

## THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM OF FRANCE.

The Court of Appeal in Paris has six chambers, a first president, six presidents of chambers and fifty-nine judges.

In important matters, such as questions of state, or very difficult questions, two chambers, where there are more than one, are united and the decision must be concurred in by fourteen judges. This is termed the solemn hearing, and is called by the first president of his own motion or by him, upon the request of one of the chambers, in a matter which they deem of sufficient importance.

The appeal from this court is to the Court of Cassation, and must be brought within three months.

The judges are all appointed for life, but may retire or be retired upon a pension after thirty years' service, or in the event of permanent infirmity.

## COURT OF ASSIZE.

There is also a Court of Assize, composed of judges of the Court of Appeal in each department (or eighty-six in all), for the trial of criminal cases with a jury. Where the seat of the Court of Appeal is within the department, the Court of Assize of the department is held by three of the judges of the Court of Appeal, the senior judge being president, and when such is not the case the Court of Assize is held by one judge of the Court of Appeal, and two judges of the Tribunal of First Instance of the district where the Court of Assize is held; the judge of the Court of Appeal being president.

The Court of Assize is held every three months, usually at the chief town of the department. The one in Paris is held twice every month. The trial is public; the jury is composed of twelve; they pass only upon the facts, and a verdict by the majority is sufficient. The appeal from the judgment of the Court of Assize is to the Court of Cassation, and must be brought within three days.

## TRIBUNALS OF COMMERCE.

There are in all the commercial towns and cities in France what are known as Tribunals of Commerce. The number or the locality of these courts is not fixed by law, but is determined by the government, according to the exigencies of each locality. This court takes cognizance only of disputes and transactions between merchants, tradesmen, bankers, or of matters connected with trade or commerce, in which is included bankruptcy. It is composed of a president, of judges and of supplemental judges. The number of the judges must not be less than two nor more than fourteen. The number of the supplemental judges is in proportion to the exigency of the public service. The number of each in each tribunal is fixed by a government regulation. The judges of this tribunal serve for two years, without compensation, and are elected by an assembly of the most eminent commercial men within the

district, the list of electors being prepared by the prefect of the department, and approved by the minister of the interior. Any commercial man thirty years of age, who has exercised his calling with honor and distinction for five years, may be elected either as a judge or a supplemental judge. The president must be forty years of age, and be chosen from among those who have served as judges. Three judges, at least, must concur in a decision. If the amount involved is under 1500 francs (\$300) there is no appeal, nor in any matter, if the parties give their consent to abide by the decision without appeal. In all other cases an appeal lies to the Court of Appeal within the jurisdiction, and takes priority in the court over other appeals.

In the Tribunal of Commerce in Paris, there were in the year 1853, 51,042 cases, of which 35,257 went by default, 10,465 were put at issue, 2663 were conciliated, and 1985 were withdrawn. This tribunal has a general president, ten judges and sixteen supplemental judges. It is in session every day throughout the year except Sundays, and is one of the most useful courts in France.

## COURT OF PRUDHOMMES.

(*A Mechanic's or Workingman's Court.*)

There is in the cities of Paris and Lyons, and in some of the other cities, a court called *The Court of Prudhommes* (literally good and true men, but meaning in this connection men well versed in some art or trade). It takes cognizance of all contests between manufacturers or master workmen, and their workmen and apprentices. It acts first as a court of conciliation, and if that fails, it has jurisdiction to the amount of 200 francs (\$40), without appeal, and jurisdiction to any amount subject to appeal to the Tribunal of Commerce, if there is one in the district, and if not to the Tribunal of First Instance.

This Court of Prudhommes consists of a council composed of master-workmen or manufacturers, and of foremen, being six of each equally balanced; one-half of each of which go out every two years, but are re-eligible. They are elected by the members of their respective classes. To them is added a president, and two vice-presidents, appointed by the sovereign for three years, but who are re-eligible.

This is a very practical and most useful tribunal. It sits every day except Sunday, decides cases with great dispatch, with little expense, and generally to the satisfaction of both parties. They are usually settled by conciliation. There are in the Paris Tribunal about 4000 cases in the year, two-thirds of them relating to wages. The judgments pronounced exceed one hundred annually, and appeals are rare.

## COURT OF ACCOUNTS.

The next court is the Court of Accounts. It is a court of exchequer, before which com-