

REMINISCENCES OF THIERS.

IT was in 1867 that I first saw Thiers. Having passed many years in private life, in 1863 he had entered the Corps Législatif, under the Second Empire, as a deputy from the second *circonscription* of Paris, thus commencing a new political career at the age of sixty-three. In my younger days I had read with enthusiasm his "History of the French Revolution," a work which for half a century has held the intelligent world under the empire of its charm and fascination. I had also read with almost equal interest his "History of the Consulate and the Empire," which Lamartine once pronounced "*the book of the century.*" Being in Paris in the month of July, 1867, I hailed the good fortune which enabled me to obtain admission to the Corps Législatif, and to listen to Thiers on the day he concluded his great speech on the "Mexican Question," which was one of the most terrible arraignments ever launched against any government.

Previous to the *coup d'état* of the 2d of December, 1851, Thiers had been a member of the Legislative Assembly under the Republic of 1848, from the department of the Seine Interieur. It was at this time that he was thrown into the prison of Mazas, together with many of the most eminent men in France. Afterward temporarily banished, he was permitted to reënter France in August, 1852.

When I took up my official residence in Paris, in the spring of 1869, Thiers was still a member of the Corps Législatif. He was the center of a small group of deputies who composed the opposition in the Chamber, and known as the "Left." In a body of nearly three hundred members, this opposition could not claim more than about thirty. But in this small minority there were numbered many men of such ability, power, and eloquence as to make them a real force. After Thiers there was Jules Favre, who held the first place as an orator, and next to him I should place Jules Grévy, a lawyer of distinction, a man of large attainments and an original republican, and now President of the French Republic. Gambetta was a comparatively new member, sitting on the extreme left, and just beginning to make his reputation. Ernest Picard was an able man, witty and skillful in debate; Jules Simon, also an original republican, a man of real ability, and much devoted to letters and the cause of education. Emmanuel Arago and Eugène Pelletan, advanced republicans, were among the deputies from

Paris. And in this group of the opposition there were two members of the Provisional Government of 1848—Granier Pagès and Adolphe Crémieux. Pagès was a man of striking personal appearance and courtly manners, and bore the strongest resemblance to Henry Clay of any man I have ever seen. Crémieux was the old Hebrew advocate who had but recently been elected a member, and was beginning to take that position in the Chamber to which his large experience in affairs, his great ability and earnest patriotism entitled him. They have both died within a comparatively recent period. One of the most prominent, able, and courageous men of this group was Jules Ferry, now so well known as the recent head of the French ministry. Among the other members of this opposition was Jules Le Cesne, deputy from Hâvre, who had passed much of his life in New Orleans, where he had accumulated a fortune.

Never in his long and illustrious career did Thiers occupy a higher plane than in the Corps Législatif, in July, 1870, when the question of war or peace hung trembling in the balance. It is impossible to go into the history of those frightful days, when a midsummer madness seems to have seized the French Government, and when all Paris was under the influence of an excitement and fury almost without a parallel.

It was in the sitting of the Corps Législatif of the 15th of July, 1870, that the question of the declaration of war came up for consideration. Thiers, almost single-handed and alone, undertook to stem the torrent which he saw was about to sweep over his country and engulf its glory and prosperity. In the midst of a hostile and howling majority he appealed for a little delay, that the members might have more information and a fuller knowledge of the subject. I now quote from the official record of the proceedings:

"M. THIERS: History, France, and the world are now regarding us. The resolution which you propose to take may result in the death of thousands of men. Upon your action, perhaps, may depend the destinies of our country, and it is necessary to me, before this formidable decision may be made, that I should have a moment for reflection. Leave me, then, to say one thing. You cry out against me, but I am as decided to hear your murmurs as it is necessary to brave them. [*'Très bien'—à Gauche.*] * * * I have the sentiments which I represent here, not by the passions of the country, but by its well-considered interests. I have the certainty, the inmost consciousness, of fulfilling a difficult duty in resisting passions—patriotic, if you wish to call them such, but imprudent. [*'Allons donc'—à Droite; à Gauche—'Oui, oui; très bien.'*] You may be

convinced that when one has lived forty years in the midst of agitations and political vicissitudes, and that he has fulfilled his duty, and that he has the certainty of having fulfilled it, that nothing can shake him, not even outrages. When a subject so grave, gentlemen, any member—he might be the only member, he might be the last in your esteem—if he have a doubt, he ought to have the privilege to express it. Yes, there are more than I. I am not the only one. [Interruptions.]

"M. DUGUÉ DE LA FAUCONNERIE: You are fourteen.

"M. DE CHOISEUL: If the elections had been free we would be more numerous. [Exclamations.]

"M. LE MARQUIS DE PIRÉ: Recall to yourself then, M. Thiers, the noble energy with which you denounced the legislative defections of 1815, and do not imitate them. * * *

"M. THIERS: Very well, gentlemen; do you wish that they should say—do you wish that all Europe should say—that the vital point had been accorded, and that on a mere question of form you would shed torrents of blood? [*Réclamations bruyantes à la Droite et au Centre.*] I demand, then, in face of the country, that they shall give us information of the dispatches upon which they have taken the resolution which has been announced, for it is not necessary to deceive ourselves—it is a declaration of war. [*Certainement—mouvements prolongés.*]

To this statement of Thiers, M. Granier de Cassagnac, one of the most violent of the Imperialist members of the Chamber, frankly answered, "I believe it." M. Thiers said that he well knew what men were capable of, under the influence of their emotions; that the candidature of the Prince of Hohenzollern had been retired, and that, in the opinion of all Europe, France had received satisfaction on the essential point. The Right and Center received this declaration with loud protests. "You have," said Thiers, "expressed your opinion; now permit me to express my own, in a few words." Meeting with interruptions, he said it would be comprehended that he was in that moment fulfilling the most painful duty of his life, and added these great words: "Yes, as to myself, I am tranquil for my memory. I am sure of that which is reserved to me; I am sure of that, for my action of this moment; but for you, I am certain that there will be days when you will regret your precipitation." These remarks were greeted with insulting expressions by the majority of the Chamber—"Allons donc! allons donc!"

