

## FRENCH FINANCE.

[CONCLUDED FROM THE CHRONICLE OF THE 24TH.]

The system established for the administration and collection of the revenue comes next to be considered. The administration is divided into two distinct departments, which are under the management of different ministers: the one, entitled the minister of the Treasury; the other the minister of the Finances. The latter superintends the execution of the laws relative to the assessment and collection of the taxes—regulates all the establishments, such as the post-office, the customs, &c., which yield a revenue to the Exchequer—and issues orders for the public payments which are made by the treasury. He is supposed to act only, either by virtue of a general law, or an arrêt of the executive, or of a mandat or order from a minister. The treasury is the central point of all receipts and disbursements. The minister of this department is charged with the verification of the sums received and paid over to him by the collectors—with all public payments when warranted by an order from the Minister of Finance—and with the guardianship of the grand livre, or book of inscriptions for the public debt. Both Ministers exhibit, annually, a separate budget, prepared by an exposition of the state of their respective departments. The report of the Minister of Finance is accompanied by an elucidation of its various items, and a general survey of the financial resources of the Empire. Their accounts are subject to a revision of a committee, consisting of seven members, appointed by the conservative senate, who bear the name of national accountability, *comptabilité nationale*. An exposition of the amount of the revenue and expenditure is submitted every month to the Emperor, who allotts, to each department of the state, the sum which the supposed wants of the department require. It was solemnly decreed, in 1805, as a *sénatus consultum*, that the budget should receive the *veto* of the Arch-chancellor, as an important formality! As the revenue cannot be realized within the year, the accounts are left open, and stated in the budget of the following year, under the title of *Exercises*. These open accounts, which are reported for three or four years, considerably increase both the volume and the intricacy of the budgets. These reports are prepared under the immediate inspection of the Emperor, and by those who are the mere slaves of his will. They are subject to no legislative scrutiny whatsoever, and are exhibited to the deliberative assemblies as a proof of confidence. Notwithstanding the boast with regard to the nobility given them, they are presented only in part to the public, in the columns of the *Moniteur*. The full reports are reserved for the functionaries of the two departments, with the exception of a few copies for the members of the legislative bodies. The rejection or disregard of all specific appropriations by general law would, inevitably, other country, be considered as fatal to public liberty, and necessarily productive of the most mischievous disorders. But, in France, these circumstances, as they are styled—the appropriation, for instance, of the capital of the sinking fund—are qualified reciprocal loans, calculated to facilitate the public service, and to promote the circulation of specie.

Every village and commune in France has a collector, or tax-gatherer, who pays over the amount of his receipts to a treasurer, called a particular receiver; of whom there is one for every district.—There is, also, a receiver-general for each department, into whose hands the particular receivers convey the sum drawn from the collectors, and who communicate immediately with the treasury.

They are all under the active superintendence of an administration, entitled, the direction of the taxes, (*direction des contributions*.) This administration consists of a director-general, or inspector, verifiers, controllers, &c., and of various other functionaries, whose province it is, to watch over the receivers and tax-gatherers, and to regulate and expedite the collection of the taxes.

In 1805, the number of chief officers (*employés en chef*) belonging to the direction of the taxes, amounted, throughout the empire, without including Piedmont, to 1044; 254 controllers of the first class; 558 of the second, &c. The administrators for the collection of the indirect taxes employ likewise an immense multitude of directors, subdirectors, inspectors, subinspectors, clerks, verifiers, visitors, controllers, receivers, excisemen, *préposés*, *émissaires*, *récepteurs*, &c. Those, together with the agents employed in the collection of the direct taxes, are all nominated by the Emperor. Pouchet, an eminent statistical writer of France, declares that there are no positive data by which it would be possible to calculate the expense of collection; but he acknowledges, that the expenses on the land-tax alone could not be lower, in 1803, than 161 per cent. The charges on the other taxes are, perhaps not unreasonably, calculated at 20 per cent, taking into consideration the increase in the number of revenue officers, and the high-pounding allowed them. The minister of finance, in his report of 1806, states, that the expenses of lawsuits, writs, and seizures, incident to financial delinquency, form a mean proportion of 1-180 to the whole amount of the direct taxes. In some departments, the ratio was upwards of 1-45. The injuries and expenses sustained by the people, in the enforcement of the other taxes, are not so easily calculated; but there seems no reason to doubt, that the oppression must be every where pretty nearly proportionate.

