

VIGNAUD THANKS AND SUGGESTS.

Secretary of American Embassy Discusses the Question of Pensioning Public Servants.

Henry Vignaud, first secretary of the American embassy at Paris, who has resigned after 34 years of service at the age of 70 without means to provide for his remaining years, has addressed the following letter to the 20 prominent Americans, headed by Levi P. Morton, Andrew Carnegie and J. Pierpont Morgan, whose generosity in subscribing a fund of \$20,000 sustains the last days of the veteran diplomat against want. The letter will raise again the oft mooted question of providing civil pensions for public servants who have grown old in the service. Although Mr Vignaud has lived very modestly, his comparatively meager salary hardly sufficed to meet his expenses:—

AMERICAN EMBASSY, Paris.

To the Hon Levi P. Morton, Hon Whitehall Field, Hon T. Jefferson Coolidge, Hon Henry White and Messrs James Gordon Bennett, Ferdinand Blumenthal, David Cohn, Coudert Bros, Andrew Carnegie, John H. Harjes, Alfred T. Heidelbach, R. De Jenge, Luke De Loubat, J. Pierpont Morgan, Morgan & Co, George H. Ostheimer, Seligman Bros, Tiffany & Co, Edward Tuck, H. A. Van Bergen:—

Gentlemen: After 34 years of active and incessant services in this embassy, to which I have devoted the best part of my life, and at the moment of attaining my 70th year, the age of infirmities, I feel that the hour of my retirement has come. I yield to the inevitable. The world moves on. The aged, the weak, the weak have no right to obstruct that upward movement which is drawing us all toward more favorable conditions, and I deem it proper to withdraw in order to make room for one who is younger and whose tastes and means will enable him better to respond to the peculiar exigencies of our present diplomatic service. The American government, having neither the right to bestow a pension upon its old servants, nor even that of honoring them with one of those bits of ribbon whereby the older governments of the world are enabled to show appreciation of faithful services, my retirement at my advanced age and without personal fortune, might have placed me in a precarious situation—straightened circumstances, if not actual want. At this very critical moment for me, gentlemen, you intervened. Discreetly and without my knowledge you substituted yourselves for my government, and you have done what it could not do in assuring for the remaining years of my life—rest, security, ease itself.

It is unfortunately but too true that alone among the governments of the great nations, ours is bound by the dilemma which compels it either to refuse admission to those who are not well off, or, if they be admitted, leave them unprovided for when advanced age lessens the value of their services. Your generous initiative, a very fortunate one for me, has bound to call attention to this grave question which remains unsolved for so many others equally worthy of interest, and it will show, I hope, that in such cases as mine, there is an anomaly which contrasts very unfavorably with the efforts made everywhere else to throw down the old barriers whereby those not favored by rank or private fortune were formerly excluded from access to certain privileged callings and to provide an honorable pension for those who have devoted their lives to the service of the state.

In so far as I am concerned, no words can give utterance to the sentiments of gratitude I owe you, nor express how deeply touched I feel at the willingness with which you have all associated yourselves in the generous sentiment which has brought forth this exceptional mark of kindness and esteem. The spontaneity of your action has been for me the dearest and most flattering reward that I could expect for the efforts I have never ceased to make to conciliate the duties of my post with the kindly disposition and good will due to those who have had recourse to the embassy for any public service. I have the honor to be, gentlemen, very gratefully yours.

HENRY VIGNAUD.