OF all the civilised peoples of modern times, the French are without doubt the most interesting; of all political histories, that of the greatest European Republic is by far the most instructive. England's lively neighbours live in a glass house, through the transparent walls of which their every action, nay, almost their very thoughts, impulses, and velleities, are distinctly and painfully visible to the least attentive spectator. Every Frenchman of note is a celebrity throughout our entire planet, and in the Republic itself distinction is the inevitable outcome alike of a creditable reputation and of criminal notoriety. Every step forwards or backwards taken by the Republic as a whole, or by the meanest of her self-advertising citizens, in the sphere of politics, science, art, or religion, is chronicled and criticised by the Press of the world with a wealth of detail and ingenuity of commentary, with a lavish expenditure of labour and money, such as the doings of the first Napoleon, were he to return to the earth, would certainly fail to command. Cultured people in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America regard Paris with the reverence, enthusiasm, or curiosity with which the name of Mecca inspires the devout Moslem, and no man's, or woman's, education is deemed to be quite finished until he, or she, has made the prescribed pilgrimage to the City of Light and Life. In a word, France has succeeded in hypnotising the world to such a degree that the impassable gulf between that which she claims to be and that which she is yawns hidden from the view of almost every pilgrim, whose loving glances, open-mouthed admiration, and lyric praises are singularly suggestive of the maudlin manifestations of momentary affection felt by Titania, the Fairy Queen, for Bottom the weaver, when he had assumed the head of the least lovely quadruped known to mankind.

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No doubt the factitious importance thus attributed to everything French has its drawbacks even from our neighbours' point of view. If their good qualities are strongly emphasised in consequence, their defects are grotesquely magnified, and petty peccadilloes and national idiosyncrasies are liable to assume the dimensions of heinous crimes or iniquitous vices in the process. The historian, therefore, whose mind is free from bias, and who would fain have his conclusions exempt from error, must needs view the people and their institutions in correct perspective. This is all the more difficult at the present moment, when the Dreyfus agitation has divided the entire civilised world into two camps, in one of which the French are not merely accused of inhuman injustice, but are condemned for refusing to try their suspects according to foreign methods of legal procedure, while in the other one hears the fateful words: It is expedient that one man should die rather than the honour of the army should be tarnished. These are most pernicious extremes of which an impartial mind will sedulously seek to keep clear. For the deplorable scenes to which this painful case has given rise are but transient symptoms of a chronic condition which Frenchmen themselves aver has its roots much further down in the character of the French people, as modified by historical processes, especially by those which have been at work since the Great Revolution.

The French have been aptly described as the yeast which leavens the racial dough of Europe. Their sense for the pretty, as distinguished from the beautiful, their readiness of judgment which contents itself with a hasty glance at the surface of things, their undying love of gaiety and novelty, and, above all, their worship of mere form, are among the main characteristics which pierce through the events of which their entire history is composed. Their intellectual mechanism is remarkably simple, and wonderfully adapted to guide the will in the pursuit of those aims and objects the attainment of which is commonly supposed to make life worth living in the materialists' estimate. Their character, which can readily adapt itself to a variety of conditions, has more of the blaze of the brilliant furze-fire than of the equable force of the latent vital heat which imparts warmth and life without losing a single spark. They lack the apparent listlessness and laziness in small matters which, in truth, are the outcome of the constancy characteristic of all phlegmatic peoples who put substance before shadow and feel a profound faith in the triumph of noble ideas. Like children, they are remarkably free from the disgusting vice of hypocrisy and its less repulsive relative, modesty, despite the fact that they possess in a high degree the last of the three symptoms of that moral disease, as enumerated by a shrewd Oriental, who said of the hypocrite: "When he speaks, he lies; when he promises, he deceives; and when he trusts, he suspects."
The vanity of which they have so often been accused is the result alike of their feminine qualities of mind and of the estimate put upon these by their complimentary neighbours. When Frenchmen sleep, enthusiastic foreigners, like well-bred courtiers, are able to quote witty extracts from their snoring, so that no matter how fulsome the lavished praise, it contains nothing new to those upon whom it is bestowed. Few men consider that their advocates, however eloquent, are quite as good as the cause which they plead.

The awe-inspiring spectacle of the French Revolution may, perhaps, be quoted as a proof that underneath the gaiety, vanity, and changefulness of the French there are other and nobler latent qualities, which, on occasion, can manifest themselves in earth-shaking convulsions, inaugurate new eras, and laugh to scorn the most plausible explanations of the wisest philosophers. These, however, are but as the sudden outburst of a bonfire, not as the even heat that glows in the depths, and at best they can hardly be said to do more than justify the description given by Voltaire of his countrymen when he called them "tigres-singes." The struggle for bread was at the same time a war against injustice and lies, and mad resistance to the worst forms of oppression merged into short-lived enthusiasm for the phrase, "freedom, equality, and brotherhood," which speedily again subsided into such abject submission as is paralleled only by that of the flock.

The worship of form, the love of the pretty, the study of the surface, and the pursuit of the materially useful, contain the clue to most of the psychological mysteries of the French character. They afford a satisfactory explanation of the facts that for a whole century the French people have been fitfully struggling to obtain the republican form of government, without caring a jot whether it is as good as an enlightened monarchy; that they are satisfied with less than its shadow; that in the France of to-day education is either aggressive atheism or gross superstition; that ethics are selfishness girt with fine phrases; religion a mixture of outward ritual and reactionary politics; marriage, a cold contract construed à la Malthus; the drama, adultery combined with sparkling dialogues and interesting situations; literature, to a great extent, obscenity leavened by wit; and journalism, elegant and polished fiction.

Such is the estimate formed by foreigners of a serious, contemplative, and unbiased turn of mind after years of study and observation. They make, however, a distinction between the individual and the masses, as is usual in these days of psychological analysis. The individual is credited with nimbleness of intellect, graceful elegance, drawing-room politeness, ready wit, the desire and ability to please, and that perfect clearness of expression which is never obscured by depth of thought or a multitude of details. His taste, like his manners, is refined; he varnishes and perfumes every-
thing he touches, and almost disinfects sensuality with the salt of wit. He is cheerful, sociable, and obliging in little things, moderate even in his pleasures, but at bottom egotistic, and devoid alike of great passions and high ideals.

