

## THE SMALLEST REPUBLIC IN THE WORLD.

BY THE EDITOR.

THE visit of the Prince of Monaco to American shores recalls to our minds the tiny principality of which this studious and efficient scientist is the ruler. There are a few other independent governments in Europe of very small dimensions, and not the least interesting of these is the republic of Moresnet which this year celebrates its centennial anniversary.

Some time ago a Swiss author by the name of Hoch wrote a little book on this forgotten territory in central Europe,<sup>1</sup> which is scarcely known to the world, except to specialists, and whose existence is due to the jealousy between Belgium and Prussia.

When the great powers divided Europe among themselves after Napoleon's defeat, there was a strip of territory smaller than any other country in the world, being only 330 acres in extent and inhabited at the time by only a couple of thousand people, which was claimed by two of the powers, and they were not anxious to go to war about it. This was the little township Kelmis, also called Altenburg, and since 1793 known as Moresnet, to be pronounced *Moraynay*. The significance of the place was due at the time to calamin mines, which were then found in a mountain called Bleyberg in the immediate vicinity of Kelmis.

The tiny republic of Moresnet lies between the three cities, the Belgian Louvain, the Prussian Aix-la-Chapelle and the Prussian town Eupen. It is reached by the Belgian state railroad between Aix-la-Chapelle and Vezier. Moresnet, the capital of the country, possesses a post-office, but they issue no postal stamps of their own. Stamps of either Prussian or Belgian denomination are accepted.

This small strip of ground belonged to Austria until 1793. It

<sup>1</sup> Published in Bern, Switzerland, 1881, under the title *Un territoire oublié au centre de l'Europe*. See also F. Schroeder, *Das grenzstreitige Gebiet von Moresnet*. Aix-la-Chapelle, 1902.

was then taken by France during the revolution, and continued a French possession until the defeat of Napoleon at Leipsic. When the map of Europe was reconstructed at the convention of Vienna, Moresnet might have fallen either to Belgium or to Prussia, had not the calamin mines been of interest to both countries. Neither of the contending powers cared very much for the possession of these few acres, but both wanted to have free access to the mines which at that time furnished mainly zinc ores. The result was that both Prussia and Belgium allowed the inhabitants to have their own government on condition that the ores should have free importation into both states.

The constitution of Moresnet was newly drafted in the forties, and the rival governments allowed the people entire freedom on condition that the commercial interests should be equally divided between the two powers. They allowed the people to elect their own mayor who administers the little country with the aid of a council of ten. The four thousand inhabitants are about one-third Belgians and two-thirds Germans. The mines have given out and so the only interest either country would have to possess Moresnet has been lost, but the independence of the little republic has been preserved.

All young men born in Moresnet are free from military duty, while the German and Belgian settlers have to serve in their own country. This little republic of Moresnet is blessed above all other republics in the world by not having any import duty. They have no custom houses on their Belgian and Prussian frontiers, and, what is better still, they have no courts. The few quarrels that arise among the inhabitants can be settled at will either before Belgian or German courts, while they are relieved of all responsibility in international affairs; for in spite of being a European republic they have never been asked to any of the European conferences, and have had no part in making or waging any of the European wars, so the mayor can attend to his home politics, unmindful of what may happen in the rest of the world.

In connection with this smallest of the nations we may mention also those other and better known countries which are not so much greater, but likewise owe their independence either to rivalry between two great powers or to the forgetfulness of the world which is excusable on account of their small size. There is a country called Andorra, which is situated between France and Spain in the eastern portion of the Pyrenees, and is bounded on the west by Spanish Catalonia and on the east by the French department Ariège.

It enjoys free trade with France, to which it is affiliated as a kind of dependency. Originally the country was governed by the bishop of Urgel and the count of Foix. How small and insignificant it is may be seen from the fact that the income which the bishop draws from Andorra is 460 francs, which is less than \$90, a year, while the income of the government consists of a tribute to the amount of 960 francs paid at present to the successor of the old count of Foix, the French republic. The bishop divides his authority with the pope and has the right to install priests four months in a year, while the pope installs them during the other eight months. When the counts of Foix died out they left the principality to a Count Albert, and when the country fell to France its international government was interfered with as little as possible, and the inhabitants were not prevented from drawing a goodly revenue by smuggling.

At present the country is governed by a council of twenty-four and a president who is elected for life. Juridical affairs are in the hands of two judges called in French *viguiers*, and in Catalonian *vegueros*, who have the high-sounding title *Illustres*. Military service is compulsory. Every adult man is obliged to serve and must equip himself with arms as he deems best, and, as may be expected, most of them are good shots.

We may add a few comments on the two smallest principalities of Europe of which the best known is Monaco, on the Ligurian coast of the Mediterranean, surrounded by French territory. Though much larger than Moresnet, it has only eight square miles of area and may possess about sixteen or seventeen thousand inhabitants, but it is frequented by many fashionable and wealthy travelers who are attracted by the mild climate and also by the gambling resorts of Monte Carlo. Down to a recent date the country was an absolute monarchy, but of late the scholarly prince has granted a kind of constitution. This country too is defended by an army which consists of 125 men, seventy-five soldiers and fifty policemen.

Considerably larger, yet still very small, is the principality of Liechtenstein, which is situated on the upper Rhine between Switzerland and Austria, having about 10,000 inhabitants who live in a territory of seventy square miles. Like Moresnet the country of Liechtenstein has at times been forgotten, and this happened at an important moment of its history. When peace was declared after Prussia had conquered the allied states in the war of 1866, the principality of Liechtenstein was left entirely out of account. As a result of this obliviousness on the part of the contracting governments, Prussia must still be considered as in a state of war with

Liechtenstein. But this fact has been generally forgotten, and many travelers from the Prussian provinces enjoy the beautiful scenery of Liechtenstein in the most peaceful spirit. The prince of Liechtenstein has granted a constitution to his country, which provides for a parliament of fifteen members, three of whom are appointed by the prince and twelve elected, not to mention four additional members who are called in if any of the active members are disabled from service. There is no independent Liechtenstein post-office, and in general the country is closely attached to Austria.