I now quote further from the official report:

"M. LE MARQUIS DE PIRÉ: You are the trumpet anti-patriotic of disaster—go to Coblenz.

"M. THIERS: Offend me, insult me—I am ready to submit to all to avert the shedding of the blood of my fellow-citizens which you are ready to shed so imprudently. I suffer, believe it, to have to speak thus.

"M. LE MARQUIS DE PIRÉ: It is we who suffer in listening to you.

"M. THIERS: When I see that, yielding to your passions, you do not wish to take an instant of reflection,—that you do not wish to demand a knowledge of

the dispatches upon which your judgment should be supported,—I say, gentlemen, permit me the expression that you do not fulfill, in all their extent, the duties that are imposed upon you.

"M. JEROME DAVID: Guard your lessons—we reject them.

"M. THIERS: Say what you wish, but it is very imprudent for you to let the country suspect that it is a party resolution which you take to-day. [*Vives et nombreuses exclamations.*]

"M. DUGUÉ DE LA FAUCONNERIE: It is you who are but a party; we are the nation; we are two hundred and seventy.

"M. THIERS: I am willing to vote to the Government all the means necessary when the war shall have been definitively declared, but I desire to know the dispatches on which that declaration of war is based. I await that which is to be done, but I decline, as to myself, the declaration of war so little justified."

The little group of the Left in the Chamber associated itself by its applause to these brave words of Thiers, so profound, so patriotic, and so far-sighted. The next day, the Senate adopted a resolution analogous to that of the Chamber of Deputies. Events now marched apace. A few days after, on the 28th of July, 1870, the Emperor, doubtful and hesitating, left the palace of St. Cloud, never to return to it more, to join the army. The disaster at Wissembourg, on the 4th of August, was followed on the 6th by the double defeat at Reischoffen and Forbach. No one in Paris at that time can ever forget the scenes of excitement, turbulence, and madness that followed the news of these frightful disasters to the French arms. The crisis had already arrived, and made the stoutest hearts tremble. In that extremity there appeared no resource left but to call the Corps Législatif together, and to invest it with sovereign power.

It was on the 9th day of August that the Corps Législatif met in extraordinary session. Excitement, indignation, grief pervaded all Paris, and all looked forward with the most intense interest and anxiety as to what action would be taken by that body in this hour of peril. That sitting has hardly a parallel in the parliamentary annals of France, except in the very worst days of the National Convention. In my long service in the House of Representatives I had witnessed many scenes of violence and excitement, particularly just before the Rebellion, and, on one occasion (in the affair of Grow and Keitt), a hand-to-hand fight in the area in front of the Speaker's chair, but never had I witnessed anything equal to the intense and long-continued violence of this sitting. And it was on this occasion that I was particularly struck with the attitude and deportment of Thiers. Goaded to madness by the threat of M. Granier de Cassagnac that, if he had the power, he would send them all before a military commission.

before night, in an instant nearly every member of the Left rushed into the hemicycle in front of the Tribune, gesticulating wildly and filling the hall with their vociferations. Garnier-Pagès, nearly seventy years old, and ex-member of the Provisional Government of 1848, in advance of all his colleagues, made directly for the Duc de Grammont, who was sitting on the ministerial bench, and shook his fist in his face. During all this mad tumult, when every member was wild and livid with rage, Thiers sat quietly in his seat, unmoved, and apparently undisturbed by the tempest which was raging around him—the coolest of all his colleagues, because the greatest.

It is impossible, in the limits of this paper, to make more than a passing allusion to the stupendous events that followed this celebrated sitting of the 9th of August. The weight of public opinion rested so heavily upon the majority of the Chamber that the Ollivier ministry fell miserably under its own weight and the reprobation of the country. Never was that force of public opinion—which Webster once described as being more powerful than the lightning, or the whirlwind, or the earthquake—so strikingly felt as in its effects on the Corps Législatif on this occasion. This ministry of Ollivier, which had inaugurated the war and plunged France into unheard-of disasters and perils, went down without an instant's warning and without a single voice being raised in its behalf. What is known as the "Palikao ministry" succeeded to that of Ollivier. The majority of the Chamber refused to associate itself with the measures proposed by Thiers and his colleagues of the Left intended to meet the crisis. On the 24th of August, Thiers arraigned the majority for opposing propositions the necessity of which no one could deny, and in sincere and patriotic words expressed the sentiments of the opposition to the effect that they should not mingle political questions with the question of the defense of the country.

All the world now knows the desperate efforts made by Thiers in the last days of the Corps Législatif to retain France on the brink of the abyss. They know all the courage, patience, and devotedness he displayed in the too famous sitting of the 15th of July, 1870, in endeavoring to arrest in its headlong career the majority, struck with madness. There is not, in the history of political assemblies, a more touching spectacle than this venerable man giving the most salutary counsels, the most patriotic warnings in the midst of interruptions and murmurs, and contending against the clamors

of those who accused him of betraying the country when he wished to save it.*

Long, dreary, and anxious days ran on. Immense masses of people thronged the *boulevards*, surrounded the news-stands, reading the journals, discussing the situation, and awaiting telegraphic dispatches which never arrived. The sessions of the Corps Législatif were short and feverish, and the ministers did not appear any more on their benches.

