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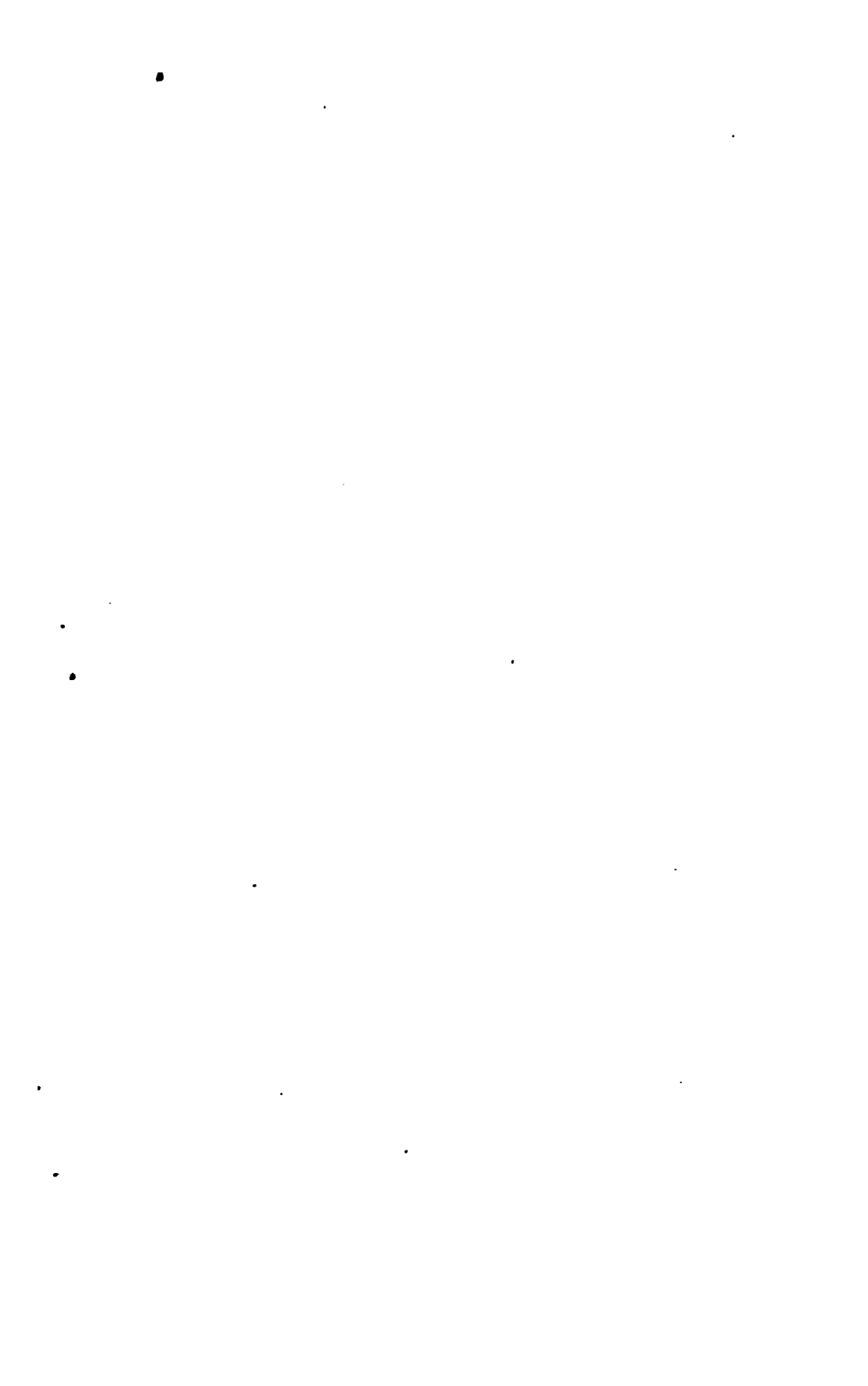
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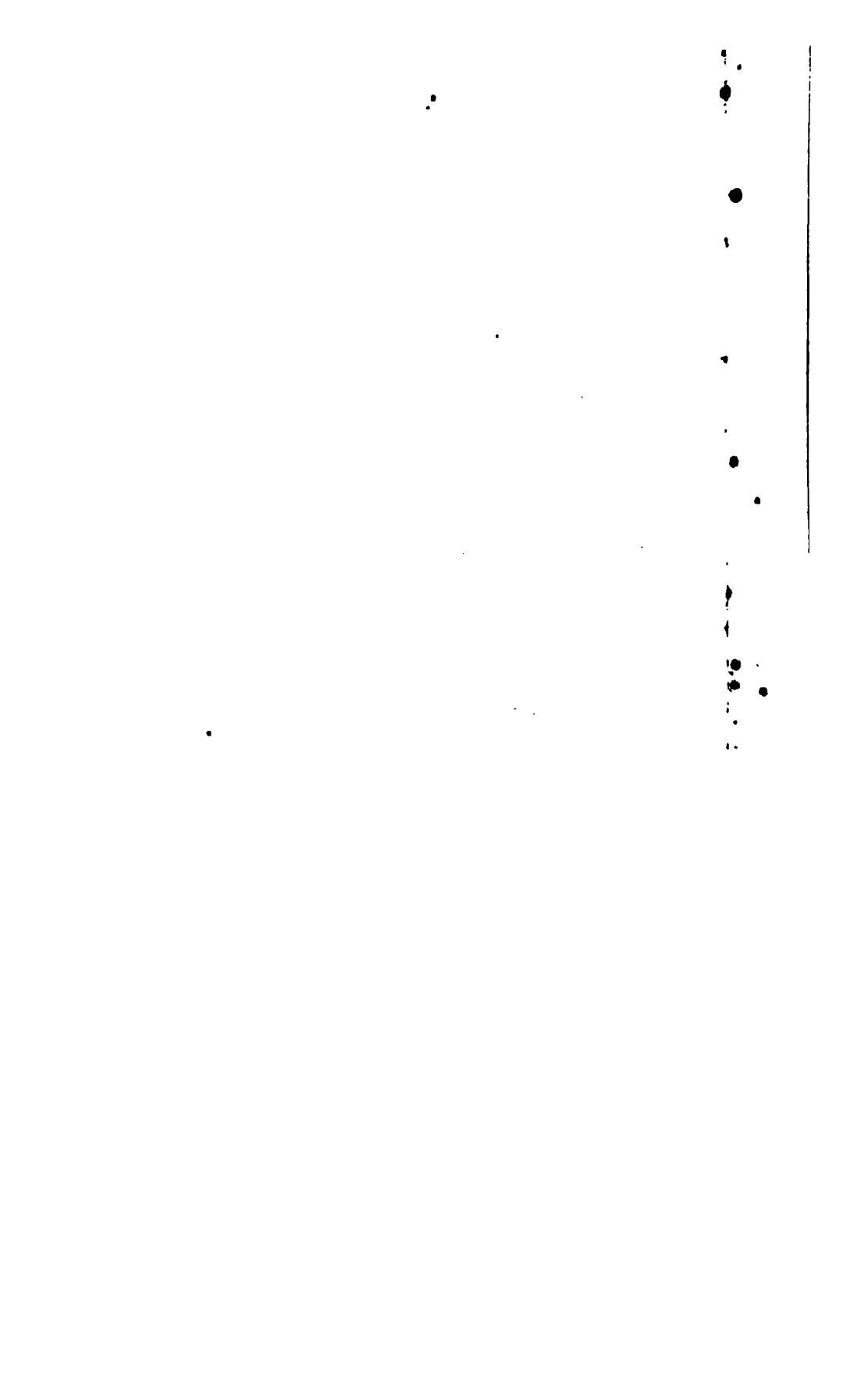
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**THE FALL OF METZ.**









# THE FALL OF METZ.

AN ACCOUNT  
OF THE  
SEVENTY DAYS' SIEGE AND OF THE BATTLES  
WHICH PRECEDED IT.

BY  
G. T. ROBINSON.

(FELLOW OF THE ROYAL INSTITUTE OF BRITISH ARCHITECTS.)

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT OF THE  
"MANCHESTER GUARDIAN."



LONDON:  
BRADBURY, EVANS, & CO., 10, BOUVERIE STREET, E.C.  
1871.

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237. e. 193.



Lim. of Prussian O  
Prussian Batteries

LONDON:  
FRALBUR, KVASH, AND CO., PRINTERS, WHITECHAPEL.

TO

J. E. TAYLOR, ESQ.,

AS THE ONLY MEANS I HAVE

OF ACKNOWLEDGING HIS KINDNESS TO ME AND MINE

DURING A TIME OF MUCH ANXIETY,

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED.

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## PREFACE.

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THE accidental circumstance of my being the only English correspondent who was shut up in Metz, during its unfortunate siege, having given a special value to my relation of the events I witnessed there, I have been induced to publish, in a collected and more connected form, my letters to the *Manchester Guardian*. Contemporaneous personal narratives form the most valuable assistants the historian can have ; and I am glad to give my contribution to that future history, which the events we are but yet in the midst of must call forth. The greatest part of that which I have herein described I myself have seen. When, however, it has been necessary to record simultaneous events, I have, in all cases, drawn my description of these from personal conversations with those who took part in them.

In the expression of political feeling, I have endeavoured to present a concrete of that of the army and the

civil population, trying to reflect this without giving it any particular hue, or without consciously contorting it by any mental twist of my own. My aim has been to place the reader, as nearly as possible, in the same position as that in which I found myself, minus some of its disagreeableness ; so that, should he find much dreariness or dullness herein, it will prove how faithfully I have rendered a very considerable portion of my time at Metz. Where I could do so, I have retained the original language of my letters as they were written, because they expressed the first impression the events made upon my mind. Some slight repetition is here and there caused by this, but I thought such an evil less than that which might be occasioned by destroying the freshness of the original record, by after-reflections upon it.

We are as yet too much disturbed by the turmoil of the war to reason calmly upon its events : as yet the results of yesterday are modified by those of to-morrow, and my desire has been simply to provide straw for the bricks of the edifice yet to be built. To those who seek for other materials for the history of this important episode in the war, I would point out the recent pamphlet of Marshal Bazaine, which did not reach me until too late to be noticed in the body of the work. Whilst I am writing these lines I receive intelligence of a *brochure* of General Deligny's being

about to appear. My friends and confrères, MM. Nazet and E. A. Spoll, are engaged on a history of the Campaign of the Moselle, and M. de Piolant is equally engaged on the history of the Army of the Rhine. All these were in Metz with me, and I would therefore especially draw attention to their record. I cannot write my last lines without thanking the proprietors of the *Manchester Guardian* for their kindness in thus allowing me to make use of that information which I acquired in their service. I wish that I might also publicly express my thanks to the many very true friends I found in Metz, and to whose kindly aid I owe the means of acquiring that information. Too many are where my thus naming them would render their position more painful than it already is; and to mention only those who escaped from sharing their captivity would be invidious.

From every man who loves his country, whatever may be his own nationality, the struggles which France is now making to preserve her integrity and existence, must draw forth a feeling of sympathy. However unrighteous the war might have been when it began, that sin has been expiated. At present each Frenchman fights for all that each true man holds most dear. It is no longer a war of ambition, it is a struggle for national life; it is no longer a war for politics, it is one of patriotism. It is no longer a war of Imperial aggran-

disement, it is for the preservation of a people ; and looking upon it in this light, I hope that every true-hearted Englishman, while praying longingly for peace, will join me in the cry of

VIVE LA FRANCE !

1, ST. PETER'S SQUARE,  
MANCHESTER,

*January, 1871.*

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# THE FALL OF METZ.

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## CHAPTER I.

### METZWARD.

*August 9—10.*

TWELVE o'clock was sounding from all towers and steeples of Paris as I left the station of the Chemin-de-fer du Nord. The 8th of August was ended, and the 9th begun, and for the first time I found Paris in a state of siege. We had talked of it in the train, wondered how it would differ from its normal condition, and were rather disappointed at finding that it did not, but was much the same Paris still, for at this period the difference was only nominal. There were more people hanging about the corners of the streets, spelling out the latest proclamation by the dim gas-light, for the battle of Wissemburg had just been lost. The shadow of the coming evil was on the people, and France was already putting on her mourning. Inflation was on the walls, but depression in the hearts of the people, and I sought my hotel with a wondering feeling as to what the morn-



ing's sun might shine upon. It did shine, and shone upon Paris ; and as I rushed from the Bourse to the prefecture in search of news, I found it a very hot sun indeed. Everywhere dissatisfaction and discontent were rampant. News it was difficult to obtain, that is, reliable news, for at each corner was some wild rumour of strategic combination of the forces, of sudden movements of the army, of dissension in the legislature, of the Empress taking the field in person, of everything and of nothing. Where to go or what to do I hardly knew, so I sought Truth at an unlikely source, and found it. I went to the editors of the "Debats" and "Galignani."

With these courteous gentlemen, to whom my errand was introduction enough, I discussed my future plans, in discussion that conference could be called, when they advised me to return to England, and I was determined to proceed on my errand. "It is useless to proceed," they said. "I must," said I, "but where?" Where would the next blow be struck? Opinions differed. "Mullhouse," said one, "Metz," said another ; "but if you won't go back to England, stay in Paris," said they both. "You know, of course, that all the English correspondents have been sent out of Metz," said one. That decided the question ; I didn't know, or I should not have waited a moment in Paris ; but directly I heard that all the English correspondents had been ejected, and that most of the French had fled, my wavering mind was made up. Go I must. Having swept their house clean, the authorities at Metz would look no more for those noxious

animals, and I should be safe, or at least able to lie hidden until I had learned something others could not know—go I must.

Now came tales of men thrown into prison, and accidentally or designedly forgotten. How that for eight days a friend of theirs had lain in gaol, under suspicion of being a spy, and, how that all the influence they could bring to bear, was but just sufficient to get him out again. In Metz—a stranger—no one to seek for me, such a fate might be mine, only prolonged until death or accident released me. The picture they painted was strongly tintured with the local colour just then prevailing in Paris—every thing looked black. “Obstinate as an Englishman” was the comment they made on my expressed determination, and wishing me a better fate than they saw in store for me, we shook each other’s hands with a glimmer of my hope penetrating through their fears as we looked forward to a future meeting.

The meeting with one of us three has already passed away into the long future. Poor fellow! even in Metz I read in a stray scrap of newspaper, rifled from the pockets of a prisoner, that he had been killed in a railway accident, whilst I, in the midst of all these dangers he drew so vividly, still lived. The other’s hand I hope to grasp again another day on earth; at present it is, I fear, well nigh paralyzed by the pain he feels at the misery which overwhelms his country, and at the position the city he loves and lives in finds itself.

