

Captain A. F. Mathieu, the French Commissioner-General.

MONSIEUR le Capitaine de Vaisseau Adolphe Francois Mathieu was born in Paris on the 6th of April, 1827, where he also was educated. From the earliest age he showed peculiar aptitude for mathematics, and in 1842, when barely 15 years old, he carried off the prize at the general course of all the Paris schools. The result of the work achieved by A. F. Mathieu at that early period of his scholastic career was deemed of sufficient merit to be published in the SCIENTIFIC REVIEW.

Besides his proclivity for mathematical studies, the young scholar evinced a peculiar fancy for geographical studies, and a decided inclination for travels. The works of the celebrated explorer, "Dumont D'Urville" particularly attracted his attention, and caused him at last to leave college to enter the naval school. From the nautical returns of France we note that his career in the service is as under, viz.:—Rated as midshipman of second class on 16th August, 1844; midshipman of first class 1st October, 1846; ensign, 1st October, 1848; lieutenant, 3rd February, 1855; commander, 7th March, 1868; captain, 29th January, 1879.

The rapid strides Captain Mathieu made in his naval career are entirely due to the services he rendered his country. From 1844 to 1848, he took an active part in settling the dissensions which disturbed the islands of Tahiti and the Marquesas, where his lordship, the late Bishop of New Caledonia, was hemmed in by the three cannibal tribes of those islands. Captain Mathieu was one of the first to come to the rescue of that venerable missionary. Hardly returned to France, he once more made his way to the Pacific Ocean Station, where he served in various grades on board the *Durance*, the *Thetis*, the *Cocyte*, and the *Thisbe*. In 1852, Admiral Bonard selected Captain Mathieu as chief of his staff, and for a time in that capacity, he had the difficult duty of managing the French Settlements of Tahiti and dependencies.

From the Pacific, Captain Mathieu was removed to French Guyana. We find his name on the staff of the *Armide*, the *Vedette*, and the *Marceau*. Here, again, as chief of the staff, he rendered eminent services in organising the official work of that colony. His efforts, however, were frustrated by the severity of the climate—fever compelled him to return home, whence, after a short stay, he again sailed for the West Indies on board the *Cleopatra*, with Admiral de Guesdon, one of the most dis-

with Admiral de Guesdon, one of the most distinguished French seamen of the day. After leaving the West Indies, Captain Mathieu took an active part in the Italian campaign, during which he was made Knight of the Legion of Honour, as well as decorated by the Italian Government. During this campaign he showed his particular superiority as an engineer, repairing and suggesting improvements to the machinery of his own vessel, as well as to other steamships of his squadron. For this he received special commendation from Admiral Romain Desfosses. In acknowledgment of such services Captain Mathieu was appointed in 1862 to the command of the steam frigate Coet Logou, fitted up entirely under his own supervision. This vessel made a most rapid passage from France to New Caledonia, and during four consecutive years rendered eminent services to that French settlement. It is during that period that Captain Mathieu became acquainted with the social and progressive institutions of Australia, for which he openly avows such unqualified admiration.

After four years of incessant navigation, Captain Mathieu left the command of the Coet Logou, and became the right hand of Admiral Guillain, Governor of New Caledonia, first as aide-de-camp, then commander of the staff, and subsequently Colonial Secretary of that colony. Here, as in the French Guyana, Captain Mathieu used every endeavour to introduce some of the liberal institutions and ideas he had become imbued with whilst in the Australian colonies. In 1866 Governor Guillain solicited his favourite staff officer to represent New Caledonia at the Melbourne Exhibition. During his stay in that colony he visited the gold-mines of Victoria, and reported thereon. On his return to New Caledonia, Captain Mathieu, promoted to the rank of commander, had at once to proceed to the northern end of that colony, where an outbreak amongst the natives threatened the safety of the colony. He only returned to Noumea when peace was restored. At this period he entertained serious thoughts of giving up the navy and devoting his time to the development of the French settlement. Unfortunately, the term of the Government of Admiral Guillain had arrived, and perhaps, also, the opinions and views of Captain Mathieu were too broad, too liberal—we might say, too Australian to suit this French colony. The fall of the French empire led him once more to France, where he once again sought and obtained active service. We find him shortly after his return, on board the Jeanne d'Arc, in the Mediterranean, rendering such services as to cause him to be promoted to the rank of officer of the Legion of

rendering such services as to cause him to be promoted to the rank of officer of the Legion of Honour. From the Jeanne d'Arc, he removed to the school ship Cornélie, then to the Entreprenante on a voyage of inspection to Senegal, the West Indies, and Guyana. After such long and active service one might expect to see this officer seeking rest; but hardly landed in his native country, as a warm disciple of "Whitehead," he devoted his time to the study of torpedoes, and, though 50 years of age, patiently sat out all the lectures at the school of Beyardville, where this submarine warfare is taught in France. The ex-Colonial Secretary of New Caledonia soon mastered the art—his reports on the subject attracted attention—he was at once promoted to the honourable office of member of the commission of torpedoes and reporter on coast defences, and subsequently to the rank Capitaine de Vaisseau. He also received the decoration of Public Instruction, thus realising the old adage: "*Labor improbus omnia vincit.*"

The commissary-general of France at the Sydney International Exhibition was engaged in preparing a work on naval instruction, when he

was called upon to undertake the duties which have brought him once more to Australia. Many competitors sought the honor of the mission which has been entrusted to Captain Mathieu, but the reports of the Colonial Secretary of New Caledonia were not forgotten. The Government knew that amongst the officers of the French navy there was one whom his colleagues had nicknamed "the Australian," Admiral Porthnau, and Mons. Teisserenc de Bort, the Ministers of Navy and Commerce, agreed on the selection, and their successors, appointed Captain Mathieu to the command of the transport le Rhin, giving him the further title of commissary-general.

The reception vouchsafed in Sydney to Captain Mathieu, his officers, and the members of the French commission will, we trust, prove to the French Government that the colony approves of the selection, and that he is the right man in the right place. Since his arrival in Port Jackson Captain Mathieu has renewed acquaintance with many who had kept an agreeable souvenir of the commander of the Coet Logou, and made new friends, who will assist him in every way to carry out to a satisfactory issue the laborious mission which has been entrusted to him by the Government of France.



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Captain Mathieu has been married twice. By his first wife (who was a native of New South Wales) he has one daughter. The present Madame Mathieu, a lady from the French colony of Guadaloupe, has a son, to whom we may be permitted to wish the same honourable career which has led his father to hold his present position amongst us.

We cannot close this brief biographical notice without expressing the hope that Captain Mathieu may re-visit Australia as Commissionaire-General to the Melbourne Exhibition. It would be impossible for the French Government to make any other arrangement so acceptable to Australians.

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