

OBITUARY.

---

JEAN CHARLES ADOLPHE ALPHAND was born at Grenoble on the 26th of October, 1817. He entered the École Polytechnic at Paris in 1837, preparatory to studying at the École des Ponts et Chaussées. In 1839, having passed out as "Ingénieur Ordinaire," he was posted to Bordeaux, where for fifteen years he directed the services of bridges, railways and moors (*landes*). In this position he constructed a quay in the harbour of Bordeaux, allowing ships of the largest tonnage to discharge alongside. He also filled the office of Chef d'escadron d'Etat-Major of the National Guard, and was a member of the Municipal Council of Bordeaux and of the General Council of the Canton of Contras.

In 1854 Baron Haussmann, formerly Prefect of Bordeaux, but at that time Prefect of the Seine, appointed Mr. Alphand Engineer-in-Chief at Paris, charged with the embellishment of the city. To the service thus established of public recreation grounds, gardens, &c., were successfully added the lighting of the city, the concession for temporary purposes of portions of the public thoroughfares, and the control of public conveyances. Under his direction were formed or laid out the Bois de Boulogne, the Bois de Vincennes, the Buttes Chaumont, the Parc Monceau, the numerous squares which adorn the public thoroughfares, and the cemeteries, boulevards, and monumental fountains. In 1861 he founded the Mutual Aid Society in connection with the roadmen and park-keepers of the Bois de Boulogne. In 1867 he was appointed Superintendent of Public Highways and Promenades. At the International Exhibition of 1867 he was entrusted with works for the preparation of the Champ de Mars, and was elected Vice-President of the Jury of Class 83. On the 30th of June of the same year he was created a Commander of the Legion of Honour, having been a Chevalier since the 7th of October, 1852, and an Officer since December, 1862. On the 30th of June, 1869, he was promoted to Inspector-General of Ponts et Chaussées, 2nd Grade.

During the war of 1870-71 Mr. Alphand was employed by the Government to render defensive the continuous girdle or chain around Paris, and organised a corps of engineer volunteers, of

which he was Colonel. In 1871 President Thiers appointed him Director of Works of Paris, which included the supervision of all architectural matters. On the 3rd of May, 1875, he was promoted to Inspector-General of Ponts et Chaussées, 1st Grade, thus achieving the highest position to which an engineer can attain in France. In 1878 the office of Director of the Water-Supply and Drainage, vacant by the death of Mr. Belgrand, was added to his other duties. On the 13th of July, 1882, the President of the Republic sent him, at the New Hotel de Ville, the insignia of Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour. Beyond his functions as Member of Municipal Commissions, he was a member of the Executive; first, of the International Exhibitions Commission of 1855, 1867, and 1878; secondly, of the Public Buildings Commission; thirdly, of the Water-Supply and Storage Commission; and fourthly, of the Council of Public Health.

The foregoing brief account of the manifold offices filled by Mr. Alphand may serve to indicate his many-sidedness as well as his powers of work, but it gives only a faint idea of the importance of the "Directeur des Travaux."

When in 1878 he undertook the functions of his eminent colleague Belgrand, he centralized all the so-called "technical services" of Paris in his own person. He became, so to speak, Prefect of the Works of Paris and of the Seine. Modern Paris is said to owe its existence to Napoleon's famous Prefect. If at first the Prefect supplied the bold conceptions, and politically pulled the wires by which his grandiose schemes were realized, his henchman, Alphand, organized the means by which they were carried out. If it be conceded that the latter was the pupil, and that his functions were only executive during the official life of Baron Haussmann, yet his genius made him such a good second that his share of the merit was scarcely less than that of his nominal superior. But it has been said that even Haussmann derived his inspiration from the Emperor, whose policy it was, by providing constant employment for the turbulent workmen of the capital in rendering Paris the pleasure-ground of Europe, to keep them contented—at any rate, long enough to consolidate his dynasty. In any case, the city has been the gainer, for the work of transformation once begun acquired sufficient impetus to continue active even after the fall of the Empire. Alphand, having held aloof from politics, maintained his position, and ultimately acquired a free hand; for the Paris Municipal Council, while loudly proclaiming its independence, had the good sense to

defer to him as to an edile whom it was useless to oppose. It must be admitted that Alphand had great opportunities, and that circumstances favoured the development of his genius. The money at his command, too, was enormous, and he spent it lavishly, often sacrificing large sums in order to get a public monument with its centre exactly in line with a new road. And when funds began to fail, or money came in slowly, Alphand was always ready with some new scheme for providing means for carrying on the work. His great ambition was the improvement and beautifying of Paris; and in the pursuit of this aim he was unsparing of himself and also of others. He was a master of detail, as is shown by the various improvements he introduced, in the maintenance of the streets, for instance, such as methods of washing, sweeping, sanding, &c. He was also the first to introduce steam road-rollers into Paris. Gifted with a splendid physique, his powers of work were extraordinary; after a stormy meeting at the Municipal Council, he would preside at a Commission, or inspect important works, calm and unruffled. During the construction of the Exhibition of 1889 he was to be seen early and late inspecting and directing the works, even though the immense labours thus entailed were an addition to his ordinary duties, and he was over seventy years of age. He possessed what his compatriots term "a brain of steel," and this perhaps enabled him to get through the work of three ordinary men, and towards the close of his life to fight and overcome a serious attack of paralysis. But even the strength of such a man has its limit, and a second stroke brought the end. Alphand died in harness on the 6th of December, 1891, aged seventy-four years. Amongst the attendants at his funeral were representatives of no less than sixty-three societies to which he belonged. He was elected an Honorary Member of the Institution on the 12th of January, 1886.

Mr. Alphand's contributions to literature were mostly confined to his reports contained in the annual budgets of the city of Paris; but in conjunction with collaborators he published the following works:—"Le Bois de Boulogne Architectural. Recueil des Embellissements exécutés dans son Enceinte et à ses abords sous la direction de MM. Alphand, Ingénieur-en-chef, et Davioud, Architecte, dessinés par Th. Vacquer." Paris, 1860. "Darville H.—De l'Exposition Universelle. Lettre Préface par A. Alphand." 8vo. Plates and cuts. Paris, 1890.

---