The masses, on the other hand, are said to justify, by their character and conduct, the Voltairean epithet of "tigres-singes." Suspicion, cruelty, servility are their leading traits. They are capable of overrunning their weak Sovereign's palace, of compelling him to don the revolutionary cap amid shouts of jubilee that shake his throne to its foundations, and then of beheading him; but they creep to their garrets like lashed hounds before the man of iron will who calls them canaille and treats them as sheep. Their belief in themselves is unbounded, and deep as the faith that removes mountains, while their efforts to justify it are marred by lack of trust in their leaders and of fidelity to their principles. They are docile and pliable only when the hand that rules them is guided by a will of adamant and armed with a rod of iron. They utterly lack that sense of humour which is the saving trait of most European nations: they contradict themselves, belie their own principles, thwart their own plans, and blast their own hopes by conduct which seems to lack any conceivable motive. Take, for instance, the period, if ever there was one, when the French race was in dead earnest. During the Revolution the people was led hither and thither by its changing chiefs, maddened by hollow phrases as a bull is by a red rag, and befooled not only by every audacious adventurer who united a powerful voice with the gift of re-echoing commonplaces or paradoxes, but still more by its own vain folly. Is there any other civilised country in which a general would, at a most critical moment, report to his Government, as the French general wrote to the Convention: "A cannon-ball fell yesterday within two paces of where I stood; the slave felt respect for the free man"? And what are we to say of that other enthusiastic Frenchman who seriously sketched out the line of conduct which he was prepared to adopt should another tyrant succeed Louis Capet: "Yes, I will seize my hair and lop off my head without a sigh, and, approaching the despot, will offer it to him, and exclaim: 'Behold, tyrant, the action of a free man!'"

Whether the above severe judgment, which has been repeatedly passed upon the French nation, is correct or erroneous is a question the discussion of which might well call for a volume. I state it merely as an opinion which, as such, deserves to be recorded along with the views of enthusiastic Gallophiles. The reader may compare with the two those salient characteristics which have been brought to light by the events that compose the history of the French people during the Third Republic, which even the general reader has at his fingers' ends.
Whatever opinion one may reasonably hold as to the basis of French character, it is fairly certain that even the most highly gifted people cannot sustain such spiritual life as is presupposed by a civilising mission and the rôle of a pioneer of culture on pabulum like materialism, egotism, and the cult of the external. Some mixture of heavenly ichor is needed to impart fire to the blood and force to the sinews of the race which aspires to play the part of Moses to the peoples of the earth and lead them to the Land of Promise. Yet, so far as one can ascertain by a careful study of the intellectual, political, and religious movements of the last hundred years, there is not the faintest trace of any ennobling principle, of any sublime ideal, or even of any glorious aspirations which can be pointed out as French by origin, or even by adoption. Ever since the days of the Revolution, one might even say since the death of Malebranche, the faith of the French nation, in so far as it has been a working belief fertile in motives to spur on the will to activity, has been limited to those aspects of good and evil which are distinctly visible and tangible, immediately pleasant or hurtful. The greedy public policy of colonising whole continents abroad, the egotistic private practice of limiting families at home to two or three children, the prevalent politico-ritual theology, the apotheosis of the army and the infallibility of its chiefs, the defilement of literature, the prostitution of the drama and of pictorial art to the passions of the human beast, the total negation of science, the universal conviction that the nation is invincible by land and by sea, and the concomitant prodito-mania,* combined with the cheerful certitude that France is still the light and the life of the world, are inevitable consequences of the four conditions enumerated above and unerring symptoms of the dire disease which has eaten into the vitals of the citizens of the Third Republic. It may be urged that higher aspirations, holier strivings, nobler ideals, frequently play a part in French politics and literature, that they have materially contributed to further the cause of culture among the people. The plea may be allowed to stand, for undeniable facts invest it with an air of welcome plausibility, which it would take much time and space to dispel; but it is difficult to withstand the growing conviction that most of these evidences of a true spiritual interest are devoid of substance. Idealism seems little more than a valuable collection of telling phrases which impart spice and flavour to public speeches or literary work, the massive gold having been beaten to the thinnest leaf for the purposes of gilding. Writers and speakers frequently give sententious or eloquent expression to opinions on the spiritual order of things, and reap a harvest of popular applause in consequence; but the opinions are too often independent of the reasons by which they could be rendered probable, and the ensuing acts are, for the most part, irrecon-

* A morbid belief in the ubiquity and omnipotence of traitors.
cilable with the opinions. Public personages possess the knack of defending such elevating views with eloquence and fire, and often obtain place and renown as their reward; but some of the most sincere or cynical among them frankly admit that they take very good care never to allow such opinions to degenerate into convictions. Characteristic in this respect is the story of the French preacher who, having begun his sermon before royalty with the ominous words: "Nous mourrons tous," and observed the sudden frown on the face of his nervous monarch, quickly added, "ou presque tous."

The Republican form of government affords a typical instance of the ruinous readiness of the French people to believe in the miracle of transubstantiation in political life, by means of which a catchy phrase or a witty conceit is supposed to crystallise and transfer the highest ideals to the most pitiful realities. For over a century the word "République" has been the lode-star of the people. Most of them regarded it as the "Open Sesame" of the wished-for millennium, and many of them lost their lives in mad efforts to realise the ideal—of liberty, equality, fraternity. They finally attained the veriest shadow of the thing yearned for, and when it was being established, their zeal went so far as to suggest that church steeples, towering aloft above citizens' dwelling-houses, constituted an infraction of equality, and should therefore be levelled down. They now possess a Republic which has been aptly termed a military oligarchy tempered by scandals, and in which there is considerably less of genuine freedom, equality, austere morality, and rugged honesty than in Germany, Austria, or even in the dominions of the Tsar. Party struggles wildly with party for power or pelf, each one employing means which degrade politics, discredit the nation, and disgrace civilisation; and all of them crying *Hosanna* to the Great Republic, One and Indivisible.

