FRANCE'S NEW PRESIDENT: Paul Deschanel's Shadowy Office Better ...
By WALTER LITTLEFIELD.
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FRANCE'S NEW PRESIDENT
Paul Deschanel's Shadowy Office Better Matched to His Personality
Than to the Rugged Figure of Clemenceau

By WALTER LITTLEFIELD.

Possibly it is only in Latin America that the strongest, most popular man has a fair chance to become President of a republic. Elsewhere politicians are afraid of him, and are able to obstruct with a complex electoral machinery what seems to be a natural destiny, the crowning distinction of long public service faithfully performed. Sometimes, to be sure, the politicians are overwhelmed and the man gets there in spite of them. It is not often, for unselfish public service is pretty certain to create selfish political enemies, and these enemies are skillful in defeating the popular will. It is their profession.

In France everybody thought that the politicians were to be overwhelmed by the desire of the people, and that Clemenceau, the great organizer of victory, would continue his work as the great organizer of peace. But everybody was mistaken. The politicians over there ignored the great man, and made a merely clever and accomplished man President of the republic.

Not that this great man particularly cared. His whole attitude has shown that. His utterances revealed his anticipation of the end before the end came. This destroyer of Cabinets, who was also the savior of nations, had never received a vote for the Presidency. He had never asked for any. He did not ask for them when all France was demanding them for him. He consented to remain passive, however, and let his friends try to carry out the mandate of the people. He consented to remain passive and let them make the effort. So they went to the caucus at Versailles on Jan. 16, and gave him 389 votes. The opponent, the man selected by the politicians, received 408.

In ordinary times this would have meant little. Few successful candidates have been nominated by a Versailles caucus. Loubet, in 1899, was an exception, but he was the President of expediency, nominated one day after the death of President Faure and elected the next. The thing had to be done quickly, for in France there is no Vice President. It had been the same in 1894, when President Casimir-Perier had hurriedly stepped into the shoes of the murdered Sadi Carnot. On the other hand, Faure, another President of expediency, elected on the resignation of Casimir-Perier in 1895, was beaten by Brisson in the caucus and Faillères, who was elected in 1906, was hardly mentioned in caucus. The favorite there was M. Doumer, with a majority Radical and advanced Socialist backing. When President Poincaré was elected in 1913, he had been known to the caucus the day before by M. Pams.

In ordinary times the caucus has usually merely served the purpose of bringing out the radical vote—of forcing the extremists among Senators and Deputies to show their hand. More than two-thirds of the number intending to vote on the following day have rarely been present. But now to the two exceptional instances must be added a third. For out of the total of 889 who voted at the election on the 17th, 839 voted at the caucus on the 16th, and as we know the nominee of the first day, with 408 votes, became the elected of the second with 734, while his opponent, who had received 289 votes at the caucus, got a paltry 56 at the election.

It was a great triumph for Paul Deschanel and for the adroit organizer of his supporters, former Premier Briand. It was a grievous disappointment to the people of France—possibly to the world. But was it a disappointment to the great man, to the organizer of victory, Georges Clemenceau? Who can say?

Between the caucus and the election he had practically said to his friends of the Ministry, "I told you so," and had advised them to bring about the re-election of President Poincaré. But the latter declined, and so President Grévy, re-elected in 1886, still has the unique distinction of being the only re-elected President of the Third Republic.

It seems absurd to suppose that the man who had so successfully organized the great victory for France, for the Allies, could not do so small a thing as to organize a little one for himself. There is nothing to show that he even lifted a finger to do so. Perhaps the truth is that he did not care to be President. He passively placed himself in the hands of his friends. That is all. Possibly he would have liked to please them, to please the French people, by accepting the honor and the politicians allowed him to do so. But he made no effort. Why?

The answer may be found by contrasting the man with the office—the active, dominating statesman, with the servant of Ministers, with the eloquent orator at public festivals. And there may have been something in the words he said to a friend, who, just after the November elections, where the Socialists had been routed, approached him on the subject of the Presidency:

"And what would happen if I were President and had to accept another Clemenceau as Premier?"

It was different with Deschanel. He wanted to be President. Twice he had permitted his name to be used; once in 1899, when he received 10 votes, and once in 1915, when he received 18. On those occasions he did not have the "organization" behind him. M. Briand was not there as the manager of his political fortunes. Clemenceau as President with another Clemenceau as Premier would be impossible to conceive. But Deschanel as President with Briand as Premier would be a logical sequel to the Versailles election. Briand may or may not have stolen a march on Clemenceau at Versailles; it is all a matter of opinion, particularly the opinion of Clemenceau. He did, however, steal a march on him in a speech he made on Nov. 3, at Nantes, when he said:

"The President should be elected by popular vote, instead of being selected indirectly, as at present, by a vote of the two houses of Parliament. It is imperious that the President of France should assume a more efficacious and a wider field of authority."

Now Clemenceau since the war had been at work on a project of law for making the office of the Chief Executive more authoritative, more independent of the Cabinet, less subordinate to the Premier. He thought more of that project of law than he did of the Presidency. It was a vertu coup de Jarnac for Briand to anticipate him. It may be that something more than viewed in the light of a possible Deschanel-Briand combination that may extend beyond the precincts at Versailles and find full expression at the Elysée.

Meanwhile, as the great man enjoys

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France's New President

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give up his title as President of the Repub-
lic.

In 1878 the same President negotiated
and ratified the treaty which established
the autonomous principality of Belgium.

