on the war of 1870. Even when the Liberal-Imperialist Ollivier ministry was formed, he maintained at first an anything but benevolent neutrality, and then an open opposition, and it is impossible to be sure whether mere “ canniness,” or some­thing better, kept him from joining the government of the National Defence, of which he was in a manner the author.

Nevertheless the collapse of the empire was a great oppor­tunity for Thiers, and it was worthily accepted. He undertook in the latter part of September and the first three weeks of October a circular tour to the different courts of Europe in the hope of obtaining some intervention, or at least some good offices. The mission was unsuccessful; but the negotiator was on its conclusion immediately charged with another—that of obtaining, if possible, an armistice directly from Prince Bismarck. The armistice having been arranged, and the opportunity having been thus obtained of electing a National Assembly, Thiers was chosen deputy by more than twenty constituencies (of which he preferred Paris), and was at once elected by the Assembly itself practically president, nominally *chef du pouvoir exécutif.* He lost no time in choosing a coalition cabinet, and then personally took up the negotiation of peace. Probably no statesman has ever had a more disgusting task; and the fact that he discharged it to the satisfaction of a vast majority is the strongest testimony to Thiers’s merits. He succeeded in convincing the deputies that the peace was neces­sary, and it was (March 1, 1871) voted by more than five to one.

Thiers held office for more than two years after this event, which shows the strength of the general conviction that he alone could be trusted. He had at first to meet and crush at once the mad enterprise of the Paris commune. Soon after this was accomplished he became (August 30th) in name as well as in fact president of the republic.

His strong personal will and inflexible opinions had much to do with the resurrection of France; but the very same facts made it inevitable that he should excite violent opposition. He was a confirmed protectionist, and free trade ideas had made great way in France under the empire; he was an advocate of long military service, and the devotees of *la revanche* were all for the introduction of general and compulsory but short service. Both his talents and his temper made him utterly indisposed to maintain the attitude supposed to be incumbent on a republican president; and his tongue was never a care­fully governed one. In January 1872 he formally tendered his resignation; and though it was refused, almost all parties disliked him, while his chief supporters—men like Rémusat, Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire and Jules Simon—were men rather of the past than of the present.

The year 1873 was, as a parliamentary year in France, occu­pied to a great extent with attacks on Thiers. In the early spring regulations were proposed, and on April 13th were carried, which were intended to restrict the executive and especially the parliamentary powers of the president. On the 27th of the same month a contested election in Paris, resulting in the return of the opposition candidate, Μ. Barodet, was regarded as a grave disaster for the Thiers government, and that government was not much strengthened by a dissolution and reconstitution of the cabinet on May 19th. Immediately afterwards the question was brought to a head by an interpellation moved by the duc de Broglie. The president declared that he should take this as a vote of want of confidence; and in the debates which followed a vote of this character (though on a different formal issue, and proposed by Μ. Ernoul) was carried by 16 votes in a house of 704. Thiers at once resigned (May 24th).

He survived his fall four years, continuing to sit in the Assembly, and, after the dissolution of 1876, in the Chamber of Deputies, and sometimes, though rarely, speaking. He was also, on the occasion of this dissolution, elected senator for Belfort, which his exertions had saved for France; but he preferred the lower house, where he sat as of old for Paris. On May 16th 1877, he was one of the “ 363 ” who voted want of confidence in the Broglie ministry (thus paying his debts), and he took considerable part in organizing the subsequent electoral campaign. But he was not destined to see its success, being fatally struck with apoplexy at St Germain-en-Laye on September 3rd. Thiers had long been married, and his wife and sister-in-law, Mlle Dosne, were his constant companions; but he left no children, and had had only one—a daughter— who long predeceased him. He had been a member of the Academy since 1834. His personal appearance was remarkable, and not imposing, for he was very short, with plain features, ungainly gestures and manners, very near-sighted, and of dis­agreeable voice; yet he became (after wisely giving up an attempt at the ornate style of oratory) a very effective speaker in a kind of conversational manner, and in the epigram of debate he had no superior among the statesmen of his time except Lord Beaconsfield.

Thiers was by far the most gifted^and interesting of the group of literary statesmen which formed a unique feature in the French political history of the 19th century. There are only two who are at all comparable to him—Guizot and Lamartine; and as a states­man he stands far above both. Nor is this eminence merely due to his great opportunity in 1870; for Guizot might under Louis Philippe have almost made himself a French Walpole, at least a French Palmerston, and Lamartine’s opportunities after 1848 were, for a man of political genius, illimitable. But both failed—Lamar­tine almost ludicrously—while Thiers in hard conditions made a striking if not a brilliant success. But he only showed well when he was practically supreme. Even as the minister of a constitu­tional monarch his intolerance of interference or joint authority, his temper at once imperious and intriguing, his inveterate inclina­tion towards *brigue,* that is to say, underhand rivalry and caballing for power and place, showed themselves unfavourably; and bis constant tendency to inflame the aggressive and chauvinist spirit of his country neglected fact, was not based on any just estimate of the relative power and interests of France, and led his country more than once to the verge of a great calamity. In opposition, both under Louis Philippe and under the empire, and even to some extent in the last four years of his life, his worst qualities were always manifested. But with all these drawbacks he conquered and will retain a place in what is perhaps the highest, as it is cer­tainly the smallest, class of statesmen—the class of those to whom their country has had recourse in a great disaster, who have shown in bringing her through that disaster the utmost constancy, courage, devotion and skill, and who have been rewarded by as much success as the occasion permitted.

As a man of letters Thiers is very much smaller. He has not only the fault of diffuseness, which is common to so many of the best-known historians of his century, but others as serious or more so. The charge of dishonesty is one never to be lightly made against men of such distinction as his, especially when their evident confidence in their own infallibility, their faculty of ingenious casuistry, and the strength of will which makes them (unconsciously, no doubt) close and keep closed the eyes of their mind to all incon­venient facts and inferences, supply a more charitable explanation. But it is certain that from Thiers's dealings with the men of the first revolution to his dealings with the battle of Waterloo, constant, angry and well-supported protests against his unfairness were not lacking. Although his search among documents was undoubtedly wide, its results are by no means always accurate, and his admirers themselves admit great inequalities of style in him. These char­acteristics reappear (accompanied, however, by frequent touches of the epigrammatic power above mentioned, which seems to have come to Thiers more readily as an orator or a journalist than as an historian) in his speeches, which after his death were collected in many volumes by his widow. Sainte-Beuve, whose notices of Thiers are generally kindly, says of him, “ Μ. Thiers sait tout, tranche tout, parle de tout,” and this omniscience and “ cocksure­ness ” (to use the word of a prime minister of England contemporary with this prime minister of France) are perhaps the chief pervading features both of the statesman and the man of letters.

His histories, in many different editions, and his speeches, as above, are easily accessible; his minor works and newspaper articles have not, we believe, been collected in any form. Several years after his death appeared *Deux opuscules* (1891) and *Mélanges inédites* (1892), while *Notes et souvenirs,* 1870-73, were published in 1901 by “ F. D.,” his sister-in-law and constant companion, Mlle Félicie Dosne. Works on him, by Μ. Laya, Μ. de Mazadc, his colleague and friend Μ. Jules Simon, and others, are numerous.

(G. Sλ.)

THIERS, a town of central France, capital of an arrondisse­ment in the department of Puy-de-Dôme, 24 m. E.N.E. of Clermont-Ferrand, on the railway between that town and St Étienne. Pop. (1906) town, 12,601; commune, 17,418. Thiers is most picturesquely situated on the side of a hill at the foot of