They began by abolishing rank and titles, and renouncing all the works and pomp of odious royalty, and they ended in a debasing system of buying and selling ribbons to stick in their coats, so as to be able to tower aloft above their meager brethren, like the steeples above the citizens' chimneys. This method of purchasing arbitrary distinction seemed to many good Frenchman to offer little that was objectionable from an ethical point of view, but to foreigners it appeared to be a pathetically wrong-headed way of realising the sacred principle of equality. It may, of course, be urged that the number of persons who took part in this ribbet-mongering was but a fraction of the population, to which the reply is very obvious that not every citizen possessed the money necessary to buy the coveted honour, nor could the Legion find room for 40,000,000 citizens of great merit, but only for the very cream of the most highly distinguished, which appears to be a very numerous class indeed. A couple of years
ago a Radical Cabinet was in power under M. Bourgeois, and during its short tenure of office did more to advance the true interests of the Republic than any of its predecessors. Its Democratic members seemed to be in grim earnest, if ever Ministers were, and the Chamber enthusiastically supported them against the open censure and underhand opposition of the Senate. M. Doumer, the Finance Minister, drew up an Income Tax Bill, hated by all, the object of which was to compel the rich to contribute to the revenue of the State proportionately as much as the poor. Suddenly, however, the Cabinet resigned, ostensibly in consequence of the refusal of the Senate to vote the credit for Madagascar, although the Chamber was ready to repeat its votes of implicit confidence. The Ministry that succeeded was strongly Conservative and friendly towards the clericals; yet the Chamber which had supported the "Red Radical" Bourgeois Cabinet quietly veered round and became just as devoted to its antagonists. It may be an ungenerous insinuation which is implied in the remark that the alternative of that sudden conversion would have been a new general election and its concomitant risks; but the assertion will not be gainsaid that even Continental parliamentary annals offer no parallel to this extraordinary spectacle.

Nor was this all. One of the greatest lights of the Radical party was M. Paul Doumer, whose courageous attitude as Finance Minister more than warranted the belief that he was the rising man of the age, the democratic Moses who would lead his fellow countrymen to the Promised Land of liberty, equality, and brotherhood. Towards him all eyes were turned with hope or fear, until, a few months later, he eagerly accepted from his uncompromising antagonists the very lucrative post of Governor-General of Indo-China and the mellifluous title of Excellency which must be music to the ears of French patriots. His Excellency has since been labouring to spread the blessings of republican civilisation in the Far East, with the assistance of Christian prelates and patriotic missionaries.

Now, his Excellency the Governor-General is a type, not an isolated exception. His countrymen were no wise shocked at his sudden transformation, nor were his colleagues much surprised; they all regarded it as one of the commonplace incidents of political life, hocie mihi cras tibi. Foreigners who fail to understand these sudden changes have occasionally resorted to the hypothesis that the psychological substratum of the French character is a combination of dramatic and forensic talent with hysteria, so that the true embodiment of the type would be a gifted neurasthenic actress turned special pleader. Energy displays itself by fits and starts, but there is no sustaining form, no stamina. This would seem to have been the idea entertained by the Englishman who, when he was shown the picture of the sun which Louis XIV. at one time intended to adopt as his emblem, wrote
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under it "Phaeton." From the days of the Emperor Julian it has ever been the same: opportunism, eclecticism, trimming, have always possessed attractions in France with which those of consistency, principle, and conviction have been powerless to compete. Thiers was an uncompromising opponent of Louis Napoleon's pretensions to the Presidency of the Republic, yet when he went to the Mairie to record his vote, he unhesitatingly gave it to the Pretender, and less than a year later he became his bitter antagonist again. Gambetta's first bid for public notice was the publication of a poem in praise of the Pope St. Leo and all the sovereign pontiffs of that name, after which he coined the celebrated phrase "Le cléricalisme, voilà l'ennemi !" Henri Rochefort made his débüt with an ode to the Virgin Mary. In 1870 no fewer than 150,000 soldiers voted at the plébiscite for Napoleon and the Empire, and a few months later were ready to conspue any citizen so far behind the times as not to have become a republican. As ladies are carried away by fashion, no matter how repugnant to their personal tastes, so are the French irresistibly moved by catching phrases, irrespective of the nature of the realities they cover; and whenever that vivacious people become momentarily masculine, they resemble George Eliot's Mrs. Poyntz and are masculine "in a womanly way."

The Empire was a system by which the entire nation was exploited for the behoof of one family for the support of which numerous acts of injustice were cheerfully and methodically committed. But it had at least a policy, it feared ridicule, and it seriously strove to accomplish something for the people and the country. The Third Republic, on the contrary, born of the unnatural union of clerical demagogy and infallible militarism, has let loose not one hungry family, but a whole legion of place-hunters, to satisfy whose ravenous appetite the resources of the country, the credit and prestige of the nation, the doctrines of republicanism and principles of a far more sacred character have been ruthlessly sacrificed, nem. con. A few years ago those ideal Republicans were at the beck and call of General Boulanger, who had he possessed but a tithe of the spirit and grit with which we are asked to credit every French officer of to-day, would have been long since crowned Emperor before the high altar of Notre Dame. Yet the followers of this the most popular man in France since Napoleon I. shouted Vive la République, as well as hosanna to the bravé général.