Having made up my mind where to go, the next thing

was to find how best to get my body there. At the Strasbourg railway station I found that they would endeavour to send a train to Metz next morning at 8 o'clock, but would not guarantee that it would ever get there; the line was encumbered with troops, with provisions, with artillery; the enemy was advancing—if I liked to try, I might go, but—the shoulders expressed what the tongue thought better to repress.

In spite of the pantomime, I liked to try, and determined to go as far as any one else could, so made my arrangements accordingly.

That settled, I had now time to lounge about Paris, and study the people from a street point of view. Crowds stood round the print and picture shops, and the prints and pictures which attracted them were those relating to the early stages of the Great Revolution. Here it was the calling out of the volunteers of 1792. There the victory of Valmy, the day which preceded the declaration of the Republic. The comments of the crowd were all prophetic, but little did I think then that between the prophecy and the fulfilment so short a time would pass. The beginning of the end was already at hand, for hardly had I extricated myself from the crowd of the pavement when the roadway itself was thronged.

The Ollivier Ministry had fallen.

All along the Boulevards come the blouse-wearers, there is a dense blue fog of them. The low, growling howl man utters when he loses his reason and makes a

wild beast of himself comes nearer. There is a rhythm in it now;—there is a rhythmic cadence in the howl of all animals. As I flatten myself against the wall to avoid contact with the passing folly, I find the cry resolves itself into words :—

“ Il n’y a pas un Ministre,  
Il n’y a pas un Ministre,  
A bas Ollivier,  
A la lanterne ! ”

shouts hoarsely the unwashed multitude as it surges by.

Crowd after crowd follows repeating the same monotonous cry. Each member of it thinks himself a patriot because now that his country is engaged in external, he assists in internal strife. The Ollivier ministry might have been a weak one, but it was weaker still to change it at such a moment, and I felt even then, that the ebb and flow of history was obeying the unknown law which regulates it. The red tinge of a Republic was just blushing. As for the respectable world it took no part in the ebullition, the scum always boils first. The authorities evidently thought the wisest way to get rid of it was to let it boil over; perhaps it might put the fire out too. Well-to-do citizens evacuated the pavement and ensconced themselves in corners of the cafés, those almost, but not quite, well-to-do sat moodily outside, smoking in silence. Not a soldier was seen, and what few officers were in the streets hid themselves from view. Even the balcony of the Café du Helder, the grand

stronghold of militarydom, did not display one single uniform. Not one policeman was visible on the Boulevards, but in the side streets, flattening themselves up against the walls, hiding in alleys, they peopled desolate places, and were ready, in case of any overt breach of the peace, to issue into sight and action.

Here and there an excited orator mounted a three-legged stool, and spouted forth his well-learned short harangue, but the people themselves were too busy shouting to look favourably on any one who wanted silence, so he simply earned his money. One of these I followed, he was dressed in the costume of that Chemin-de-fer de l'Est I wanted to leave by on the morrow; so in the intervals of his present business, I inquired about his ordinary one to find if the railway were yet open, or if these recent events would effect a change. I found him one of the most communicative of men, he had already talked himself hoarse, but as he had three hours' more talking to do, I suppose he thought it better to keep his throat in constant exercise. From him I learnt sundry by-ways of getting on to Metz in case the iron highway should be found impassable, and in return I listened patiently to his oft-repeated, short, lecture to the few people who would listen. Its burden was a good one. "The sacred soil of France was invaded, let the nation rise like one man; let the enemy be repelled first, and the political situation of the country considered afterwards." The language in which his discourse was couched was so different to the verna-

cular in which he talked to me, that I began to think he had a dual existence. He descended from the loftiest sentiment and his three-legged stool at one and the same moment. On an expressed wonder, on my part, at his eloquence and his ability to resume a common-place conversation after so exalted a parenthesis, he informed me that his oratory was paid for at five francs per hour, and that that man there, pointing to a friend who had closely followed us, accompanied him to see that in each hour he orated for thirty minutes at least.

Patriotism assumed a new light to me. He had spent half an hour over me, and he didn't at all object to be paid at the same rate for it. For 7 fr. 50 c. no doubt he would preach Red Republicanism with an interlude of the guillotine. Patriotism I always knew had a price, but I did not think it had descended in Paris to so low a market price as five francs per hour. Wondering if these things were always so, I wandered back along the Boulevards, listening to a few more five-francers, and sought in the Café du Helder the cup of consolation and a friend. Here I learned somewhat of the cost of war, already I found friends had died, and that many other officers whom I had hoped to make friends of had already fallen. We looked over the *Annuaire Militaire*, the French army list, and found many a black cross of which the ink was yet hardly dry, and as I left I shook hands with a grey moustached old officer, whose military career commenced under the first Napoleon, and who was volunteering his aid again. His ancient enemy had shot his

only son, and as he had but death to look forward to now, he wished it might be met where his life had been spent—before his country's foe. That was a better sort of patriotism than the five-francer's, but then it cost more. There might be doubts about the political necessity of the foe, but there was none about the soldier's duty, and pondering these things over, I packed and prepared for to-morrow.

I put in practice an ancient maxim I do not invariably approve of ; like many another ancient adage, it is open to contradiction. I went early to bed, and was early to rise, but I cannot say that an increase of either health, wealth, or wisdom attend me, and at eight o'clock on the morning of the tenth, my journey to the memorable city of Metz, which for nearly three months was to be my involuntary home, commenced. My ticket was given me with a wondering stare, the porters eyed me with curious interest, and the guard regarded me with excited suspicion. I was the only passenger making the journey. All the officials in turn came up to look at me, and amusement or pity was legibly written on their countenances as the idiosyncrasy of the spectator varied. At 8 we were ready, but in consequence of oft-recurring telegrams, it was not till 8.35 that we started.

Of the earlier part of my journey I have nothing especial to relate. It was an ordinary railway journey through an ordinary character of country, nor was it until the Champagne country was entered and Epernay

reached that any indication of an unusual state of things was manifest.

Here we began to encounter enormous trains laden with horses, artillery waggons, and huge convoys of commissariat stores. Here, too, a serious intimation of a coming scarcity became obvious, from the fact that the buffet of the railway station was emptied of all its contents, liquid and solid—by no means a pleasant prospect for a man whose only foundation for the day's work was a cup of *café au lait*, and who, by a misplaced confidence, had relied upon the usually well supplied condition of French refreshment-rooms for his daily bread. It was the shadow of a coming event which, as our journey proceeded, became more and more evidently a dread reality.

A swarm, as of locusts, had passed before us, devouring everything eatable and drinkable throughout the land, and a stray crust and a glass of water was the sole *déjeuner* obtainable. Now, the train became crowded with young blouses going to be enrolled in the Garde Mobile, and it was very evident where that wine so much desired by others had gone to. Their patriotism was rampant, and developed itself in the most martial of songs, sung very much out of tune, but with an excess of vigour which was evidently of vinous origin.

When some of this surplus force had expended itself, and calmer moments succeeded, a very logical reason was found for their leaving their homes and encountering the risks of war. It was that France was invaded, and



that it was the duty of every citizen to assist in repelling the invader. The five-franc preacher was not needed here, though a suspicious similarity in the sermon struck me—perhaps they did not pay for their wine.

By-and-by Chalons is reached, and the recruits are changed for grave earnest men of the ambulance corps. They are as silent as the late occupants were noisy, and the grimness of their calling seems to have impressed itself already upon them. Again we change them, and our delays grow more serious and longer, till we reach Commercy, where we encounter a tedious one of two long hours' duration, caused by the collision of two trains in front of us laden with troops. The time seems as though it would never pass, but is relieved by the discovery of a Madelaine. We pounce upon her and devour her. She is small, but rather dry, and is a species of local manufacture of the nature and similitude of a sponge-cake flavoured in some peculiar manner, and forming the staple manufacture of the place. It wasn't much, but it was something, and for small mercies we were now beginning to be greatly thankful. The soldiers had not drunk the wine here. They were discriminate; it was too sour to drink undiluted, and much too thin to need the process, but there was a delicious spring of cold water, and after seven hours' dusty riding in hot carriages, a drink of cold water is a glory beyond description.

Starting again, we creep slowly on until we reach Toul, the scene of the disaster. Here the line is torn up, and strewn with fragments of carriages, some shivered into

splinters, and others bent and broken into the most erratic shapes. The shock must have evidently been a very violent one, and the damage to the occupants severe, but to what extent it was quite impossible to ascertain, the reticence of a French official being utterly unassailable. He takes off his hat, rubs the back of his bristly head, shrugs up his shoulders, and exclaims, "Dieu-de-dieu-de-dieu," but beyond this not a word is to be extracted from him. Patiently waiting—impatience was worn out long ago—until the line is cleared, we once more resume our journey. A few miles further we are brought to another standstill, and in weariness wander listlessly about the railway banks until the welcome sound of "*En voiture, Messieurs!*" sets us off for almost another mile, when a longer pause takes place. At last even French patience is exhausted; the majority of the passengers leave the train with the intention of walking on to Frouard—those who are going short distances only, with the intention of seeking some more rapid means of locomotion than a *grande vitesse* and mail train affords in time of war.

After a weary while we, whose baggage causes us to remain with the train, arrive at Frouard too, to find this, the junction with the main line for Metz, in what our conducteur calls "a fog of trains."

On they come in a seemingly never-ending line, each train consisting of sixty or seventy carriages, and each drawn by two of the enormous engines built by "His Excellency M. Schneider," at Creuzot. Even they,

powerful as they are, are hardly able to start their heavy-laden load. On they come, now a tall dark train of covered luggage vans, filled with men, and looking like steam hearses, now a white shrouded train of ambulance waggons and litters, suggestive of a very harrowing consequence of the pomp and circumstance of war ; now a singing crowd of soldiers, who have decked their train with huge branches of willows, cut from the marshy lands where they were last encamped.

Out from the lamp-holes, tied to the stanchions, wreathed through the door handles, everywhere hang out huge branches of the willow. Fortunately, the symbol is not understood in France as with us, or the omen would not be a cheerful one ; but as it moves along in the misty twilight, as the boughs bend, turning the glaucous hue of their whitening leaves towards us, the train seems a weird and ghostly creature crawling away with an awesome glimmer, and as it vanishes off into the thickening night, the thought of the willow symbol comes home to us. Often and often in my musings at Metz did that willow wearing ghost haunt me afterwards. Other trains are gloomily enshrouded in dark sombre-looking pine branches, whilst the oak, the chestnut, and the plane decorate those which follow ; indeed, it would almost be possible to point out by the foliage they bear from what part of France each convoy comes.

Whilst all this is passing we are filled with wonderment at the fact that no soldiers stay here ; all are rushing Metzward. And yet this is the junction of the railways

from Paris, from Metz, and from Strasbourg—in fact, it fulfils the function Metz once did. When high roads were the chief means of communication, the key of the district was the town which rose at their junction, and in consequence those stupid old fogies, our ancestors, fortified them, making them as strong as they knew how to do. But then there were wars and rumours of wars in those days, and it was a vital necessity to command the means of communication. We know better now-a-days. We live in a time when Presidents of Republics write learned treatises on the use of artillery, and when Emperors make commentaries on those of Cæsar, and the Empire, it is Peace. So we leave a fine open country, with a river, a railroad, and a canal running through it, to take care of itself. What is the use of all this civil engineering if it wants military engineering to look after it? There are fine escarpments of rock, with wooded crests, dominating the Moselle—fortresses by nature each of them. A few miles away to the west is the fortified town of Toul; to the north is the great fortress of Metz. Nancy, a town of 50,000 inhabitants, is five miles away to the eastward, and the valleys of the Moselle and the Meuthe are both commanded by the position here. Why were not earthworks thrown up upon these heights? Why was not this made a military station? Why, then, this hurrying on towards Metz? We had not solved the question before a gap in the crowd of convoys occurred, in which we inserted our train, and we were crawling Metzward once more.

Six more weary hours did those last forty miles occupy ; the rain fell heavily, the wet wind howled mournfully, and very hungry and tired was I after my sixteen hours of anxiety, at each stoppage fully prepared to hear that the prophecies uttered in Paris might be fulfilled at that point, and that I should be turned back. So I entered the station at Metz with considerable thankfulness, and in the hopes of food. But, alas ! my troubles were not yet over, for after waiting till my luggage was declared admissible, and after finding a porter to guide me, I trudged off in a soaking rain and through wonderfully and curiously muddy streets, seeking rest and finding none. Not an hotel would open its doors to receive a foreigner at that time of night, and in the Act of Mercy which relates to the reception of strangers the Messians are lax. Back again must I go to the station, through the wet and muddy streets, where thousands of wet tricolours are flapping in the damp and gusty air, striking against the windows and causing many a crash of falling glass, and gladdening my vengeful heart at the thought of the glazier's bill those inhospitable citizens would have to pay to-morrow. It was wrong, perhaps, but I was hungry and miserable, and hunger and misery have many greater wrongs to answer for. Back again all that weary way to the station, perhaps to pace its platform for what was left of the night, wet, weary, and very hungry. Fortunately the waiting-rooms were occupied by the medical staff of the ambulance service, who on hearing of my dilemma, kindly rolled themselves a little closer,

and made way for a damp stranger among them. Food they could not offer me, for they had it not ; but of such as they had they gave unto me, and their friendly shelter was a boon of great value, for which I am profoundly grateful. It was an odd sight that waiting-room. Packed closely all over the floor were stretchers prepared for the purpose of carrying off the wounded, and on each lay an officer in the neat uniform of the International Society of Geneva for aiding the wounded, ready to rise at any moment. In the vacant spaces where the stretchers would not fit, chairs were placed, so as to afford sitting room for others ; and as the dim gaslight fell upon their uneasy-postured forms, the red cross on a white ground bound round their arms and borne on their caps looked wonderfully like blood-stained bandages, and as I dozed off to sleep I fancied I was in hospital. In two hours more they were up and off, they to seek the quarters already assigned them, and shortly afterwards I was up and off, too, searching ravenously for a break to that fast of thirty-six hours, which initiated me into some of the delights of a special correspondent at the seat of war.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE CONCENTRATION OF THE FRENCH TROOPS.

