

POLITICAL FORECASTS.

Whenever a new personality in a position to influence the tide of international events steps into the arena, the public is stunned with the vociferation of writers, in their haste to prove their insight and foresight by impromptu forecasts of what is to ensue. Those, most frequently based on the crude guesses and unscrupulous sensationalism of European correspondents of American newspapers, are generally found to be entirely worthless.

The temporary popularity achieved by General Boulanger, led to all sorts of surmises, which for the most part tended to the speedy *bouleversement* of the Republic, the establishment on its *debris* of another one-manpower of the Napoleonic type, and the re-installation of the spirit of military adventure. Nothing of the kind has happened—Gen. Boulanger took his seat in the Chamber, and the Chamber has almost laughed in his face, while the country has remained tranquil, and the army has maintained its fidelity to existing institutions. General Boulanger has, moreover, received a sharp check in the Charente election. There were three candidates. A Bonapartist, who received 31,400 votes; a Republican who received 23,900; and M. Paul Déroulède, the poet of the *revanche*, and the staunch ally of Boulanger, who stood at the foot of the poll with 20,000. As the candidate who headed the list did not gain a sufficient majority, another ballot became necessary, but the position of M. Déroulède is a severe blow to General Boulanger, who had rashly said "To vote for Déroulède is to vote for me."

General Boulanger's pretensions are an appeal to all that is volatile and restless in a nation which is so deeply tinctured with those qualities, yet it would happily seem that there is a substratum of solidity, or, it may be, of stolidity, which has as yet been found strong enough to keep the general body politic from infection to any serious extent. We trust it may continue so to be, and indeed we think that the Republic is in point of fact, stronger than even its adherents believe it to be.

Again, rash prophecy ran wild on the theory of the fire-eating propensities of the Emperor William. Everywhere he was spoken of as a "youth," with the evident prompting of the inference that his accession at an early age to the most important sovereignty of Continental Europe must of necessity turn his head. As a matter of fact a man of thirty, sedulously trained, as the Hohenzollern princes are, to both civil and military responsibility, is anything but a "youth" in the common acceptance of the term. That his first manifestations should bear the impress of decision, resolution, and a full sense of power was only in accordance with the traditions of his house, and the nature both of the Prussian constitution and the Imperial authority, surrounded as by both are by circumstances emphatically demanding constant vigilance, and preparation for all emergencies. His speech to the Reichstag displays no lack of a full sense of the responsibilities of his great position, and tho' his utterances have revived confidence in his desire to maintain the peace of Europe, it is perhaps no bad thing that they are marked by a spirit of determination calculated to warn the belligerent powers that the young ruler of Germany is not a man to be played with. It is possible that a certain degree of sternness, which seems undoubtedly to belong to his character, may prove to be the best possible preventive to oppression on the part of France and Russia, which latter power, indeed, appeared to recognize it by the interdiction of inflammable articles in the Russian press.

It is only now and then that forecast can be indulged in with any prospect of being borne out by events, and none is more apt to be belied than that grounded on the probable policy of sovereigns before their accession to power. They cannot be judged by expressions used in a state of greater freedom, and the responsibilities of supreme power are calculated to check and control the personal impulses of even the strongest characters, unless they are as mad as Charles 12th, as unscrupulous as Napoleon 1st or as egotistical as Louis the 14th.

THE ICELANDERS.

We are sometimes tempted to wish that the three years which must elapse before the taking of the census were come and gone, that we might know how our population will then really stand. We have much confidence that, when the numbering of the people does take place, the result will be satisfactory to the patriot and discouraging to the pessimist and annexationist, whose mind (not his heart—for he has none) is resolutely bent on depreciating the country to which he does not deserve the good fortune of belonging.

The courage and spirit which have enabled the people of Canada first to link the Maritime Provinces with Quebec and Ontario by the Intercolonial Railway, and then to span the Dominion from sea to sea, are being rewarded by that rapid increase of population in the North West, the effects of which cannot but be ultimately felt even in the extreme east. It is true that the British emigration returns still show a large preponderance of numbers in favor of the States, but the annual increment from this source alone is still to be reckoned by thousands to a land which, 18 years ago, can scarcely be said to have possessed a population at all.

It is curious to think that the year 1891 will be the coming of age of Manitoba, whose existence as a Province must date from 1870. What amount of population the North West will by that time possess it is impossible to surmise, but it is certain that one characteristic of it will be a cosmopolitan mixture of peoples. No doubt a generation or two will bring about some degree of fusion, and history impresses upon us the superiority of mixed races. No bad element of this admixture will be the Scandinavian, and perhaps more especially that portion of it which comes from Iceland. That remarkable country is, according to all accounts, rapidly becoming uninhabitable. The winters are becoming more severe, the land refuses even its usual scanty supply of fodder, and the island produces nothing else. The people depend on their cattle and sheep and on the coast fisheries. Thousands of sheep have of late years perished in the snow-storms. The

population of Iceland was at last census 68,000. It is now probably less. Under these circumstances the idea of emigration to the British North West seems to have taken firm root in the Icelandic mind, and is being systematically carried out by whole colonies at a time. We believe about 2000 have arrived this season, and the arrivals of previous years amount to between 4000 and 5000.

