https://doi.org/10.22364/jull.10.05

# French Liberal School of the Second Half of 19<sup>th</sup> Century. On Political Freedom

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The article seeks to analyze political and legal views of the French liberal school of the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century on freedom as a whole and on political freedom in particular.

**Keywords:** liberalism, liberal school, freedom, individualism, constitution, parliamentarism, political regime.

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### Introduction

Over the two recent centuries, France has developed a rule-of-law state, which is based, *inter alia*, on the provision of human rights and freedoms. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789) was the first to enshrine rights and freedoms, since then it became a constitutional principle. In this regard, studies of political and legal concepts of human rights and freedoms never become irrelevant.

This article explores the political and legal narrative of the French liberal school of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century regarding political freedom. When developing these issues, the following methods were used: dialectical, functional, formal and dogmatic, legal and historical, comparative historical, method of systemic analysis, etc.

Thus, formation of the political and legal concept of liberalism was tightly linked to the evolving capitalism of 17<sup>th</sup>18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Liberalism defied absolutism for several reasons. Firstly, liberalism counterposed the idea of social strata to the concept of natural law. Secondly, it supported the idea of individual freedom and

proved the existing governance inefficient. Thirdly, it criticized the arbitrary rule, whereby authorities stood above the law.<sup>1</sup>

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, main principles of classical liberalism had either been articulated or already enshrined in legislation. They were: absolute value and equality of human personality; autonomy of individual will, existence of inalienable human rights; contractual nature of state-individual relations; rule of law as an instrument of social control; restriction of the state domain and range of its functions; immunity against state intervention into private life and freedom of action (as permitted by law) in every area of public life.<sup>2</sup>

# 1. French Liberal School of the Second Half of 19th Century

French liberalism as a political movement originated in the first decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century after the Bourbon Restoration and was formed by G. de Staël, B. Constant, F. Guizot, A. de Tocqueville, etc.

Generally, the 19<sup>th</sup> century is viewed as the "golden age" of French liberalism."<sup>3</sup> Representatives of French liberalism in their works sought to understand the legitimacy of governmental power and the limits thereof; they also proved the necessity to restrict political power in order to protect individual freedoms.

The middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a certain transformation of French liberalism, caused by political changes taking place in France. Liberals "were opposed both to the democratic ideas that fuelled the 1848 Revolution and to the establishments that appeared after the coup d'état of 1851." French liberal school was formed in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its representatives include L. A. Prévost-Paradol, É. R. de Laboulaye, E. Vacherot, J. Simon.<sup>5</sup>

A central place in the political and legal thought of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is attributed to rights and freedoms, their classifications and, above all, to political freedom. The terminology articulated by P. Rossi in late 1830s to early 1840s became widespread in France. According to him, rights and freedoms can be divided into private, public (social), and political. Private rights belong to the field of civil law. Rights "that belong to individuals, but cannot be thought of without a society, because they reflect the development of human capabilities in the society and the development of humans themselves" are a group of public rights that includes liberty of an individual, property right, freedom of expression, religious freedom. Political rights in their turn "are constituted by participation in political power". E. Vacherot classified all rights into social and political, and thought that they defined the ideal of human and society. E. Olivier, an outstanding political figure in France at that time, noted that "rights of an individual that are not controlled by the state, constitute individual freedom; whereas rights used

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Ballestrem, K. G. Predposylki i predely demokratii // Voprosy filosofii. 1994. # 7-8, s. 238.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Hallowell, J. H. Main Currents in Modern Political Thought. NY: Henry Holt and Company. 1950, pp. 10–11.

Laine, M. Préface // R. Leroux et D. Hart, L'âge d'or du libéralisme français, Paris: Ellipses, 2014, pp. 3.

Mishel' A. Ideia gosudarstva, Kriticheskiji opyt istorij social nyb i politicheskiji teorij vo Francij so

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Mishel' A. Ideja gosudarstva. Kriticheskij opyt istorii social'nyh i politicheskih teorij vo Francii so vremeni revoljucii. M.: Izdatel'skij dom «Territorija budushhego», 2008, s. 315.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Rosanvallon, P. Guizot et la question du suffrage universel au xix siècle // François Guizot et la culture politique de son temps. Colloque de la Fondation Guizot. Paris: Gallimard & Le Seuil, 1991, p. 134.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Rossi, P. Cours de droit constitutionnel. T. 1. Paris: Librairie de Guillaumin et C, 1866, p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 11

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Vacherot, É. La démocratie. Paris: F. Chamerot, 1860, p. 20.

by individuals to control power constitute political freedom". Similar ideas were expressed by J. Simon, who divided rights and liberties into natural or inalienable rights, and political rights. Thus, French liberal scholars of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century thought that rights and freedoms, when systemized, represent a dichotomy that shows itself, on the one side, in exercising private rights and on the other side, in the degree of participation in political life.