*August 11th, 12th, 13th.*

ALL was bustle and hurry at Metz when I arrived there. From all quarters came troops—infantry, cavalry, and artillery. Military-train, commissariat, and the myriad of camp-followers, Francs-tireurs, Guards National and Mobile, all kept flocking in. The roads were blocked with waggons, and the streets impassable with men. Upwards of two hundred thousand soldiers and civilians were flocking into and around the city. Frossard, with the 2nd Corps d'Armée, was coming in fresh from the disgrace of Forbach. Ladmirault, with the 4th corps, was returning up the Moselle, with his back to Berlin. Canrobert, with the 6th corps, was working up from Nancy and Chalons—places it never ought to have left. Recruits were coming in from everywhere; and hundreds of men who knew not how to charge a chassepot were drafted into regiments they had never seen before. All was confusion; no one knew where his head-quarters were; and the illusion which I shared with most Englishmen, that they managed these things

better in France, was shattered at the first contact with the fact.

It was not exactly a panic which seized the army congregating here; but the principal idea was safety, the secondary one fighting. The army of the Rhine was no longer an attacking force, but forced to place itself on the defensive. Nay, more, it had to defend Metz, which, when I entered, had hardly a single gun mounted on its walls, and not one of those external forts the increased range of artillery had called into existence was finished.

Now was felt the first-fruits of that vain policy instituted by Marshal Lebœuf. Good-looking and having good luck, he found himself the right hand man of the Emperor. Three-and-thirty years ago a pupil of the Artillery School here in Metz, he was now a minister of war, the most important personage in the campaign. Knowing little himself, he took care that no one knowing more should have access to the Emperor. Unable to take the post of commander-in-chief of the army of the Rhine without immoderately exciting that rapidly-ignited jealousy of his superiors and seniors in military rank, he fell back on the golden rule of "divide et impera."

MacMahon, his nearest rival in the affections of the Emperor, he neatly shelved and sent away to the typic region of wise men—he sent him to the East. Canrobert nobody ever considered wise, so he was left in the West. Bazaine was his only rival now, and Lebœuf was too vain to think much of him. Bazaine wasn't a gentleman, and



even if he were, hadn't he been in Mexico? and M. Kératry had settled the question long ago, that any fellow who had been in Mexico was no fellow at all. His brother marshals attached to this army thus disposed of, Lebœuf could rule, and, under the name of the Emperor, be imperial and imperious too. That suited him.

As a natural consequence, such a man made a mess of it; the thing collapsed, and when I entered Metz the astute Bazaine had thrown him over—he was *chiffonné*. To quote the words of an illustrious and ex-Imperial author, who has since enlightened the public on his own weaknesses, “these melancholy openings of the campaign must, naturally enough, have affected public opinion in a painful manner. The Emperor felt he was held responsible for the wretched situation of the army, whilst that army was charging Marshal Lebœuf with the delays and the insufficiency of the organisation.” Naturally enough they did, and in consequence the Emperor “therefore decided to give the command to Marshal Bazaine, whose ability was recognised on all sides, and to suppress the post of Major-General,” which post had been created to find an unique one for Marshal Lebœuf, thus officially uniting personal vanity with military discipline — a union not uncommon.

All the sides which recognised the ability of Marshal Bazaine must have formed an irregular figure, certainly it was not done “upon the square.” Canrobert was the oldest marshal attached to the army of the Rhine, but

then everybody knew him to be unwise. Brave certainly, foolishly brave, but without an ounce of brains in his good-looking head. His soldiers were not men, they were pre-eminently "his children;" the game of war was to him a childish romp, and the want of discipline now so prevalent in the French army owes its fatal development to this feeling, and no man ever did more to engender this feeling than Canrobert in his African campaigns. Aide-de-camp to the President of the French Republic prior to the coup d'état of the second of December, he made the Emperor by winning the goodwill of the soldiers. Most men are won when you flatter them, give them plenty of money, and relax their duties. It is only necessary that the flattery be sufficiently delicate, the money sufficiently large, and the duties relaxed so that even the most sensitive conscience couldn't run up against them. It is simply a question of degree, and he gauged it, from a soldier's point of view, with mathematical accuracy; so, perhaps, after all, he was not then so unwise as his after conduct declared him to be. In those days he was a Certain-Canrobert; he has given up the first name now and become nobody. Upon Bazaine, "therefore," as says the ex-Emperor, the command fell. There was a change of ministry when I left Paris, a change at the head of the army when I arrived at Metz. Poor Emperor! Poor France! "Quos Deus vult perdere, prius dementat;" and this madness was on the people, when I mixed my fate with theirs, and entered Metz. I leave the inference to the uncharitable. But all the

world at Metz was suffering from the insanity of war, and the greater includes the less.

Hardly had I set a foot in Metz, when I heard that the Prussians had occupied the route I came by, and that Frouard, and with it our direct communication with Paris and Strasbourg, was in their hands. The isolation was commencing. This city was, of course, in great consternation, for though the fortifications were of immense strength, and capable of sustaining a prolonged siege, yet the prospect was not pleasant. Provisions for so enormous an army and the normal population of the town would be awkward things to find within a limited area was the idea which impressed itself upon one at the outset, and so we afterwards found it.

My first object at Metz was to find out as much as possible the military dispositions of the forces round it, and my first day's journey was to the French front, on the eastern side of the city. The road was lined with soldiers, the country overflowed with them, and ugly as the French uniform is in the individual, it is a glorious piece of colour when assembled in a large mass; and to see a whole battalion grouped together, with their glistening bayonets and odd assemblage of accoutrements, is to see a beautiful bouquet of colour, with infinite variety of picturesque form. Five miles out I rode in one direction, finding the whole road one vast camp. Soldiers, just come in from a long muddy march, are here bivouacking. Pitching in a few minutes their gipsy-looking *tentes d'abris*, two minutes suffices to make a

kitchen, three shovelfuls of earth scooped out from the bank makes the range ; the firewood borne on the men's knapsacks makes the fire, and in five minutes three pots are simmering on each stove. Kettles, dishes, drinking cups, and all the paraphernalia of the *cuisine*, together with bread and meat, are unstrapped from the kit ; in twenty minutes the meal is dispatched, and the men at rest.

Now I struggle with and through an artillery train, with its seemingly never-ending line of gun carriages and carts, and very careful riding it takes to avoid being jammed in between two of them. On the earliest opportunity I leap the ditch which bounds the road, and take to a mild form of steeple-chasing until their train is passed, and so the variety of the road goes on, meeting at intervals a long string of the narrow country carts, like two long hayracks placed together, in a V shape, and mounted on wheels. Some hay is thrown into the bottom, and then comes a sorrowful load. Often we see a whole family, from the grandfather to the last baby, huddled into it, surrounded by the few household goods they could manage to transport, including generally the last kitten—the children's pet. They are country people, speaking more German than French, hurrying into the city for safety and for food.

The further we go, the larger seems the nomadic population, and tented field after tented field stretches itself out in seemingly endless line—dodging down into a valley here, and sweeping up a hillside there, till, as

they dwindle off into the distance, the lessening tents give the whole country the grim appearance of a huge cemetery. There, cresting the hill, is a low range of something. It looks like a rather gappy plantation badly kept; it is a park of artillery. Before many days are passed, the death doom of many hundreds of men will peal out from that still quiet dark line. Here we come upon the butchers slaughtering the beasts for the hungry multitude. The poor animal is knocked down and hacked to pieces on the bare ground, and if the ligatures of a joint are rather too stiff, the slaughterer's heavy and muddy boot is placed upon it to hold it steady whilst he chops it like a block of wood on the ground. Two soldiers stand still as posts; a pole is placed across their shoulders, and from this hangs the steelyard; the rations for the various messes are weighed in bulk, delivered to the waiting messenger, sent off, and in a short time all that is left is a blood-stained puddle and the offal. All else is already in those rapidly-erected kitchen ranges, and that which does not go there will be strapped to the knapsack for the next day's food.

As we skirt the hills on this long undulating plain we come upon cavalry and artillery in enormous numbers. Officers are making themselves comfortable, and ransacking their baggage for the little luxuries they modify the hardships of camp life with. Two tents will often be pitched close together, and the entrance-flaps united, so as to form a pleasant shady common room between the two, and where are pitched the mutual camp table and

individual camp stools of the united proprietors ; in these making most grateful-looking shady places in the broiling sun of to-day. Further on, the road takes us through a fine avenue of juniper trees, covered just now with berries lustrouly grey as frosted silver, contrasting most beautifully with the deep-green foliage, and lighting up into almost mirth the funereal gloom of shadow they fling across our path. Here is a fine chateau ; its windows are all closed, its garden trodden down, a few flowers still struggling up here and there as if in protest against the ruthless destruction all around. The bright scarlet blossoms of the pomegranate and the pink bunches of oleander seem out of place as they shine forth with abnormal brightness from amidst the muddy mass beneath them. Down the fine avenues of old trees, in the winding paths of once trimly-kept shrubberies, are picketed as thickly as they can be placed a herd of horses ; and a thousand lancers are eating, drinking, and performing all the functions of life in the roughest manner in a place which seems to have been the home of all that was refined and elegant. And even rising above the greater sorrow that there should be this causeless strife at all, comes a feeling of deep regret, mingled with indignation, at this spoliation of so charming a retreat.

I little then thought that the morrow would make me more intimately acquainted with the spot. A turn at the corner launches us all at once into the village of Borny—a pleasant little village, with the bills stuck up notifying a concert next Sunday ; but before next Sunday

comes, though it is so close, that village will have heard the tones of awfully solemn music. Here again comes more artillery, light field-pieces this time; and those half-dozen bright guns, those with leather muzzles over their mouths to keep them from barking too soon; those pretty-looking bright bronze things, with big black aprons on, and comical-looking tails; what are they? They are the last invention the Devil put into the heart of man to conceive. They are the dreadful mitrailleuses, which will be screaming death and horrors worse than death to many before long. I afterwards came to know the man who carried that heart about with him, and a kindlier, more simple-hearted man, I never knew. The Devil certainly chooses his missionaries oddly; nor is the contrast presented by the view I have before me less singular—an abbé sits comfortably in the shade of these death dealers, and reads his office. The antithesis is so great it almost becomes comic, and I find a smile rising as I ride away. Down into a willow-fringed valley the road winds now, and under the darkening shade of the trees breaks out here and there deep folds of crimson and blue, and a flash of light from a bayonet reaches us as the lowering sun struggles in through the opening boughs. We are nearing the front. Little is to be seen; but there is much there. A little further on, a higher hill closes up the valley. A solitary figure caps that hill. That is the last Frenchman here. Almost within chassepot range over yonder is the first Prussian. Soon those two men will be changed into tens of thousands, and before long



thousands of them will have lived their day, and have died. Why ?

Pondering over the answer to this question, I wend my way in the fading light to that maiden city—Metz-la-Pucelle—often assaulted, but never yet taken. How much longer is this to be her pride ?

Events kept thickening upon us, and rumours came to us that not only was the Prussian force, which had beaten Frossard at Forbach, MacMahon at Wissembourg and Woërth, approaching us, but that enormous masses were rolling down upon us from the north. Once more was there an invasion of armed Teutons coming southward, and a pent-up torrent of rude northern people flooding once more the valleys of the south.

Where would be the point of impact ? At which side of Metz would this stream break upon us ? What could we do ? Was it wiser to stay, to divide the stream, to let it shiver itself in useless spray against us here, or to let it flow on into the shallower plains of Champagne ? At Metz, the town was certainly incapable of resistance, and though M. Rouher had stated that for four years France had been prepared ; though the Minister of War had said that all was ready for the crushing blow, Metz was only ready to be crushed. Bazaine's idea was to crush the German forces in detail ; here, on this eastern side, he would stem the tide which set in from Saarbrück and St. Avold ; there on the south he would demolish the vain-glorious army of the Crown Prince and revenge MacMahon, and turning up again to the north,



hurl back the adventurous foe who came that way. His soldiers were ubiquitous, the tardy German would be taken by surprise, the resistless *élan* of the French would bear all before them ; at least so we were told, but as yet we were uncertain at which spot the first example-should be made, and the first punishment for this temerity inflicted. At any rate the Fête Napoleon should be duly honoured, and the 15th of August should not pass away without a rather unusual display of fireworks. Still any hour might bring with it the prelude of this foretold victory, and all I could learn pointed to the eastern side of the city as the first point of attack, so on the morning of the 13th I again started for this quarter.

Contrary to all expectation, the night had passed quietly. There were several alerts ; a few shots fired, as outpost discovered outpost. The Prussians were massing themselves on the heights in front of us. They had been allowed quietly to occupy the grand range of hills to the east, which dominate the flat plain of the Moselle, and the rolling high table-land which forms this side of the valley. Culminating in Ste. Barbe, this range of hills became their eastern stronghold, and this they never left.

It was towards these hills I now wished to make my way, when I was initiated into some of the mysteries connected with the life of that unseen and awe-inspiring individual, "our special correspondent at the seat of war"—an initiation all have to go through before freedom of the press can be accorded them. I was arrested—igno-

miniously captured as a Prussian spy. My success in penetrating to the extreme front in one direction yesterday had emboldened me, and as the morning was beautifully fine, I therefore thought I would mount my horse and be off again in another. Leaving by the picturesque *Porte des Allemands*, I jogged on quietly enough through the continuous stream of carts of provisions and other materials of war which flow off night and day without cessation from Metz to the innumerable camps which surround it. All went well ; there was a clear open space on the road, and thinking a preliminary canter would do neither myself nor my horse any harm, off we went. Suddenly, just as the road to Boulay branches off, outsteps a soldier, and spread-eagles himself till he is like the letter X, in hysterics. Of course I stop, and two non-commissioned officers seize my rein. "Have I any papers?" "Yes, my passport," which I show them. This quite puzzles them ; it is taken to a superior officer, who is intelligent enough to find out that it is in English, but who regards with immense suspicion the German *visa* for Prussia which it bears. I must go to General So-and-so. I go ; it is only just across the road, but he can do nothing for me, and remands me to the *commandant en chef d'état major*, a mile back again towards Metz. It can't be helped ; go back I must and do. Here the business begins to look serious. I am placed in arrest.

Now, though I had no fear of ulterior consequences, yet the chance of a long detention was sufficiently patent

to be annoying, especially as the General was not there, and it was uncertain when he would return. Meanwhile my passport was curiously scrutinised ; and I was interrogated as to when I came to Metz, and why, and what I had been doing each day of my stay there, whilst here and there a question was put to me in German, to try and find out if I understood that language. Ignorance was bliss in this case, as, had I exhibited the little knowledge of it I possessed, the prison of Metz would probably have been my hotel without further inquiry until such time as I might happen to recur to the busily-occupied memories of my captors—a prospect not pleasant, however greatly it might vary the usual routine of life.

