

mouse-like timidity, de Freycinet has been detected at last, and not a voice is raised to defend the old intriguer. He is not the type of statesman France has need of; she wants straightforward officials.

Some financial journals admit there is a gleam of hope, that a new company will be formed to achieve the Panama canal project. But the public have no such corresponding faith, nor is the State at all likely to support a plan for executing the scheme. The prospect of securing dividends must be very bright and clear, to induce 1,500 million frs. of capital to be subscribed for any loan. Then France, following M. Beaulieu, who is the double of Leon Say on national finance, asserts, France herself must borrow one million of francs every 3 or 4 years, to square her revenue. There is a balance of 45 million frs. in the hands of the liquidator of the Moribund Canal Co.; he has induced the Colombian Government not to foreclose on the concession before another 18 months; he will pay that government the sum of half a million francs every six months to keep quiet and allow an effort to be made to resuscitate the enterprise. More millions were worse spent.

It is strange that so thrifty a people as the French, never took kindly to the principle of co-operation, or of People's Banks. At present keen attention is being given to both subjects; indeed one is the corollary of the other. Toulouse has been holding a Congress on the plan of People's Banks, so general in Germany, Italy, Belgium and Switzerland, and the Government has been officially represented thereat. Indeed a society platonically exists in Paris, under that ubiquitous chairman of all work, Senator Jules Simon, to promote these useful establishments. There are two types of People's Banks, that identified with Schulze-Delitsch, and the other with Raiffeisen Senior. The latter is generally associated with agricultural syndicates, it lends to farmers residing in districts where their probity, manners and life are well known; it pays no interest, profits are divided between members, and all are solidaires for the moneys lent. In the Schulze Banks, advances are made to all workers and their operations are chiefly confined to towns; the shares are taken by servants, artisans, clerks, small shop keepers, etc., who are paid a dividend, but all are responsible for one, and one for all. The French Savings Banks could readily be changed into Peoples' Banks.

It is curious that whenever the evacuation of Egypt flickers up the French bondholders at once testify to the solid amelioration in Egyptian finances effected by the British administration; and that would be at once compromised, were the protectorate withdrawn. The French want John Bull to simply go away so as to leave the entry for themselves free, and this explains why France will never accept as a rider to her offer to quit the Nile Valley, to have the sole right to return should events in her eyes justify a reoccupation. Until England guarantees the Egyptian national debt, and abolishes the capitulations, does something heroic in fact, she will be continually thwarted. Oriental races, save the Chinese and Japs, cannot in this age of advance and inter-

mixing, be expected to govern themselves, unless helped by Western intellect.

"Catharine the Great, of Russia," by Bill-assou, is much read. It is the best portrait of that wonderful woman, "the little Fike o' Stedin," that has as yet appeared. Her breviary was Moliere's plays. When Grimm indulged in eloquence in his letters to her—she was her "Own special correspondent," at Paris—she begged he would not write balderdash, and "never to employ stilts where our legs are sufficient." When only fifteen Catherine was a gamine, and though the daughter of penniless royal parents, her ears were often democratically boxed. The Empress Elizabeth invited her to Moscow to become the wife of the Caesarewitch Peter. The latter was a drunkard as early as eleven years old, but "Fike" knew, that in a royal coquette o' marriage, the husband counts for least of all. Till she arrived at the Russian frontier, she had to rough it on her voyage, and to sleep as she could in wayside inns, along with the hostess, the hens and the dog. She found the Grand Duke to be a brute, but his crown was valuable. The Empress Elizabeth had 15,000 silk dresses, and 5,000 pairs of shoes—which leaves "Good Queen Bess" thus nowhere in wardrobe matters; but neither the windows nor the doors kept out the wind and rain. Although meals were served on golden plates, etc., the dinner table was rickety and seats few. During her baptism for reception into the Greek Church, her fiancé kept making grimaces all during the ceremony. When married the Grand Duc consulted his valet as to the way a wife ought to be ruled: "Make them hold their tongues, and never to meddle with business." Catharine said she put up with all because supported by her ambition. In due time her husband had lapsed into drink, passed his lifetime playing with dolls and paper soldiers. On one occasion he had a rat tried by court martial for devouring one of his paper sentries, and he presided at the execution of that culprit. Z.

PARTY POLITICS UNDER THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION.

The Empire of the 17th, contained an article headed "Mr. Meredith's Wisdom," in which the question how far party allegiance should control patriotic conviction is raised, as well of course, as the subordinate question,—to what extent may a member of a party permit himself to express his convictions on those subjects wherein he differs from his party? Mr. Meredith's speech was, on the whole, admirable in tone and thought. But it is the doctrine which the article seeks to enforce that it would be desirable to discuss. The main idea is this, that if a member of a party differs from it on one or more great issues, he has no choice but to conceal his convictions, or go over to the other side, for it is laid down as an axiom that under the British constitution there can be but two great parties in the state, and that with one or other of these you must always act or you cannot accomplish great results. This is laid down as historically true. The writer is under a complete misapprehension. The teaching is unsound from every point of view. The writer says:—

"In politics under our parliamentary system there is no middle course. A man

may exercise perfect independence of view within certain lines, but on the great issues of public policy he must act with one party, or with the other.

"Under the British system of government—the very best in ultimate results the world has ever seen—the universal experience is that, for practical purposes and to accomplish great results, a man must belong to one of two great parties in the state."

What are the lines within which independence of view may be exercised? As we are not told we can only infer from the history of parties. Independence of view is always tolerated when it is exercised by a sufficient number of members of a party—Then on a question like that of prohibition, the exercise of independent views is considered quite right, because prohibition views are strong in both the parties. Yet surely it is a great issue. But neither party has adopted it, or opposition to it, as a plank in its platform. The "great issues of public policy" in the writer's mind, must therefore be those on which the two parties have joined issue. In regard to any one such issue if a member of a party cannot conscientiously act with his own friends he is undoubtedly in an unhappy position. But does it follow that he has no choice between acting contrary to his convictions or going over to the other side? I have not spoken of all issues but of one issue because in the next paragraph the writer says, speaking of such dissensions: "They will simply weaken or perhaps defeat the party with which, in nine cases out of ten, they are still in sympathy." Not infrequently cases occur in which a proposition which a supporter of the Government would endorse in the abstract is embodied in a motion of want of confidence. In such cases, I see no difficulty. You can express your views and vote on the want of confidence issue and support your friends in power. Six years ago Mr. Watson, then member for Marquette, moved against disallowance but in a form which had his motion been carried would have destroyed the Government. The Manitoba and Western members voted against the motion, with the exception of one member, who abstained from voting. It is clear to me they were right. But they were still bound to press their views on the Government as they did. Let us take the issue that is in the mind of the writer in the Empire—protection or a revenue tariff. I should like to believe there was no impatience or difference of opinion on the details of the tariff. But the Empire, during the session, expressed and must get credit for the view that a Conservative who holds to protection may differ with the Government as to the best way of carrying out that policy. But let us suppose he thinks in the interest of protection that pig iron should be placed on the free list, and that the manufacture of that commodity if protected should be protected by bonus, and the Government of which he is a supporter determines to keep up the protection by duties, what is he to do? I fear the Empire would say:—Sink his views and vote with the Government? Is he not bound by his duty to the country to express and press his views? And is it not certain if a considerable number of the Conservative party should hold the same opinion, and should express and press it that the Government would give way?