The most complete and feasible political and legal concept of political freedom was set forth by L. A. Prévost-Paradol and É. R. de Laboulaye, prominent French liberal scholars.

Political and artistic activities of Lucien-Anatole Prévost-Paradol (18291870) reached its peak in the 1860s, when he became member of the French Academy, run for Legislative Corps at the 1863 and 1869 parliamentary elections and was appointed ambassador in the US. His most famous work was "The New France", published in 1868, which made its author "the leading political writer." The Book was "dedicated to general politics; complete and beautifully written, it summarized all the ideas of the liberal party." It is worth noting, that L. A. Prévost-Paradol was "not that much concerned with abstract thoughts about the correlation between rights and equality or with forms of governance; he would rather focus on more specific issues: political institution reforms, moral and intellectual progress of the society."13 L. A. Prévost-Paradol is considered to be the "spiritual father" of the 1875 Constitution.<sup>14</sup> Many of his ideas found their reflection in constitutional laws of 1875. They were implemented in establishing a bicameral parliament, electing a Chamber of Deputies on the basis of general direct voting, as well as in collegial liability of ministers to the parliament (articles 1 and 6 of the Constitutional Law "The organization of government" from 25 February 1875).<sup>15</sup>

Édouard René Lefèbvre de Laboulaye (18111883) – a French scholar, legal activist and politician. Like L. A. Prévost-Paradol, he was elected active member of the French Academy, taught at the Chair of Comparative Legal Studies at Collège de France. From late 1850s to late 1860s he run for Legislative Corps four times, but was unsuccessful.

After the Third Republic had been proclaimed in France, at the additional elections of 1871, E. Laboulaye was elected a deputy of the National Assembly, where he was a leader of the Centre Left, headed the commission on reforming higher education. E. Laboulaye was one of the authors of the 1875 Constitution; he presented national law "Relations between governments" to the National Assembly. In December 1875, he was elected lifelong senator.

The most prominent of his works, containing his political and legal views are "Liberal Party, Its Program and Its Future", "Constitutional Thought", "The State and Its Limits", "French Administration and Legislation", etc.

<sup>9</sup> Ollivier, É. Démocratie et liberté Paris: A. Lacroix, Verboeckhoven & C., 1867, p. 384.

 $<sup>^{10}\,\,</sup>$  Simon, J. La liberté politique. 5-e éd. Paris: Librairie hachette et C. 1881, p. 164.

Giquel, J.-É. Les idées constitutionnelles de Prévost-Paradol // La Revue administrative. 2000. № 316, p. 395.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Istorija XIX veka. / pod red. Lavissa i Rambo. T. 6. M.: Socjekgiz, 1938, c. 453.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Fedorova, M. M. Modernizm i antimodernizm vo francuzskoj politicheskoj mysli XIX veka. M.: COP Instituta filosofii RAN, 1997, c. 90.

Morabito, M. Histoire constitutionnelle de la France de 1789 à nos jours. 12-e éd. Paris: Montchrestien, 2012, p. 311.

<sup>15</sup> Constitution de 1875, IIIe République. Available at www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/conseil-constitutionnel/francais/la-constitution/les-constitutions-de-la-france/constitution-de-1875-iiie-republique.5108.html [last viewed 05.11.2016].

In his works, E. Laboulaye tends to analyze the category of freedom, definition of the state power, differentiation between private and public interests.

Overall, despite diverging views on a number of separate issues, the general ideas of L. A. Prévost-Paradol and E. Laboulaye are quite similar to each other.

# 2. Freedom as Understood by French Liberalism of The Second Half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

French liberals viewed freedom as an individual notion, because it "is enshrined in the right of every individual to develop themselves and do whatever is possible, given their physical, intellectual and moral capabilities". <sup>16</sup> Besides, freedom is considered as a panhuman notion: "Inventing a purely French political regime is as unreasonable as inventing a purely French industry, thus defying all the experience given to the Americans and the Englishmen. Since industry has no homeland, neither has liberty; both belong to the common legacy of the Christianity." <sup>17</sup>

It is worth mentioning that L. A. Prévost-Paradol in "The New France" paid far less attention to the notion of freedom than E. Laboulaye. Like the majority of French law scholars of the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century, who thought that parliamentarism was "an instrument of freedom", effecting through "representative government control of both parliamentary chambers and public discussions," L. A. Prévost-Paradol also supposed that it is parliamentarism that makes nation free. Besides, the author of "The New France" did not raise the issue of setting up a particular regime. The key idea was that "people rule themselves within a republic or a monarchy with the help of an elected assembly and a liable ministry." Thus, L. A. Prévost-Paradol defined parliamentarism as a type of representative government.

