

Everybody must also remember meeting people who protested against this surprise and stated emphatically that they had always believed in the French nation, had never consented to look upon the French as modern *Graeculi* (the Greeks of the decadence) or, as a famous writer once said even less politely, as the monkeys in the European jungle.

Such differences of opinion can never be altogether unfounded; and the inference which a logical person who knew nothing of French history in the last four or five decades would draw could only be that conflicting tendencies must have been at work in French society. This conclusion is correct. Since 1870, the date when France, defeated by Germany, weakened furthermore by the Commune, and exhausted financially by the ransom (£200,000,000) she had to pay down to her conquerors, was left to heal her wounds as best she could—there have been two currents in French thought, consequently also in French morals, and according as observers happened to take note of one or the other, their impression was one of disgust or on the contrary of hopefulness.

Most people who followed the trend of French thought between the years 1876–95 were pessimistic. It is true that during the first five years after the war France gave a marvellous example of vitality. In those few years she managed to pay off the Germans who occupied her fortified towns along the eastern frontier, and she accomplished such a thorough reform of her military arrangements (keeping her soldiers under the colours for five years, rapidly improving her armament, and copying intelligently the organization of her enemies), that Bismarck became nervous and was for picking another quarrel the result of which must be her final destruction.

But this effort was the combination of a great national