It was on the 4th of September, 1870, that the last hour of the Empire came finally to strike. This day is one of the most important in that French history which for nearly a century has been more interesting and exciting than any romance which ever captivated the imagination. It was on this beautiful and radiant Sabbath, when all Paris had poured itself into the streets, as on a day of *fête*, that the Empire ceased to live. I saw all that it was possible for any one man to see, and my description of the scenes, embodied in an official dispatch to my Government, has been published, with others, by the order of Congress. The establishment of the Provisional Government of National Defense was the immediate outcome of this revolution. Thiers, while declining to become a member of this Government, lost no time in associating himself with its appalling labors and responsibilities. His conspicuous position, the courageous and brilliant rôle he had played in the Corps Législatif since he had reëntered public life, and his courageous attitude at the moment of the declaration of war, made him the first man in the state.† It was to him that the Government naturally turned in this hour of its extremity, as the only man who could plead the cause of France before the cabinets of Europe. Commissioned as an Ambassador to the European governments, Thiers, in spite of his age, disdained to spare himself the fatigues, the dangers, and disgusts of an ungrateful enterprise. He visited London, St. Petersburg, Vienna, and Rome. Received everywhere with the utmost consideration and sympathy, he was yet unable to accomplish much for his afflicted country. It is a long and sad history—his return to France, passing through the German lines under a flag of truce; his visit to Paris; his going back to Versailles; the insurrection of the 31st of October, 1870, and the consequent breaking off of all negotiations with the Count de Bismarck.

An armistice having been concluded between France and Germany in order to enable France to elect a new Assembly, to decide on

* M. Henri Martin.

† M. Jules Favre.

the question of war or peace, the election took place on the 8th day of February, 1871. The immense popularity of Thiers at this time is shown by the fact that no less than twenty-six departments elected him to the Assembly. He chose to serve for the Department of the Seine (Paris). Thiers now entered upon a new career, which the misfortunes of his country had imposed upon him, and in which he was enabled to render such services as will make his name in all coming time one of the chiefest glories of France. He was made chief of the executive power by the new National Assembly which had met at Bordeaux, and it was through his immense influence and prestige that the treaty of peace was made and signed with Germany, and ratified by the Assembly by a vote of more than five to one. After remaining a few days at Bordeaux, the Assembly transferred its sittings to Versailles. Though the Assembly was to sit in that old city of Louis IV., Thiers took up his official residence in the splendid *hôtel* of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris.

The insurrection of the Commune of Paris broke out on the 18th day of March, 1871. I was obliged to go to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at nine o'clock in the morning of that day, to communicate to M. Jules Favre an important dispatch I had received from the Count de Bismarck. What struck me as somewhat curious was that the court of the Foreign Office was filled with horses with military accouterments, and being held by orderlies. On inquiring of the messenger, I was told that M. Favre was in the second story, and if I wanted to see him personally, I would have to go up, which I did, and delivered my communication. One of the grand *salons* was filled with officers of high rank, and an excited discussion was going on. In an adjoining room I found Thiers walking up and down, entirely alone, and apparently very much absorbed. Not being advised of the gravity of the situation, I very soon started for a little trip to the country in company with some American friends. Returning late in the evening, it was only the next morning (Sunday) that I learned fully what had taken place. I immediately started for the Foreign Office to procure more authentic information, but on arriving there I found no one except the old messenger of the minister.

He told me that on the preceding day, and while Thiers, his cabinet, and many military men were in deliberation at the ministry, they were constantly receiving the most alarming reports from the insurrectionary parts of the city, but that no determination had been made to leave Paris until about

four o'clock in the afternoon, when a battalion of the insurrectionary National Guard marched along the Quai D'Orsay, keeping step to the cry, "*À bas Thiers! À bas Thiers!*" (Down with Thiers!) This demonstration at once determined the whole Government to take its immediate departure for Versailles. This was the commencement of the bloody and terrible reign of the Commune of Paris. On his arrival at Versailles, Thiers took up his official residence at the Prefecture (residence of the Prefect) of the Seine et Oise, tendered him by the authorities of that department. It is no part of my purpose to dwell upon the action of the National Assembly at Versailles during the reign of the Commune, nor to recount the terrible events at Paris during that frightful epoch. Never was a greater responsibility imposed upon any man than upon Thiers at this time. He had to sign a peace imposing the most onerous conditions upon the country. Order had to be reestablished in the interior, the army had to be reconstituted, the finances reestablished, and the opposing interests of the country conciliated.

The Empire had fallen on the 4th of September, 1870, and the Provisional Government of National Defense had taken its place. I was never accredited to this Government, neither were any of the representatives of foreign powers, but all were accepted and acted as such representatives the same as if they had been regularly accredited. After the establishment of a regular Government at Bordeaux, and Thiers had been made chief of the executive power, my Government sent me letters accrediting me as minister of the United States near the French Republic. I received them during the very height of the Commune, and my presentation of them was of the most simple and informal character, and probably no minister of a first-class power ever presented his letters of credence to another first-class power with less ceremony than there was on this occasion. It not being deemed necessary, under the circumstances, that I should pursue the forms of the Foreign Office, I informally notified Thiers that I had received my letters of credence, and was ready to present them at any time he should be pleased to designate; and he named half-past two o'clock on the afternoon of May 9th, 1871. At that hour, accompanied by a friend, I proceeded to his official residence, and was immediately received by him, without any ceremony, in his *cabinet de travail*, where he sat at a small table, busily engaged in writing.

The letters of credence were drawn up with that admirable tact which distinguished Mr.

