SKETCHES MADE IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.

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ODILON BARROT.

Odilon Barrot ascends the tribune step by step and slowly; he is solemn before being eloquent. Then he places his right hand on the table of the tribune, throwing his left hand behind his back, and thus shows himself sideways to the Assembly in the attitude of an athlete. He is always in black, well brushed and well buttoned up.

His delivery, which is slow at first, gradually becomes animated, as do his thoughts. But in becoming animated his speech becomes hoarse and his thoughts cloudy. Hence a certain hesitation among his hearers, some being unable to catch what he says, the others not understanding. All at once from the cloud darts a flash of lightning and one is dazzled. The difference between men of this kind and Mirabeau is that the former have flashes of lightning, Mirabeau alone has thunder.

MONSIEUR THIERS.

M. Thiers wants to treat men, ideas and revolutionary events with parliamentary routine. He plays his old game of constitutional tricks in face of abysms and the dreadful upheavals of the chimerical and unexpected. He does not realise that everything has been transformed; he finds a resemblance between our own times and the time when he governed, and starts out from this. This resemblance exists in point of fact, but there is in it a something that is colossal and monstrous. M. Thiers has no suspicion of this, and pursues the even tenour of his way. All his life he has been stroking cats, and coaxing them with all sorts of cajolling processes and feline ways. To-day he is trying to play the same game, and does not see that the animals have grown beyond all measure and that it is wild beasts that he is keeping about him. A strange sight it is to see this little man trying to stroke the roaring muzzle of a revolution with his little hand.

When M. Thiers is interrupted he gets excited, folds and unfolds his arms, then raises his hands to his mouth, his nose, his spectacles, shrugs his shoulders, and ends by clasping the back of his head convulsively with both hands.

I have always entertained towards this celebrated statesman, this eminent orator, this mediocre writer, this narrow-minded man, an indefinable sentiment of admiration, aversion and disdain.

DUFAURE.

M. Dufaure is a barrister of Saintes, and was the leading lawyer in his town about 1833. This led him to aspire to legislative honours. M. Dufaure arrived in the Chamber with a provincial and cold-in-the-nose accent that was very queer. But he possessed a mind so clear that occasionally it was almost luminous, and so accurate that occasionally it was decisive.

With that his speech was deliberate and cold, but sure, solid, and calmly pushed difficulties before it.

M. Dufaure succeeded. He was a deputy, then a minister. He is not a sage. He is a grave and honest man who has held power without greatness but with probity, and who speaks from the tribune without brilliancy but with authority.

His person resembles his talent. In appearance he is dignified, simple and sober. He comes to the Chamber buttoned up in his dark grey frock-coat, and wearing a black cravat, and a shirt collar that reaches to his ears. He has a big nose, thick lips, heavy eyebrows, an intelligent and severe eye, and grey, ill-combed hair.

CHANGARNIER.

Changarnier looks like an old academician, just as Soult looks like an old archbishop.

Changarnier is sixty-four or sixty-five years old, and tall and thin.
He has a gentle voice, a graceful and formal air, a chestnut wig like M. Pasquier's, and a lady-killing smile like M. Brifaut's.

With that he is a curt, bold, expeditious man, resolute, but cunning and reserved.

At the Chamber he occupies the extreme end of the fourth bench of the last section on the left, exactly above M. Ledru-Rollin.

He usually sits with folded arms. The bench on which Ledru-Rollin and Lamennais sit is perhaps the most habitually irritated of the Left.
While the Assembly shouts, murmurs, yells, roars, and rages, Changarnier yawns.

LAGRANGE.

Lagrange, it is said, fired the pistol in the Boulevard des Capucines, fatal spark that heated the passions of the people and caused the conflagration of February. He is styled: Political prisoner and Representative of the people.

Lagrange has a grey moustache, a grey beard and long grey hair. He is overflowing with soured generosity, charitable violence and a sort of chivalrous demagogy; there is a love in his heart with which he stirs up hatred; he is tall, thin, young looking at a distance, old when seen nearer, wrinkled, bewildered, hoarse, flurried, wan, has a wild look in his eyes and gesticulates; he is the Don Quixote of the Mountain. He, also, tilts at windmills; that is to say, at credit, order, peace, commerce, industry,--all the machinery that turns out bread. With this, a lack of ideas; continual jumps from justice to insanity and from cordiality to threats. He proclaims, acclaims, reclaims and declaims. He is one of those men who are never taken seriously, but who sometimes have to be taken tragically.

PRUDHON.

Prudhon was born in 1803. He has thin fair hair that is ruffled and ill-combed, with a curl on his fine high brow. He wears spectacles. His gaze is at once troubled, penetrating and steady. There is something of the house-dog in his almost flat nose and of the monkey in his chin-beard. His mouth, the nether lip of which is thick, has an habitual expression of ill-humour. He has a Franc-Comtois accent, he utters the syllables in the middle of words rapidly and drawls the final syllables; he puts a circumflex accent on every "a," and like Charles Nodier, pronounces: "honorable, remarquable." He speaks badly and writes well. In the tribune his gesture consists of little feverish pats upon his manuscript with the palm of his hand. Sometimes he becomes irritated, and froths; but it is cold slaver. The principal characteristic of his countenance and physiognomy is mingled embarrassment and assurance.

