

## Contemporary France

COMPARED with Justin McCarthy's popular "History of Our Own Times," this volume by Hanotaux, the second in his contemplated series,\* is less picturesque, less witty, more solid, more detailed and more given to philosophising. In the main it is written in short staccato sentences; but occasionally the eloquence offends an Anglo-Saxon taste by becoming turgid and obscure.

But this defect is offset by brilliant characterizations, vignettes sharply drawn and ruthlessly touched in. As an instance take this paragraph-picture of M. Jules Grèvy:

"His cool common sense, his full and firm language, his commanding tone, and something of a middle class and austere morality, lent character to his physiognomy even beside M. Thiers and the brilliant orators of the Left. As an orator he was well known, chiefly by his deliberate silence. He was a very shrewd *Franc-Comtois*, with the manners of a Methodist pastor. His toneless voice never warmed, his pale face never relaxed; his thoughts were minted in formulas, adages and sentences."

As his first volume had demonstrated the ability, industry and conscience that he gave to his task, M. Hanotaux was readily granted the help of private papers and of personal recollections of actors still living. These have enabled him to make this volume an authoritative history of the two cabinets of the Duc de Broglie (May, 1873, to May, 1874) and of the double failure to restore the monarchy. For the general reader there is too minute a study of the debates, committee meetings, intrigues and runnings to and fro that ended so happily in the destruction of the hopes of royal pretenders. But, bloodless as was the victory, doubtless to a Frenchman its importance justifies microscopic examina-

tion. Consider the circumstances. France was bleeding and on her knees. Her rulers, in whom she had blindly trusted, had brought her within touch of Death. By an effort almost superhuman she was throwing off the burden of the war indemnity and ridding her soil of the invader in less than the allotted time. Her vanity (a marked national characteristic, as our author allows) was cruelly wounded; her fear of unprovoked attacks acute. The fires of the Commune had been extinguished in the blood of Frenchmen. Order, precious order, had cost ruthless executions. The government of M. Thiers, which had piloted the State thru critical months, had succumbed in May, 1873, when it attempted to frame a constitution. Marshal MacMahon, the man of the sword, had been immediately elected his successor. But the question "Republic or Monarchy?" was still unanswered. In the Assembly there was a clear majority of Monarchists. Why, then, did they establish a republic? First, because the Royalist factions could not combine, and their titular "king," the Comte de Chambord, had no political pliancy. At the critical moment he obstinately refused to accept the tricolor flag. With a sense of honor entirely misplaced and stupid, but comprehensible in a Bourbon, he published a letter that insisted on the adoption of the white flag of the Bourbons. This declaration tore away the fine net of friendly intrigue in which he was being enmeshed, but, to his naïve surprise, it also carried down his own chances of being seated on the throne. This result depended no longer upon the few thousand of the nobility and bourgeoisie. Their day of power, as M. Hanotaux shows in one of his best chapters, had already expired. Universal suffrage, a mockery before the war, was now a saving reality. The blouse was no more to bow to the frock coat; a college degree would no longer be a patent of political leadership. In the vineyards, orchards, meadows, factories and workshops the plodding Frenchmen who were redeeming by their industry what their leaders had lost by their stupidity had now determined to control their national affairs themselves. They wanted no more monarchs, and events therefore compelled a majority of

\* CONTEMPORARY FRANCE. By M. Gabriel Hanotaux, formerly Minister of Foreign Affairs. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$3.75.

Royalists to establish the republic. Only this year has France demonstrated that her determination was final. The Church, which fought republican institutions, has been disestablished, the religious orders have been expelled, the lords of the army have been smartly shown their subordination to the civil power. The way is now clear for France, with her warm enthusiasm and her preference for logical political systems, to make pioneer roads thru the industrial wilderness and to extend her republican institutions into new sections of national life. That she means to do this the recent Parliamentary duel between Jaurès and Clémenceau clearly indicates.