Secretary Fish when dealing with political questions. I did not think it necessary to make a formal speech, and only remarked that I could add nothing to what had been so well said by the President in the letters of credence, further than to express my own wishes for his health and personal welfare, and that prosperity and happiness might come to the people of France. He signified his gratification at the cordial terms in which the President had expressed himself, and desired that I would communicate to him that he most sincerely reciprocated the sentiments of the United States which the President had declared for France. Thus commenced my official relations with this distinguished man, and which grew into personal relations of the most cordial character, and existing until the day of his death.

It was in the summer of 1871 that the late Governor Seward was in Paris on his return voyage around the world. Though he was physically feeble, never was his mind clearer or his conversation more delightful. He was particularly interested in the political situation in France and in the success of the Republic. I visited the National Assembly at Versailles with him, and afterward he attended one of the official receptions of President Thiers, where he was received with the highest marks of respect and consideration. As a special compliment he was invited to dine *en famille* the next day at the Palace of the Prefecture. In a subsequent conversation with Thiers, he inquired particularly after Mr. Seward and spoke of his gratification in having met that distinguished man, whom he considered, to use his own language, "as one of the greatest statesmen of the two worlds."

The first thing to be accomplished by Thiers was the suppression of the insurrection of Paris, which was only accomplished after a siege of more than two months by the whole military power of France. As the advancing army approached nearer and nearer to Paris, the hatred of the Commune authorities to Thiers became more and more intense. It passed a decree that his house in the Place St. Georges should be demolished, which was remorselessly executed. Passing there every few days, I saw the work of demolition progress until literally not one stone was left upon another. Thiers had lived in this house for nearly half a century, and there he had composed the great works which are a part of the literary glory of France, and there he had prepared the speeches he had delivered at the Tribune. There he had received the most celebrated historical persons and savans of the age, and there he had gathered books, manuscripts, and the rarest

works of art that were to be found in all Europe. All these priceless contents were carried away and scattered.

The labors of Thiers at this time were simply prodigious. The condition of France was terrible. The Germans held military occupation of a large number of departments; its armies in part prisoners; its treasury empty and its credit impaired; the whole interior administration disorganized; violence and disorder in the large cities; political parties violent, and the Assembly secretly hostile and reactionary; the indemnity to be raised for Germany. Though seventy-five years old, Thiers entered on his duties with juvenile ardor, and exhibited an activity alike without limit and without example. There was little that escaped him in the administration of the Government. With but a few hours of sleep, five o'clock in the morning always found him at work in his cabinet, in conjunction with his secretary, his life-long friend and associate, Barthélemy St. Hilaire, one of the most distinguished men of France, member of the French Academy and recently Minister of Foreign Affairs under President Grévy. I recollect an account given in the papers of Thiers having once playfully reproached his old friend for not having arrived at his cabinet until after five o'clock in the morning. Often would some minister be surprised to receive a note, asking him to call, in relation to some matter in his department, at six o'clock in the morning. While giving all his attention to matters of interior administration and to public affairs generally, Thiers was attending the sessions of the National Assembly and participating in the discussion of the most important questions. As M. Jules Simon well says, he was absorbed in labors enough to fill three existences. He managed to do everything, thanks to his strength of will and the extreme lucidity of his mind. He gave himself up entirely to the matter in hand and the person present. He never had that busy and preoccupied air which some persons have with one-twentieth of the work. He was, in some respects, like Lincoln. He was cheerful in the midst of the greatest crisis. He would catch a jesting phrase on the wing, and was not afraid of a doubtful joke. His natural cheerfulness was a great aid to him in his crushing work. While his ministers were weighed down with labors and responsibilities, he was always cheerful and at his ease. He has furnished an example for all rulers. He gave all he had of heart, mind, and strength to his country. He did not fritter away his time on trifling and immaterial questions, nor permit it to be taken up in dispensing public patronage. He rarely gave

himself any vacation. When the Chambers had taken a vacancy and the ministers were having their holidays, Thiers was once asked about a holiday for himself. "Ah!" said he, "my holiday is eighteen hours' work a day."

To Thiers will belong the imperishable glory of having paid off the ransom of a thousand millions of dollars to Germany, and of freeing French territory from the occupation of German troops. On the accomplishment of these objects, all France was filled with joy, and the National Assembly declared that he had merited well of his country. But who can measure the uncertainty of political events? It was soon after this that the same Assembly pushed him from power, and attempted to snatch from him the laurels which belonged to him. In this connection, it was my fortune to be present in this Assembly, and to witness one of the most remarkable scenes that ever took place in a deliberative body. It was at a very full sitting, on the 17th of June, 1877. The parties in the Chamber were very equally divided, and occupied different sides of the hall. It was by accident that Thiers, still holding the position of deputy, was present and sitting in his usual seat, near the main aisle, on the left of the Chamber. This was during the administration of President MacMahon, when the "Ministry of Combat" was in full swing. M. de Fourtou, Minister of the Interior, a man excessively odious to the Republicans, was making a speech on the political questions of the day. In the course of his remarks he said: "The men who are at the head of the Government to-day are the outcome of the elections of 1871, and made part of this National Assembly, which, it can be said, was the pacificator of the country and the liberator of the territory."

This impudent claim, so derogatory to the Left of the Chamber and to Thiers, was like a spark of fire falling on a powder magazine. As soon as the words fell from the lips of M. de Fourtou, several members, pointing to Thiers, cried out: "*Voilà le libérateur du territoire!*" (There is the liberator of the territory.) Every man of the Left and the Center-left sprang to his feet, and as by a common impulse turned toward Thiers, and saluted him with cheers and acclamations such as have rarely fallen on the ears of any man. Again and again were the cheers and clapping of hands renewed. Many members approached Thiers, who remained unmoved in his seat, and embraced him; all were under the empire of the most profound emotion, and many shed tears. The news of this wonderful ovation spread immediately over all France and created

a great sensation, and the persons who had the good fortune to witness it were envied, as having been present on an occasion which will hardly ever find a parallel. A celebrated French artist has put the scene on canvas, after the manner of the painting by Healy, of Webster replying to Hayne, which adorns the historic walls of Faneuil Hall, in Boston.

