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MICHEL CHEVALIER.

Mr. Moncure Robinson is one of the oldest, as he was in earlier years one of our foremost civil engineers. The Reading Railroad owed a great deal of its early impetus to his hand, and several of the great lines were built in part upon his surveys. When he was a young man, distinguishing himself in his active professional work, after three years of diligent study in the engineering schools of Paris, he was able to assist a young Frenchman who came to this country under an appointment from M. Thiers, then Minister of Public Works, to visit and study minutely the public improvements, canals and railroads, and the financial and banking systems, both of the States and the General Government. From this period, 1833-35, down to the day of his death, Michel Chevalier was one of the warmest admirers of this country, and now his early friend, Mr. Robinson, publishes this memoir, read before the American Philosophical Society, in which he gives us a clear and instructive account of the useful career of M. Chevalier, and of the wide sphere of his activity. His Letters on the United States were received with great applause, and even now are well worth reading, and his thorough and exhaustive report on our public works, although, of course, antiquated by the half century that has almost passed, is a monument of the painstaking diligence of the writer and of the progress made by this young country in developing its communications. What he learned here and in subsequent visits of the same kind to England led to his elaborate work on the Roads, Canals and Railroads of France, and the adoption and execution of many of his plans and suggestions may be seen in the France of to-day, with its network of railroads, its thorough system of high roads, and its chain of canals. Indeed, the great schemes that are now being carried out in France for supplying every part of the country with local railroads connected with the great through lines may be deduced from Chevalier's lessons learned here.

So great was the appreciation of his pre-eminent services and of the success of his studies in finance as well as in engineering, that at thirty-five he was appointed Professor of Political Economy at the College of France, and that office he held down to his death, although he was prominent in public life, a Senator, and frequently occupied with great public missions and commissions. His sturdy independence in politics stayed by him to the last, and he was the one man in the Senate who, in 1870, voted against the German war, on which Napoleon the Third entered with a high heart, only to lose his throne. The part taken by Chevalier in bringing about a commercial treaty with England is fully described by Mr. Robinson, who attributes to it and to the admirable railroad system in France, devised by Chevalier, the rapid recovery of France from the results of the Prussian war, and its advance to a state of national prosperity and individual welfare not equalled in any other country of Europe. Free trader as he was in theory, he was, like all Frenchmen, watchful to prevent waste of wealth, and in international commerce, as well as in regard to railroads, he was bent on preventing undue or unfair competition, and he encouraged a well considered protective tariff, and especially duties that would protect every industry necessary to make the country quite independent of foreign supplies. His last public effort was to advocate the submarine tunnel between France and England, and his last private experiment was to introduce hardy American grape-vines into France so as to resist the destruction of the phylloxera. During all his busy life he found time to encourage and assist in successive international exhibitions, to contribute to the leading French scientific journals, and to take part in the editorial work of one of the best French newspapers. With such material, and after a friendship of nearly half a century, it is not surprising that Mr. Robinson has prepared a memoir that is worthy of its subject, and is honorable to the American engineer who thus pays the last tribute to the French engineer, who, as public servant of his own, and friend of both countries whose needs he knew thoroughly, well deserves this tribute. The record of such a life is itself a most instructive lesson.