

OBITUARY.

MARIE FRANÇOIS SADI CARNOT, President of the French Republic, was born at Limoges on the 11th of August, 1837. He was the eldest son of Hippolyte Carnot, author of the "Memoires de Bertrand Barère," and the grandson of Lazare Carnot, well known as the "Organizer of Victory" under the Convention of 1792, who was a member of the Committee of Public Safety and afterwards of the Directory. The subject of this notice was named after his uncle, the well-known engineer and writer on thermo-dynamics, Sadi Carnot, whose classic work, "Reflexions sur la puissance du feu et sur les machines propres à développer cette puissance," published in 1824 in Paris, demonstrated that whenever work is produced there is a transmission of heat and enunciated the "Law of Carnot," which is recognized as the basis of all true formulas devised for the measurement of the efficiency of thermo-dynamic machines. After distinguishing himself at the *École Polytechnique*, young Carnot became in 1860 a pupil at the *École des Ponts et Chaussées*, from which he passed out three years later at the head of the list. After being engaged, under the Administration des Ponts et Chaussées, on engineering works in various parts of France, he was appointed on the fall of the Second Empire in 1870 an extraordinary commissary of the Provisional Government for the purpose of organizing the defensive forces of the country in the departments of the Seine Inférieure, Eure and Calvados.

The overthrow of the Second Empire opened to Carnot, as to so many others, the path of political ambition. After acting as Prefect of the Seine Inférieure, he was returned to the National Assembly early in 1871 as representative of Côte d'Or. He joined the "Left" and voted for all the measures in favour of a definite establishment of the Republic. In 1876 he was elected to the Chamber of Deputies for a division of Beaune, and two years later was appointed Under Secretary of State for Public Works, a post for which his engineering training and experience specially fitted him. On the formation of the Jules Ferry Cabinet in 1880, Carnot took office as Minister of Public Works. The ministry, however, lasted little more than a year, and he, of course, went out with it. He again took office in 1885 in the Brisson Cabinet as Minister of Finance. By this time he had prominently identi-

fied himself with the Democratic Left, and was elected one of the four Vice-Presidents of the Chamber. He continued to hold the portfolio of Minister of Finance in the De Freycinet Cabinet of 1886 and won a large measure of public confidence by the candour and straightforwardness with which he exposed deficits glossed over by his predecessors. On the fall of the De Freycinet Ministry, he was elected a member of the Budget Commission.

On the resignation of the Presidency of the Republic by M. Grévy, towards the end of 1887, the rivalry between M. Jules Ferry and M. de Freycinet—the respective candidates of the Opportunists and of the Radicals—left the prize to a public man of high personal character, of well-known name and of unquestioned republican principles. Such a man was Carnot; he was spontaneously put forward as candidate and on the 3rd of December, 1887, was elected President of the Republic. In referring to the new President shortly after his election, the Paris correspondent of the *Times* said: “His newly-acquired grandeur neither frightens nor elates him. He is thoughtful and rather taciturn, moving with measured and firm step towards a future of which he has no dread, because if he fall, it will not be due to a deviation from the most direct course. It must not be inferred, however, from M. Carnot’s modesty and simplicity that he will let things slide. He clings tenaciously to his ideas and resolutely defends them. He will not let the Republic drift, and it will not be easy to convince him. He will mildly but firmly maintain what he thinks right, and withstand with the patience of conviction what he thinks bad.”

Well did M. Carnot fulfil the terms of this prophecy. During his tenure of the Presidential office he steadily increased his reputation. He showed firmness in resisting the clamours of the mob and steadiness in encountering attacks on the Republic even when, as in the case of the Boulangists, the agitation appeared to be popular with the masses. The collapse of that movement strengthened his position and the weakness of a succession of short-lived ministries induced the majority to look to the President as the one element of stability in the State. No one could well have worked harder to promote the moral and material interests of France. He paid several visits to various parts of the country to ascertain for himself the needs, the interests and the conditions of the people. As an instance of his firmness—to which he probably owed his death—it may be mentioned that on several occasions he refused to exercise the prerogative of mercy in favour of anarchist criminals, such as Ravachol, Vaillant, Henri and

others. On the 24th of June, 1894, M. Carnot was in Lyons for the purpose of visiting the exhibition being held in that city. While driving in the evening of that day from the Palais de Commerce to the theatre he was stabbed in the region of the liver by an Italian anarchist, who rushed from the crowd and jumped on the step of the carriage as if with the intention of presenting a petition. The President was immediately conveyed to the Prefecture of Police, where medical assistance was promptly rendered. His condition, however, was hopeless; he gradually became weaker and died at a quarter to one on the following morning.

M. Challemel-Lacour, President of the Senate, in announcing to that House the assassination of M. Carnot, paid to his memory the following tribute, which may well be quoted here:—

“Europe, which appreciated the nobility and stability of his character, will join its regrets with ours. It will share our reprobation for this dastardly outrage against the life of a man ever imbued with these two essential ideas: the maintenance of social order in the nation over whose government he presided and the maintenance of peace among the nations of Europe. If any man seemed bound, by the moderation of his ideas, his upright character, his spirit of justice towards all, especially the weak and unfortunate, by his kindly heart, compassionating all misfortune, and by the touching example of his domestic virtues, to escape hatred and fanaticism, it was Carnot. But fanaticism has at all times been bitter against those who should have been least exposed to its blows. By unmasking itself it has but rendered itself more hateful and has strengthened in all valiant minds, respectful of the rights of men and of human life, the energetic resolution to defend the fundamental laws of society and to protect mankind, outraged in what it deems most sacred.”¹

M. Carnot, as chief of the State, was Master of the Order of the Legion of Honour, with the Grand Cross of which he was decorated. Among other orders conferred upon him was that of St. Andrew of Russia, which is usually bestowed only upon sovereigns and members of reigning families.

M. Carnot was elected an Honorary Member of the Institution on the 13th of January, 1891, on the ground that he was “eminently qualified by training, experience and position to advance the interests of engineering science and practice.” In accepting this distinction he presented to the Institution a small bust of himself which is preserved in the Library.

¹ *The Times*, 26 June, 1894.