

THE SOCIALIST BUGBEAR.

GREAT pains have been taken by the promoters of the forthcoming Socialist Congress in Germany to organize it in such a way as to avoid incurring penalties under the anti-Socialist laws, and it is therefore to be an open congress—that is, anybody calling himself a Socialist is to be allowed to take part in it, but no delegates to it are to be elected. Even in this seemingly harmless shape, however, it appears to be causing the authorities more or less alarm, and it will probably be closely watched by the police. But why the Germans or anybody else are afraid of Socialists who propose simply to put their schemes into force by legislation, it is hard to see. What harm they can do by meeting, and speaking, and writing, has never been clearly explained. What makes Socialism a term of dread, both in Europe and here, is undoubtedly the large part the French have played in originating and spreading Socialist ideas, and the violence which in France has so often attended Socialist propagandism. But there is no doubt that even in France Socialism has passed or is passing rapidly out of the violent stage. The Government is ceasing to be in the least afraid of it. What made it formidable there under the various monarchies was the danger that it might begin disorders which would end in overthrowing the reigning dynasty. Now that there is no dynasty to overthrow, the police snap their fingers at the Socialists, and bid them “come on.” But the Socialists do not come on. They have threatened a great deal under the Republic, and have got up several “demonstrations” for the outcome of which all Europe waited with feverish anxiety. They have always evaporated in loud talk and songs.

In like manner we had a considerable scare about Socialism in this city a year ago, when Henry George started as a Socialist candidate for Mayor—for that is what he really was—and polled an unexpectedly large vote. If he had been elected, too, it would perhaps have done a good deal of mischief by frightening city capitalists and property-owners, and exciting wild expectations among the poor and ignorant and lazy. After his vote was counted, a large number of writers and orators thought that a terrible reorganization of society—or “social liquidation,” as the French call it—was at hand. George, too, was immensely elated by the support he received, and incontinently started a weekly paper, and opened his batteries on the Catholic Church and landed property. We all see what has come of it. The Socialist newspapers in this city are apparently all in financial trouble, or are torn by domestic dissensions, and the only converts of note whom George has made are one Catholic priest, Dr. McGlynn, and one Protestant clergyman, Mr. Pentecost. The more he talks, too, apparently, the less impression he makes. His land theory certainly meets with less and less acceptance every day. That is, the few people of intelligence who ever gave it serious attention become every day fewer, even if the sale of his book increases.

The truth is, that it is with Socialists as it is with strikers, the more active and numerous they become, or, in other words, the more they spread themselves, the less formidable they are. Time was when a “general strike” of all the

trades in this city, or in the country at large, was talked of as a means of bringing “society” to its knees; and many good people shuddered over it as a possibility. But it was soon discovered that the more people engaged in a strike the nearer it came to the final collapse, or, in other words, that a general strike would be the *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole “labor movement.” So, also, the more converts Socialism makes, the less influence it undoubtedly has on the community. As long as the preaching of it is confined to the professors, and writers, and “thinkers,” it is presented in a form which has an air of reasonableness and practicability. As soon as the apostles and disciples become at all numerous, and begin to quarrel among themselves, and urge divergent views, and run after side issues, and exhibit different degrees of impatience and hopefulness, and the visionary and the lazy make their way into the more prominent positions, the monstrosity of a social organization of which such people would be the legislators and administrators, is brought home to every intelligent and industrious man, and he turns his attention away from them.

When Socialism is brought near enough to the practical to induce the public to examine it, the public always begins to laugh, and laughter is and will always be a great power in the world. For instance, that favorite plan of having all “instruments of production,” land, mines, mills, and machinery, taken possession of by “the State,” and worked for the general benefit, may seem now, when discussed in a library or lecture-room, to have something in it worth the attention of the statesman or philanthropist. But when it becomes politics, and the gentlemen come forward who would probably have charge of “the instruments of production” if the scheme were realized, and we picture ourselves in a community in which they would hold all our money and assign us all our daily tasks; we indulge in one hearty guffaw, and turn to our lawful occupations.

MR. GLADSTONE'S LONGEVITY.

ENGLISH politics has now entered on what is, perhaps, the most curious phase in its history. It appears to be all but certain that the Liberals who abstained from voting, or broke away from the followers of Mr. Gladstone, last year, are now prepared to return to their allegiance if the opportunity is afforded them. In other words, it appears to be all but certain that if a general election were to take place now, Mr. Gladstone would be restored to power. Consequently, as the Tories have admitted by their concessions on the Irish Land Bill, the one cardinal point in their policy is that a general election shall not be permitted to take place. The surer they are that the country, if consulted, would send Mr. Gladstone back to office, the more determined they are that it shall not be consulted.