I write this while he is in the tribune.

Anthony Thouret met Prudhon.

"Things are going badly," said Prudhon.

"To what cause do you attribute our embarrassments?" queried Anthony Thouret.

"The Socialists are at the bottom of the trouble, of course.

"What! the Socialists? But are you not a Socialist yourself?"

"I a Socialist! Well, I never!" ejaculated Prudhon.

"Well, what in the name of goodness, are you, then?"

"I am a financier."

BLANQUI.

Blanqui got so that he no longer wore a shirt. For twelve years he had worn the same clothes--his prison clothes--rags, which he displayed with sombre pride at his club. He renewed only his boots and his gloves, which were always black.

At Vincennes during his eight months of captivity for the affair of the 15th of May, he lived only upon bread and raw potatoes, refusing all other food. His mother alone occasionally succeeded in inducing him to take a little beef-tea.

With this, frequent ablutions, cleanliness mingled with cynicism, small hands and feet, never a shirt, gloves always.

There was in this man an aristocrat crushed and trampled upon by a demagogue.

Great ability, no hypocrisy; the same in private as in public. Harsh, stern, serious, never laughing, receiving respect with irony, admiration with sarcasm, love with disdain, and inspiring extraordinary devotion.

There was in Blanqui nothing of the people, everything of the populace.

With this, a man of letters, almost erudite. At certain moments he was no longer a man, but a sort of lugubrious apparition in which all degrees of hatred born of all degrees of misery seemed to be incarnated.

LAMARTINE. February 23, 1850.

During the session Lamartine came and sat beside me in the place usually occupied by M. Arbey. While talking, he interjected in an undertone sarcastic remarks about the orators in the tribune.

Thiers spoke. "Little scamp," murmured Lamartine.

Then Cavaignac made his appearance. "What do you think about him?" said Lamartine. "For my part, these are my sentiments: He is fortunate, he is brave, he is loyal, he is voluble--and he is stupid."

Cavaignac was followed by Emmanuel Arago. The Assembly was stormy. "This man," commented Lamartine, "has arms too small for the affairs he undertakes. He is given to joining in mêlées and does not know how to get out of them again. The tempest tempts him, and kills him."

A moment later Jules Favre ascended the tribune. "I do not know how they can see a serpent in this man," said Lamartine. "He is a provincial academician."

Laughing the while, he took a sheet of paper from my drawer, asked me for a pen, asked Savatier-Laroche for a pinch of snuff, and wrote a few lines. This done he mounted the tribune and addressed grave and haughty

words to M. Thiers, who had been attacking the revolution of February. Then he returned to our bench, shook hands with me while the Left applauded and the Right waxed indignant, and calmly emptied the snuff in Savatier-Laroche's snuffbox into his own.

BOULAY DE LA MEURTHE.

M. Boulay de la Meurthe was a stout, kindly man, bald, pot-bellied, short, enormous, with a short nose and a not very long wit. He was a friend of Hard, whom he called mon cher, and of Jerome Bonaparte, whom he addressed as "your Majesty."

The Assembly, on January 20, made him Vice-President of the Republic.

It was somewhat sudden, and unexpected by everybody except himself. This latter fact was evident from the long speech learned by heart that he delivered after being sworn in. At its conclusion the Assembly applauded, then a roar of laughter succeeded the applause. Everybody laughed, including himself; the Assembly out of irony, he in good faith.

Odilon Barrot, who since the previous evening had been keenly regretting that he did not allow himself to be made Vice-President, contemplated the scene with a shrug of the shoulders and a bitter smile.

The Assembly followed Boulay de la Meurthe, congratulated and gratified, with its eyes, and in every look could be read this: "Well, I never! He takes himself seriously!"

When he was taking the oath, in a voice of thunder which made everybody

smile, Boulay de la Meurthe looked as if he were dazzled by the Republic, and the Assembly did not look as if it were dazzled by Boulay de la Meurthe.

DUPIN.

Dupin has a style of wit that is peculiar to himself. It is Gaulish, tinged with the wit of a limb of the law and with jovial grossness. When the vote upon the bill against universal suffrage was about to be taken some member of the majority, whose name I have forgotten, went to him and said:

"You are our president, and moreover a great legist. You know more about it than I do. Enlighten me, I am undecided. Is it true that the bill violates the Constitution?"

Dupin appeared to think for a moment and then replied:

"No, it doesn't violate it, but it lifts its clothes up as high as possible!"

This reminds me of what he said to me the day I spoke upon the Education Bill. Baudin had permitted me to take his turn to speak, and I went up to the presidential chair to notify Dupin.

"Ah! you are going to speak! So much the better!" said he; and pointing to M. Barthélemy Saint Hilaire, who was then occupying the tribune and delivering a long and minute technical speech against the measure,

added:

"He is rendering you a service. He is doing the preparatory work. He is turning the bill's trousers down. This done you will be able to at once--"

He completed the phrase with the expressive gesture which consists of tapping the back of the fingers of the left hand with the fingers of the right hand.