The work of intrigue and conspiracy in the Assembly to overthrow the President of the Republic did not cease at the moment when he had accomplished one of the greatest works ever achieved by any ruler. All the reactionary elements of the National Assembly, the Bonapartists, the Legitimists, and the Orleanists, though hating each other scarcely less than they hated Thiers and the Republic, united together, as one man, to overthrow both. The Republican Government overthrown, they were to take their chances as to what government should be established in its stead. The discussion in the Assembly on the "*interpellations*," the votes on which were to decide the fate of Thiers and his ministers, was fixed for May 23d, 1873. The excitement all over the country was at fever heat, but it culminated the next day, when it was known that Thiers would mount the Tribune in his own vindication and defense. Never as on this day had there been so many members of the Assembly present at its sittings. Out of a body of seven hundred and thirty-two members there were only about twenty absent. Never before had I seen the galleries so crowded. Not only every seat, but every inch of standing room was taken. I heard all the discussion of both days. On the 24th, I was enabled to procure a seat in the diplomatic tribune for ex-Governor Hoffman, of New York, who was thus enabled to witness the proceedings of that historic day. The Chamber met at nine o'clock in the morning, and Thiers promptly mounted the Tribune at that hour, and made one of the most remarkable and effective speeches of his life. Never had he been better inspired, and never had he shown greater talent or more ample resources. He spoke for two hours, and without a single note before him, and with a wonderful vigor and earnestness. He was frequently and loudly applauded by the Left and the Center-left. Feeling that he had nothing to hope for from the opposition, he addressed to it many keen reproaches, which always brought loud cheers from his friends. The Duc de Broglie, whom he had sent to England as Ambassador, had now turned bitterly against him, and had become the organ of the opposition in pressing the *interpellation* before the Chamber. Thiers closed with a bitter thrust at the Duc,

who had accused him of being a "*protégé* of the radicals." I shall never forget the scene. Looking directly at M. de Broglie, who sat almost directly before him, he exclaimed:

"Are not you the *protégé* of a party whom the great Duc de Broglie, your father, would have repulsed with horror—the *protégé* of the Empire!"

That was the conclusion of his speech, and he terminated, as it might be said, that supreme parliamentary struggle in the same way as Napoleon told Marshal Soult that he must terminate the campaign of Austerlitz—*par un coup de tonnerre* (a clap of thunder). A scene followed the closing words of the President of the Republic. The whole Left and Center-left rose, giving him repeated and prolonged acclamations. Then came the vital vote on passing to the order of the day pure and simple, which is equivalent, in our parliamentary practice, to laying the whole subject on the table. It was a long time before it was announced, and the result was awaited with breathless anxiety. The majority against passing to the order of the day was only fourteen, out of a vote of seven hundred and ten. Then came another vote connected with the *interpellation*, involving the censure of the Government. This proposition was voted by a majority of sixteen, and that gave the *coup de grâce* to Thiers and his ministers. The Assembly then adjourned till eight o'clock in the evening, in order that Thiers might be conferred with. In the intense excitement and confusion which prevailed at the moment, the stentorian voice of Emmanuel Arago was heard, proclaiming "that the coalesced monarchists had taken it upon their consciences to show before Europe and before history the most monstrous ingratitude." The Assembly reconvened a quarter before nine o'clock, when M. Dufaure presented the resignation of Thiers. A vote was immediately taken upon accepting it, and that was carried by thirty-one majority. Mr. Buffet had just before been elected president of the Chamber in place of Jules Grévy, who had resigned but a few days previous on account of an indignity offered to him by the reactionary members of the Assembly. He now took it upon himself, in the name of the Assembly, to express regrets for the resignation of Thiers. As soon as the friends of the latter understood what the president of the Assembly was driving at, the most extraordinary uproar ensued. At his every attempt to speak they literally howled him down by the cries, "No funeral oration from you!" "No more hypocrisy!" etc., etc. Many times did the president attempt to be

heard, and every time was his voice drowned by cries of rage and indignation. At this moment, two-thirds of each side of the Chamber were on their feet, vociferating at the top of their voices, and shaking their fists at each other, until finally both sides were exhausted. After this scene was over, the proposition was carried to proceed immediately to the election of a President, and Marshal MacMahon was elected by the votes of the coalition, the Left abstaining from voting. A committee was at once appointed to notify him of his election, and it soon returned to report his acceptance. The Assembly adjourned at midnight. All this time, the excitement in Paris was intense. When the deputies arrived from Versailles at the Gare St. Lazare, at one o'clock on Sunday morning, they found ten thousand people surrounding it and in the neighboring streets, all crying, "Down with the Assembly!" "Down with the Right!" "*Vive la République!*" "*Vive Thiers!*" The ejection of Thiers from the presidency produced a deep feeling throughout France and Europe. From this time, the hold he had upon the French people became stronger and stronger, and the time was soon to come when the men who had thrust him from power were to find that the stone which the builders had rejected was to become the head of the corner. History has never recorded an instance of baser ingratitude toward a public servant than that of the National Assembly toward Thiers. But the instructions they had taught returned to plague them. Nine days after he had retired from the presidency, he entered the National Assembly as a simple deputy from Paris, and chose his seat on the benches of the Center-left. On his entering the Chamber, three hundred members of the minority rose to receive him, and gave him round after round of applause, gathered around him, and extended to him every mark of affection and friendship. The coalitionists could not conceal their uneasiness at this demonstration, and they trembled when they considered their treatment of him, the place which he held in the affections of the French people, his patriotism, his wonderful ability, his restless activity, his tact, and his eloquence. They now began to realize that, though they had hurled him from power, he still ruled in the hearts of the people of France. Though striking him down, his enemies did not dare to touch the Government of the Republic which he had set up, and he lived to witness the extraordinary spectacle of an Assembly which had cast him out, as Mr. John Lemoine expressed it, "profoundly royal and clerical, finishing, without knowing it and without wishing it,

by establishing with its own hands a republic."