Two gendarmes were then called up, and I was delivered into their custody—a custody not very severe, as they merely kept pretty near me, allowing me to walk about and do as I pleased. Presently the soldiers came up to stare at me with wonder and some degree of savageness, as the character of a Prussian spy is not a pleasant one to support in these times ; but shortly this wore off, and an interchange of tobacco provoked a change of opinion rapidly. Certainly, the pipe is an immense step in civilisation ; and I was soon declared to be “ all entirely ” an Englishman ; and so strong an *entente cordiale* was established that it was carried to the extent of bringing me a bottle of wine and refusing to accept of payment for it. “ The French soldiers are very sensitive, M’seu,” said an old grey moustache of the Imperial Guard, “ especially the young ones,” as, with a bow and a

grin, he pocketed my 5-franc piece on its way back to me. Old ones evidently were not so, and, seating himself on a fallen tree by my side, he helped himself once more to a fill from my pouch and assisted me in demolishing the wine. An old Crimean man, and bearing as large an amount of metal on his breast as of æs triplex on his face, he was an amusing companion, and whiled away the weary time of waiting most agreeably. Now and then some of the junior officers came up and stared as though I were a new addition to the Jardin des Plantes, and behaved about as ill as junior officers generally do. It was unanimously declared that I would be shot without judgment, at which I laughed, and replied that it certainly would be without judgment, if I were. The pun might have been a bad one, but it came in usefully, and we became somewhat better friends after it. At last the Commandant arrived, accompanied by General Bourbaki—a remarkably fine soldier-like fellow, sitting his horse most admirably.

Of cleanly chiselled features, Bourbaki bears in his face not only the indication of his Greek origin, but of that imperious, jealous temper which has through life been his bane and the perplexity of his superiors. A bold, dashing soldier, the fit commander of Bashi-Bazouks, foreign legions, and the semi-civilised scum of civilisation, he won distinction by ruling and leading in his earlier days; he seemed somewhat out of place here attached to the Imperial Guard, the reserve of the army. Thirty-four years of service may have damaged his dash,

but it has hardly taught him discretion. His pride and his Greek aptitude for getting on may have made him an elegant courtier, but it never converted him into a wise General. Important events had evidently to be discussed by him and the Commandant, how important I did not then know. It was a long and evidently a serious conference that of theirs, and when it was ended my interrogation had to be gone through again.

When this was ended, a mounted messenger was sent into Metz to see if the facts I had declared had been true ones. There were not wanting plenty of witnesses to state that I had frequently passed that way, that yesterday I was seen in the camp with a brown blouse on, and as many other lies as an active imagination could provide on so short an emergency ; but on the return of the messenger the truth of the statement I had made was satisfactorily proved, and an order was made to take me to Marshal Bazaine. So bidding good-bye to my friends of the Imperial Guard, who had been my captors, I again mounted, and was accompanied by an escort to the head-quarters of the greatest officer in the French army. His commission as commander-in-chief was signed yesterday.

Up the road I had two hours ago come down, we went. Officers, chiefly however of the non-fighting part of the army, commissariat officers, officers attached to the postal service, to the paymaster's department, men clad in imperial green, and bearing innumerable silver buttons, stepped up to me to insult me. Soldiers jeered

at me, and fusiladed me with mimic prophecies of my future fate, and my march was neither pleasant nor triumphal. Turning off to the left, I saw the wooden stakes and templates of that future fortalice of Des Bordes which held the Prussians in check towards the end of the siege, though it was still unfinished as I passed it by on my last ride from Metz. Had this been completed then, the battle of that to-morrow, which was then coming, need not have been fought, the army of the Rhine need not have been delayed for those two fatal days of Gravelotte and St. Privat, and the bodies of some 60,000 French, and some 70,000 German soldiers, need not have enriched the already fertile soil of the valley of the Moselle.

Little more than a mile's march did it seem, and my surprise was great when I found myself at the pretty château whose spoliation I so much regretted yesterday. Here I was received with as much courtesy and kindness as I had met with suspicion and ill-bred rudeness at the other place. It was a new sight to see the internal economy of a commander-in-chief's bureau in time of battle. We were in a large hall, forming a sort of pavilion in the sadly-ruined garden. At a long common deal table was seated the Marshal and about twenty of the superior officers of his staff; despatches were written by dozens and signed by the secretary after the Marshal had read them over, and the work seemed to go on with the regularity of a counting-house. Messenger after messenger, mounted and on foot, came at very frequent intervals. Their reply was immediately dictated and sent

back. In the corner was an electric telegraph perpetually ticking its tale from the most distant quarters, and for about half an hour I was in the innermost heart of the French army, watching its pulsations if I could not see the movements of its limbs.

There in conference, in very earshot, was Marshal Bazaine, surrounded by so many generals, now, alas! no more. Poor, kind-hearted Manèque, was acting as his secretary; his hand too soon was stayed, and his body now lies hard by. Decaen, who was to die from the wound of to-morrow, and who had the charge of the coming fight, was busy with him over a map, scoring red and blue chalk lines all over it. Bataille, Montaignu, and a crowd of others, who have spilt their blood and left their bones so uselessly round Metz, were there in anxious expectation. Presently the Marshal rose, a few last words were said, the conference broke up, and after a short, thoughtful pause, as if to collect his thoughts, the Marshal invited me to seat myself beside him. A few questions were asked, the very blue and red scored map was placed before me, and I was requested to point out the way I came, and to which part of the lines my former visits had taken me. I was too stupid to know much about a map. Ignorance of German had stood me in good stead before, so I learned the lesson rapidly, and was almost equally ignorant of topography. It became evident that I was much too big a fool to be dangerous, and though the character was not a flattering, it was a safe one to play. Nevertheless, I had

sufficient wisdom to play my part so slowly as to learn thoroughly the position of certain red and blue lines, marked on that map, and to remember certain figures attached to them. The red lines meant the French, the blue the Prussian forces, assembling for to-morrow's work. Soon the Marshal left me to the courteous care of his secretary, who, with a sly glance at me which emphasised the word, declared the whole thing to be *une bêtise* on the part of the officers who arrested me, but apologised for them by saying that they were so surrounded by Prussian spies, and had so many in the town and camp, that their own movements were known to the enemy almost better than amongst themselves. Nevertheless, he refused to give me a "safe conduct," for which I had been hoping all this time, and declared that no civilian could be admitted within the lines. One thing he did, he gave me a *laisser-passer* for that day, and I was sent off on my way back again through the huge camp I was forbidden to enter, bearing a letter of reproof to my captors; the which, however, I did not trouble to present myself, but sent by a gendarme, who left me once more a free man.

Me, but not my horse. That horse gave me much trouble then and afterwards. One of the first things I looked after on my arrival at Metz was a horse; I was recommended here and recommended there, but only one horse did I see which recommended itself to me, and that belonged to, or was supposed to belong to, a man who combined in himself the kindred qualities of a Jew and a



horse-dealer. Well, I'm a Yorkshireman by extraction, so the struggle was severe. It was at last agreed that I should have the horse this day on trial, but as times were dangerous, I should deposit with the Jew the sum of 500 francs as a pledge for its safe return, with the saddle and bridle. The horse suited me exactly—a wiry, fiery little Arab—who could run like the wind, and leap anything. I had quite made up my mind to be its master, and the shock was great when I found that I had to succumb to that odious thing—*la force majeure*. During my detention as a suspect, my horse had been eyed with suspicion also; and like me, carefully examined. Its hoof was found to be marked with the chiffre of a regiment of Chasseurs, to bear the regimental number, and this regiment had suffered at Forbach. Stopped up with black wax and the hoofs neatly polished over, this mark had escaped my scrutiny. The Fates' were against me. It was more than ever likely that I was a Prussian, but fortunately I had "my bond" the Jew gave me in my pocket. My former incapacity to decipher a map, and my inability to understand a word of German, stood me in good stead. I certainly must be a fool. This point settled, a receipt was given me for my horse; the saddle and bridle scrupulously returned to me, and the gendarme, who bore the rebuke to my captors, took my saddle and bridle back to Metz. My evening's interview with Shylock was not pleasant—he refused to exchange his, or my, 500 francs for Marshal Bazaine's receipt for the horse, alleging that "it was not in the

bond" so much horseflesh, and that particularly-indicated horseflesh must he have, or I should not have my money. I have said I am of Yorkshire blood, and to be "done" about a horse was more than that blood could stand; so, ignoring the axiom, *Silent leges inter arma*, I immediately "went to law." If other courts could not sit, the Tribunal of Commerce, at any rate, could take cognisance of such things, and to the Tribunal of Commerce I went. Delay after delay was created, the Jew praying for adjournment after adjournment, in the hopes that the Prussians would enter, or that I should get killed or tired before the affair was settled; but I stuck to him, and had the intense satisfaction of receiving from him, in open court, 500 francs in gold, which was at a premium now, whereas I had paid him in depreciated paper, and the gratification of finding that he had provided me with some amusement at Metz, and had to pay the costs of it. The diversion has been as great from the subject as it was from other subjects to me in Metz; leaving then for ever this horse, *revenons à nos moutons*.

My "*Laisser passer*" specified no particular route, so I took advantage of its vagueness to wander about down into the valley of Lavalliers, up towards the farm Bellecroix, and so back by the wood of Colombey—sites all to be made famous on the morrow—joining the road I had travelled yesterday, worked my way through the camp to Metz—seeing that camp and that disposition of the troops, such special means had been taken to prevent my seeing.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE BATTLE OF BORNÿ.

*August 14th.*

THIS, the first of those three battles fought round Metz, has become so eclipsed by the more sanguinary glory of the two which followed it, that it has almost been already forgotten, yet the first designation given by the victors to it was that of "the battle of Metz."

After the abandonment of the line of the Saar, a feeling, akin to panic, seems to have seized upon the French—all was confusion. The army of the Rhine knew not what other river to take for its base. Was it to be the army of the Moselle? Was it to be the army of the Meuse? Was it to be the army of the Marne? Nothing could be decided. Embarrassed by the presence of the Emperor and the Prince Imperial, entangled in the web of weakness woven for it by Lebœuf, it was bound hand and foot. The Emperor must be sent away, and Lebœuf disposed of. Wounded in its most sensitive point, vanity, by the checks it had received at Wissemburg, at Woerth, and at Forbach, it quivered, and during this paroxysm the foe kept steadily coming on. It was de-

terminated to make a stand at Metz, and Canrobert was hastily called from Châlons ; it was equally determined to retire on Châlons, and so the army of the Rhine was ordered to take up a position on the Marne ; and it was now found that the ammunition and reserve artillery were somewhere between the two. A more lamentable picture of distraction could scarcely be conceived than that which now presented itself to our view at Metz.

Marshal Bazaine had, indeed, a difficult task to perform, and the magnitude of it was too much for him. He made it greater by trying to do two things at once, to stay the advancing forces, and at the same time to run away from them ; as a natural consequence he fulfilled neither intention. With that preposterous ignorance of the enemy's movements, which throughout this campaign has been pre-eminently remarkable, he did not even know by which route the enemy was approaching him, and he feared to sally forth far on any side, dreading their approach on the other. Moreover, his reserve ammunition was as yet undiscovered, so that he could not go far until it was found. On the 13th this turned up ; it had been forgotten somewhere until somebody remembered it, it was too late to do much, and then it was discovered that thirty millions of cartridges were rendered useless by the dampness of the paper envelope they had been so hurriedly enclosed in. Certainly if France was so well prepared, as Marshal Leboeuf had said, much pains had been taken to ensure her destruction. I have said that we looked to the advancing troops

from Saarbruck and St. Avold for our first attack. It came, and with it came the demonstration of a further want of foresight in our generals. The long line of heights I have before mentioned as being dominated by Ste. Barbe, had been abandoned by our forces. Now this line not only formed the boundary of the valley of the Moselle, but running nearly at right angles with that river, formed the water-shed of its tributary, the Sielle. Crumpled up into hundreds of little creases this chain of hills gave issue to a hundred little rills; these had worn deep furrows for themselves in the soft liassic clay which forms this side of the basin, and in consequence left innumerable little mamelons and jutting headlands. It hardly needed the art of the military engineer to convert these into formidable batteries and earthworks. "The untutor'd savage," if the animal ever did exist, would at once have seized the advantage of such a line; indeed, even yet the long lines of grass-covered ramparts, where the ancient Gauls fought amongst themselves or withstood the Roman, still score their rounded sides. Yet such a line as this was allowed to fall into the hands of the enemy without a blow. Need it be said that that enemy occupied it! Soon it teemed with Prussian life; soon pontoon bridges were thrown over the Moselle, and if Bazaine would now advance to stay the tide by this route, he could not.

Down from this ridge of hills, issuing almost from the same point run two little streams, the one ploughing a deep wide channel for itself, so deep and so wide that its



name pre-eminently became Lavallier. A long outspur from the main ridge prevents its flowing directly down into the valley of the Moselle, so it runs away northwards, and forming three-fourths of a circle, falls into that river close under the walls of Metz. The other trickles away, nibbling out a little course for itself in a shorter line to the Sielle, forming a wooded little dingle, which has won for its valley the name of Plantiers. On the circular ground, thus divided from the main ridge, Bazaine made a stand, and it was to the front of the hill thus formed that my yesterday's visit had been paid.

Frossard's corps was there ; it might perhaps retrieve the disgrace thrust upon it a week ago by the cowardice of its commander, who ran away and left it at Forbach. He received his title on that field, and his men in derision that day dubbed him Comte de Spicheren Duc de Forbach. He could not hold the heights there, so he was placed in the rear on the lowlands here, but then was he not the governor of the Prince Imperial, aide-de-camp to the Emperor, &c., &c. ? What more could be needed ? he was the most polished courtier, next to Lebœuf, so it was perfectly natural that he should be entrusted with so important a command. He occupied the left, protecting the deep wide valley. On the right was the 3rd corps, Bazaine's old corps, now in the hands of General Decaen. Over on the other side of the valley, was Ladmirault, and the 4th corps, who were yet crossing the Moselle from the route to Thionville. In fact, as they crossed from north to south here, a portion of

Steinmitz's force crossed from south to north, higher up. Had Ladmirault received orders to keep that plain, and to harass them at their point of difficulty, their crossing the river, the battle of St. Privat, or as I have found it is called in England, Gravelotte, need not have been fought, and Bazaine's route through Briey would have been left open to him. Such was the position of the French army on the morning of the fourteenth.