The corruption in high places revealed by the Panama disclosures which followed the destruction of the "Boulange" seemed so unique in political history that no existing word was found capable of expressing all that the phenomenon signified, and the name Panama itself had to be retained for the purpose. But the revelations carried with them only one practical lesson, that the guilty people were foreign.
traitors. Yet bribers and bribed, the dupers and the duped, were equally enthusiastic patriots who shouted "Vive la patrie," and could vie with one of Charcot's nervous female patients in shedding tears or breathing sighs. They had grown too great

"For narrow creeds of right and wrong, which fade
Before their unmeasured thirst for goods"

that belonged to others. The inquiry into the origin of the scandal let in a flood of light on the subject and made it clear to all France that the ring leaders of the conspiracy were foreigners; French, of course, they could not be. The chosen people of to-day, like the chosen people of olden times, have doubtless their own sins and backslidings, but heinous crimes and irreparable calamities invariably came from the "nations." The grande nation, which in war is sans peur and in peace sans reproche, was deceived and betrayed by heartless Jews and foreigners. The army, which is infallible in peace, is invincible in war: it may be betrayed, but cannot be beaten. Europe would have become French instead of Cossack had it not been for the numerous traitors with whom France has had to contend. After the Panama came the scandals of the Chemins de fer du Sud, which exposed another gallery of Republican types moving in the higher planes of political existence, and actuated with the pious hope that the charity which covereth a multitude of sins is identical with the charity which beginneth at home.

The worship of Russia and the apotheosis of autocracy should, one would think, have been sufficient to open the eyes of "austere Republicans" in France to the plight of the political temple in which liberté, égalité, fraternité had taken up their earthly abode. But the French people are merely witty; humour has been inexorably denied them. Since the partition of Poland, they had welcomed, protected—encouraged the Poles, thousands of whom lived in Paris and dreamed of their renovated kingdom. But friendship with the Tsar put an end to this maudlin sentimentality, and the cap of liberty was speedily pulled off while the Muscovite national anthem was reverently played—and the Poles were told to make peace with the godlike Tsar and to remain inarticulate in the free Republic. There is probably not one rational human being from Moscow to Peru, from Tokio to Rome, who could acquiesce in the relations between France and Russia, and putting his hand on his heart say, "And yet I am a Republican." But all France has wrought this miracle, and lustily shouted, "Vive le Tsar! vivre la République."

And now comes the Dreyfus and anti-Semitic movement, which, to quote the words of an eminent Continental politician, "produces an impression as if the crater of a volcano of filth had suddenly become active, belching forth the deep-lying deposit of a whole epoch.
of corruption, overflooding therewith the length and breadth of the
land, and smothering and burying everything with which the glorious
traditions of the 'grande nation' were even loosely associated."

It is needless here to recapitulate the arguments for and against
the ex-Captain. His guilt or innocence is still an open question,
concerning which very few persons have the right to express a
conviction. One decisive fact is certain: none of his courageous
defenders has hitherto brought forward a single proof that he is
innocent. I am now speaking from a purely legal point of view.
Many interesting statements have been made which render his guilt a
matter of doubt, and most unbiased people are morally persuaded that
it is not proven. But a trained judicial mind cannot be influenced by
mere statements, and they are as yet nothing more. No State could
allow a judgment once solemnly pronounced by a legally constituted
court to be quashed and a new trial granted because of mere doubts
entertained by the prisoner's friends. New proofs are indispensable.
It is quite possible that in one or other of the series of lawsuits to
which the Dreyfus case has lately given rise, had the sacred authority
of the chose jugé been less religiously upheld, such proofs would have
been evolved. But as a matter of fact they were not.

Further, it is clear that if Dreyfus was condemned for betraying his
country's secrets to Germany, he was wrongly condemned; for the
clear and emphatic denial of the German Government, in the person of
Herr von Bulow, admits of no doubt or weakening commentary. The
French Government certainly allowed it to be understood that
that was his crime, and for years encouraged the belief that the
treason was committed on behalf of Germany. Ethically, this was—
not to put too fine a point upon it—wrong on the part of the French
Government if the allegation was untrue, but so far from being sur-
prising, it was exactly what should have been expected. Still it by
no means follows that Dreyfus was really condemned on a charge of
having revealed French military plans to Germany. Nobody except
the initiated few knows on what charge he was condemned. The trial
was secret. It could not have been public in France or in any other
State. This being so, it cannot be proved that Dreyfus was condemned
on a charge of betraying secrets to Germany, although it seems very
probable. Consequently the alleged fact is no legal ground for
quashing his condemnation and proceeding with a new trial.

But the secrecy of the trial was not quite impenetrable. Corners
of the veil were raised by the initiated for the edification of their
friends, while the rest of the world was still left in ignorance. This is
not ideal equality, but it is prosaic fact. The friends, however, revealed
a little too much in the heat of their dispute with Dreyfus's defenders,
and it is these disclosures which afford the one unanswerable argument
against the condemnation of the "traitor." In this way leaked out
the truth about the bordereaú, the divergency of opinions among
the experts in handwriting, the hesitation of the judges, the sudden
production of a secret document which the latter were allowed to read,
but not the prisoner nor his counsel, and then the unanimous verdict,
on the basis of this secret proof. If this story of the secret document
be true, and it now seems indubitable, then there can no longer be
question of an error of justice, but of such a fiendish crime against
every form of human justice and equity as the majority of British
convicts would refuse to perpetrate. Maitre Démange, who defended
Dreyfus, exclaimed, on first hearing of this document: "The act
would constitute such a brutal infraction of the elementary prescrip-
tions of justice, that I cannot believe it."

Yet the story stands unchallenged. It was first announced by the
organs of the French Government, and was used as an argument
against the demand for a new trial. Its effect, of course, was very
different, but this is a mere detail. The statement has never since
been denied. Deputy Jaurès, in his speech of January 21 in the
Chamber, called on the Prime Minister to say, yes or no, was such a
document used against the prisoner. M. Meline replied: "I will
not answer this question, for that would mean the revision of the
trial." Now, if he could have replied "No," this would surely not
have made a new trial necessary. And every citizen has a right to
receive an answer to this question, which turns not upon State secrets,
but upon the elements of justice. Secrecy at the trial was necessary;
but the condition sine qua non was that the trial itself should be con-
ducted on the lines of simple justice, and the prisoner should know
what were the proofs used against him. Yet the Government refused
to say that this condition had been observed! The presumption, there-
fore, is that it could not. In like manner, during M. Zola's trial, not one
of the military witnesses denied the existence of that secret document,
and in one case—the examination of General Mercier—a misunder-
standing rendered an explanation necessary, and the explanation
formed a very strong presumption in favour of the statement that
Dreyfus was condemned on the strength of a document shown to his
hesitating judges and withheld from himself and his counsel. This
is the really strong point in the case for a new trial, for the first
court-martial, assuming that it condemned the prisoner on evidence
which was kept from him and may not have been evidence at all,
was guilty of an act which cannot be adequately qualified in print.

