

precedent bespeaks a lack of vitality and staying power in the race. Such an inference, however, would not stand the test of confrontation with facts.

French life is like a closely woven texture of conventions holding in check elemental forces which occasionally burst forth through the meshes of the social fabric and reveal deep-rooted racial traits which cannot be eradicated. The manifestations of these forces often stand in sharp contrast with social customs and the opposition of such antagonistic principles is what gives French life its enigmatic character.

No civilized race has ever displayed such dauntless curiosity, such intellectual fearlessness as the French; yet none has been more enslaved by social conventions and petty observances. No nation has ever risen to such height of collective magnanimity; yet none has ever revealed more individual pettiness and hardness in matters of small moment. No people is more capable as a whole of fearless decision and intrepidity in the face of overwhelming odds; yet more distrustful of risk and adventure, more afraid of the least initiative in the pursuits of daily life. No race is more passionate, more unashamed of instinct, none drinks more deeply at the sources of natural enjoyment; yet none is more stoic, more industrious and laborious. They display an exquisite sense of sociability; their politeness is the expression of extreme refinement and forbearance; yet no other people have ever displayed such utter indifference to the rights of others. They are irritable and nervous, impatient of restraint; yet capable of endless patience and dauntless calm. Such is the kaleidoscopic view that French life offers. Is it then to be wondered that France should be now reviled as a degenerate and depraved nation, now exalted as the champion of enlightenment, generosity and freedom?

A close study of the many sharp contrasts presented by the character of the French compels one to assume that it is the result of the interaction of two antagonistic forces, the one, social instinct, inherited from their Celtic and Roman ancestors, the other, fierce individualism, derived from their Frankish conquerors. No other hypothesis will offer a solution of sufficient scope.

While individualism triumphed in the Anglo-Saxon race, the social instinct, strengthened by environment as constituted by geographical position and historical development, has in France more and more reduced its activities and encroached upon its field of action. The spectacle of a fearless, life-loving race, so ardently individual and so frankly realistic, struggling against the ever increasing pressure of environment is one of the most tragic that the history of human societies has ever offered.

France has had to fight for her existence ever since she became conscious of her entity as a nation. Waves of savage hordes, all the violent upheavals of a world in the making swept over earliest France and almost annihilated her. Again and again she has seen her monuments destroyed, her institutions shattered. The ground on which the destiny of the world has just been fought for is the same as those Catalaunian plains on which Attila tried to throttle her. Then, for nearly a thousand years, she had to maintain herself in the teeth of an aggressive Europe. That her people went on living, "Surviving Catalaunians offering dogged resistance to invasion, clinging to the same valley, the same river-cliff", speaks for the vitality of the race. Life under such continual menace of death has produced in an intelligent race two strong passions,—pious love of the soil, and an intense dread of all internal innovations which might weaken the social structure and open the door to the enemy. As a consequence of such unrelenting struggle there is at the very root of the French character "a reflex of negation, an in-

stinctive recoil from the new, the untested," which makes the French the most conservative of the Western races.

To resist victoriously, the nation has required a strong centralized government and a deep sense of social discipline and solidarity. Her great kings, from Louis Capet to Louis the Fourteenth were ever strengthening her by their resistance to the disintegrating forces of feudalism. Richelieu finally broke this opposition and left France united against Europe, but deprived of the sense of individual freedom. Hence, as a result of historical evolution, the original ardent individualism of the French with its anarchistic tendencies has been counteracted by a spirit of conservatism, and the iconoclastic instinct of the freest minds in the world has found an inevitable check in the creation of a strong social instinct.

France has incarnated this instinct of human nature with unbroken continuity throughout the ages. This directing principle gives her history a deep-seated unity. Inpate in the Gaul, it has developed, after fusion with Roman institutions, a disposition of interdependence and solidarity whereby the individual has been subordinated to the supremacy of society. Its development may be traced from its earliest political manifestation. It begins with the struggle of the Gallo-Roman spirit against the barbaric Frankish personality, continues with the twelfth century communal movement for equality, the anti-ecclesiastical policy of Philippe-le-Bel, the national condensation of Louis XI, the Renaissance reversion to social as well as artistic ideals, to attain its maturity in the splendid efflorescence of the seventeenth century.

The "Grand Siecle", politically, socially and artistically, represents the culminating point in the evolution of the French genius. Left internally unified by Richelieu's suppression of the last vestige of feudalism and his destruction of Protestant separatist tendencies, France now stood as the most powerful political unit of Europe. Deprived of the sense of individual freedom, the nation found in artistic expression and social intercourse an outlet for its imagination, its intellectual energy and every form of creative activity. From this impulse arose the organization of polite society with the almost ritualistic etiquette of its court, the elaborateness and refinement of its manners, its salons its academies, etc. The ideal of every individual, bourgeois and aristocrat, was to be "un honnête homme" and to possess "le bel air."

The eighteenth century witnessed the slow recession of France from her position of political pre-eminence, and the gradual exhaustion of her artistic power, but the social instinct, immeasurably strengthened by historical conditions, had become the dominating trait of the French character, a trait so deeply inwrought, that not even the Revolution could permanently eradicate it.

It appears, then that historical conditions explain very largely the intensity of the social instinct among the French. A full explanation demands, however, that we take into consideration another factor just as powerful, the influence of the Catholic Church.

The chief effect of the Reformation was to strengthen the sense of personal responsibility by awakening the conscience, of all psychological forces the most powerful to originate and direct human energy. In countries where the reformation had full sway man assumed entire control of his life, his character was fortified, his personality intensified. Where the Reformation partially or totally failed, the individual entrusted the Church with the direction of his spiritual life. The consequence of this continued submission to authority was to weaken his individuality, his sense of personal responsibility, and to make more sensible his relations to his fellow-men. The bond of union between men is thus infinitely stronger in Catholic communities than in