Even now the marshal's mind was not quite made up, and there was great vacillation still evident. An order was given to one corp d'armée to march southwards upon Pont à Mousson ; an hour afterwards it was recalled, and no sooner was Ladmirault well settled on the slope of St. Julien, than he was ordered once again to cross the river by the Isle Chambière, and retreat to the other side of Metz. This movement brought on the battle, and the enemy plunged into us all at once. Evidently, they thought our whole body was retiring, and they would take us in the rear, and so, creeping up the two valleys I have described, take on the flank our yet unfinished fort of St. Julien, and establish a good position against the old-fashioned fort Bellecroix. The 1st division had already descended the hill to cross to the left bank of the river ; the second division was on the move under General Grenier when the first sound of the enemy's approach was heard. That sound grew louder, and into the retiring forces of Ladmirault at four o'clock fell the first shell ; the first instalment of that enormous quantity of Prussian iron we were to have

presented to us. Our artillery, which was in our rear, quickly turned round, taking up a position on our left, so as to enfilade the ravine and cover the rising ground in front of Servigny. General Veron orders up the 5th battalion of Chasseurs, the 13th and the 43rd, and takes up a position in front of and a little higher up the slope than the little wood of Mey. Orders are sent forward, and the troops which were retiring upon Metz are brought back at the double. Whilst these things were being done down from the superior heights of Ste. Barbe, came the fire of the Prussian artillery. Ladmirault pushes forward his to reply, but our fire cannot reach their guns; all we can do is to push forward under the cover of our fire a strong force of infantry in skirmishing order: these creep off into the vines and disappear. Down from the hill roll long lines of Prussian troops, who likewise melt away into the green vineyards, and disappear also. The hill sides throw up a sudden fog of smoke, as each army blazes away at his hidden enemy. The Prussian torrent never seems to stop, it overflows the hills and fills the valleys, and its smoke gets nearer. Our men drop suddenly, too fast, and we have to retire. The wood of Mey is behind us, and to that wood, with the ancient instinct of their race, these Germans want to get. Our 64th hold well for a time, but their ammunition is expended, and they break cover and run. Now the 13th go to their aid, but they have 600 new recruits with them, who joined only yesterday. They run too, the deadly hail of the needle-gun



is too strong for undisciplined soldiers. The Prussians, with a wild hurrah, gain the wood ; then bush by bush, tree by tree, the place is fought over, and we are driven out. The Prussians have now pushed forward their infantry, and occupy Servigny ; they place their batteries on the Buzonville road, and Vernon's brigade is forced to retire under a heavy shower of shells. Their shells, too, filled our men with horror, especially the new recruits. Many had never seen such things before, and these percussion shells which exploded where they struck, and left no time to get out of their way, created much uneasiness in the minds of all who saw them now for the first time. Indeed such a panic did they occasion that all our reserve ammunition ran away. The horses were frightened the men said—the horses said nothing about it, but if they had spoken they would probably have said much the same thing of the men.

The Prussians now pushed up the valley in two strong bodies, and no one seemed inclined to stop them. Ladmirault's corps on the left thought Decaen's corps on the right would do it, and between the two General Pritzelwitz pushes his men between them. I don't know if his name was then made known to Ladmirault and Decaen, but think it must have been, and their astonishment at the sound of it momentarily paralysed them. There is no other supposition I could for a moment entertain ; it must have been their astonishment at this which allowed so great an advantage to be gained so easily.

After a little while, General Pradier makes up his mind to face the Pritzelwitzers, and rushing into the gorge he throws out a couple of battalions along the side of the valley in skirmishing order, and drives them back for a while. They move up a few guns and rake the valley, forcing us to retire. Then they advance under cover of their fire, and our artillery opens on to the valley. Crash comes after crash, as shell fired from French batteries comes into the mingled mass; what with the fire of friend and foe, those French soldiers there had a very bad time of it; but the end comes. The Prussians carried that position, the north side of Lavalliers is theirs. Whilst Ladmirault is thus engaged on the north side of the valley, along the ridge which divides the source of the two bounding streams, creeps out another Prussian force to attack Decaen and by five o'clock the battle becomes general all along the line.

Decaen gathers up his men and advances; the mitrailleuses grate out their horrid sound, and, ploughed down by this unseen battery, that ridge is a mass of mutilated men. The moment of confusion is seized. Our infantry charges up the hill, and the Prussian left retires—not far though; his artillery up to the right there hold us in check, and his shells fall into thick masses of men squeezed together by the contortion of the valley. The mitrailleuse is advanced—we retire. They advance—again plunges our fire into them—for a time we are silent, and then from every hill and wood bursts out a hellish roar; cannons, mitrailleuse, chasse-

pot, and needle gun, at one moment yell out together, from both sides of the valley, the dead roll down in waves; one Prussian regiment alone lost 32 officers and 890 men there, and some of our regiments suffered almost as severely. Decaen, wounded before, has his horse killed now, which falling crushed once more the smashed knee the general has refused to dismount for. General Castagny is hit, and all around are huge heaps of dead.

Night falls, for night falls rapidly in this dry air, and the soft twilight of an autumn evening as we have it, does not exist. Volley follows volley, and the position of the two armies, as night sets in, is not greatly altered. In front of the wood of Colombey we have advanced, whilst down the wider part of Lavallier the Prussians have penetrated till they are under the guns of St. Julien. To-morrow is the fête Napoleon; and there are the Imperial Guards at Borny who haven't fired a shot to-day, so we shall hurl the invader back to-morrow is the word each one says to the other as retiring each corps returns to its camping ground; the bivouac fires are lit, the soup kettle slung, and the morrow expected in confidence. On the right the French have advanced their line; Borny and Grigy are still held. On this side the soldiers are exultant. On the left have not the Prussians been cunningly drawn under the fort? Won't they dance to-morrow, that's all! So the soldiers here are gleeful too, and execute a pantomime rehearsal of to-morrow's drama joyfully.

Nine o'clock strikes, the booming sound comes up the valley, and the still night air is hardly broken, excepting here and there when a stray shot or two is fired. The camps as yet are quiet, but in the town there is bustle and excitement. The wounded begin to arrive. Now, although there were many wounded from Forbach, yet they were brought by train, and were quietly hidden away out of sight before any one knew of it; but now comes a long line of suffering wending its way through the streets, wringing more exclamations of pain and horror from the bystanders than from the poor patient sufferers themselves; and it will be long before I shall forget my first visit to the artillery caserne of the Coislin, where this night I witnessed the reception of the first fruits of the terrible struggle that was commenced this day. Hundreds of wounded are there already, and still they come; all at present disabled by gunshot wounds, chiefly in the arms. No sabre cuts have I seen, nor do I learn that the cavalry have been seriously engaged in the fray. It may be that it is because it is the first attempt to bring it into action here. At present the ambulance service seems to be quite inoperative, and for the hour I was there not one medical attendant could be found. Priests in numbers were there, and women in far too large quantities—dear good creatures, fussing about in everybody's way, and dabbling their long dresses in human blood, and seeming to think that a few tears and tender clasps of the hands were very serviceable surgical applications. They had not

yet learned what the reality of nursing meant—it was the romantic fiction now, but by-and-by they became our most valuable and valued aids. Of course, the most serious cases have not yet arrived; they will need early attention on the field, and I hope the medical men will not then be as absent from their posts as they seem to be now. There are enormous quantities of them disporting their bandaged arms about Metz generally; but for an hour to-night I sought them in vain. The wonderful systemization of the French army is certainly marvellous, and my illusions are becoming rapidly shattered.

The glory of war has a different aspect when we view it in the dim light of a hospital ward, with hundreds of our fellow-creatures with bleeding and shattered limbs about us, and the winged Victory should be painted with crimson wings—wings died red with human gore. The loss of blood from some of the patients was simply enormous, and the five miles' journey from the field of battle must have been very trying to the poor fellows, who bore their pain with wonderful fortitude and patience, the less seriously wounded assisting in undressing, and in otherwise helping their more unfortunate brethren. Occasionally you hear a cry of "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu;" and one poor fellow, with a ball right through his lungs, is gurgling out an anguished gasp for the absent doctor. Poor fellow! I fear the only doctor who can do him any good is that grand curer of all evils, Dr. Death. But generally there is an oppressive still-

ness, and the only murmur one hears is the regret that they cannot join in the great battle of to-morrow.

I came away very saddened at the sight of so much suffering, passing a long string of other unfortunates, those who can sit up on the mule ambulances, seated in panniers as it were, one on each side. This was my first introduction to the *cacolet*—an institution I afterwards became so well acquainted with, and have so sincere a respect for. For all arm or chest wounds and for slight flesh wounds generally, these mule *cacolets* are the most rapid mode of getting the wounded off the field. You can get close to the wounded man, and when once comfortably balanced by a fellow-sufferer, they are both taken to the ambulance much more readily than in the jolting cart. Almost funereally through the dimly-lighted streets come with slow and silent tread the bearers of those whose wounds require that they should be carried on stretchers. Occasionally we are passed by a cart going in another direction, bearing in it something blue, with a white cloth across the top of it. It is the dead body of some poor soldier who has died on his journey from the battle-field, and whose life on this side eternity has ended itself this sad Sunday night. What to-morrow may bring forth who can say! As I entered the gates of Metz I looked forward to a great victory, but as I leave this hospital the tramp of soldiers passing through, echoes in the silent streets. The ammunition waggons which thronged them two hours ago have all rolled off. Not a single soldier goes east-

ward towards the foe. On closer examination I find they are the very troops that have been engaged all day. I am doubtful now for that victory of to-morrow.

To-morrow came, as to-morrow will, and with five French friends I started very early for the battle-field of yesterday, believing that its engagement was but a prelude to a more serious one to-day. It was a glorious early morning, and as we issued from the Port des Allemandes it was so bright and peaceful, the air hung so stilly and quietly round us, that it seemed impossible to us that the object of our search was the field of past and the probable scene of future death. On we marched along the road to Saarbruck, past the place where I spent so uncomfortable a time in arrest on Saturday. All was now deserted ; the vast camp had disappeared, leaving only memory and foul odours behind it. We were puzzled, but still we went on, thinking that after the victory of yesterday the French troops had pushed on further to the front, leaving the battle-field behind them. Troops of the Messins were returning, bearing in their hands now a chassepot, now a needle-gun, and often the helmet of a Prussian soldier, having on its front the quaint old covenanter-like motto—"By God's help for King and fatherland." Equally sad trophies all of them to a neutral like myself, as each told its tale of death and suffering, and the reckless mirth which the vulgar Messins indulged in on their return from the battle-field was harrowing to the feelings of any one bearing in his breast the sentiments of humanity. Laden

with the plunder of the dead, they are returning to Metz. Knapsacks have been ransacked, and many a relic, alike of friend or foe—if these Messins possessed heart enough to have either—is handed about in jest, which would be the most highly prized treasure of a home left desolate by the death of its former occupant. Back they come with as much excitement and bravado as if they had won a victory, instead of being thieves—and thieves of the worst sort too—robbers of the dead and wounded ; back they come, offering us the trophies they bear at any money value they think we appear likely to be good for, caring nothing for what they sell, or to whom they sell it, and our already indifferent opinion of this mixed Franco-German race is by no means enhanced by what we see of them this morning. Many of the chassepots they bear are loaded ; these they are discharging at random any how, totally heedless where the ball may go to, and only care so long as they cannot be hit themselves.

Still proceeding, not a soldier is seen, but presently a stampede in the crowd occurs, and a cry arises that the Prussians are coming, and there through the field-glass can be distinctly seen a few Prussian dragoons riding across the battle-field. Three of my French companions are lost in the confusion this stampede occasions ; and, not finding us, they turned back. At least this is the account they give when we return to Metz ; and as they were all young lions this morning, each carrying a revolver, with which to do wonderful execution, “ en mitrailleur,” it is impossible to suppose they returned filled with vulgar



fear. As the remainder of our party and the Prussian force approach each other, we find that the latter are guarding the field, driving away the wretched human vultures who have already descended on the prey, and who are gorging themselves with the contents of purses, of knapsacks, and of the pockets of the soldiers.

But where are the French ? Not a living French soldier is to be seen. Here, where last night the French were reported to have been victorious all along the line, they have not now any but their dead ; and the Prussians, who were expelled, occupy the field, though not in force. Whilst we are pondering this over in our minds a shot is heard, three huge heavy dragoons charge us, and the scrimmage is great. Our party of six is now reduced to two. Presently the dragoons return, bearing between them a Garde Nationale of Metz. The idiot had been showing his patriotism by taking a pot shot at them from behind a hedge. His valour rapidly evaporated in cries when he saw the uplifted sabres of his captors, and he was led away over the field to the Prussian camp.

We were at the Farm Bellecroix, in front of the junction of the roads to Saarlouis and St. Avold, a spot we shall have many an occasion to revisit during this narrative, and round which many a bloody struggle was fought between the time I entered and the time I left Metz. This is the centre of the position. Last night our troops held it ; it was they who loopholed those walls ; that blackened mark against the gable is caused by a

spent shell from Ste. Barbe, which just had strength enough to reach but not to breach the wall. The sign which swings over the door is riddled with bullets, for this road-side farm, like most other road-side farms in France, was an inn also ; even the very finger-post in front is pierced through and through, and the little stone cross, at the parting of the way there, is chipped and pock-marked in a sacrilegious manner. That was once the belle Croix, which gave this place its name. The ashes of the French camp-fire at the crossing are yet alight, but there is no soldier near. It is very strange this absence, for this was to be the great day of victory.

Infuriated at being potted at, the guardians of this field of death will not let us go forward, so, ascending the rising land to our right, we work our way across the fields, and are soon on the crown of the hill, and here, O God! what a sickening sight awaits us. There, in front, is a clean even line of dead Frenchmen, three deep, laid out with military regularity. Craning their necks to peer over that crest, the foe caught them ; he had crept into that wood close by, and as they raised their heads to aim they were all dead men. Most of them have fallen forward on their faces, their arms extended, some with their fingers on the trigger they never had time to pull. Some few have reeled backwards, and then there is a smashed and battered face turned up to heaven. If the blood of Abel cried to heaven for vengeance, these men's blood appeals also, and that battered image of their Maker is their offering priest. There is another there

whose face is half shot away. Surely it must be fancy—but no, it moves, and then it flashes upon our mind that there may still be some living men yet here, and that therefore we have a duty to do in which a neutral may engage, and we go up to him. Yes, poor fellow, this one still lives, though it might almost seem to be the greater mercy to end that life of pain at once than attempt to save the battered remains of life which, should he live, he will have to carry about with him. But as he lives, something must be done. The question is, what? Not a French soldier is near, not a French doctor, not one of that multitudinous and polyglot assemblage who sport their white “Brassards” with so much complacency in Metz. There is no help for it but to go right up to the Prussians there, and ask in God’s name their help for a wounded enemy. This is done, and with true noble-heartedness a party of their own men and a cart are sent off with us for any wounded we may find. Here and there we pick up another still breathing soldier, and consign him to the kindly hands of those who a few hours ago were just as anxious to kill him as they are willing now to save. This is the scene of the hottest part of the fight, and the dead lie thickly round. The Prussian officer accompanies us, and, like ourselves, he almost weeps over the spectacle. He is a non-combatant officer—an officer of the engineers—and though just where we stood the French dead lay heaped up high, he did not disguise the fact that there, further down in the valley, the Prussian dead this morning rose much higher.