To such an extent had Thiers contributed to this result, that he may justly be looked upon as the founder of the Republic of France. Though a deputy, he now rarely went to the Chamber, and could not be considered much more than a private citizen. But without power and without patronage he practically dominated France. Such was the condition of things that Thiers became a greater power in France when living as a private citizen in his Hôtel Bagration, in the Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré, than MacMahon in his official residence at the Palace of the Prefecture at Versailles, or at the Elysée at Paris.

After Thiers left the presidency he had one great object in view, and he enforced his opinions and advice everywhere—in the *salons* of his residence, in the *couloirs* of the National Assembly, in his travels, and in his speeches. He never ceased to repeat that the only government possible in France was that of the republic. His counsels were always those of wisdom and moderation, and his watchwords were "*confiance et sagesse.*"

Thiers had come to be regarded with admiration and esteem by Frenchmen, wherever they were to be found in every part of the civilized world. From our country he received many tokens of affectionate regard, and he always expressed to me his profound gratitude. The most significant presentation to him from the United States was that of a medal and certain historic relics from the French citizens and residents of Philadelphia. Requested by Mr. H. A. Sintard to make the presentation in their name, I performed that pleasant duty on the 19th of January, 1874. The occasion was a very interesting one. In accordance with a previous appointment, I proceeded to the residence of the illustrious statesman at nine o'clock in the evening, accompanied by my secretaries, Colonel Hoffman and Mr. Vignaud, and several American gentlemen. In making the presentation, I addressed M. Thiers as follows:

"MONSIEUR THIERS: I am called upon to-day to fulfill a mission to you which is very agreeable to me.

"The French residents of the city of Philadelphia, desiring to show the great respect with which you have inspired them, and make known their appreciation of the services which you have rendered to the French Republic, have had a medal struck in your honor, and have added several valuable historical relics connected with the first colonization of the State of Pennsylvania and of the Revolution of 1776.

"These gentlemen have sent me these objects, and have done me the honor to choose me as their intermediary in presenting them to you.

"I have now the pleasure to offer to you this medal,

which is inclosed in a box of which the materials are of historic origin. Those which form the body were made from the wood of the room in which was accomplished one of the greatest acts of history—the emancipation of a people—the signing of the Declaration of Independence of the United States.

"The escutcheon which supports the lid is made of a piece of oak and a piece of elm. The oak comes from the beam on which was suspended the bell which, on the Fourth of July, 1776, gave to the American colonies the signal of freedom, which the powerful arm of France was soon to consolidate. The elm is a fragment of the celebrated tree under which William Penn, in 1682, concluded with the Indians a treaty which has never been broken.

"Many of your fellow-citizens have established themselves in that beautiful and admirable city of Philadelphia, and you will be happy to learn, and I am pleased to bear witness, that they uphold nobly the dignity of the French name, and that they are honored and respected citizens of their adopted country.

"I know that I am the interpreter of their sentiments, and those of the American people, in wishing that your happiness may always be associated with that of the French people, and that your illustrious career may be extended through long years."

M. Thiers made the following response:

"MY DEAR MR. WASHBURNE: I thank you for having the goodness to serve as intermediary to the French established in Philadelphia, and for having consented to bring me, in person, the high testimony of their esteem. Nothing could have honored me more than to see my conduct approved by former citizens of France, settled in your noble country, and strangers to all our divisions, and to see that approbation confirmed by Americans, who are such good judges of patriotism.

"Intrusted with the direction of the destinies of my country in one of the most painful moments of its history, I have consecrated to it my entire devotion for nearly three years, and perhaps I have succeeded in reducing the sum of the evils which weighed upon her. I allow myself to think so, when I receive testimonials coming from so far away, and which no political passion could have dictated.

"France and America have had for each other the sentiments of sisters. I should be happy if the continuation in France of the republican form of government, which I regard as the only possible one among us to-day, shall contribute to increase the mutual sympathies of the two nations, and if, marching united in the same paths, they strive, on both sides of the Atlantic, to diffuse throughout the world, with the light of civilization, the love of liberty, of order, of justice, and of peace.

"Accept, my dear Mr. Washburne, my cordial grasp of the hand, and consider it as given to the French and Americans living together on the beautiful soil of the New World."

After his new *hôtel* in the Place St. Georges had been rebuilt, in place of the one destroyed by the Commune, he took up his residence therein. In this retreat, where France and Europe had their eyes constantly upon him, every one came with respect, to be enlightened by his large views and to solicit counsel of his great experience. In his elegant *salons* were congregated, almost every evening, some of the most distinguished men of France, both

in the political and literary world. The souvenirs of those days, so dear to the friends in the hearts of whom yet vibrate that conversation, always so entertaining and instructive, so amiable in its familiarity, and so elevated when it touched the domain of art or of history, or the interests or the hopes of the country. One could but admire the reunion of faculties the most diversified, or, it might be said, the most opposite. To that spirit which appertains only to the young, he joined an incomparable personal experience enlarged by an habitual intercourse with all that had been grand in history.* Almost the only relaxation he had was in the evening. While President, and afterward, almost up to the day of his death, while in Paris, it was his habit to give a dinner party almost every evening, to which a greater or smaller number of persons was invited. After the dinner was over, his *salons* were open to receive informally such persons as had, from their political and social character, a right to call. It was my pleasure to dine with him often, and still more frequently to attend his evening receptions, where all the current topics of the day were discussed. On these occasions he was always the central figure, usually standing in the middle of the room, surrounded by his guests, who listened with the utmost attention to everything that fell from his lips. He was the master of every subject—government, politics, law, philosophy, history, and all the sciences.