Neither did E. Laboulaye think of a particular regime, because what mattered was "the spirit of freedom, neither English, nor French, that is, however, a common value and glory of civilization." The spirit of freedom can find its expression only in parliamentarism or, as said by E. Laboulaye, in constitutional rule. 22

In his definition of freedom, E. Laboulaye proceeded from the articles of the 1789 Declaration of human and civic rights, which was based on the natural law theory. The Declaration supported the concept of inalienable human rights that are given to people by birth, not by law. At the same time, the contemporary French constitutionalists note that "definitions of various rights provided in the Declaration present an individualistic social concept. Everything is aimed at reaching maximal independence of people from each other and at limiting state prerogative power."<sup>23</sup>

E. Laboulaye presented and proved his own classification of freedoms, based on the assumption that they can be of primary or secondary, or derived nature.

Labulje, Je. Gosudarstvo i ego predely. V svjazi s sovremennymi voprosami administracii, zakonodateľstva i politiki. SPb.: Izdanie N. I. Lamanskogo, 1868, c. XXVII.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Laboulaye, E. Le Parti libéral. Son programme et son avenir. 8-e éd. Paris: Charpentier et C, 1871, p. 129.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> *Laffitte P.* Le suffrage universel et le régime parlementaire. Paris: Libraire Hachette, 1888, p. 180.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Prévost-Paradol, L.-A. La France nouvelle. Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1868, p. 104.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Laboulaye, E. Le Parti libéral. Son programme et son avenir. 8-e éd. Paris: Charpentier et C, 1871, p. 130.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Hamon, F., Troper, M. Droit constitutionnel. 36-e éd. Paris: LGDJ, 2015, p. 329.

He distinguished between two types of freedoms: "the first type exists on its own (i.e., by birth – S.B.); they are what we today call social, individual, municipal freedoms, etc.; the other type provides guarantee for the freedoms of the first type: they are political freedoms". Laboulaye calls the freedoms of the first type civil freedoms; they are natural, because "for us they mean only the right to live and to be masters of our life". In addition, civil freedoms were considered from the point of view of individualism that allows to shield people from abuse of authorities in power.

Unlike civic freedoms, political freedoms are apt to change, because they are directly dependant on a certain historical epoch and on political institutions of various states.

# 3. Concept of Political Freedom by E. Laboulaye and L. A. Prévost-Paradol

Political freedoms as understood by E. Laboulaye included four elements. They were: electoral law; free election of national representatives with broad control capabilities; independent judicial system; free press, devoid of any administrative restrictions.

E. Laboulaye stated that political freedoms should protect civil freedoms; however, the first should not replace the last.

Both E. Laboulaye and L. A. Prévost-Paradol stood for universal suffrage. Nevertheless, they differed in opinion regarding electoral system that was in place in France. E. Laboulaye was sure that the 1852 Constitution "preserved universal suffrage, which is the guiding principle of our government. Empire is a democracy that has hereditary sovereign and representative institutions. This is a new unprecedented political system". <sup>26</sup> In his opinion, electoral system required only minor amendments.

A major disadvantage of the universal suffrage law, according to L. A. Prévost-Paradol, was "exclusion from the chamber of outstanding figures, who often represent the minority." However, he thought unacceptable to establish two categories of deputies within the parliament, with one of them having specific mandates". The author of "The New France" also rejected the voting system, whereby "value of the vote of every citizen would be proportionate to their authority and their individual status", 28 which was defined by the income tax.