Once more I am on the road bordered by junipers ; their shadow falls heavier now :—the road is thickly strewn on both its sides with dead and dying men,—almost all on this side of the valley French, and almost all on the other side of the valley Prussians ; for in these days of long range, that *mélée* in the fight and that mingling in the death which made the chivalry of the wars of old, has passed away, and there is nothing left but dull animal slaughter.

We still wander on, searching for the living amongst the dead. Five miles of dead and wounded are there in these valleys and up these hill sides. I am startled here by my French companion asking permission from the kindly officer who still accompanies us, to bear away from the field a Prussian helmet as a trophy—a trophy ! of what ?—of such a victory ? What an extraordinary people they are ! The Prussian officer evidently thinks so, too, and gives us his permission to carry away what we will, a permission which forces a manifestation of my own neutrality from me, and a declaration that I want no dead men's clothes. The way in which my French companion looks at me is evidently a silent translation of my own wondering reflection of what an extraordinary people they are,—so differently do we look at things. There lies a Chasseur de Vincennes. Surely he must be living, his colour is so good ; nor can he be deeply wounded. Why, then, is he so still ? Hearing French voices near him, he looks up, pretending to awake out of sleep. For about ten hours he has lain there in

mortal funk—no other word will do,—and the wretched coward appeals to us to deliver him from the hands of the Prussians. I am sorely tempted to call them up and give the timorous animal into their custody; but then they would have to keep him, and he certainly is not worth his keep, so the counsels of my French friend prevail, and we pick the creature up. He is so stiff from his seeming death that he can scarcely stand. We call a couple of peasants, he leans on them as though seriously wounded; and thus they lead him away. Now come down upon us about a dozen dragoons, and a parley ensues as to what we are doing with that soldier. My French friend succeeds in persuading the German officers to let him go, and with a smile they do so, reading at once the truth of the case, and probably thinking such a soldier more detrimental than advantageous to the arms of France. Once the creature is in a place of safety he is dismissed with kicks and curses, and left to find his own way back to Metz. A well-to-do looking farmer steps up and tells us there are some wounded up by the wood yonder; so across the fields we go, and here we find another heap of dead, and amongst them three poor soldiers, who have lain there since about five o'clock yesterday, unable to move, without a particle of food, and, above all, without a drop of water. One of us goes back to Borny to seek some help, whilst the other stays and tries to give some relief to the cramped and stiffened limbs, or at any rate a few kindly words of hope and encouragement. An hour's waiting brings a long country

cart with plenty of straw in it, and we lift the poor fellows into the shaky vehicle, and jolt them over the fields as gently as possible, yet still with horrible agony to their crushed and bleeding limbs. At last we reach the road, and progress is somewhat easier, passing as we go on our way another battered man, whom it would be dangerous to lift into such a cart as ours. He needs those beautiful stretchers, which are so scientifically constructed, but which are all where the doctors are—in Metz, doing nothing. Nor can we do anything for him now, poor man. He would probably die on the road, and meanwhile would cause an increased agony to those we are already transporting. All we can do is to build a bower of branches to keep off the blazing sun, and send word when we get to Metz to have him brought in, if he should live that long.

Evidence of the rapid withdrawal, nay, almost flight of the troops during the night, is abundant. Hundreds—indeed it would be within truth to say thousands—of chassepots lie scattered around; some of them I open the lock of, and see that they have never been discharged; the inside of the barrel is yet bright from the polisher, and they have only been made to surrender without having fired a shot. Caissons of ammunition are there unopened, the varnish intact on the head of the hammer which accompanies them. Telegraph wires line the road, severed but not rolled up, and hasty flight is visible everywhere. So we leave the wasteful field of battle, and return, disgusted beyond all things at the want of

humanity in an army which, whilst claiming the victory, leaves no guard over its own dead, and makes no search for its own wounded. Back again all the way to Metz, and not a French soldier did we see. All where the vast camps were the other day is empty, and had the Prussians felt inclined, a few thousand might have marched in and captured Metz. Had the enemy as much information as the French commanders thought they possessed, they would have known, as I did, that between them and Metz there was not a single soldier, not a single gun mounted on its walls, and that Fort Bellecroix, excepting for the three lines of mines which burrowed it, was a harmless heap of earth and masonry. As it was, they rode round Metz, and looked on its formidable walls; they traversed its southern side, some Uhlans rode up the railway, almost to the station, and were scared away by a boy shooting sparrows. The discharge of his piece frightened them away, and two round shots from a four-pounder pierced the wall of a house near where the juvenile sportsman enjoyed himself—the nearest shots that ever fell against us during the siege. Fearing an ambuscade, they withdrew in astonishment, and Metz was saved by the want of that knowledge they were supposed to possess so abundantly, and from which supposition so many innocent had to suffer the misery of actual arrest and the daily dread of its recurrence. In short it was Sebastopol over again.

As we approach the Porte des Allemands we tell a few soldiers how near the foe really is; they call an officer,

who is equally ignorant of the defenceless condition of this side of the town, and some soldiers are sent forward to examine cautiously if our tale be true. Meanwhile we enter, or try to enter, Metz. All is confusion. We are stopped at the gate, our papers examined, and, although we have been on a mission of mercy, we are treated as spies, and rudely dealt with. How Frenchmen submit to this sort of thing is a mystery beyond solving; but we can only do as others do, and submit. My friend has his Prussian trophy taken from him, and seems likely to have to go to the commandant, until a superior officer happens to come up, and he is at once liberated. Two other of my acquaintances here were arrested—the one a Danish gentleman, and the other an officer in the National Guard at Paris—so indiscriminate is the indiscretion of the police.

The Emperor is gone to head his army—not on the way to Berlin, but towards Paris, leaving behind him thanks for the courtesy he has received in Metz, and hoping to return in happier days and show his gratitude. Meanwhile he takes his army with him, and relies on the loyalty of Metz to defend itself, for scarcely a soldier is left to us—all have passed on, and are seeking an exit on the other side. We follow through the town, and reach the long, wide bridge which crosses the Moselle—the Pont des Morts, an ominous title on which to encounter our first contact with Imperial pageantry. It is crowded with the Emperor's carriages; they, too, are hurriedly seeking to find their way out. Upwards of a hundred of



the finest horses England could export are there ; carriages, of all sorts and sizes, with their windows closely shuttered, are there too, yet from these closed-up carriages comes now and then a sound of female laughter. They tell strange tales in Metz of evenings at the Prefecture ; I don't know if they were true or not ; perhaps not, as they were generally believed. This was all I saw of the Emperor at Metz. It is said that he was at the battle of Borny and rode all along the front ; but I never saw a man who saw a man who saw him. Afterwards I heard the same tale at Rezonville ; how that he had been in the thickest of the fight when, at the same time, he was seeking an ignominious safety in flight ; so, perhaps he was there also. Great men have dopplegangers ; perhaps he had one when he was a great man. As for the poor little Prince Imperial a dreadful retribution awaited him ; the sin of his father was visited on his head. Never since he received the Devil's sacrament of his " baptism of fire " was he seen in public again. On that sad 2nd of August, when that most wilful murder was done—on that day, when a special train took the Emperor, the Prince, the Marshals, and so many Generals as could be induced to witness unjustifiable homicide, to Saarbrück, the poor little nervous child was made to direct the first mitrailleuse fired by the Army of the Rhine. The shock to his system was more than he could bear ; old soldiers might indeed weep, but they wept for sorrow when they saw the poor little fellow's terror at the dreadful sound. The special train which took him out from breakfast

a moderately healthful youth, brought him back to dinner a shattered lad, hysterically afflicted with what is called St. Vitus' dance. I never saw the lad, so I cannot tell if the tale be true ; but it was told me by a medical man attached to the Imperial Guard, and medical men were not greatly given to the manufacture of that much-used article in Metz, *blague*. True or not true, he never was exhibited in public after that time, nor did the Emperor appear very frequently. He was not much "ovated" in Metz, for Metz was one of those towns which voted "Non" at the plebiscite in May last. Its people already began to feel some of the effects of a popular government as translated through an Imperial war, and Metz was not warmly devoted to the cause. The five-francers preached here ; some of them earned much more than five francs ; the police went round and distributed tri-coloured flags to those who had not provided themselves with them, while sundry intimations were made as to the result if they were not hung out ; so Metz put on festive attire to order, but the inhabitants could not be induced to rejoice in the presence of him who had declared the Empire to be peace, but who made it war.

Beyond his paper benediction we knew nothing whatever of the departure of the chief actor in the drama ; he shuffled off the stage and away from the theatre of war without good wishes, without applause, and without one farewell word from any one in Metz. He sought a refuge for a part of this night under the

guns of St. Quentin in the little village of Longueville, and even there those Prussian bullets he was fleeing from nearly found him, for the house which harboured him had a shell in it shortly after he had left it. Never did he find a quiet resting-place from the time he left the prefecture at Metz till he laid his head upon a captive's pillow at Wilhelmshöhe.

Poor man! his evil deeds do follow him; and it is to be hoped he will never attempt to bring them back to France with him. Poor Metz! it was in consternation that evening. Those who had valuables to hide, hid them, and not many slept tranquilly that night. The timid feared the Prussians were at hand; the hopeful knew MacMahon was—for even thus early the ghost of MacMahon haunted us—the prudent took care of their goods, and saw that somebody else went into the National Guard; and so ended the fifteenth of August, that Fête Napoleon, which was to have seen the triumph of French arms and the abasement of the foe.

## CHAPTER IV.

### MARS-LA-TOUR—REZONVILLE—GRAVELOTTE.

*August 16th.*

WHILST the events described in the last chapter were taking place eastward of Metz, other and more serious ones were preparing in the west. Already a considerable portion of the 2nd corps had crossed the Moselle, and on the morning of the 15th found itself at Rezonville. The cavalry division of Legrand was pushed on as an avant garde so far as Mars-la-Tour, and there it was arrested by a strong column of Prussian cavalry, who held the height. Forming in charging order to force his way through the opposing ranks, Legrand saw the Prussian cavalry open, wheel to the right and left, and a battery of 4-pounders belched out a murderous fire against him. To charge would have been useless, and as the mania for cavalry slaughter had not yet taken possession of the generals (that came on the morrow), Legrand retired. This demonstration checked the advance, and Legrand must wait until the rest of the army approaches, or at any rate until valid supports arrive. It now becomes evident that the enemy's onward march

has not been seriously arrested by the events of the 14th, and that only a portion of their forces was engaged there. Whilst we were fighting one division of the army there, the Prussians were racing the other divisions here, and they had so far won. They were first—they had crossed the Moselle, higher up than Metz, by the bridge of Noveant, and seized upon the wooded vallies, to mask at once their numbers and their movements.

The Maire of Gorze sent word to Frossard that the country to the south-west of Metz was being filled with Prussian troops; nay more, next morning he came himself, but was duly snubbed for his officiousness. "I know all you have to tell me," said the General, "and you know nothing about the enemy's forces." How could he, poor man? he was only a civilian, and it was preposterous to suppose that a mere civilian should know more than a general upon any point. Such presumption must be snubbed, and so it was. The Maire went back a little way to Gorze, only to find that the Prussians had occupied his country to the very verge of the wood in front of Frossard's corps, but he could not return again to the supercilious General. That they would not permit. He was escorted back to his Mairie to receive there his orders from a Prussian General, whom he found far more civil and courteous than his own countryman had been, and Gorze became the king's head-quarters. Our front was thus being gradually hemmed in, whilst our rear was yet dragging its enormous length slowly out

of Metz. All the night of the 15th, and all the morning of the 16th, filed out a thickly packed line of baggage-waggons and auxiliary carts. It was a winged dragon, but the wings were very near the head, and the coils of the tail were multifold.

So certain was it that the march to Châlons, where the Marshal had at last made up his mind to retreat to, would be unimpeded, that not a single thing was to be left in Metz. All that baggage train, all those commissariat stores, everything which was to have supported the army of the Rhine on its road to Berlin was to be taken back to Châlons-sur-Marne. Never was any army accompanied by anything like such a collection of impedimenta. Impedimenta they truly were: they blocked up the roads in all directions. Artillery could not get forward. Troops had to leave the highway and flounder through the fields and by-ways, cavalry took to steeple-chasing, and everybody swore at everybody, especially at the immovable, stolid, stupid, hindering body of Auxiliaires. These men, picked up anyhow, anywhere, under no known direction, were always clubbing themselves and their carts at a corner, or getting into a hopelessly inextricable confusion. Forced to make long journeys at all hours, some of them had not had their clothes off for three weeks; the consequence of this overwork was that their natural stupidity was enhanced by perpetual sleepiness, and the only way to make them understand an order was, literally and physically, to beat it into them. So long as the pain of the blow remained they would

recollect the order, but after that, it passed into the Lethe of their brain and was immediately forgotten.

All this was going on outside Metz. The military condition of the place was not very hopeful inside, and it must have been a very anxious time for General Coffinières, the General on whom the total responsibility of the defence of the town would now be left. Not one of the exterior forts was finished; St. Julien alone could have made anything like a vigorous resistance, and that might easily be taken in the rear from Vallières, as it could only be by the uncertainty of a plunging fire that Fort Bellecroix could reach an enemy hidden there. The walls of the town proper hardly bore a gun, and would soon be rendered useless in these long range days by the fire from the adjacent hills. The Mobile, to whom our defence was to be entrusted, were as yet undrilled, and the National Guard was armed with old percussion muskets, for which no ammunition existed in Metz, and our volunteer artillery, on whom we were greatly to rely, had hardly ever seen a gun. How unsafe Metz was is demonstrated by the desire to get the Intendancy and the money chests out of it. They were both ordered off to Gravelotte; thence they could go to Verdun direct, or by Doncourt to Conflans and Etain, or by Vernéville to Briey; anywhere else would, they thought, be safer than Metz. The money and the Emperor both being gone, there was nothing much worth guarding in the city, so it might do the best it could; where the Emperor and the money were, there would the Generals be

gathered together, and the army must follow them, so they go. The patriotism of the people of Metz, on which the Emperor relied, was of course sufficient to defend it there.

Now, booming through the quiet morning air, comes the sound of heavy cannonading, and, looking out westward from the city, we can see the white death-wreath rising from the hill.

