquainted with French History. The Republic has proved its stability by weathering many a grave crisis, and of the last it may well be said that it is hard to imagine one more serious. What would be the effect in Germany, for example, if the Emperor were to resign his office in a fit of petulance, and his Chancellor were forced, at the same time, to retire before hostile public opinion? The result would be a political commotion compared with which the French agitation was the merest bagatelle—a commotion which would imperil the whole system of government.

A glance at French history during the last hundred and ten years suffices to show the improvement that has taken place in the political condition and future prospect of France. When the Revolution began in 1789 there was no mention, and apparently no thought, of abolishing the monarchy and in all human probability it would not have been abolished but for the folly and perfidy of Louis XVI. and his Queen. The first Republic was established by decree of the National Convention in 1792, and it lasted till 1804—a period less than half the duration of the one now in existence. Moreover it was never a Republic except in name for any length of time. The first Empire endured a still shorter time—till 1815. The restored Bourbon Monarchy continued till 1830, and the Orleanist *régime* till 1848, to be followed by the Second Republic for four years, and the Second Empire for eighteen. In the matter of persistence alone, the Republic stands already pre-eminent among the kaleidoscopic political changes in modern France.

But this is the least part of the case for the Republic. It is, in some important respects, the outcome of the popular will, for its continued existence depends on a popular Legislative Chamber elected by universal suffrage, and there has never yet been manifested over any large area of France a desire to overthrow the Republic by electing deputies hostile to its perpetuation. On the contrary, the Bourbon, Orleanist, and Bonapartist factions in the Assembly have become weaker and weaker at successive elections until they are no longer regarded as dangerous, even if they should coalesce. The Bourbon Royal Family in the direct line has become extinct and so has the Bonapartist Imperial Family; all that is left is a scion of the Orleans dynasty, and he is in exile. More important, still, the Pope, after a lapse of over twenty years, during which the Republic had arrayed against it all the power of the Roman Catholic Bishops, has recognized the Republic, and instructed both bishops and priests to submit themselves to it in all legitimate ways. Apparently nothing but some general uprising of the people could by any possibility even seriously menace the present system of government, and it could not be anything more than a menace so long as the army and fleet are loyal.

What is the chance of such a popular *émeute*. The only party in sight, with aims of the kind, is that great body of malcontents who are known as "Socialists." That there is a seething mass of discontent in France, as there is in Germany and in Italy, is beyond doubt. What is the cause of the discontent, and what is the remedy? Apparently the "hard times" in France, as in the other countries named, are due to the crushing burden imposed on the country by the maintenance of a huge standing army and a rapidly in-

creasing navy. To this must be added the loss incurred through expenditures on foreign wars. All that seems needed to place the safety of the Republic beyond peradventure is a common understanding with the other great powers—Germany, Russia, Italy, Austria-Hungary, and Great Britain—that there shall be no war of aggression in Europe, and that whenever disputes arise through complications elsewhere an honest effort will be made to settle them by some less injurious means than the arbitrament of the sword. Meanwhile there is good reason to believe that Republican France is on just as stable a foundation, so far as socialism and anarchism are concerned, as Imperial Germany or Autocratic Russia.

The Coming General Election.

IT is conceded on all hands that the question of questions before the country, in view of the coming general election, whether that election take place this year or next, is that of the tariff policy. Tariff for revenue vs. tariff for protection is the issue. True, it is contended with a good deal of force that, so far as the average height of the tariff is concerned, there is but a narrow margin between the two policies, inasmuch as the requirements of the public service cannot be met by a tariff very far below that which now prevails on the whole. It is, of course, open to the Opposition to reply that, in respect to many articles, it is quite possible to increase the revenue by lowering the rate of duty. Be that as it may, it is impossible to deny that there is a broad difference in kind between the two policies—that, viz., which would arrange the tariff with a view to affording the largest possible amount of protection to home industries, while raising the necessary revenue, and that which would arrange it with a view to raise the necessary revenue, while imposing the smallest possible burden upon the users of British and foreign goods. The economic principles underlying these methods, respectively, are radically distinct and lead in widely divergent directions, the one verging constantly towards absolute protection, the other towards absolute free-trade. Without entering just now into the merits of either, I may refer to one argument which has been and is extensively used in the United States, and which is occasionally made to do duty in certain sections of the Canadian press, which seems to me rather pusillanimous if not unfair.

The argument to which I refer is that based upon the discomfort and inconvenience which would result to some from disturbing the tariff as it happens to be now fixed. All intelligent citizens know that radical changes in matters of policy, especially of trade policy, are in themselves, for the time being, disquieting and injurious to business. The capital invested in any industry affected by the tariff becomes timid and distrustful when changes are proposed, and a temporary dullness is likely to result. The only justification of the advocacy of any such change is the prospect of a greater good, which will more than counterbalance any immediate evil. Still no thoughtful person can seriously argue that, supposing a given country to have committed itself to a system unsound in principle, and fruitful of hardship and injustice to the majority of its people, it should hesitate to change that system at the earliest opportunity, and at whatever immediate cost. To urge such change is merely to maintain that when a nation has got upon the wrong track, its first duty is to make as directly as possible for the right one. It is evident that the permanent prosperity of Canada depends in a large measure upon its getting settled as soon as possible upon a sound and permanent fiscal policy. The people are at present divided in opinion between protection and tariff-for-revenue looking to free trade, as the sound policy for the future. There is nothing to be done but to have the two policies fairly and exhaustively discussed, in the light of all the facts and arguments which can be brought forward, leaving to the people the ultimate decision. To urge that the question of principle should not be discussed, or a change advocated, lest the current of trade and industry be temporarily interrupted, is equivalent to saying that it is better to persevere in a course which we know to be wrong and injurious to ourselves and others, than to incur the discomfort and expense which may be involved in changing it for the right one.

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