If it be asked what is the use of putting off the evil day, the answer is that by waiting they will probably get rid of Gladstone, and Gladstone is, they flatter themselves, the only man capable of persuading Englishmen to concede home rule to the Irish. If he were to die, they think that the agitation

for this particular scheme would subside, or cease to be formidable, and the whole subject might be indefinitely postponed. Consequently, as long as he lives, the constituencies must not have a chance of voting for him. That there is some truth in this there is no denying. There is no other man in the Liberal party capable just now of carrying a scheme of home rule through the House of Commons. One would doubtless arise if Mr. Gladstone were gone, but he would not show himself for some time, or until many changes had taken place in the constitution of the Liberal party. So that the really burning question of English politics to-day is, how long will Mr. Gladstone live? If he lives five years, and retains his intellectual vigor, home rule is pretty sure to come and the Tories be driven from power for a long period. If he dies before that time, there will be so much confusion in the Liberal ranks that even if the party got back to office, there would probably be no disposition to enter at once on schemes of such magnitude as the creation of a separate legislature for Ireland, and there might be confusion enough to disgust the public for a short period, and give the reorganized Tories a chance for another term of office.

There is very little question now in the minds of most observers that foremost among the persons whom Mr. Gladstone's continued hold on life has disappointed, and is disappointing, is Mr. Chamberlain. We presume it is doubtful, however, whether even he would have ventured to act on the presumption that the veteran's career was near its close but for the fall of Sir Charles Dilke. Dilke in his heyday was a competitor for the Liberal leadership so formidable that, if he had retained his place in public life, Chamberlain would not have thought it prudent to desert Gladstone and try to set up in business on his own account. He would have felt that, with Dilke in the field, it was at least doubtful whether he would stand any chance of the chief place. Of Hartington no candidate is now afraid, because every one knows that Hartington may any day be called up to the House of Lords; and John Morley, though the growth of his influence has been wonderfully rapid, has still too much of the *littérateur* about him—that is, as the Tory Squire once said of John Stuart Mill, is considered “too clever by half”—to be quite ready for party leadership. He is, moreover, weighted in the race by the fact that he is not, like Chamberlain, a man of independent fortune, something which Englishmen still consider a necessity for the highest places in politics. Consequently, it was not unnatural for Chamberlain to conclude that, if Gladstone could be got rid of, the party would look to him as the only person capable of standing in his shoes. He probably would not have broken with him on home rule, however, if he had thought Gladstone would have stayed in political life after his defeat, or have stayed on earth until now in good working condition.

It is thus no exaggeration to say, therefore, that Mr. Gladstone, by merely living on, is to-day profoundly disarranging the calculations of all the Conservative politicians. There would be nothing extraordinary in this if he were in office. Louis Napoleon, Bismarck, Cavour, and many other statesmen have long confounded or annoyed their enemies by

continuing to live in the possession of great power. What is peculiar in Mr. Gladstone's case is, that he creates immense political disturbance and uncertainty simply by existing in a private station, and by impressing everybody with the belief that in his seventy-sixth year he still has a future. Nothing quite like this is, we think, to be found in the career of any other prominent public man.

NEW LIGHT ON THE CAPTURE OF MAXIMILIAN.

THE controversy now raging in the Mexican press over the question of Maximilian's capture had its beginning last April, and bids fair, before it is closed, to falsify all the histories. The accepted view, both with Mexican writers like Payno and with blind partisans of the Emperor like Domenech, has been that the besieged troops at Querétaro were basely betrayed by Col. Lopez, one of their commanders and a favorite of Maximilian. The Colonel himself, it is true, passionately declared his innocence, in a letter made public at the time; but he was replied to by the generals of the Imperial Army, who brought against his unsupported assertion such an array of facts, apparently so conclusive, that the matter was considered for ever settled.

Last spring, however, Lopez, who has always been restless under the ignominy popularly attached to his name, appears to have been freed from some mysterious pledge to silence, and published a new letter, roundly denying the charge that he had played the part of a traitor to his chief, and boldly appealing to Gen. Escobedo, the head of the besieging army, for confirmation of his innocence. "You once wrote to me, General," said Lopez, under date of April 29, "that you had not spoken because you, had not been asked to speak; now I ask you, in the name of the truth, and I beseech you for the sake of my honor, as well as your own, to speak." Escobedo was at the time at his estate in Guanajuato, but submitted to an interview with a reporter about the middle of May, in which he substantially upheld Lopez. He declared that Lopez came to him in the night of May 14, 1867, representing himself as an authorized ambassador from Maximilian, and offering, on the part of the latter, a surrender of Querétaro, together with an absolute renunciation of the Mexican crown. The only conditions asked were permission for himself and certain of his generals to depart with an escort to Tuxpam, there to embark for Europe, never to return to Mexico. Escobedo demanded some proof that Lopez was empowered to make such an offer, and was shown letters of Maximilian amply certifying what the secret emissary had said. Thereupon the Liberal General said that his orders were either an unconditional surrender or an assault. Lopez besought him to avoid the bloodshed which would result, and the probable spread of the war over the whole country, but Escobedo remained firm. Lopez asked nothing for himself, neither promotion nor guarantees nor money, but spoke only in behalf of the Emperor, to whom he professed the most unbounded attachment. And after the capture, when Maximilian was a prisoner; and when Lopez sought an interview with the fallen Emperor, Escobedo took

pains to ask the latter if it would be agreeable to him to see Lopez, referring to the rumors of treason, and Maximilian distinctly said: "Col. Lopez has not been false to me in the least."

