

## LABOR DAY IN PARIS.

May Day is always a more or less anxious anniversary in the French capital. It is the annual occasion on which labor makes an organized demonstration, with processions, bands, banners, speeches and the other usual accompaniments of such celebrations. Did the matter end here, there would be not the slightest cause for misgiving, and all Paris would enter heartily into the spirit of the festival. For the honest toilers in all lands are recognized as forming the bedrock foundation of national prosperity. Every right-thinking man is sincerely desirous of increasing the earnings of the working classes, reducing excessive hours of toil, raising the standard of living, diffusing comfort, happiness and the sunshine of life over the very widest area that is possible. So when the artisans of Paris march by in peaceful parade, there are only hearty buzzes to greet their passing.

But the trouble lies in the fact that the annual demonstration has been seized on by those members of society who have the least right to call themselves honest workingmen. May first is the chosen day for the anarchists to display their red flags, and for the Socialists to declaim their subversive doctrines. So there is always the danger of a clash between duly constituted authority and the lawless elements that would, if they could, recognize no authority other than their own predaceous instincts. And, unhappily, this condition of things is quite frequently taken advantage of by other sections of the people. There are the Royalists and the Bonapartists, who are ready secretly to assist any form of social upheaval that might strike a blow at republicanism. Then even the political opponents of the government that happens to be in office, although they may themselves be good republicans, do not scruple to encourage displays of social discontent that may serve to embarrass a ministry whose overthrow is being sought. These are the permanent factors in the recurring May Day problem.

But this year there are fortuitous factors that gravely compromise the situation. The law of separation between church and state, not so much in its essence as in the manner of its execution, has led to intense bitterness of feeling, not only in the country districts, but in the large cities, including Paris itself. The riots following on the attempts to take ecclesiastical inventories by armed force, whereby the interiors of many churches were wrecked, have resulted in the clerical party being looked upon as persecuted martyrs by large numbers of the people who have no extreme views on the vexed subject, but whose ideas of simple piety have been shocked by the sacrilegious scenes. Many of the soldiers told off for the unpleasant duty have been offended, and several officers have thrown up their commissions rather than violate what they deemed to be their rightful conscientious scruples.

But this religious strife is only one of a number of disturbing factors. The terrible mining disaster in the north-east corner of the country, by which over a thousand lives were lost, has kindled superstitious fears in many minds; it has been interpreted into a manifestation of divine wrath over the anti-church crusade; it came just at a time when such a feeling, in spite of calm reason, was likely to exercise its grip upon the imagination of the people. Then, again, there is organized discontent among the employes of the state, a very large body in France; one manifestation of this was the recent strike of letter carriers in Paris, accompanied by riotous proceedings. Yet another cause of unrest has been the recent active propaganda against army service that has been adjudged by the courts to be high treason, and has sent several of the leading advocates to prison. Furthermore, we have to remember that France is at this moment just relaxing from the tense nervous strain of the prolonged diplomatic struggle with Germany over the Moroccan question. Finally, the country is on the eve of a general election, at which time there is always more or less of popular ferment and effervescence.

Each of these causes of trouble may be slight of itself, but their combination obviously has serious potentialities. Hence the strong display of military force in Paris—troops pouring into the city during the past few days, until now there are massed in the French capital thirty-nine battalions of infantry and forty-eight squadrons of cavalry. But these very precautions afford the best guarantee that the government has the situation well in hand, and that May Day will come and go in Paris without untoward incident of any kind.