The conduct of the trial of M. Zola is another instance of the manner
in which liberty, equality, and brotherhood are understood by the
austere Republicans on the other side of the Channel. Everything
which a witness cared to say against the wretched ex-Captain was
expressed with deliberation, emphasis, and dramatic gestures, but the
moment a word or hint was about to be dropped which might possibly
tell in his favour, the Court cut it short with the remark that under no circumstances could the question of Dreyfus's guilt be gone into. The authority of the *chose jugée* was above all doubt. And yet, when one comes to think of it, the *chose jugée* is not precisely a dogma of faith. Frenchmen have been sentenced and even put to death as criminals whose innocence was later on clearly established and officially recognised. To say nothing of the case of Calas and Lally-Tollendal, with whose tardy rehabilitation Voltaire's name is gloriously associated, there is the instance of a schoolmaster named Pierre Vaux, who, in the beginning of the fifties, was sentenced to lifelong transportation by a military court. The evidence against him was French, frothy, and false. Shortly after his removal to Cayenne the fact of his innocence was fully established, but the Government, acting in the public interest, felt reluctant to call in question the authority of the *chose jugée*, as this might throw discredit on the military men who had tried Vaux and found him guilty. Therefore he was allowed to live in despair and die by inches in Cayenne. But perhaps he was really guilty? No; because a few months ago the Cour de Cassation in Paris quashed the sentence and formally recognised his innocence. It was a political enemy who had perjured himself to ruin the man, and the proofs of his innocence which the highest court of appeal lately admitted were offered during Vaux's lifetime, but refused in the interests of the State, and the *chose jugée* was duly respected. Again, in the year 1852 a law-abiding citizen named Cirasse was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to be executed for having shot a landowner named Bonneau. He protested that he was innocent, and he was. It was a court-martial, however, that tried him, and he was duly put to death. Later on — after the ten years had elapsed which, according to the Statute of Limitations, relieve a criminal from the penalty attaching to his crime—the real murderer turned up and confessed that he had first killed Bonneau, and then allowed Cirasse to be executed. Was the mistake admitted? Certainly not. The authority of the *chose jugée* was manfully upheld, and Cirasse's memory was not rehabilitated; on the contrary, his three daughters, despite their petitions and prayers, were compelled to go on living as the children of a vile murderer. In 1882 strenuous efforts were made to have the trial quashed; but the *chose jugée* remained *chose jugée*. In the year of grace 1898 the question is being raised again, this time with some hopes that at least Cirasse's grandchildren may have the stain washed off. And yet a mere novelist presumes to demand that the authority of the *chose jugée* in the case of Dreyfus should be undermined by a new trial held during the lifetime of the prisoner! No wonder the French people should regard M. Zola as a madman. And, from the French point of view, he undoubtedly is a hopeless, dangerous maniac, and neither a patriot, a Republican, nor a Frenchman.
To foreigners the Dreyfus case, as such, has no intrinsic importance. The man may be guilty, even though he had been condemned without a hearing, as the victims of Lynch justice often are, and the circumstance that there was a traitor in the French army would leave the rest of Europe calmly indifferent. But the case is highly interesting in another way: it has brought out into clear relief certain of the essential characteristics of the French nation, the knowledge of which may prove serviceable to the world. It has revealed to us the repulsive spectacle of an entire people, with its army, press, politicians, and clergy, rising up against a defenceless and wretched man, and threatening to demolish the fabric of the State if simple justice were done to him; a Government which invokes the interests of the national defence to screen indefensible breaches of equity, and whose press organs publish the names and addresses of the jury before they have given a verdict; an army whose select representatives threaten the jury with their resignation if the verdict be different from what they expect, and a legislative assembly whose enlightened members refuse to raise their voices on behalf of the victim of injustice, lest at the coming elections they should lose their seats. M. Jaurès affirmed on oath that when he spoke in the Chamber on behalf of Dreyfus he was supported by about twenty colleagues. All the others were dead against him. "But later on," he continued, "in the lobbies, where parliamentarians recover their elasticity and freedom, numberless deputies of all groups and parties said to me: 'You are right; but what a pity it is that this question should have cropped up now, just a few months before the elections'"! And yet a few days ago an eminent parliamentary orator—in a debate on foreign policy—exclaimed: "In France public opinion is always active on behalf of justice and in favour of the weak"! The three phenomena which have grouped themselves around the Dreyfus agitation are a firm belief in the infallibility of the army; the union of clericalism, militarism, and anti-Semitism; and the utter demoralisation of the "healthy kernel" of the nation.