L. A. Prévost-Paradol offered to introduce the system of cumulative suffrage in France (*suffrage accumulé*),<sup>29</sup> which would comply with the idea of justice and public interest on the one side, and provide for proportionally represented minority on the other side. Such a system would allow the electors divide the available votes between different candidates and "give the minority a chance to obtain a relevant majority of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Laboulaye, E. Le Parti libéral. Son programme et son avenir. 8-e éd. Paris: Charpentier et C, 1871, p. 11.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Prévost-Paradol, L.-A. La France nouvelle. Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1868, p. 63.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 66

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Bayssellance, A. Représentation proportionnelle des minorities au moyen d'une nouvelle method de scrutin. Paris: Libraire Sandoz et Fischbacher, 1879, p. 4.

votes by dividing them among few candidates".<sup>30</sup> The number of votes the electors had would equal the number of deputies to be elected. Every elector could divide their votes between several candidates or support the only one with all the votes they have. According to their choice, electors should write several names on the voting card or write the same name repeatedly several times. In the latter case, the candidate would receive as many votes as many times his name appeared on the card. "We see, – L. A. Prévost-Paradol concludes, – that *cumulative suffrage* (italics – L. A. P. P.) is the most genial way to develop the representative system".<sup>31</sup>

The second element of political freedoms, which is closely connected to the first one was national representation.

Views of E. Laboulaye and L. A. Prévost-Paradol on this issue are alike. Both supported bicameral structure of the parliament, empowerment of the elected (lower) chamber. It is worth noting that according to the effective Constitution of 1852, the only function of the Legislative Corps was to discuss and pass draft laws, including taxation laws (Art. 39).<sup>32</sup> However, L. A. Prévost-Paradol underlined that "this right is restricted at the moment".<sup>33</sup> E. Laboulaye wrote that "it (Legislative Corps – S.B.) has neither right of initiative, nor right of amendment, right of accepting claims or right of interpellation".<sup>34</sup> These rights were proposed to the lower chamber.

As to the upper chamber, L. A. Prévost-Paradol thought it should "share the legislative power with the other chamber". The law should pass only with consent of both chambers. Any disputes on the draft law should be settled by conciliatory commissions. He emphasized that the upper chamber "would not be endowed with any special rights that are already assigned to the other chamber". 36

When considering the authorities of the upper chamber, E. Laboulaye proceeded from the Article 25 of the 1852 Constitution, which appoints Senate to serve as "warrant of the Fundamental law and public freedoms. No law could be promulgated before the Senate considers it". However, "if the Chamber makes a poor judgment, if the voting is rushed or if the decision is unsavoury – the flaw is irretrievable; here come disadvantages of a single assembly. The Senate cannot [...] hold a second discussion and amend the law. This is a disadvantage both for the state and the government, to say more, it is an incorrigible disadvantage". Laboulaye proposed to solve this problem by endowing the Senate with the powers identical to those held by the Legislative Corps.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Gessen V. M. Osnovy konstitucionnogo prava. Petrograd: Juridicheskij knizhnyj sklad «Pravo», 1917, c. 295.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> *Prévost-Paradol, L.-A.* La France nouvelle. Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1868, p. 74–75.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Constitution de 1852, Second Empire. Available at www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/conseil-constitutionnel/francais/la-constitution/les-constitutions-de-la-france/constitution-de-1852-second-empire.5107.html [last viewed 22.11.2016].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Prévost-Paradol, L.-A. La France nouvelle. Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1868, p. 95.

<sup>34</sup> Laboulaye E. Le Parti libéral. Son programme et son avenir. 8-e éd. Paris: Charpentier et C, 1871, p. 163.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> *Prévost-Paradol, L.-A.* La France nouvelle. Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1868, p. 112.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Constitution de 1852, Second Empire. Available at www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/conseil-constitutionnel/francais/la-constitution/les-constitutions-de-la-france/constitution-de-1852-second-empire.5107.html [last viewed 12.11.2016].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Laboulaye, E. Le Parti libéral. Son programme et son avenir. 8-e éd. Paris: Charpentier et C, 1871, pp. 200–201.

E. Laboulaye and L. A. Prévost-Paradol supported parliamentarism and were convinced that France needed an accountable government: "[...] a homogeneous, accountable ministry that can be altered is the key instrument of parliamentary rule and a warrant of political freedom".<sup>39</sup> Unlike E. Laboulaye, who did not propose any particular system of interaction between executive and legislative branches of power, saying that "ministers have nothing in common with the chambers, the two branches of power are totally isolated",<sup>40</sup> L. A. Prévost-Paradol established a solid concept of parliamentarism that was based on two principal elements: political liability of the government to the lower chamber of the parliament and right of the government to dissolve the parliament. These ideas were later reinforced in the Constitution of the Third Republic.