After a life of the most incredible activity, it might well be supposed that, at nearly eighty years of age, M. Thiers might wish to "crown a life of labor with an age of ease." But not so. He was scarcely ever more active or more busily engaged than after he had laid down the burden of the Government. All his faculties were in their primitive vigor and his health excellent. He devoted much attention to the political questions of the day, and gave advice to his friends who flocked around him to listen to his words of wisdom. It was his greatest delight to find time to recur to the studies and occupations of his earlier years. His fondness for art never left him. He had filled his *salons* with a choice collection of works of art, of bronzes, marbles, plaques of China and Japan, and the rarest engravings. He often passed long hours at the Museum of Natural History, at the Observatory, and the Normal School. He studied with M. Le Verrier the movements of the stars, and made experiments in chemistry with M. Pasteur; and often, like a zealous pupil, placed his hand on the alembic and on

the retort.* In the midst of all his occupations and all the responsibilities resting upon him, he had, since 1862, been engaged on a work in which is treated the history of humanity in its relations to the world. It was his intention to complete this work, in which culminated all his scientific studies, all his experience of life, and where, in this greatest of all subjects, that mind, in which everything was clear and strong, would make itself manifest.†

The year 1877 was a most eventful one in French politics. The Republican Assembly elected in February, 1876, having defied the "Ministry of Combat," was dissolved by Marshal MacMahon on the 16th day of May, 1877. The election for deputies to the new Assembly was fixed for the 14th of October following. France was now plunged into an electoral contest which excited an intensity of feeling of which the people of this country have but a faint conception. Familiar with the elections that have taken place in the United States for more than forty years, I have never known anything that would begin to compare with it—except, perhaps, the celebrated contest between Lincoln and Douglas, in Illinois, in the senatorial campaign of 1858.

Nothing was better understood than that, should a Republican Chamber be returned, Thiers would be elected President of the Republic whenever a vacancy should occur. Occupying that position, he was naturally the leader in the pending campaign, which was to determine the political destinies of France. His wise and sagacious counsels were sought for by the Republicans in all parts of France, and to an extent which overtaxed his physical powers. In the month of August he left Paris and went to Dieppe, for a change and for needed repose. In order to be nearer the political center, he left Dieppe toward the last of August and went to St. Germain-en-Laye, a suburban village of Paris, celebrated as the birthplace of the Grand Monarch, Louis XIV., and took up his lodgings in the modest but celebrated hotel known as the Pavilion Henry IV. It was here that he wrote, with his own hand, his great manifesto to his constituents—and, indeed, to all France—made public soon after his death, and which is his testament before posterity. While at his midday breakfast on the 3d of September, Thiers was smitten with a stroke of apoplexy. I cannot well forget the time or the circumstances. A short time before this date an American gentleman, ‡ a

* M. Xavier Marmier.

† M. Caro.

‡ Hon. William D. Washburn, representative in Congress from the State of Minnesota.

* M. Henri Martin.

great admirer of Thiers, had sent to me a beautiful and most elaborate carriage blanket, to be presented to the ex-President of the Republic. I addressed a note to Thiers, advising him of the mission with which I had been charged, and asking him to fix a time when it would be agreeable for him to receive me at St. Germain. On the 2d of September Madame Thiers wrote me a note, stating that her husband would be at home, and would be glad to see me, at two o'clock P. M., on the 4th. But it was not for me to fulfill my mission. He had died at half-past six o'clock the previous evening.

The news of his death on the evening of the 3d was not generally known in Paris till the morning of the 4th, and it fell like a thunder-bolt over the city. The great leader of liberal and republican France had fallen, as it were, on the field of battle, and consternation and despair pervaded the Republican party. While his death was mourned as that of a great man, who had rendered inestimable services to his country, his taking off in the very crisis of the electoral contest was regarded as a great political calamity. There was deep and sincere mourning for him in every city, village, and hamlet in France. But, on the other hand, in the reactionary and anti-republican circles, and in a portion of the Paris press, there was open rejoicing in being delivered from the man who had done the most to found the Republic. Even while his body lay in state in the Place St. Georges, and thousands and tens of thousands were taking their last look at the remains of the dead ex-President, the reactionary press was teeming with the most brutal assaults on his memory. But without knowing it, the enemies of Thiers at this time were simply "piling up wrath against the day of wrath." Never in the history of nations has there been such a revenge taken as on the men who, in the height of their power and arrogance, drove Thiers from the presidency, and after his death insulted his memory. The Republicans of France have only had to wait the returns of successive elections to see most of these men relegated to private life.