The publication of this interview in the *Diario del Hogar* caused a tremendous sensation. Two of Escobedo's generals of division, Arce and Gallardo, rushed into print to express their incredulity, and to repeat the details of the suspicious conduct of Lopez on the night of the capture, of which they had been eye-witnesses. Escobedo politely replied to them, admitting their perfect honesty, but assuring them that they were mistaken. He also announced that he was preparing a detailed account of the whole matter, which he intended to transmit to the Secretary of War for publication in the *Diario Oficial*. It was expected that this narrative would appear last June; in fact, it is almost certain that it was sent to the Government as long ago as that; but, for some unknown reason, it has not yet been made public.

Meanwhile, several facts of great significance have been brought out in the newspaper discussions, going to show, it is probable, what the real state of the case will be found to be. A captain in the Belgian Guards, one of Maximilian's regiments, reports the general belief of the besieged troops that there was to be a surrender, and that Lopez was acting at the Emperor's orders. There was great surprise, the Captain says, at the cry of treason raised against Lopez: it was the understood thing, the men supposed, that the city was to be surrendered and the safety of Maximilian and his generals secured. On August 21 the *Monitor* published a letter of Maximilian's, which Gen. Escobedo had had photographed and shown to some of his friends. It was written to Lopez three days after the surrender, and besought him to keep a profound secret his errand to Escobedo, lest it might bring a stain upon the Emperor's honor. And Monday's despatches speak of a second letter, even more compromising, in which Maximilian refers to bribes offered to secure his personal safety.

All this points to the conclusion, which we believe will be supported by the official account when published, that the unfortunate Archduke had grown utterly weary of the whole affair, despaired of ultimate success even if temporarily triumphant, repented bitterly of his return after his abdication, and only wished to be well out of the struggle. The negotiations with Escobedo failing, he seems to have adopted the plan of a surrender under the guise of a betrayal, confident that he would soon be at liberty in Vienna. To his surprise, as to that of the whole world, he was soon put on trial for his life. Then he resolved to keep silent about all that had gone before, and to go to his inevitable death like a brave man. Why Lopez has remained quiet all these years, is a mystery. Why Escobedo has never spoken, is still more mysterious. Now that the long silence is to be broken, it may be expected that these points will be cleared up. It seems almost certain that we shall have to add to the other weaknesses of Maximilian a selfish cowardice in the last days of his empire, scarcely atoned for by his unflinching courage when the end finally came

TEACHING WHIST.

ONE of the most curious social phenomena of the year is the success which has attended the attempts to teach whist in classes, both in this city and in Boston, last winter, and during the past summer at some of the watering-places. It has been found, as a matter of fact, that a good whist-player, possessed of fair teaching capacity, has no difficulty in getting pupils enough to make it worth while to treat whist-teaching as a calling. The experiment thus far (which, we may mention, has only been made between ladies) has revealed the fact that the number of people who want to play whist both in summer and winter is very large, and is probably increasing, and also that a very large proportion of those who have been playing the greater part of their lives are really ignorant of what is called scientific or modern whist, as moulded by such great masters as Cavendish and Pöle. Then, too, a very large proportion of those who play either the old or the new game, whether to oblige friends by "taking a hand," or to help to pass dull days or dull evenings, suffer year after year from a consciousness of gross incapacity, and consequently from a sense of humiliation, from which they are eager to escape by obtaining competent instruction.

It is often said in general terms that the way to learn to play whist well is to play with good players. This is in part true, but it is mainly delusive. There is, to many people, not much use in seeing what good players do, without knowing the reason why they do it, and this good players are not ready to give, and in fact the rules of the game forbid their giving it while playing. All the direct instruction the unfortunate whist dunces receives while actually playing, he is apt to get only from the contemptuous reproaches of his partner, or the contemptuous silence of his opponents, after each hand. But it is not very profitable to know that you have been playing the part of an ignoramus without knowing how you showed it. In fact, good players play whist for their own pleasure, and never will or can be induced to mingle with their play a little kindly help for beginners or incapables. Their feeling towards them is rarely anything but one of annoyance at their appearance in a rôle for which they have no fitness. Some of the books even contain special directions for acting with stupid partners without any sacrifice of one's own comfort. All this makes a teacher of whist—that is, somebody who will deal tenderly with poor players, tell them why they have blundered, and what they ought to have done but did not do, in a spirit of kindness or even commiseration—wear the air of a ministering angel; and we should venture to predict, therefore, that the most successful teachers will be, as indeed they are now, women.

The reasons for the increasing popularity of whist, and consequently increasing desire to learn it, are not, we think, far to seek. It is not wholly a game of skill, like chess, and therefore does not impose that severe strain on the nerves which makes chess an impossible game in the evening to poor sleepers, especially if they are very fond of it. Moreover, although whist makes a constant