The Norse increment is an eminently advantageous one. Sober, moral, industrious and courteous, the Icelander is also never illiterate, a child of ten who could not read would be phenomenal. To the Icelander, the fertility and comparative mildness of the North West climate must be the revelation of an Eden, and tho' he loves his icebound and frowning land with all the poetry which is ingrained in the Northman's nature, it seems probable that we shall in a very few years absorb the entire population of his inhospitable land.

We do not doubt that he will be found to be a contented citizen, and on the side of moderation, law and order.

THE REFORM OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS.

Lord Salisbury's measure for the reform of the Upper House is disappointing. As it is eminently fitting, and indeed necessary, at present that the movement should proceed from the Lords themselves, it is not difficult to imagine the dead weight of resistance that handicaps any proposition which would really go to the root of the matter. The root of the matter is the complete abolition of the hereditary right to legislation, and this *reform can scarcely be carried out except by the organized power of a strong administration*. This term might perhaps without impropriety be applied to the Government led by Lord Salisbury, but he is evidently not strong enough to venture on such a measure, tho' it might have the support of much of the best intellect and the highest conscience among the Peers.

A good deal has been said about the exclusion of "black sheep," and there is no reason to doubt that if, in any shape, the power to exclude were given, the House would use it for the protection of its own honor and dignity. But it does not seem to possess the courage (no doubt the majority has not the wish) to embrace the principle of election, which would at once cut the knot. If the Peers were influenced by logical consistency and the force of reasonable analogy, they would scarcely fail to see that there is no sound reason why the Peerage of the United Kingdom should not be on the same footing as the Peerages of Scotland and Ireland, out of which a limited number is elected to sit in the House of Lords (16 for Scotland and 28 for Ireland). The bearing of this circumstance was illustrated a few years ago in the case of the Marquis of Queensbury, who had to resign his seat on account of his unorthodox opinions as to religion. Anything short of election will fail to exclude the "black sheep," because, tho' the power might be sternly used for the expulsion of Peers who should openly disgrace themselves, it would be very difficult to deal with less pronounced cases of moral delinquency, without a risk of injustice and the dangerous precedent of inquisition into the moral character of individuals.

Lord Salisbury has proposed the creation of Life Peers to the number of five annually, and this would no doubt add to the deliberative Peer strength of the House, as the selection would be made from men eminent as Judges, Ambassadors, Members of the Civil Service who have been called to the Privy Council, Colonial and Indian Governors, Generals and Admirals. Three would be chosen from men of such positions and two from persons of special merit not included in these categories. This would be a step in the right direction, tho' but a short one, and would tend to strengthen the tone of the House, but its proper place would be as a supplementary measure to the extinction of the hereditary principle.

This Lord Salisbury has entirely passed by, as he did also a point much considered by the eldest sons of Peers—the question of the retention of a seat in the Commons after accession to a Peerage. This consideration leads to the recollection of another inconsistency in the present arrangement—the right of Irish Peers who are not Peers of Parliament to sit in the Upper House, a privilege denied to Scottish Peers who are in the same position. The uneasiness of the Lords is evinced by their apparent dread of any of their number retaining his seat in the Commons after accession, lest the practice should help to denude the Upper House of the ability it possesses.

Their Lordships had better take courage, make the plunge with a good heart, and throw heredity to the winds, leave everything open, let Peers stay in the Commons if they prefer to do so, and, if they lose a good man in that way, election would enable them at all events to fill his place with another. It is a pity they cannot make up their minds to the inevitable, if they could they would regain at once the consideration which has for some years been steadily diminishing.

Only five British officers who fought at Waterloo survive. They are General Whichcote and the Earl of Albemarle, Colonels Browne and Hewett, and Major Jackson.

Implications of the collusion of O'Donnell with the *Times* are rebutted by Mr. Davitt, who says O'Donnell was prompted by himself, "believing that the case would receive an impartial hearing from a British Judge." This is the usual clap-trap, and the whole case is mixed up with charges, denials, and every species of shift and prevarication, going to show the utter unreliability of the whole party, whose doings, as every sane man knew beforehand, cannot stand the light of legal investigation. The flutter of chicanery, falsehood, and evasion which gradually exposes itself is altogether contemptible. The whole world is now beginning to gauge the blare and blather of those folks with much accuracy.