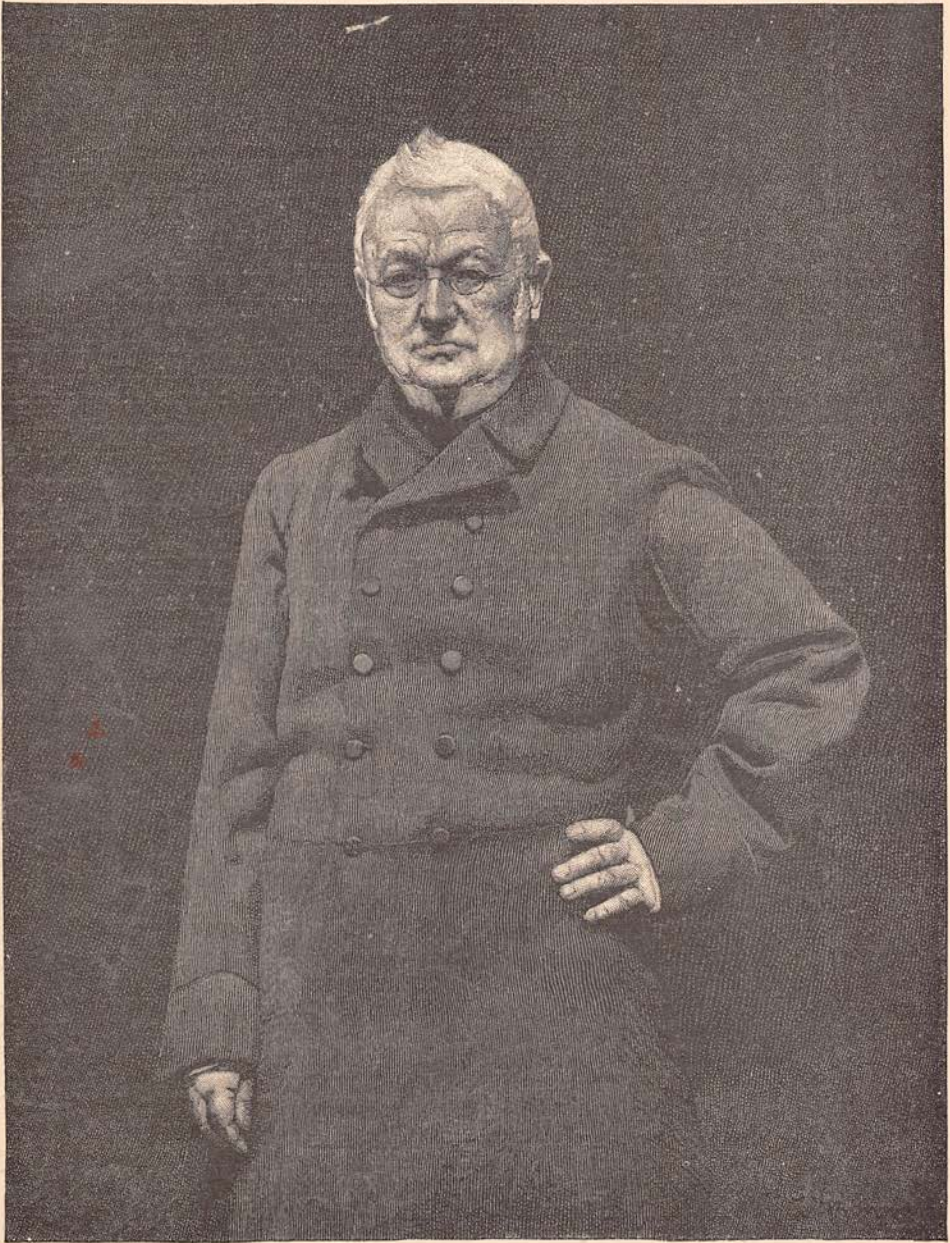
The death of Thiers, occurring as it did, affected not only the Republicans, but it caused a marked uneasiness in Government and official circles. It was feared that the funeral obsequies of the distinguished statesman would be made the object of a great national manifestation, implying a severe condemnation of the policy of combat and reaction. The Government undertook, therefore, to regulate all the funeral ceremonies, and designate the men to deliver the dis-

courses that were to be pronounced. To that end, Marshal MacMahon issued a decree that the obsequies would take place at the expense of the state. But Madame Thiers declared that she would accept the concurrence of the Government only on the express condition that she should be left free to regulate all the details of the funeral ceremonies. The Government declining this, she further declared that all the obsequies should be at her own expense. She then made application to have the religious ceremonies at the Church of the Madeleine; but the Archbishop Guilbert refused to do for the first President of the Republic what he had done a short time before for Madame Déjazet, the actress. All these things had excited among the French people devoted to Thiers the most intense indignation, and many thought it would be impossible to prevent an outbreak of violence, to be repressed by the strong arm of military force. Though fearfully exasperated, never before in all their history had the people of Paris shown such self-control. As by instinct they seem to have comprehended how disastrously any violence would affect the stupendous political struggle in which they were engaged, and how it would be used to the prejudice of the Republic.

The funeral of Thiers took place on the 8th day of September, 1877, and it was the most imposing funeral demonstration ever witnessed in the history of the world. Eight hundred thousand people assisted at that unequalled ceremony, and not the slightest incident occurred to trouble the calm of that last and affectionate homage to a great man. Nearly all the representatives of the foreign powers were present, and most of the large cities and towns sent delegations to place wreaths upon the grave of the illustrious dead. As the tribute of our own country to the memory of the great statesman and patriot, I helped to lay flowers on his bier, and followed his colossal hearse to the tomb.

The impression created all over France by the death of Thiers, and by the circumstances attending his funeral, was deep and profound. From that day, there was no longer any doubt that the cause of the Republic, to which it may be said he had given his life, would triumph. The election, taking place six weeks after his death, resulted in giving the Republicans a majority of one hundred and twenty-five in the National Assembly. The French people had vindicated M. Thiers. His epitaph, engraved upon his tomb, will be forever cherished in the hearts of his countrymen:

"Il a aimé sa patrie : il a cherché la vérité."



LOUIS ADOLPHE THIERS.