The French army is the embodiment of the noble longing for revanche at home, as the Franco-Russian Alliance is its expression abroad. From the day on which the Treaty of Frankfort was signed every Frenchman felt that the reorganised army was bound to become the one infallible and omnipotent power in the State. Hence the Clericals, who, it must be admitted, had to content themselves at first with the crumbs that fell from the table of the Republic, advised their aristocratic friends to send their sons into the army. And the advice was extensively followed with signal success. A French official who is at home in the Ministry of War states that at present the entire War Ministry, the General Staff, two-thirds of the cavalry officers and about one-half of all the other officers are pupils of the Jesuit fathers and devout children of the Church. Senator Ranc affirms
that France has now ninety-six Ultramontane soldier clubs, at which
the soldiers attend religious services, play billiards, receive tobacco
and cigars and obtain letter paper and stamps free. Most of the
officers' wives are patronesses of the club, and no soldier who is not
on good terms with the presiding abbé has a chance of getting on
well. All the rich officers manage to be sent to Paris, the poorer
brethren remaining in the Alps or on the Eastern frontier. The
Pope protects the Republic, and the French workmen who made a
pilgrimage to the holy city last year received a commemorative medal,
on one side of which was the image of his Holiness, and on the other
the figure of La République, a sword in one hand and a cross in the
other. In a word, the sword and the cross are allies, just as the
French and the Russians are, and the cross is determined to play
Russian to the sword. This, at least, is what the Catholics themselves
maintain, and they are the best judges. Last November, at the
National Catholic Congress in Paris, one of the most warmly
applauded motions was for the adoption of a new French Standard:
instead of the Tricolore the nation is to take the banner of the
sacred heart of Jesus! The electoral programme put forward
recently by the Revue du Clergé Français is very frank and
intelligible: "The Church," says this authoritative organ, "pos-
sesses the right to govern not only individuals and families, but also
peoples. In other words, the State is not independent of the Church;
the State is obliged to accept the Catholic religion, to profess and to
defend it. . . By divine right the Pope, as supreme head of the
Church, has power to enact mandates with obligatory force for
princes." This means, among other things, the reinstatement of the
civil punishment of heretics and unbelievers; and this is as it should
be, if it be a fact in France as in Germany that only true and devout
followers of Jesus Christ can butcher their neighbours with worldly
success and heavenly approbation.

This union of clericalism and militarism explains the religious aspect
which the Dreyfus affair has assumed. The Jews and the Protestants
are to be driven away, annihilated, as were the aristocrats and
clericals during the Great Revolution in the name of liberty, equality,
and brotherhood. For the last few years the agitation against these
two sects has been increasing by leaps and bounds. One of the most
influential members of the late "Boulangé," M. Thiebaud, wrote lately
in the Éclair:

"The Dreyfus agitation is but a pretext for the establishment of the per-
manent rule of the Anglo-German Jewish and Protestant group in France.
The Protestants play a far too influential part in the Republic. . . . The
Protestants are uneasy that the Government should have abandoned the
war against the Catholics, and should support the latter at the elections.
It also goes against their grain that the alliance with Russia should have
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taken the place of a Franco-English and Franco-German modus vivendi, towards which they felt attracted by the common bonds of extraction and religion."

To this charge clear-sighted Frenchmen reply that if the army were a military organisation only, and not a clerical agency as well, the question of race and religion would never have been mixed up in an issue which has to do solely with the administration of justice. As for the reproach made against the Jewish capitalists, it is equally applicable to all exploiters, whatever their religious creed. This particular moment, too, when Christian and Aryan Europe is clamorously urging upon its Governments the desirability of appropriating by brute force the remaining riches of the Mongolian races, is not very happily chosen for the purpose of accusing the Jews of being the only possessors of easily gotten gold.

The worship of the army and the doctrine of the infallibility of its leaders are therefore clever moves made by Clericalism for the purpose of seizing la République. If Frenchmen approve Clericalism, there is no reason why they should not gratify their taste: the Clericals could not possibly bring any disgrace on the Third Republic, and they might introduce many serious reforms. But the comic element of the spectacle lies in the circumstance that priest-eaters like M. Rochefort are unconsciously doing the work of their bitterest enemies with energy and joy. That the Clericals should proclaim their friends and pupils, the generals, above the law of the land is quite natural, the moment that the doctrine has a reasonable chance of being accepted. But that a "Red Radical" should undertake to carry out their will is part of the farce which is never absent from the most earnest movements of the French people.

The defective ideas of judicial procedure entertained by Dreyfus's military judges led to the Dreyfus gâchis which we now behold in France, and the desire to justify the results of the court-martial, rather than compromise the judgment of the officers, was the opportunity longed for and utilised by the clerico-military party to set themselves above the State. There may have been personal motives of an innocent but irrelevant kind as well, as there are in every movement originated by men. General Mercier, who was the War Minister at the time, had lost much of his prestige in consequence of the Madagascar campaign, and would have welcomed as a godsend any opportunity which might enable him to become his country's saviour. This opportunity came in the form of the secret document. General Mercier and the Chief of the Staff, General Boisdeffre, made the most of it, and caused Dreyfus to be buried alive on its evidence. They could not know at that time that the document—in so far as it represented that the treason was committed in favour of Germany—must be a forgery. And to make such a confession after Herr von
Bülow's declaration would, in the judgment of most Frenchmen, have been to damage the prestige of the officers! The document was said to have been stolen from the waste-paper basket of the German ambassador, a statement which was a priori wildly improbable and, since the declaration of the German Government, utterly untenable. "Who," asks M. Clémenceau in his Aurore, "who is the agent who for a large reward handed over to the War Ministry the papers attributed to Dreyfus? He evidently made himself guilty of a terrible deception." The opinion which now seems most probable is that the documents were forged, not stolen. But on all these matters the authorities are silent, lest by making public even a particle of truth they should hopelessly destroy the prestige of the army, whose leaders have the whip-hand of the civil authority. The evidence adduced at the Zola trial has enabled the main issues of the Dreyfus case to be put in a very small compass. Either the ex-Captain was condemned on the evidence of the bordereau or on that of some document. Now the bordereau would not, according to the experts themselves, be enough to convict any man. And if there was another document, it was not shown to the prisoner nor to his counsel, and therefore there was no trial whatever, but a disguised lettre de cachet which outdoes the most arbitrary proceedings of the Holy Inquisition. These are the two alternatives; there is no third issue.

