

other side of the channel, devotion to one particular technical quality threatens to establish a standard hardly less artificial than that of a century ago; but among English artists the stimulus which missed the painters of dry land struck the painters of the sea with its full force, though each practically confines himself to some favourite aspect of the ocean, Mr. Hook paints the breezes and broken water; Mr. Henry Moore the heavier movements of the waves; Mr. Colin Hunter paints the ocean as a liquid jewel; Mr. Macallum the play of sunlight through the mists which lie upon it; and so on with some half a dozen more. There is not a single painter of landscape proper whom we can put side by side with these men, unless, indeed, it be Millais.

The same spirit is to be recognised in the best modern portraits. A hundred years ago, good portraits were, above all things, decorative. Painters like Reynolds and Gainsborough were content to catch a likeness and to finish a head on a system, leaving much of their canvas to be covered by their pupils. A few sittings of an hour apiece were all they asked. It was inevitable that works produced in this way should have little individuality; in fact, nothing impresses one so strongly, in a gathering of portraits from the eighteenth century, as the want of variety among the sitters. On going back further, this becomes still more strongly marked. Kneller, Lely, even Vandyck, seem to have been content with likeness in the head alone. It was not so with the Dutch. The portraits of Van Der Halst, Frans Hals, and Rembrandt are more comparable to modern work in essentials than any landscape of their school, and the best of our living portrait painters are more closely allied to them than to those Venetians on whom they prefer to fix their eyes. It is only at the present day that the practice of Rembrandt and Hals has been revived, and that the character of the sitter has been allowed to decide the whole treatment of his portrait. The first man of the English schools to work conscientiously on this principle was Lawrence, who, whatever his faults, could at least model a head when he had one before him; but to see it thoroughly grasped, we must turn to living men, like Millais (at his best), Holl, or Bonnat, and to see its results in perfection, to portraits like those of Mr. Hook, of Mr. Chamberlain, and M. Thiers. The object of this article, if it has succeeded, is to point to one particular phase of modern art, as characteristic of the nineteenth century as its author. This phase is based on curiosity, the new substitute for faith. Men no longer dogmatise upon Nature; they go to her, and find out what she is, and they bring back what they can. Hogarth foreshadowed the new motive in one of his smaller works; and this new trust in Nature has given an art of its own to the nineteenth century—an art which is likely in time to be placed with those of the sixteenth and seventeenth—to be called the Inquisitive.

#### THE TRUE POSITION OF FRENCH POLITICS.

THIS subject may be effectively studied in the *Nineteenth Century*, where the present situation in France is most graphically treated by M. Renaud, who deplores the fact that the English nation at large should be hopelessly ignorant of matters concerning politics on the other side of the channel. "Where do English people," he asks, "study our public affairs and statesmen? I will not hesitate to declare that they derive their information from the *Figaro*. We have in Paris at least half-a-dozen newspapers, carefully and conscientiously edited, from which—due allowance once made for party prejudices—a stranger might make himself acquainted with the true position of our affairs. If any one of these journals be read in London by more than twenty-five people (not reckoning the French colony), I will undertake to study for six months nothing but German metaphysics. The *Figaro* alone is the favourite paper, yet there is on its staff but one political writer who is gifted with sound common sense; I mean M. Magnard. We have in France a number of writers of very great merit, who make the mistake of being rather too honest. Do the English know them? No. They know the literary mountebanks. Our *savants*, our philosophers, our philologists, write and publish works frequently of the highest order, but as *Figaro* takes no notice of them they do not so much as suspect their existence. But if at the shop of some scandalmonger one of those shameless novels should appear, which not even a monkey could read without a blush, and which are excluded from our homes, lo! the title of that book, and the name of its author, will immediately hover over every British lip. *Figaro* has spoken, and the exclamation is, What a horrid race those French people are!

"*Figaro* persistently deceives the English nation. Allow me to refer to the last two instances. Eighteen months ago we had in France a general election. Thanks to the culpable division of the Republicans, thanks also to the slanderous reports spread against the Tonkin expedition, two hundred Monarchists succeeded in forcing their way into the Chamber of Deputies; thereupon the *Figaro* began to trumpet forth a hymn in favour of the coming Restoration, and for three whole months the English press echoed the dirge of the Republic. Meanwhile the feud among the Republicans had to some extent abated, and the Monarchists of the House, incapable even of proposing in due form the restoration of the Monarchy, were discovered to be capable only, after the fashion of Irishmen, of parliamentary obstruction. Scarcely had this demonstration been made when the Republican Government, worried by the incessant intrigues of the pretenders, determined upon expelling them. 'The French nation,' wrote the *Figaro*, 'will energetically condemn this iniquitous, odious measure.' A fortnight elapsed; the electors were called upon to re-elect one-half of the departmental assemblies, and behold! the Royalists suffered a defeat which culminated in a disaster. The measure, which was to shake the foundations of the Republic, strengthened them so well that several deputies gave their adherence to the constitutional principles. Still, on the

faith of *Figaro's* assertions, Englishmen are convinced that General Boulanger is 'the first man in France.' It is said and written seriously in England that since Napoleon at the zenith of his power, and Lafayette in 1830, no man has ever enjoyed in France a popularity comparable to his; and that he is (with the exception of M. de Lesseps) the only one really popular with us.

