

Notice.

LÉON GAMBETTA.

The foremost man in France is Léon Gambetta. It is well to write a sketch of his life now while he is the foremost man in France, for in that country of tremendous and sudden changes it is possible that he may suddenly disappear, and as far as his name is concerned almost be as if he had not been. There is no life which illustrates better than his the old adage that "the child is father to the man;" for both his birth and education were such as to indicate him an "irreconcilable" of the darkest dye, whether in the small village or in the grand arena of the country's Legislative Assembly where giants strive and toil.

Soon after the opening of the Languedoc Canal, the Gambetti, a Genoese family, established a bazaar in the town of Cahors. In 1827 the *National* newspaper was founded by MM. Thiers and Armand Carrell. It was a regular visitor at the bazaar, and was eagerly read by the young wife who reigned there. This was Gambetta's grandmother. Her children were by her carefully trained in the republican teachings of the *National*. As time passed on Gambetta's father entered into the sole charge of the bazaar, having previously married one who, like her predecessor, evinced an absorbing passion for the *National*. Her son was Léon Gambetta, who was reared on the *National* as her husband had been, and thus this paper was instrumental to no small extent in impressing those views on the young Frenchman of Genoese-Jewish descent which have placed him in the position of foremost man in France to-day.

He was a self-willed boy, frank and boisterous, and wont to ramble alone, investigating the nooks and corners of his native town. Next to this means of obtaining pleasure was the hearing of the speeches of Thiers and Guizot read from the *National* by his mother, who doubtless gave them with all the vim and passion with which they were originally delivered. But his father, whose mind was more influenced by the stern realities of life, and the desire, if

not necessity, of gaining money, was beginning to feel that the advocacy of the opinions of the *National* were not likely to advance the interests of any one in the Empire; and when young Léon was seven years old, he sent him to the Jesuits' preparatory school at Monfaucon, to learn accounts, writing, and other practical branches, instead of having his education confined to the "frothy" oratory of his favorite exponents of opinion. Léon became a diligent student; his teachers soon learned to be proud of him, and perhaps it was this feeling which caused them for a time to allow him free scope in his reading, and even to declaim to his fellow students choice morsels of speeches and leading articles from his favorite paper. During the exciting months previous to the presidency of Louis Napoleon, Madame Gambetta rewarded her son for honors obtained by smuggling into the seminary the papers received at the bazaar which most suited her taste, and their incendiary articles lost nothing in flavor or influence by being rendered or read by the young agitator. When Louis Napoleon became President young Gambetta was not allowed to continue in this course. His *Nationals* were confiscated, and he himself scolded, locked up and otherwise punished. His mother, learning this, used to cut out the most remarkable details from the paper and send them to him in cakes, pies, and articles of clothing, and the young man gave voice to them as he had done before. The priests, finding no other means to silence him would avail, sent him home in disgrace, with the message to his father that he was forming the school into a club of Jacobin urchins. His father frowned; his mother thought of her journalistic cakes and pies, and the wordy linings of the youth's jackets, and was grieved, and the neighbors with one accord prophesied that Léon Gambetta was born to be shot.

The same year, 1849, government agents were sent into departmental towns to overawe the easily influenced and enroll the names of those likely to oppose the re-establishment of the