On December 4 the Prime Minister, M. Méline, said in the Chamber, "At present there is no Dreyfus question." From this formula it was clear that the Minister allowed it to be understood that such a question might be yet evolved. But an hour later the War Minister, General Billot, rose up and declared that there was absolutely no Dreyfus question at all, and that he pledged his honour and his conscience that Dreyfus was guilty. In other words, the civil government implied—and doubtless not without grounds—that circumstances might make a revision of the trial necessary, whereas the representative of the army maintained that the chose jugée was closed and done with and the military judges infallible. M. Zola's honest but sweeping accusations caused M. Méline to rise once more, and to explain that only one of the novelist's many accusations—that against the court-martial—would be traversed in a court of justice, the reason being that the other parties insulted were high above all attacks, and that the Government could not think of submitting the honour of generals to the verdict of a civil court. This is regarded as M. Méline's act of submission to the clerico-military party. The Figaro, which represents this party in the Press, soon afterwards called upon the Government to enact special laws to protect the army and its leaders from being insulted. And a Bill may yet be brought in by the Clerical leader and parliamentary chief of the military party, Comte de Mun, after which it will be a penal offence even to hint
anything against such modern French Bayards as the clever Colonel du Paty de Clam and the honourable and gallant Major Esterhazy.

Yet the French army, however glorious its traditions, is not above criticism, whether we consider the leaders or the rank and file. General Mercier himself, who organised the Madagascar expedition, made grave mistakes and serious miscalculations which caused the hearts of France's enemies to beat with delight. The generals of Metz and Sedan fame were, perhaps, infallible and above criticism; but simple erring men, such as the Germans had, would have served their country better. Boulanger was another of the generals who, according to M. Méline's theory, dwell above the law; and if he and his doings had not been criticised in time, where would the Republic be to-day? The great army of the First Republic was led by many generals who, having sworn allegiance to the King and his heirs, fought like tigers against the King and his heirs for the Republic One and Indivisible. All through the present century the same spectacle has been witnessed: Orleanist, Bourbon, Imperial, and Republican officers fighting for the deadly enemies of the monarch or the Republic to which they had sworn allegiance. Yet nobody ever dreamed of calling them apostates, renegades, perjurers, or anything but "men of spotless honour." But infallible they certainly were not—even in their own estimation. The curious and farcical side of this apotheosis of the military party lies in the public statements made by Deputies and military men, that the Bayards of the French army are subjected to a system of espionage, their letters intercepted, read, and copied, and their secrets, when they have any, registered and classified. Colonel Picquart had no difficulty in getting possession of Major Esterhazy's private letters, and even a patriot like Lockroy had to employ a ruse to prevent his private correspondence from falling into the hands of the curious authorities. Picquart himself was shadowed and spied by his own military colleagues and subordinates. The Temps, which is one of the few serious newspapers in France, regrets that the general demoralisation has made such rapid progress that the people are quite unconscious of the disease, which is now almost incurable. A more severe judgment than this the worst enemies of the French people have never dared to pronounce.

And this is the France which, protected by God and the Pope and periodically visited by the Virgin Mary, is eager to spread the boons of civilisation and culture among the unsophisticated nations of the earth, to the exclusion of Teutonic peoples!

It must not be supposed that we have to do here with a few individuals, or even a powerful party which is divorced from the sound common sense of the people. The people are as blind, clamorous, and rabid as their leaders. They glory in "spitting" upon the few men who would heal their wounds and illumine their intelligence, and
who are possessed of civic courage and backbone. The very youth of France, the "young idea" at universities and public schools, which in all other countries throws in its lot with Quixotic chivalry and heroic self-sacrifice, forms the vanguard of the army of reactionary and fanatical obscurantism. The flower of France's youth waxes enthusiastic at the mention of the magic name of the chivalrous Esterhazy, and would, if it had its way, crucify Zola, Jaurès and Clémenceau.

Nor is there anything very surprising in this. The leaders of French thought are, with few exceptions, mere stylists and word-mongers, who deal in gush-coloured phrases and courageously condemn science and light. Intellectual France is split up into two camps, the clerical and the secular, between whom in essentials there is but a distinction devoid of difference. The Clericals have succeeded in materialising the ideals of Christianity, and have for years past been living on the intellectual pabulum supplied by impostors like Leo Taxil. This clever gentleman fabricated stories which a German schoolgirl would reject as lying monstrosities and which all clerical France received as gospel truth. He described the frequent and periodic visits of the devil *in propriâ personâ* to the lodges of Freemasons, and he announced the birth of Antichrist's grandmother—a Jewish maiden—in an hotel in Egypt. A lady named Diana Vaughan, who never had any existence, was described as a witness to the palavers of the devil with the Freemasons, and as a sincere convert to the true Church. And not only was this invisible lady believed in and encouraged by the French prelates, but she was formally blessed by Pope Leo XIII. And when some eighteen months ago Leo Taxil publicly proclaimed that he had for years been befuddling all Catholic France, and that no Diana Vaughan existed, Catholic France declined to accept his word and still to a large extent firmly believes in the devil's visits to the Freemasons, and in the birth of Antichrist's mother in an Egyptian hotel. Such are the spiritual leaders of intellectual France.

The non-clerical moulders of French thought are mostly men of a similar cast of mind. They are admirably represented by M. Ferdinand Brunetière, the present editor of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, who is said to have at his finger's ends every little anecdote that was ever narrated or invented about Molière, Racine, Corneille and Alexandre Dumas. This accomplished gentleman is an unbeliever, from a clerical point of view; but he is also a *persona gratissima* at the Vatican, and his *Revue* is patronised by the aristocracy and the army. This is one of the many mysteries which puzzle the unsophisticated foreigner in France, until he has obtained the clue; then everything is clear. M. Brunetière, it appears, has made a remarkable discovery with which all the influential circles of French society are positively enchanted, and which, if true, will do more harm in Germany than the most
successful war of *revanche*. He has discovered that science is bankrupt and hopelessly insolvent, and France feels that he, as a rhetorician, must know, and has, therefore, accepted his word for it. He wanted science to tell him, in *deux mots*, what the root of all things was, and science ignored the question and the questioner. Her silence, when thus intelligently interrogated, clearly proves that her pretensions are ridiculous. The Clericals, so to say, clapped the distinguished discoverer on the back, delighted to be told that if they knew nothing it was because there was nothing to know; female fashionable France, charmed to learn that its ignorance had suddenly become the acme of knowledge, smiled on the intellectual Titan who had gained this remarkable victory, and the young generation flocked to hear the new prophet who has now numerous disciples and promising adepts. Prominent among these are MM. Léon Daudet and Brieux. The former, applying in his "Morticoles" the new doctrine to facts of everyday life, depicts the most eminent French doctors as stupid quacks or brigands, while the latter, in his drama "L'Evasion," which was represented at the Théâtre Française, proves that science is not merely impotent but positively baneful, inasmuch as it demoralises and ruins young lives that might have been happy and useful had it never existed. And it is question in all these things, not of an abuse or a false show of knowledge, but of real genuine science at its best. It will take the stolid, stubborn Germans whole generations before they can fathom, adopt and assimilate this marvellous discovery, and meanwhile the French will have had ample time to garner in all the fruits.