"The natural inference from this idea is that General Boulanger is the most popular man in France; now, the most popular man in France ought to be the head of the Government; therefore M. Boulanger will be, ere long, the head of the Republic. So let us turn to General Boulanger, especially as the public abroad have not yet formed as decided opinions as we have in France. General Boulanger enjoys an immense popularity; no doubt this popularity does not rest, like that of Lafayette, on a revolution; like Bonaparte's, on victories; or like Gambetta's, on his country's honour saved by him; it is an undefined confidence, a mysterious expectation, and this makes it all the deeper and stronger. I will, however, set General Boulanger aside, with his political acts, which have been sharply and very properly criticised; and his qualifications as a military man, the value of which no one has as yet had an opportunity of gauging. For, to assert that Gambetta considered him as one of the four best generals of the French army is most incorrect. Well, I certainly acknowledge General Boulanger enjoys a large share of popularity: (1) among the rank and file, because he has shown a praiseworthy desire to improve their condition; (2) among a certain number of young officers, because he himself is still young; (3) among certain members of Parliament, because he is often willing to yield to their requests; (4) among the extreme sections of large towns, because he is on intimate terms with certain leaders, and also because of his excellent horsemanship. But this popularity, in reality, is simply notoriety, and it would be superfluous to show that notoriety and popularity differ as essentially as a figure differs from a number. To be a man much talked of is not a common lot; it is, in fact, a good deal; still, that cannot be called popularity.

"If to be talked about is sufficient to constitute popularity, who could be more popular than Mdle. Sarah Bernhardt, or M. Constant Coquelin? General Boulanger enjoys an immense and unexpected notoriety—this is unquestionable. It is because people do not take the trouble to distinguish between two nouns and two things that they make the mistake I have been endeavouring to point out. In our parliamentary constitution, Parliament determines in reality the choice of the President of the Council, and appoints the President of the Republic. Can any one see a plausible reason for raising to the highest magistracy of the country a man who may possibly be a good Minister of War, but who would not be accepted to play the political part of any of our parliamentary leaders.

"But how is this error to be explained?

"By two essential causes. First, nations, even the most forward in civilisation and democracy, experience the childish desire of personifying their hopes in the name of one man. Now there was rather a scarcity of prominent men at the very time when a succession of fortuitous circumstances brought General Boulanger to the Ministry of War. Gambetta had died, and after him, Chanzy, Victor Hugo, and Admiral Courbet. With all his skill, M. de Freycinet had never succeeded in appealing to the heart and to the imagination of the country. M. Leon Say, who was but one man in an eminent but limited group, lived a more or less voluntarily secluded life. The elections of the 4th October had crushed M. Brisson's expectations. M. Ferry was still bearing the heavy brunt of the Tonkin expedition. M. Clemenceau had allowed his opportunity to slip, and was at the time the subject of much distrust. Just then General Boulanger was caracoling his black charger in the Champs Elysées. Secondly, there was at that precise hour a great stir in the Republican party in favour of the army. Up to the time of the Tonkin expedition it had been a defeated army. The splendid enterprise aimed at and carried out in the far East showed that the young French army was both strong and valiant. It had brought victory to our standards. When political passions began to cool down, the popularity of the army grew apace, and with it that of the head of the army. Had his name been Lewal Thibaudin Thoumas instead of Boulanger, matters would have been exactly the same. The cheers raised on the 14th July, 1886, when the army of Tonkin was reviewed, were intended for the heroes of that expedition. These cheers were intercepted by the present Minister of War; that was all, but at the same time it was a great deal. The position of General Boulanger shortly after his elevation was materially strengthened by the action of M. de Bismarck, who appeared to require his dismissal from the important office to which he had been lately appointed; this was sufficient immediately to check the opposition of all his enemies.

"Our political parties may have many defects, but they are patriotic to the bone. When the great Chancellor seemed to require from us the humiliation of France, the sacrifice, not of a gentleman called Boulanger or Durand or Dupont, but of the soldier who stands at the head of our army, as if by a tacit and unanimous understanding, or by a kind of watchword which no one had given, but which all readily accepted, General Boulanger's name was from that moment no longer to be mentioned until the storm had blown over, viz., till the end of the German elections.

"All European nations err in the matter of the French desiring war. None is really in itself so anxious for peace, all the more so as our army is not an army of mercenaries, but an army including every Frenchman, whether rich or poor, educated or ignorant, capable of handling a gun; in short, every available man from eighteen to forty. At the beginning of the present year General Boulanger said to me, 'Any man wishing to go to war is a madman or a criminal and ought to be put in a strait-waistcoat.' 'Ay!' replies M. de Bismarck, 'but not a single minister has