

LONGING FOR THE FARM

PERSONAL SIDE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC.

BY JAMES B. WILSON.

THE president of France, although living in regal style, longs for the day when he can return to the farm. "It is my fondest hope," he said, on a recent occasion. Amid the splendors of Paris and his sumptuous surroundings in Elysee palace, he retains the simple tastes acquired while following the plow on his father's farm. M. Loubet left his native Le Marsan many years ago to carve out a career altogether picturesque, and his election to the presidency of the republic, February 16, 1899, was the crowning triumph of French democracy. No other ruler of that volatile people, except Faure, had sprung from the humblest ranks of the bourgeoisie in times of peace, and no ruler has given better satisfaction to all classes except the silly royalists. He speaks English somewhat imperfectly, yet he has all the graciousness of a cosmopolitan, mingled with the sturdy virtues of a self-made man. There is a thoughtfulness in his facial expression which impresses one most forcibly. Earnest and energetic in manner, and quick to grasp ideas, he seems deeply appreciative of the trust reposed in him by his fellow countrymen, and anxious only to prove his fidelity to them. His character shines in his face. A wonderfully strong face it is, too, a countenance full of dignity, patience and kindness. He talks slowly, as if to remember all that he is saying, and leans forward on his desk, with his eyes resting on his visitor.

"My boyhood?" he repeated, with a smile and a slight French shrug; "it was too commonplace to be of interest. It gave me vigor of body, that is all; as for anything else, it hindered me. Not until I knew in my own mind what I should like to do, what career in life I ought to pursue, did I exchange mental and physical weariness for hope and happiness. Every young man," he continued, "has to go through the experience of choosing a profession, and usually it is not a pleasant time for him. He thinks of adopting one career one day, but the next morning he has determined to be something else. Then a third vocation opens itself to his imagination, and he decides to follow it. More than likely, he finally decides to do none of these things, and settles upon some business or profession entirely different from any he has ever considered. It is a happy time when a young man has decided, once and for all, what he wants to do. I have been through the experience myself, and have not forgotten what my feelings were. It was like a calm after a storm when I made my choice. I had something definite, then, to work for, and could go ahead unhesitatingly. What we all need is something to work for. When we have that, we are very nearly happy. I think the most glorious years of my life were the ones during which I was struggling for a beginning in my career. I have worked for every foot of progress I have made since leaving the farm," he

said, earnestly. "I felt certain that I would fail miserably in life if I remained a farmer; but I knew, on the other hand, that I could not win professional success without working even harder. Well, I paid the price cheerfully.

"Hard work is all there is to success-winning, if the work is applied to a proper career,—a well-chosen one. There must be, first, a fit selection. Many persons work in the wrong direction. Men try to be lawyers when they should be farmers, and farmers when they should be in some university reading law. It is unfortunate, indeed, when a man has mistaken his vocation. But, assuming that he has chosen wisely, my rule is all-powerful. I never knew any geniuses that could get along without it. Everyone whom I have ever met, who has attained success in anything, tells the same story. The young man who sits still and expects to have things come to him, finds out his mistake soon. But when a young fellow has a laudable ambition and bends his energies in that direction, he is reasonably sure to win."

President Faure remembered his humble origin; he kept his tanner's suit in his cabinet to remind him of his humble manual labor; and yet it is well known that, whether from personal predilection, or for the imagined necessities of France, in the eyes of Europe, a weakness into which even the great Napoleon fell, he manifested something like a fondness for imperial style before his death. Émile Loubet appears not only to be democratic, but also to believe absolutely that democracy rules and wins respect, rather than courtliness. Of him the Prince of Wales said: "I like M. Lou-

bet very much better than I did M. Faure. The latter put on the airs of a sovereign, which he was not; while the former has the air of being a good citizen, which he ought to be."

"Monsieur Loubet gets all his goodness from his mother," said a palace dependent. "What a heart of gold is hers! Why, if any man in all Le Marsan gets hurt, or a child has the croup, there is that old farmer's wife on hand, to aid and bring medi-



President Loubet of France.

cine, and be a mother to all the people."

This peasant woman has become almost as famous, the world over, as her honored son. Scarcely anything else is so popular as a man who loves his mother. That touches the chord that makes the world's heart vibrate in unison. It recalls Garfield, inaugurated and kissing his mother, and McKinley, the Sabbath after nomination, escorting his mother to the carriage.