Bazaine is cut off, was our first thought, our second was a mild form of wonder as to whether the Emperor had got through. The hopes and fears of Metz varied very much on this latter point, the wiser portion hoping that he had, and that he might stem the political current which was so evidently setting in against him, for even thus early in its history it was evident that this unpopular Franco-Prussian war which he had brought down on France was bringing with it his fall. I say unpopular Franco-Prussian war, for though I am now aware that the Emperor alleges that it was the will of the people which forced him to declare it, yet, I cannot recall a single expression in its favour from the thinking men whom I encountered in Paris or here in Metz. With the larger part of the army and the immediate surrounding of the Emperor it was undoubtedly longed for and urged on, but popular it never was.

The dislike to the interruption of Peace and Commerce, which manifested itself very early in the history of the war, was enhanced by the first failures which attended on its outset, and the waverers between *la gloire* and *la paix* abandoned the former when it did not seem likely to



wait on the arms of France, and threw themselves hysterically into the party of the malcontents. This party then cared little about the Emperor, but they thought a good deal about their property at Metz. The other party, by far the smallest, as the thinking party must ever be, hoped that by vigorous measures under, at any rate, one nominal head and by the advice of MacMahon, the popular military commander, France yet might avenge the invasion of her territory, and that a better state of things might follow. These were prepared to make much personal sacrifice in person, purse, and political sentiment to ensure this ; they were Françaises with one r only, and rather a dejected mien. The others were Fr-r-r-rañçaises with as many rs as volubility and a loose tongue could utter, and as much pantomime as a Parisian boulevardist could create. Political sentiments they had not to sacrifice, but they guarded their persons and their purses rigidly. They said, perish the Emperor, but replenish our purses and take care of our persons, hoping in heart that he might be captured, and that the magnanimous King, who had declared that he didn't make war upon the French people but only on the Government which had insulted him, would take a graceful leave of Lorraine, and that Peace and Trade would come here in his stead. But then they were Patriots, they had five francs or more an hour for being so.

Leaving these two parties discussing vain politics on the esplanade or in the cafés, let us see what is doing over the hills there. Issuing from Metz by its northern gate, the Porte de France, we turn off rapidly to the left, and

skirt the Moselle, under the grand fort-crowned hill of St. Quentin. As yet the road is lined with poplars. The Ban St. Martin is a pleasant grove of fine old elms, and the sides of old St. Quentin seem to shake with mirth as the wind tickles the well-clothed vineyards which now hide its nakedness. Soon, too soon, this is all to be reduced to an arid, a brown and barren waste. The sun shines out from a cloudless sky, and the Moselle winds through the yet verdant valley, like a silver thread inlaid in emerald. If the road were not quite so dusty, and if our errand were not quite so dreadful, it would be a glorious enjoyment to bask in so much heat and beauty. It is not, however, exactly the time for lotus eating, so let us push hurriedly on. There, by the roadside, as we emerge through the straggling and appropriately named village of Longeville, is the Maison Hénoque, where the Emperor intended to have passed the night, but from which he fled impelled by terror. On our right we see the long curved sweeping line of the railway, with one broken archway in the viaduct which spans the Moselle. Yesterday the Prussian Uhlans had the audacity to come along it, and the arch was broken by some shells from Fort St. Quentin, up above us. Here, between Longeville and Moulins, fell the first Prussian shells sent from a battery up the river at Ars; you can just see its factory chimneys peeping up amongst the poplars. These shells were intended for the Emperor, but they were misdirected, and paid a visit to three officers who were at breakfast, a captain, an adjutant, and a

colonel of the Line ; the captain and the adjutant were killed, and the colonel had his arm broken in two places, so that had his Imperial Majesty been there, he might have prospectively realised the wish he afterwards gave utterance to, and really have died at the head of his army. As it was, he had fled first to Gravelotte, and thence with a detachment of the Chasseurs d'Afrique and three light field pieces, thundered away along the silent morning road to Verdun, finding there that safety in a third class railway carriage, he sought in vain at the prefecture of Metz.

Along the road he fled by, we follow him as best we may, for it is still an enormous trail of erratic waggons. Neither threats, prayers, nor blows will induce these auxiliaries to be anything but hindrances. We cross the little stream which once fed those mills that gave the name of Moulins to the little village and the large chateau which followed them, and now begin to ascend the steep hill which forms the other side of that valley this little stream has worn. The road winds in and out amongst the sinuosities of the valley's side, passing by the villages of Ste. Ruffine, Jussy, and Rozerieulles, and tops the hill at the Point du Jour—names, all of them which become of historic interest in the record of the siege. From the Point du Jour, looking backward, we see the deep gorge we have ascended by opening out into the wide plain of the Moselle. To our left rises the Mont St. Quentin, and in front of us is the city of Metz, clustering round its beautiful cathedral—as fair an image of peace

as the poet could describe or the painter depict, but ever and anon behind us, for it is behind us as we stop to look on Metz, there bellows out the loud cry from the war dogs, whose murderous throats sound hoarse already with continuous barking. We cross the head of another small ravine, we cross it hurriedly and as silently as we can, for its sides are wood-lined, and it debouches upon Ars, and we are told its woods are filled with Prussian soldiers, in ambush. Ascending, again we rise by the long, straight, poplar-margined road, and reach the village of Gravelotte, Bazaine's head-quarters this day, and from which circumstance this battle bears in French history as written at Metz, the name of the battle of Gravelotte. The Prussians at first called it Mars-la-Tour, but I think it is settling down in history under the name of that little village which formed its centre, Rezonville.

The little village of Gravelotte is thronged with the perpetual carts; orderlies and aides-de-camp can scarcely thread their way through them. The rattle and the roar of battle seem to impregnate the very air, nor can we distinguish at first from which direction the sounds come most loudly. Straight on in front, very straight indeed, goes the road. The French certainly retain traces of their being of "the Latin race," if only by the straightness of their roads. Down this straight road, down into the valley which crosses the stream that runs to Gorze, we descend, and ascending another hill are on the plateau of the battlefield. We have reached the village of Rezonville; another wooded valley runs due south from us, and joining itself

to the one we have left behind us, they pursue their mutual way to Gorze. Skirting the rounded, rolling, plain in front of us, is another valley, unseen from here, that leads up from Gorze to Tronville, and from each of these three valleys stream out the Prussians. The group of buildings standing on the plain, a little to the left of us, is the farm of Flavigny, a blood-stained spot before the sun goes down. That village by the roadside on in front is Vionville, whilst hid by a turn in the road, and therefore shut out from view by the wall of poplars, is Mars-la-Tour. All along to the south of this road is firing going on; the unfortunate Frossard is again in an unlucky position. He had better have given more consideration to the Maire of Gorze, he would then at any rate have been prepared; as it was, not one of his officers knew of the vicinity of the enemy until the Prussian fire came upon them. General Forton is camped on the rounded edge of the plain, looking out on the valley which creeps up from Gorze. Both sides of the hill he occupies form water-sheds, the one towards Tronville, the other towards Rezonville—it was the very place for a keen look-out—and yet the General knew nothing of the Prussians' whereabouts. Indeed, so little did he think about them, that at nine o'clock in the morning his men were still in their camp, without a single thing packed up, and he himself was comfortably sitting down to breakfast. The colonel of the 4th Chasseurs rides up to him, and asks for orders, but the general has none to give; "it is evident," says he, "that your regiment

won't be wanted to-day." The intendant-en-chef sends a couple of commissariat agents to Tronville, not two miles away, to make a requisition for cattle, not knowing that all night long Tronville has been in Prussian hands, so ignorant is everybody of that which they ought to know.

Before Frossard's men are on the move, before the general has done his breakfast, and before those commissariat agents can set out for Tronville, the Prussian shells come tumbling in amongst them all, creating the wildest surprise. Prince Murat looks up from his breakfast; he, too, hears the sound, steps out from his tent, takes a glance round the country through his lorgnette, and declares it is nothing particular, at any rate not worth spoiling a good breakfast for; so, with a philosophy worthy of a gastronome, if not of a soldier, he quietly sits down to finish his repast.

Meanwhile the Prussian troops keep coming up the valleys, and about half-past ten the fate of Metz commences. Wood after wood sends a deadly mitrail of shot and bullets into our unprepared forces. Some fighting goes on under the cover of the wood, but by whom directed, or against what, I do not believe either French or Prussian commander could tell. The 8th of the Line find themselves stung to madness by unseen enemies as shell after shell comes crashing into them; their officers have no orders, so they break through that thin partition which divides their madness from their wit, and run. Other regiments, who have not suffered so much, seem to desire to avoid doing so, when,

spurring his horse at a gallop, up rides General Bataille and rallies them. Even he is unready, all his artillery horses are away at the watering place, and Frossard has monopolised all his batteries but one. Officer after officer does he send for support, but none comes, it is as much as man can do to keep back the ever coming advance of the unseen foes, for until they issue into the valley, the wood covers them. At last, up comes the battery attached to his corps, and the turn of the French begins: it is their innings now, and the score is very heavy. Firing is now heard right on to the front, and the 4th of the Line hold well Mars-la-Tour; six times do the Prussians advance from the wood in front of this position, and six times do they retire, leaving long black lines on the ground behind them, and of the poor 4th three hundred rise no more, and most of its officers are dead or wounded. Still farther to the north the firing spreads, and soon Ladmirault is engaged. He did not stop to breakfast, but made haste with his men, and rushed forward to the right front. He hurls the Chasseurs d'Afrique at a battery, which keeps pounding away at his men, and which, from the nature of the ground, his artillery cannot reply to. On they go; not only the enemy's artillery, but a strong force of riflemen hold the position they have to carry: still, on the Chasseurs go; men drop at every yard; and now, with a ringing cry—not a shout, it is almost a yell—they are in amongst the guns. Down go Prussian artillerymen and riflemen, cut and trodden down to death. The breech-

loading guns bother our men, they don't know how to spike them, and before they can find out, into them rushes a Prussian Hussar regiment, and sabre to sabre is the order of the day ; against the flank of these Prussian Hussars is hurled the heavy Lancers of the French Guard, but they are too heavy, whether in the head or the heart is not quite certain, and the 3rd Dragoons (the Empress' regiment) come dashing past them—charging into them, the Lancers say ; anyhow from that day to this there has been no love lost between these two, the one alleging cowardice to the other, the other murder to the one. And now, comes a dreadful *mêlée*, cavalry after cavalry corps is thrown together in one confused mass. The Prussians hurl regiment after regiment, and so do we. It is a wasteful slaughter ; friend hardly knows friend, foe thinks each other foe ; carbine, lance, sabre, and pistol, all are mingled, and it has been averred to me that one Lancer of the Guard had a Frenchman and a Prussian on his lance at the same moment. For fifteen minutes it was an awful tournament. Bugle-calls of different regiments confused each other, and when at length it became known that the retreat was sounded, the extrication of the individual regiments became another combat. At last out they came, and that valley lay paved with men and horses. On our side were the Chasseurs d'Afrique, the 3rd and 11th Dragoons, the 2nd and 7th Hussars, and some few fragments of the Lancers of the Guard. What the Prussian troops were I cannot say, but it was man to man and horse to horse. Poor General Legrand went down there



at the head of his regiment ; his old African dash led him to death. General Montaigu went down and disappeared, and there are far more empty saddles than full ones, as the relics of the different regiments come up out of that valley of the shadow of death.

The 51st take a Prussian standard, and Ladmirault's corps capture two guns, and bring them off in triumph—the only trophies ever taken by the French in this eventful siege of Metz. General de Clérambault rides up, and, seizing Ladmirault by the hand, exclaims, "Twice, General, you have saved the army—to-day and at Borny," and from that day Ladmirault became the pet of the soldiers and the *bête noir* of the Marshal.

Once the Prussian cavalry were very nearly making a grand *coup*. Often and often did we afterwards regret in Metz that they did not quite succeed. The Brunswick Lancers made a sudden dash, and nearly captured Marshal Bazaine and his staff. It was very near, indeed ; but, unfortunately, there were our 5th Hussars at hand. "Hussards en avant !" shouts the Marshal, and *en avant* they go, whilst the Marshal and his staff go the other way about. The French turn the Brunswickers over, and then come back again, leaving three of their officers and about five-and-twenty of their men behind them.

The Germans seemed to be desirous to get rid of all their cavalry that day, and slaughter theirs and ours most needlessly. At the same time, almost to a minute, there was another cavalry tournament going on at our left, in front of Vionville. That little village changed

masters some three or four times that day, as fortune smiled on one side or the other. At last, somewhere about three o'clock, a desperate rush was made by that huge heavy Prussian Cuirassier regiment, "the Bismarcks," at our battery, which covered the village; through the wood they come, down they go before the artillery fire, but our muzzle-loaders are awkward things to charge rapidly, with a thunder of horse-hoofs and a lightning flash of sabres close at hand—and very close at hand they are. The artillerymen leave their guns, but not before their short chassepot has done its work, and thinned the surging wave of man and horse which rolls up the hill. Another wave of Lancers follows, and then out launches the French 1st and 9th Dragoons, and the 7th and 10th Cuirassiers, an overwhelming mass of cavalry. The Prussians are ridden down, hardly a score seem to crawl out of the mingled heap; we, too, have suffered awfully, and the waste of this arm here was sinfully murderous. Now it is the turn of the Prussians to withdraw once more. Bourbaki and the Imperial Guard have arrived; they have done breakfast, and at three o'clock they come into action for the first time. Had they arrived two hours earlier, the day might have been more serious for the enemies of France; had we had the Artillery of the Guard then, we could have kept the enemy pent up in the woods there. As it was, his guns enormously outnumbered ours, and raked the hill-sides in a murderous manner, and to silence them we had to drown them in some of the best blood of France.

Canrobert's corps alone had to withstand the fire of nearly a hundred and fifty pieces of cannon, and he only had fifty wherewith to reply. Three to one is great odds at such times as these, the percussion shell is very dreadful when multiplied by one hundred and fifty, and the 4th Corps suffered severely.