It has been asserted, and not without a certain show of reason, that the real France is inarticulate, and that her characteristics differ considerably from those of her noisy spokesmen. It may be so; but those who know the country best affirm that she is not only inarticulate like Actaeon, but also, like him, wholly transmuted, so that her own friends no longer recognise her. The population of the provinces, especially of the rural districts, is said to be sound at heart. And it is so, to the extent to which soundness is synonymous with thrift, industry, and an overpowering thirst for gold. They toil and spin and keep the finances of the Republic on a basis which seems fairly sound; but material prosperity is their aim, their mission, their ideal, and to it, as to a modern Moloch, they sacrifice the future of that *patrie* whose name is so often on their lips. In the year 1841 Germany and France had the same population. To-day the Germans outnumber the French by 14,000,000 souls, and yet in 1891 above 67,000 foreigners had become French by naturalisation. During the past seven years the number of births in Germany has been double that of France. But then the French family of two or three children is better off than the German household of five or six, can enjoy more
comforts, and more easily cultivate the charity that begins at home. The pursuit of material well-being, although it undoubtedly possesses its own peculiar advantages, would seem to suffer by being carried too far. Yet this is the main characteristic trait of the French population which is described as inarticulate.

As for higher ideals, it is difficult to name one in which France can be said to believe, as it would be impossible to conceive of any political or ethical monstrosity incapable of exciting her wildest enthusiasm. Take, for instance, the French vieäes and à bas for the last hundred years, which contain the concentrated history of the country and the people. The lesson they embody is instructive and self-evident. In 1788 the people cried, "Long live the King! Long live the nobility! Long live the clergy!" In 1789, "Down with the nobility! Down with the Bastille! Long live Necker and Mirabeau! Long live Orleans and the clergy!" In 1791, "Down with the nobles! Down with the priests! No God any more! Down with Necker! Long live Bailly and Lafayette! Down with Bailly!" In 1793, during the first half of the year, "Down with Louis Capet! Down with the Monarchy and the Constitution of '92! Long live the République! Long live freedom, equality, fraternity! Long live the Girondists!" During the second half of the same year: "Down with the nobles, the rich and the priests! Long live the Jacobins! Long live Robespierre! Long live Marat, the people's friend! Long live the Terror!" In 1794: "Down with the Girondists! Long live the guillotine!" In 1794–95: "Down with the Terror and the executioners! Down with Robespierre!" In 1795–1799: "Long live the Directory! Long live Bonaparte! Down with the Directory! Long live the First Consul!" In 1799–1808: "Down with the Consul! Down with the République! Long live the Emperor Napoleon! Hurrah for the War and the Légion d'Honneur! Long live the Court! Long live the Empress Josephine!" In 1809–1813: "Down with the Pope! Down with Josephine! Long live Marie Louise! Down with Napoleon, the Oppressor, the Tyrant! Down with the Eagles! Long live the legitimate King! Long live the Allies!" In 1815 (March 1): "Down with the Allies! Down with the Bourbons and the Legitimists! Long live Napoleon!" In the same year on June 1: "Down with the Corsican adventurer! Down with the Army! Down with the traitors Ney and Lavalette! Long live King Louis the desired!" In 1816–1830; "Long live Charles X. the much beloved! Down with Charles X. and the Bourbons! Long live Louis Philippe, the Citizen King!" In 1848: "Down with Louis Philippe! Long live Lamartine!" In 1849: "Down with Lamartine! Long live the President! Down with liberty of the Press and the Clubs!" 1850: "Long live Napoleon!" In 1851: "Down with the Assemblée! Long live the Emperor!" In 1852; "Down with the République! Long live the Empire!" In 1855: "Down with Russia!" In 1859:
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This changeful people, which has thus substituted ritual for religion, and a belief in the visits of devils, angels, and Antichrist's grandmother for the simple and sublime teachings of Jesus; which has made the names of liberty, equality, and brotherhood synonymous with a system of oppression, corrupt favouritism, racial hatred, and ignoble espionage to which Turkey alone offers a suitable parallel; which solemnly raises the negation of all science to an article of salutary belief; which delights to drag in the mire to-day the idols to which it offered debasing fetish worship yesterday; which systematically contributes to end the French race and ruin the country, lest it should forfeit some of the petty comforts of life—it is this same people which proudly claims to have been entrusted by heaven with the mission of spreading light among the nations of the earth, and of colonising territories ten times more extensive than the France which it cannot populate! Is it to be wondered at that Gambetta's friends in the Radical should take a gloomy view of things and say: "At present there is nothing more to lose, not even honour! . . . There is no Republic any more, neither are there Republicans. There are neither men nor women, but only Jesuits!" Voltaire knew his countrymen well, although it was not given him to see the astonishing things which this generation has seen. And this is how he expresses himself in a letter written to D'Alembert in 1766, and which has just been published for the first time by the Fronde: "I shall soon die. I despise this land of monkeys and tigers in which my mother committed the folly of bringing me into the world."

* Cf. Frankfurter Zeitung, February 12, 1898.