E. Laboulaye stood for independent judicial system and saw its main function in protecting individual freedoms. L. A. Prévost-Paradol also thought that judicial power should be independent. Independence of judges, which is "crucial for maintaining public order and proper law administration",<sup>41</sup> is guaranteed by the way they are elected or appointed. In particular, he proposed a system, whereby cooption could be combined with election: whenever a vacancy appears, courts that have equal authorities, propose several candidates, then the executive appoints one of them who they think best suits the position. L. A. Prévost-Paradol wrote that this "perfect combination is better adapted than any other system".<sup>42</sup>

Finally, the fourth element of political freedom is free press, which is a "driver of the modern civilization" and "higher warrant of all the freedoms". 44 Press can be free, when it is not bound by any administrative restrictions. L. A. Prévost-Paradol listed free press among the prerequisites for universal suffrage and underlined that it "should come at a comparatively low cost in order to penetrate into the population". 45 According to him, press could be called free when it could reflect various opinions.

Both scholars emphasized that political freedoms could be executed only with the consent of the state, or rather with its explicit consent enshrined in constitution. Constitution for E. Laboulaye is a "warrant of freedom, a border, dividing public authorities". However, that is not enough: "Speaking about constitution, the nature of the state should be taken into consideration, for the constitution can be liberal on paper, while in reality the government can be tyrannical and freedom would only be an empty phrase". Interestingly, both authors distinguish between the society and the government, because "the society cannot be democratic, unless it has a democratic government and democratic institutions". At the same time, both political and civil freedom can be implemented only in a democratic state, that is defined by E. Laboulaye as a Christian or an enlightened state, that can be opposed

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Prévost-Paradol, L.-A. La France nouvelle. Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1868, p. 101.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Laboulaye, E. Le Parti libéral. Son programme et son avenir. 8-e éd. Paris: Charpentier et C, 1871, p. 193.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> *Prévost-Paradol, L.-A.* La France nouvelle. Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1868, p. 156.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 164.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Laboulaye, E. Le Parti libéral. Son programme et son avenir. 8-e éd. Paris: Charpentier et C, 1871, p. 78.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Îbid., p. 122.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Prévost-Paradol, L.-A. La France nouvelle. Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1868. p. 53.

<sup>46</sup> Labulje Je. Francuzskaja administracija i zakonodateľstvo. SPb.: Izdanie N. I. Lamanskogo, 1870, c. 22.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Prévost-Paradol, L.-A. La France nouvelle. Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1868, p. 6.

to brutal revolutionary democracy, and rule of the crowd: "Christian democracy [...], that teaches people to rule over themselves, that teaches those who have power to protect everyone's rights and individual rights and that makes power the custodian of the law. This is the democracy that liberal party desires and seeks to create". <sup>49</sup> According to L. A. Prévost-Paradol, democratic rule is "the last word in civilization and the best means to provide for peace and happiness in a political society" <sup>50</sup> and all the societies "seek to establish a democratic state and democratic rule to form a democratic government that is able to give them order and freedom". <sup>51</sup>

### **Conclusions**

French liberal school of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century tends to consider political freedom as an instrument required to restrict the authorities of state in power. Simultaneously, the implementation of political freedom depends firstly on effective constitution, and secondly, on democratic regime, because democratic rule complies with the law and the will of the majority.

## Summary

- 1. Over the previous two centuries, France has rapidly developed the rule of law, based on the observation of human and civil rights. The 1789 Declaration of civic and human rights has turned the protection of rights and freedoms into a constitutional principle in France. In this regard studies of political and legal concepts of human rights and freedoms remain critical.
- 2. French liberal school of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century assigned a key role to the notion of political freedom. Among the most relevant representatives of the school were L. A. Prévost-Paradol and E. Laboulaye, whose views were quite similar. Their works "New France" and "Liberal party, its programme and future" influenced the formation of constitutional institutes in the French Third Republic. In particular, the 1875 Constitution initiated a bicameral parliament, an election of the lower chamber through direct general voting and a political liability of ministries to the parliament.
- 3. French liberals viewed freedom as an individual notion. Besides, the political freedoms as opposed to the civil freedoms are apt to change, because they are directly dependent upon the given historical epoch and on political institutions of the state. Political freedoms, as understood by E. Laboulaye, included four major elements: electoral law; free election of national representatives with broad control capabilities; independent judicial system and free press. These conditions can be ensured only with the governmental consent, which is explicitly stated in constitution. French liberal school states that political freedom can be observed only when effective constitution and democratic regime are in place.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Laboulaye, E. Le Parti libéral. Son programme et son avenir. 8-e éd. Paris: Charpentier et C, 1871, p. 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Prévost-Paradol, L.-A. La France nouvelle. Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1868, p. 22.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

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