And here, when the reader imagines he has quite done with the enumeration of taxes, another imposition starts up to surprise him. The receivers and collectors deposit, individually, in the exchequer,

sums in cash, under the title of *cautionnement*, or pledges, equal to one-twelfth of all the money which passes through their hands. The minister of finance very properly denominates these securities a loan; and of no small magnitude, as they amounted, according to the budget of 1806, to eighty millions of francs. No plausible objection could be raised against this plan, if it were confined merely to the agents of the treasury, in order to prevent insolvency or peculation on their part; but it has been extended, in a most arbitrary manner, to other classes of persons, and converted into an expedient for the creation of a new fund, applicable to the general expenses of the state. All bankers, lawyers, notaries, brokers, judicial officers, butchers, &c., and, in general, all persons exercising responsible trades and professions, are compelled to deposit similar securities in cash, according to a graduated scale, for millions for the use of the prince. Yet the magnificence, the prodigality, and the rapacity of the new court, make it impossible to believe that its expenditures can be less than that of the Bourbons; and the expenditure of the Bourbons amounted to 31 millions of livres. It is, indeed, fully ascertained, that the nominal falls far short of the real expenditure.

Such are the leading features of the French financial constitution; And it is from this constitution, combined with the code of the conscription, with the despotic regulations on the press—and the vast establishment of spies and informers, that the gigantic power, which is overturning Europe, derives its form, and recruits its strength. Vigour and rapidity are its characteristics; and despotism is its constitution undoubtedly is, it is, of all the despots, that history has described, the most active, energetic, and compact. The frame of that constitution is not disordered by intricate fictions, nor clogged with bloated aristocracies. All is bone and muscle; there is no sluggish smoothness, no sleek imbecility; every nerve is braced to its firmest tension, and preserved in perpetual vigour, by the most severe training and unceasing exercise. Perhaps, the regimen may be too painful to be perpetual;—perhaps, a proportionate exhaustion may be expected to succeed; but, as long as the system does retain its present energy, so long, at least, it must continue to triumph over the diseased and decrepit masses of corporeal impotence, that erect themselves upon the Continent with the empty show of resistance, and totter under the weight of the very arms which they affect to wield in their defence.

the Municipal Establishment, who were sent next to the Congress.

The holy office, having been performed by the Bishop, the Herald with a loud voice exclaimed, “Deputed to be sworn”—immediately after which, the Chancellor, addressing himself to the Congress, read in an audible manner the following Oath:—

“ You all swear before God, on the Holy Evangelists, and you promise to your country, to preserve and defend her rights and those of King Ferdinand VII., without any connection with or influence by France, and independently of any form of Government adopted in Spain, you acknowledging more particularly that which exists in the General Congress of Venezuela; you swear to oppose all other authority over these our states which may contravene its absolute and legitimate independence, to maintain pure and inviolable our sacred religion, and to respect the mystery of the immaculate conception of our Lady the Virgin Mary; to promote directly and indirectly the general interests of the confederation of which you form a part, and the particular interest of the district by which you are appointed; to obey the Law and ordinances which this Congress may enact and promulgate; to subject yourself to the interior regulations it may direct; and to fulfil faithfully the duties of the Deputation you are called upon to exercise.”

All the Deputies answered, “ We swear,” on which the Chancellor repeated, “ If you swear to God help you; if not, may he punish you in this life and the next.”

That the armed force might place itself immediately under the Supreme Authority, the Military Governor and Commander-in-Chief, Colonel D. Juan P. Ayala came forward, and took the following oath:

“ You swear before God, and you give your word of honour to the Congress of Venezuela, to acknowledge its sovereignty alone within these provinces, as the legitimate and direct representative of King Ferdinand VII.; to obey and make to be respected the laws which it shall sanction and promulgate; not to use force but for the purpose for which power was given you, and in the way the Executive Authority shall order; and to defend the mystery of the immaculate Conception of our Lady the Virgin Mary.”

