ON THE EVE OF THE ELECTIONS.

By the time this paper is published, the country will be in the thick of the elections; indeed it may be possible to get some idea by that time as to their possible result, but it must be admitted that before the first few come off, any prophecy on this can be little more than mere guessing.

It seems to me, however, that one may set aside the chance of an actual Tory majority, and that the chances lie between a Liberal majority large enough to swamp the united (7) Tories and Parnellites and a majority too small to carry the Liberal party through in the teeth of such a combination.

We Socialists, I think, need not be over anxious as to which of these events will take place. In the first case of an overwhelming Liberal majority, the Parliament will certainly be one of inertia; although the Liberals will not have it all their own way, yet they will be strong enough to hamper the Government terribly if they do not give way to their demands. Apart from the Irish Question, it will be the aim of the Government not to stir anything which can divide the Party; some slight and "safe" concessions will probably be made to the demand for Social Reform, and for the rest as near nothing as may be. A Great Whig Liberal majority will exhibit to the eyes of those that can see, more clearly than ever before, "the Representatives of the People" engaged in their natural function of holding together with as little change as possible, the mass of suffering, injustice and chimney which is dignified with the name of "Orderly Society."

Whether the Radicals revolt and break up the party or not in this case, the spectacle of the incompetency of Parliament for anything except repression, will be advantageous to the cause of Revolution; but in the other case of the Tories and Parnellites together outnumbering the Liberals, though the consequences may not be more disruptive of Parliamentary government, they will probably be more dramatic. For not only will some attempt at the solution of the Irish question be forced on Parliament, but also the Radicals will most likely be driven into forming a separate party, and the Great Moderate Party, upon which we have speculated before, and which I believe will be the final enemy of Revolution, will be definitely formed. Perhaps some of our Radical friends will be surprised when they see who will adhere to it, and those whom they have considered their own special champions.

Meantime something may be learnt from all the late speech-making and mauldering, besides what has been already noted in these columns. And first it must surely strike a Socialist (or indeed anybody else) how strong the tendency is, in our representative system, towards personal government.

What hopes, for example, were hung on Mr. Gladstone's appearance! How he was not only to undo the harm done by Mr. Chalfont's impatience (save the mark) but also to give spirit and meaning to the whole Liberal attack. There was the man; we were all to wait for him; then we shall see!

Well, now the oracle has spoken what has it said? Commonplace and twaddle enough; that we expect as a matter of necessity, just as the monks expected the verse of the Delphic oracle. What else? An indefinite and indeed oral-sual bid for the Irish support, received by Mr. Parnell with solemn, one would almost think ironical courtesy and an awkward request to state more definitely what concessions to Home Rulers Mr. Gladstone would be prepared to make.

And next? A declaration against the disestablishment of the churches. English and Scotch; a declaration made necessary in a sense by the obvious dissatisfaction of the Moderate party, but which taking into consideration the tone of the speech in which it was made, most clearly to be not blinded by party tactics that Mr. Gladstone has ratted to the Conservatives. Nevertheless, if one is to believe the Liberal and Radical papers, Mr. Gladstone is still the trusted leader of the Party of Progress. Little as a Socialist can sympathise with the hopes of the so-called Radicals, one cannot help hoping, however, for the sake of manliness, that there is some mutterd protest in the Radical ranks; but if there is it is inarticulate.

And to think that persons apparently reasonable, should accept as a proposition having any reason in it that the matter of disestablishment of the church has not been long enough to warrant it to be a matter of Parliamentary discussion. Surely when the great Liberal leader said that, a twitch, that might have grown into a sarcastic smile for a Special self-complimented must have come into the solemn speech which has so long been shown to the public.

Worthy people of England, that are so proud of your Representative Government, perhaps not more honest than the Parliament Magazine, which has been once again used, as it always will be, to sweep aside inconvenient questions. To check all aspirations towards progress; never to pass any law, however much desired by everybody, till the country has grown sick and tired of the subject; and then only to pass half of it, so that it becomes worse than useless—this is, it seems, the business of your Representative Parliament that governs you. When will you learn to do your own business yourselves?

WILLIAM MORRIS.

THE LESSON OF THE FRENCH ELECTIONS.

As our English elections are so close at hand, a few notes on the past French ones may be useful. The elections of France have been a puzzle to many English Liberals, and a source of much alarm to many others. English Liberals will doubtless understand this triumph of the reactionist parties. This we are not surprised at, since they cannot understand even the fall of the Gladstone Cabinet. We are told that the people of France are not sufficiently free, and that ere long there will be the restoration of the Monarchy or the Empire.

The fall of the Opportunist is a blow to Liberal policy, which the Liberals of England did not expect. But when the Liberals of France or of any other country pursue a course of expediency instead of principle; when they equal if they do not exceed in deeds of blood those of the most blood-thirsty tyrants, what is there in a name that should save them from the natural consequences of their own rascality! The petty pillaging expeditions of the Ferry Government could not fail to disgust every thinking person; petty wars in which there was neither honour nor glory nor advantage of any kind, and which meant only to disgrace to France. M. Ferry fell as Gladstone fell, but the Brisson Cabinet did not repudiate the Ferry policy. It is still the spirit and the policy of Opportunism which is the curse of French politics to-day.

After the fall of M. Ferry the break-up of the Opportunistic party was only a question of time.

The people of France cannot to-day be dazzled and fooled with military glory. Of that they have had more than enough. With a national expenditure of £110,000,000 and an enormous and increasing local expenditure, no wonder the people are tired of piratical expeditions to distant regions. But when English Conservatives predict the early restoration of Imperialism, they forget that the people are still living who suffered and bled under the assured rule of the archtraitor Napoleon the Third. That scoundrel found in 1851 the public revenue £20,000,000, and in 1869 he raised it to £50,000,000. He found at the永远 period the debt at £12,000,000, and by 1869 had raised it to £253,000,000. The war of 1870 added to that debt another £560,000,000. The people have not forgotten these things, and the country is still suffering from the terrible effects of an enormous debt and a heavy taxation. It is true we are often told that the days of the Third Napoleon were the golden days of France. But let us just look at the composition of the population of Paris in 1869, which numbered about 1,320,000. The gentry numbered 168,980; the professional classes 75,238; the commercial classes 214,341; banking, etc. classes 124,649; military and police 40,557; public functionaries 59,678; and thieves and prostitutes 98,218; making a total of 778,754, living on the vultures of the working classes. Dark for France and dark for the civilised world would be the day when the blood-stained Empire should be restored in France.

But we admit there are dangers and great dangers that threaten the Republic of France. France is essentially a military nation, and the military element has ever to be reckoned with in every crisis. It is a great and a most serious danger. But the greatest of all dangers is the fear that the bulk of the rural population may come to be at least indifferent to the existence of the Republic. They find themselves crushed to the earth by the weight of taxation, both local and national, and they find as a natural result their interests suffering; and as is the case with the Fair Traders of England, when promised relief by the