But in the late war President Poincaré,
far from leading the French armies in
the field, did not even attempt to inter-
vene. He was the first to resign his
command of the army in the midst of his
pollus. However, there was no need for the
Assembly to be called into session to
ratify the treaty. Great citizens, you have the eternal
gratefulness of France—you have crushed
the manoeuvres of treason and you have
snatched the victory of the nation for
the French Republic.

And this was the Socialist Humanity:

"It was the duty of the Socialists to
make a maximum effort against the
President and his government, and they did.

In the beginning of the war it was
Deschanel who goes to the Elysée.

It is useless to say that we expect nothing
to happen. We are not concerned with
Deschanel. We worked to bar the path of a
man of evil and we succeeded."

"It is to this man of evil" at the November
elections the Socialists are repeating the
question now, "have you ever expected to
receive anything from these men?
If you were asked, by request, the efforts
of Deschanel, Briand & Co., what would be
the attitude of the people who have
evoted for the President?

Now, about this authority possessed by
the Chief Executive of France there
is not a law to say that its nature is potential
and only requires a cunning man to discover
it and make it active. On the other
hand, the French Constitution is
the graveyard of many political
concepts—a sort of ceremonial
instrument. It is devoid of any
authority, for independent
action, let us see what President Casimir-
Périer wrote to Le Temps when that
paper had asked him "to do something."

"The President can do nothing himself;
he can validly place his signature
beneath that of another if he is asked
to do so, but exposing his resignation all
he can sign are only amounts to
an autograph in a collection.

Among all the powers which appear to
be attributed to him there is only one
President of the Republic is able
to exercise: to resign himself on
to national ceremonies.

The memory of the Second Re-
cent, of "Napoleon le petit," of the
coup d'état which practically turned a
President into an Emperor, fresh in
their minds, the makers of the
French Constitution did not disdain
even the title of President
and gave the title without the usual
functions of office.
The functions of the President of
the United States are carefully laid down
in the Constitution, whose makers left
the Roman model of the Senate in.
The French Constitution is partly a
matter of evolution, partly of devotion.

The President has never
been the target for criticism
turned down next. In the early
days of the republic Presidents
discovered one of the most
terrible duties of the
President, that of saying
about the administration of
colonial affairs. It was a heritage from the
Savoyar, and he would not
allow it out and stopped it.
Another prerogative re-
tained was the right of the
President to command armies in the field.
Still another was that of negotiating and
ratifying treaties. Both are merely po-
tential. The National Assembly at-
ttempted to take the first from Marshal
MacMahon, when President in 1875, and
the Minister of War told the Assembly:

"I am authorized to declare to the As-
sembly that if it adopts such a provision
as will forbid Marshal MacMahon to
draw his sword to defend his country
he will not hesitate twenty-four hours to
lay between Athens and Corinth, though
A Corinthian republic, perhaps, would
suit him better than an Athenian. De-
spotism, as we know it, is good for
which some women are remarkable.
Now woman could have more taste, ehara,
ing nothing to do with that, is what is
distinguished, refined. He
dances to perfection, has an elegant
figure, a beautiful voice, a
dline beauty were the forehead so not
the stare. The well-cut profile is one for
Several women, the only 
icate, but if you examine it you will find
it strong. He was reared on Greek and
Latin, but was not
But I suspect him of a weakness for Alci-
biades, Pericles, Aeschines, and the society
of the French Republic has been
veiled in a veil of love at an epicurean banquet
with more Anacreontic feeling than Monsieur
le President de la Chambre!"

Desbordes is also the author of many
books, the author of many spoaches
which have also, many of them, been published
in books. Both his writing and oratory
are finished almost to classical earring
ness. He has also been a contributor to
papers like Le Temps and Le Journal
Dubié, and to periodicals like Le Revue Politique and
Parlementaire. Among his books are "Pen Sketches in
Old France," "Leaving the French Academy; "French Interests in
the Pacific Ocean," crowned by the Com-
mander in the Order of the Medallion and
Statesmen," "The New Republic,"
"The Social Question," "Literary Sketehs," and a dozen oth-
er.

Although his real services in the war are
probably hidden amid the archives of
the secret sessions of the Chamber, and
not to be measured by his writings or the
great activities at the front, much of his
auto-biographical oratory is upon record
and his words to the Chamber on his speeches against the Left in the
nineties—"at Marville on Oct. 25, 1895; at
St. Sulpice, Oct. 14, 1897; at
Rouen, April 10, 1897. These were con-
tinued at the time by those who heard them
filled with clear and elegant exposition
of the political and social aims of the
Progressist Party.

He had first become affiliated with that
party, 1885, and became a member of the
Chamber to the Chamber from Eure-et-Loir. In
January, 1890, he was elected Vice Presi-
dent of the Chamber. He was two years
later President. Then began a series of
periodical rejections and elections as pre-
side, which have lasted ever since, when he
has constantly filled the post.

Meanwhile, he had been elected to
the French Academy in 1895 and five years
later had helped to bring about the
cessation of the chaos into which the Dreyfus case
had thrown the political as well as the
social life of France. He advocated now the
separation of Church and State.

But what was the origin of Paul Eugène
Louis Deschanel! He was born in
many good things and some had been
but they were out of place at Brussels in 1855,
where his father and mother had re-
sided since 1836. The son had been
ordered to leave France by "Napoleon
le petit." Victor Hugo happened to be
in Brussels at the time of this order and
congratulated the parents. In 1859
the three were allowed to return to
France. Victor Hugo had been to
his father, Emile Deschanel,
Senator and professor at the College
de France, resumed his political and aca-
demic career as secretary to Deshayes de Mar-
cèze in 1876 and to Jules Simon in the fol-

Twenty-six years ago he fought a duel
with Clemenceau and was wounded.
His long waiting for revenge certainly was
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