

HENRY VIGNAUD.

A French Tribute to the Distinguished Orleanian,

Who Has Been Secretary of the American Legation for a Quar- ter Century.

In a recent number of "Les Tablettes du Vingtieme Siecle," a weekly newspaper of Paris, France, there appeared an editorial sketch of Mr. Henry Vignaud, chief secretary of the American embassy in Paris. As Mr. Vignaud is a native of New Orleans, and has achieved such a splendid record in diplomatic circles abroad, a translation of the article is given below. Mr. Vignaud is a brother of Mr. J. A. Vignaud and of Mrs. General John Glynn, Mrs. N. Mellieur and Miss E. Vignaud, of this city.

One special distinction which the Parisian publication has failed to mention is that Mr. Vignaud was particularly active and successful in assisting in the drafting of the postal treaty between France and the United States, and that he was enrolled in the Legion of Honor for this important service, on the recommendation of the duke de Cazes, then minister of foreign affairs.

The "Tablettes du Vingtieme Siecle" is a publication specially devoted to sketches of notabilities in the diplomatic, financial and commercial circles. The article about Mr. Vignaud is signed by Mr. Jules Michel, proprietor and manager, and is not only justly and highly complimentary to Mr. Vignaud, but also to the Creoles of Louisiana.

Mr. Michel is led into an error, however, in stating that Mr. Vignaud is "the last descendant of the old French colonists on the classic soil of liberty." There are many more here in this city like Mr. Vignaud, speaking the purest French, and whose ancestry dates back to the remotest periods of French aristocracy. Many descendants of French colonists still have in their hearts the warmest love and veneration for the land of their ancestors, and although Americans by birth and by that fact loyal to their native land, follow with sympathetic sentiments every phase of national weal or woe which passes over France.

The article is as follows:



HENRY VIGNAUD.

Mr. Henry Vignaud, chief secretary of the United States embassy, is the dean of secretaries in Paris. He is a septuagenarian, full of activity, courtesy and sprightliness.

Born in New Orleans, three-quarters of a century ago, he represents the perfect type of Creoles of Louisiana, in whose veins courses the purest French blood. On the banks of the Mississippi delta, which Louis XIII colonized, and which the first consul ceded to the United States, there are sometimes found, but now at rare intervals, a few old descendants of the first French colonists, whose exquisite politeness and good breeding recall the eighteenth century, and who appear to us as the living representatives of some of our remote ancestors.

Such is Mr. Henry Vignaud, American by birth, but French by descent and education, whose appointment to the responsible position he has occupied for the past twenty-five years was justly deserved and due.

In truth, Mr. Vignaud seems to enjoy the privilege of irremovability as chief secretary of the American embassy. It matters not if in the political changes that come every fourth year over the people in the great republic beyond the sea the Democratic party or the Republican party gains control, it matters not what changes ensue in administrative and in diplomatic circles, Mr. Vignaud retains his position as *persona gratissima*.

Mr. Henry Vignaud made his debut in diplomacy as secretary of the American delegation of the Geneva arbitration tribunal which adjusted the Alabama claims. The following year he came to Paris as secretary of the American branch of the international metrical system congress. And in 1875 he was appointed by the United States as secretary of the American legation of Paris, and has not left us since that date.

It has been humorously stated that Mr. Vignaud is the only American citizen perfectly at home with the French language; but this assertion must be taken with due allowance. Mr. Vignaud, scion of Louisiana Creoles, is in his element, like fish in water, in high Parisian society; and it is to the credit and honor of the state department at Washington that he has been retained in a position which suits him so eminently. In this instance the department has shown far-sightedness and sound judgment and great diplomatic tact.

His duties are far from being purely representative.

For instance, in 1885, when the United States government offered to arbitrate for the cessation of war with China, it was Mr. Vignaud, who, in the absence of the American minister, was specially charged to begin and to bring to a satisfactory conclusion the preliminary arrangements for peace between France and the Celestial empire. For this and other brilliant diplomatic services Mr. Vignaud has been for a long time a chevalier of the Legion of Honor.

It was entirely due to the personal tact of Mr. Vignaud that public opinion was so completely appeased, and the United States government gave its prompt and equitable decision in the regrettable incident in which Borrup figured—Borrup, that naval officer who so flagrantly violated the laws of hospitality against the French nation.

For the international ceremonies and the various diplomatic manifestations which will be brought about by the exposition of 1900 the eminent General Horace Porter, who represents here the powerful American republic, cannot have a more valuable and worthy collaborator than Mr. Vignaud.

We sincerely hope that Mr. Henry Vignaud, last descendant of the old French colonists on the classic soil of liberty, will end his modest, and yet glorious, days in our midst. Nowhere else will be found more respect, consideration and honors.