

VIGNAUD CASE IS STRONG PLEA FOR FEDERAL PENSIONS

Aged Secretary of American Embassy Faced Poverty

BEST PART OF HIS LIFE GIVEN FOR HIS COUNTRY

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WASHINGTON, D. C., Nov. 5.—In urging Congress to pass a bill for the retirement of superannuated government employes with a pension at the coming session, the Civil Service Retirement Association is going to use the remarkable case of Henry Vignaud, formerly first secretary of the American Embassy at Paris, as one of its chief weapons.

Vignaud, who recently resigned after thirty-four years of service, at the age of 70, without means to provide for his remaining years, addressed a letter to twenty prominent Americans, headed by Levi P. Morton, Andrew Carnegie and J. Pierpont Morgan, whose generosity in subscribing a fund of \$20,000 insures the last days of the veteran diplomat against want.

Public Meeting at Academy

Mr. Vignaud lived very modestly, but his salary barely sufficed to meet his expenses. His letter, acknowledging the aid that he received from the financiers, is one of the strongest cards of the association. It will probably figure extensively at the meeting to be held by the association in the Academy of Music in Philadelphia on November 12. It follows:

"Gentlemen: After thirty-four 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 unfit, 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.

Vignaud Regrets Present Law

"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 service, my retirement at my advanced age and without personal fortune, might have placed me in a precarious situation, strained 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 unfortunate, 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.

Thanks Rich Men for Aid

"Your generous initiative, a very fortunate one for me, is 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 or 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 my public service.

"I have the honor to be, gentlemen,

"Very gratefully yours,

"HENRY VIGNAUD."