These ceremonies concluded, the herald said aloud to the people, “ Venezuela has, by the blessing of God, installed that Assembly which is to preserve your rights and those of King Ferdinand VII.” Mass was now performed by the Bishop, and *Veni Creator* sung by the congregation. The Deacon was then struck up, accompanied by the Deputation of the Ecclesiastic Cabildo, who again administered holy water to the President. The Assembly next returned to the Palace in the order before designated, when the Executive Authorities took the following oath:

“ You swear before God and the Holy Evangelists, that you acknowledge the sovereignty of the Congress now installed, as the legitimate and immediate Representative of King Ferdinand VII.; that you will exercise legally and faithfully the powers intrusted to you; and that you will neither use the public force or public funds, but as it shall direct; that you will obey and promulgate its laws and support its authority, to which you are subordinate; and finally, that you will respect the mystery of the immaculate Conception of our Lady the Virgin Mary.”

In the sequel, oaths were taken by the Prelate, the Commanders of the garrison, the Members of the Court of Appeal and of the Municipality, by the Chamber of Commerce, the University, and the College of Advocates.

The Session was then opened by the President, the following Officers having been appointed:—D. D. Felipe Fernández Paul, President; D. D. Martínez de la Cova, Vice-President; Don Miguel Serón, Secretary; D. Antonio Nicolás Brizeno, Vice-Secretary.

Of the last the following are the Representatives: D. Lino de Clemente, D. Fernando Torné, D. Nicolas Castro, D. Gabriel Ponte, D. Ildefonso A. López Menéndez, D. Luis José Riva Torá.

On this occasion the assembled Junta in full costume waited the arrival of the Deputies of the Congress, who took their seats ranged on the floor of the Court, according to the order in which they were presented. The Chancellor and Master of the Ceremonies were placed at the two extremities of the City Grand Jury:

Thomas Chatterton, Esq. Thomas McCall, Esq. Sir Wm. Chatterton, Bart. Wm. Massey Baker, Esq. Thomas Doran, Esq. James Casey, Esq. Rich. Westropp, Esq. Francis Hodder, Esq. Christopher Cole, Esq. Thomas G. Wagstaffe, Esq. John Cotter, Esq. Samuel G. Wagstaffe, Esq. Joseph Leycester, Esq. Wm. Gould, Esq. Edward Newson, Esq. Henry Bogwell, Esq. James Lane, Esq. James Mayar, Esq. Robert Carr, Esq. Barth. Gibbons, Esq. William Crawford, Esq.

The following gentlemen were sworn on the County Grand Jury:

The Honourable George Ponsonby, Foreman. Richard Townsend, Esq. Justin McCarthy, Esq. R. U. Fitzgerald, Esq. R. Hedges Eyre, Esq. William Wilson, Esq. A. Warrell, Esq. John Longfield, Esq. H. Cole Bowen, Esq. S. Rowland, Esq. John Anderson, Esq. C. Silver Oliver, Esq.

No trial, either civil or criminal, that could afford interest to the public, has as yet appeared.

On Wednesday the Cork Militia arrived at Port-Youghal, 15 months of the years 1805 and 1806, the minister of that department enters the receipts at 986 millions of francs, and the expences at 932 millions. This favourable balance is not very creditable, when it is considered, that there was an acknowledged defalcation of 100 millions in the beginning of the year 1806, and that no mention seems to be made of any such favourable balance, in the subsequent estimate of the ways and means.

The minister of police, in 1800, required, in his

own department, 1,260,000 francs for the secret services alone; and though it does not seem probable, that a smaller sum has been found sufficient for those services since, yet, in the budget of 1807, the total of his expences is put down at 881,000 francs.

The minister of war, in 1807, demanded 436 millions; and yet, for 1808, his expences are stated at only 293 millions.

The disbursements of the foreign department, in Necker's time, amounted to 11 millions. The history of the foreign policy pursued in those later days does not make it probable, that the expences can be much diminished; yet, for the year 1806, they are stated at little more than 7 millions.

The appropriation for the Imperial Household was, in 1807, 28 million francs, including three millions for the use of the prince. Yet the magnificence, the prodigality, and the rapacity of the new court, make it impossible to believe that its expenditures can be less than that of the Bourbons; and the expenditure of the Bourbons amounted to 31 millions of francs.

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