The additional weight of the guard bore back the Prussian Left, and they retired behind Mars-la-Tour, seeking again the friendly shelter of their much-loved woods. Our mitrailleuses ground out an evening malediction, at five o'clock each side withdrew, and neither could be said to have gained ground. The Prussians, however, had effectually prevented the progress of the Marshal, and therefore the victory must be ascribed to them, but at what price? Good God! at what price? Never was there more reckless, useless, wilful waste of men in all the wicked history of war, and the policy of the German commander seemed that day to be, to hurl away his men as fast as he could bring them up. The French loss is great, but from the nature of the ground the Prussian loss must be greater. Nine miles of dead men represent the front line of that day's battle. For round the valley from Doncourt to the Bois-des-Ognons, in front of Gravelotte, cannot be less than nine miles, and every mile is strewn with dead. Pray stop one moment and think of any nine miles you know, and try to realise the fact that these nine miles between breakfast and dinner-time are covered with killed and wounded men and horses. The Prussian thirst for carnage was not even then quenched,

for a useless attempt was made to carry our right by storm about eight at night. It failed, and down went more of their cavalry, but what we all felt was worse, it necessitated our mowing the ground over with a horrid fire of mitrail. It was dark, too dark to see; thank God, too dark to see what that fire did; many a poor wounded man went down then who had already lain in some six or eight hours' misery, and when such things were doing who could venture to go out to help?

At last we ventured, but it was not before midnight that we felt assured we should have no more cavalry raids made on us. And it was even then with some trepidation that we started forth. At midnight we leave the quarter-general, laden with hospital bandages, with lint, wine, brandy, water, and other stores, and started on our errand of mercy. The ambulance flag borne aloft in front of us, is a point to rally to, when we find ourselves separated, an event of very frequent occurrence, for we have to thread our way through a confused mass of carts, men, and horses, and to tread carefully wherever we go. Those things which look like sacks of potatoes strewn on the ground are men tired with their hard day's work, who have gone to sleep covering themselves with their tent cloth; so tread gently. Here and there we come upon a bivouac fire, which is most wonderfully picturesque, the ruddy light flashes from the many-coloured uniforms, producing the strongest effects of colour, light and shade, such effects as one longs to sketch and make a note of; but the production of a six-shooter would be less dan-

gerous than that of a note or sketch book at such times as these, and the nearest tree would be the destination of its owner. On we go, learning on our way from each man who can give an opinion, that the losses on both sides are enormous, but that the Prussian loss is far greater than the French.

Six kilometres more along the fine Route Impériale, with its double row of tall poplars standing like funeral cypresses in the light of the rising moon, past many a camp fire, out into the silent night, we reach the avant post of the French army at Vionville. All is still; scarcely a sound is to be heard, and we see as it were the innumerable lights of the two cities: that behind us is the French camp—in front the invader's. And now begins our work. Lighting our lantern at the last camp fire, we descend cautiously into the valley, for our banner does not show very plainly, and that wood in front of us is said to be occupied by Prussian sharpshooters, whose aim is certain death. Personally, I confess, the first few moments were those of nervousness; the stilly night, the errand we are on, all awe one; but so soon as we reached the outskirts of the battle-field all personal feelings gave way to others. Here at every turn we found all our aid was wanted. Thousands of dead and wounded were around us, and we, a few strangers, were all that were present to help them, and our lantern was the only light visible on this Aeldama. In spite of all the elaborate ambulance arrangements existing at Metz, not a single thing was obtainable here;

and of the hundreds of surgeons attached to the International Society of Geneva, Dr. Ward and Mr. Pratt, two Englishmen sent out by the International Society of London, were all that were present.

It became evident that we could do but little; but that little we tried hard to make as much as possible. Plugging and bandaging such wounds as were hopeful of cure, and giving a life-saving drink here and there, moving a broken limb into a more easy position, and speaking a word of encouragement where the heart was beginning to fail. This was all we could do; but all that night each worked his utmost, and when our water failed two of us walked back again to Gravelotte, and brought a bucketful. There was a brook, it is true, at the bottom of the hill, and the wood fringed it. We shouted "Ambulance," and descended, but, alas! so many poor fellows had crawled down to it, in the despairing agonies of thirst, that the nearly dried-up puddles, which contained all the water the hot sun had left, were far more filled with blood than water; many a man had staggered there in pain, but to fall forward on his face and die, without that one last cooling drop he risked his life for; so four miles back for water had we to send. Every rising knoll was fringed with dead; and I would here disabuse the mind of those who have imbibed the idea that the French always fought from rifle pits. Unfortunately it is not true. Spade drill, I am sorry to say, has no existence in the French service. Had it existed, many a thousand men now dead might still be living. The sup-

position of these mythic rifle-pits has probably arisen from the fact that when thrown out in skirmishing order, the French soldier almost always fires "à plat ventre," so that only his head is seen. I am sorry to say I never saw so sensible a thing as a rifle-pit all the time I was with the Army of the Rhine. No, poor fellows, they lay down along those hill-crests in hundreds. Every little natural hollow in the ground was filled with them—they could try to take care of themselves when the chance presented itself, but no one cared so much for them as to teach them spade drill. *Élan*—that fatal word—did not need a spade except to bury its victim with.

Here we would come upon a piled-up heap of dead, yet a low moan would issue somewhere from it, and then came the horror of finding where. Stiff, stark, and heavy, the dead fell with an awesome thud, as we turned over their ghastly rigid forms in the clear, cold moonlight, until we reached some wounded but still living man, half crushed beneath the weight of his dead comrades. Him we bind up, and do the best we can for, and leave till daylight. We can dress, but not remove the wounded now. Here and there we find a ghastly pile of dismembered men and horses, whose fragments lie in inextricable confusion, as shattered and mingled by a shell they are torn from the living bodies. It is horrible, but far more horrible is it to come upon some poor soldier half cut away, but yet living. Nothing can we do for him, poor fellow! he must lie and wait for that death which seems so long in coming. Often and often have I been tempted to hasten

it, and I still think it would be wiser, kinder, and more christian to blow out the flickering lamp than let it smoulder away in hours of anguish. I am told it is very wicked to say such things, but I confess that argument does not convince me. Surely where no hope of life can exist, the sooner death comes the better.

Daylight begins to dawn and we seek carriage, that is jolting unhung carts and mule cacolets, to convey our wounded. Now, as we raise them up and torture their poor wounds by moving them, for the first time do we hear a cry. The groans of the dying, the shrieks of the wounded, do not exist on the battle-field, but far more dreadful and awe-striking than they would be is the awful stillness of that battle-field at night. There is a low quivering moan floats over it—nothing more ; it is a sound almost too deep for utterance, and it thrills through one with an indescribable horror. You seem to feel rather than to hear it ; it creeps over every sense. Hardly a word is uttered, save only a low, half wailed-out thought of—“*Ohé ! ma pauvre mère, ma pauvre mère !*” Nothing is more touching, nothing fills one’s eyes with tears, and makes one’s lips quiver more than this plaintive refrain chaunted out as a death chant by so many sons who never more on this side the mysterious boundary they are crossing will ever see again that longed-for mother. “*Ohé ! ma mère, ma pauvre mère !*” The wail seems to creep over me yet.

With the earliest streak of daylight we commenced loading our convoy of suffering, and selecting some sixty



or seventy of those whose wounds were sufficiently serious to make instant removal necessary, but not too serious to bear the journey safely. We loaded our carts and mules, and turned our faces once more towards Metz. Slowly and sadly we creep out of the death valley, and the quaint-hooded forms of the sentinels who challenge us cut out strangely against the green and gold of the morning sky. It is a powerful picture that. Up out of the mist-filled valley we creep, the quaint mule with its suffering load swaying from side to side at each step; doubled up, contorted, and assuming odd, unusual attitudes, these poor wounded, bandaged, and slung soldiers scarcely look like human beings. We too, worn out, dusty, and blood-begrimed, drag ourselves up the hill. The extinguished lantern swings lazily by our side, a few bandages hang trailing from our pockets as we issue into the morning light. Not a walking-stick, not a pipe is left us; our walking-sticks soon went, cut up into tourniquet-keys; and last of all went our pipes also. Twisting up tightly by the stem, and with the bowl pressed well down on the artery, you can hardly have a better extempore tourniquet-key than a common wooden pipe, though I confess to a pang when I parted from mine even to save a soldier's life. I am ashamed to say I thought about it, and looked around to see if I could not find something else, but I could not, so my pipe went. It came back to me, however, after many weeks, and was brought to me by the man whose life it saved. He, poor fellow, had treasured it in the hope of

some day restoring it to the Englishman: and it was with an exuberant gratitude that my pipe was returned. Deprived at this time, of this solace, and doubly depressed in consequence, we presented a sad picture of weariness and suffering as we answered the challenge of the sentinel.

The bugles sound the reveillé, hill answers hill, muffled by the woods, the Prussian bugle call comes up the valley, and there is a lark singing high up in the air there to greet the coming sun. Not all the noise and din and carnage of yesterday has driven him away, and he sings as gaily as ever, although his natal field is strewn with dead and dying men. What a lot of odd contrasts one finds in life! We are musing in a tired and weary sort of way on these things, and turn to take a last look over the sad scene of our long night's labours, when Bang! right in our very faces spits out a cannon. Good heavens! they surely are never going to begin this devil's work again already. One's fatigue is past; it is a wonderful tonic, the sound of the fight. Down in the valley there are thousands of men wanting—ay, dying for want of—aid, and, good heavens! this dreadful business is beginning again; they will be ridden over by cavalry, ground to pieces beneath artillery wheels, stamped down into the blood-sodden ground by the feet of their fellow men. We rush wildly about, seeking some information as to whether this can be prevented; but by the time we can get an answer, we, too, are pushed aside, a battery of our artillery moves off to the crest of the hill and opens fire. Shot after shot rings out. Out from the wood replies the

Prussian. All thought of helping others is now at an end ; we must take care of ourselves, and those we have so far rescued from this double slaughter ; so we push forward to meet the rising sun. Now we hear come rattling down the road at a rapid pace a huge body of cavalry. Is it French or Prussian ?—the dust hides it ; but our artillery ceases fire, and up rides Marshal Canrobert and the 6th corps. Why, we don't yet know, and they can't tell us. There is something said about turning the enemy's flank by another road, something about drawing him under the fire of our guns, a tale I had heard before, but the chief something that is said is something about those we shall never see again, and whom we are leaving so sadly behind. The cavalry passes on in brilliant array. The Chasseurs d'Afrique canter past as though coming from a review ; it is wonderful to see how clean and smart they look. Regiment after regiment moves by. The Zouaves march straight over the country—straight in a line they go—nor wood nor wall, nor steep hill-side, nor deep ravine stops them. It is their boast that they take a bee line from point to point, and they would sooner risk half-a-dozen lives than deviate a yard. It may be very grand, but it strikes one as rather foolish when we see how much that last hill took out of them. The sun is now fairly up, and this side of the medal of war is wonderfully picturesque and inspiring. Gaily-dressed regiment after gaily-dressed regiment flashes by. Bright waves of colour seem to pass over the hill ; even the rapid rattle of the artillery, as it rolls along the

road, has an exciting and inspiring sound, which for the moment wipes out the thoughts of the night. Gravelotte is again reached. On we tramp, and there is no place for our wounded here, no food, not a crust of bread, not a drink of wine, not a drop of water. Cart-loads of provisions somewhere, tuns and tuns of wine anywhere else; only hay and horse-fodder can we find here, excepting a cartload of sugar, and neither are much use to us.

It is nine miles more back to Metz, and, tired as we are, that nine miles we must walk; there is no help for it, so on we go nine dusty, weary miles, nearly all the way in the midst of the artillery, who are going as far as Moulins with us. We beg a seat on a gun-carriage, but it is worse than walking, and progress is slower too. Down an old Roman road we go, cutting off a long corner, and avoiding a chance encounter. The country, I dare say, is magnificent, but I am tired and dusty, and thirsty and hungry. The excitement of the day, and the work of the night, tell their tale upon me, and I am in a very bad temper as I enter Metz, and there see, in comfortable carriages, on well-groomed horses, followed by heaps of infirmariers and waggon-loads of appliances, the ambulance service getting ready to start. They, too, had stopped to breakfast. Many hundreds of men were needlessly slaughtered yesterday because the generals stopped to breakfast, and many hundreds have died this morning because the doctors did. Ah, well, I think, Pharisee that I am, that I have earned mine, so I enter Metz and get it.

## CHAPTER V.

### GRAVELOTTE—ST. PRIVAT.

*August 18th.*

ALL the 17th was devoted to placing the army in a new position. The enemy had crossed the Moselle at Hauconcourt below Metz, and was pouring his troops down on us from the north, as well as pushing up his troops from the south. Two things threatened Bazaine. One was, that if he marched out to the west with the endeavour to find that escape to Châlons he was seeking, they might march down from the north and take him in the rear; the other evil also assailed him, that if he did not seize the present moment, the army he attacked, or had been attacked by, on the 16th, would press forward and cut off his sole chance of joining his forces with those of MacMahon. Should they do this, the enemy would be almost unopposed on its way to Paris. At Châlons there were only the damaged fragments of MacMahon's corps and the as yet untrained and undisciplined Mobile. Bazaine then represented the sole army of France; the responsibility was too great for him. He was undecided what to do; he had already made one mistake in not showing a bolder front at Borny. Had he, instead of

endeavouring to perform the two very opposite actions of standing still and running away at the same time, had he then massed all his troops on the eastern side of Metz, he could have stopped the progress of the enemy. With a force, then believed to number 300,000 men, the Prussians dare not have advanced beyond this point. They must have there sought the decision of a large battle—a battle they were then hardly prepared for. Metz was still behind him, and was evidently, by the enemy, supposed to be much stronger than it really was, or they would have made a vigorous dash at it on the 15th. Bazaine would thus have had the advantage of fighting from his front, and, should victory attend him, by turning south he would then have been able to take the enemy on his flank in precisely the same manner as he himself was taken at Rezonville; or should he be forced to retire, he had still Metz to fall back upon. His indecision prevented his then seizing this opportunity, and that same indecision was now re-exhibiting itself. Forced in by the Prussian attack from the south, threatened by the descent of their forces from the north, he again hesitated. If, instead of retiring on the 17th, he had pushed forward to the north-west, gaining the valley of the Orne at Auboué, he would have headed the Prussian army here, and prevented a junction of the two investing forces which were threatening him; he could have reached Briey. A small force could have held the heights there, and then he could thence have pushed his main body onwards in advance of the Prussian army.

The Emperor and MacMahon's force was at Rheims, so that a junction might have been effected on the Meuse. But then came the question of ammunition. With that fatality which seems to have followed every action of this unready army; the reserve artillery and the ammunition was yet at Toul: there was but very little small ammunition left; Rezonville and Borny had exhausted an enormous quantity, and the waste occasioned by these "strategic movements to the rear" was enormous. The same troops which fought on the 14th had been marched fifteen or sixteen miles on the 15th, had fought all day on the 16th, and had had little to eat. Frossard's corps had lost, in their sudden flight from Saarbruck, almost all their camping equipments and cooking utensils. Decaen's, now Lebœuf's, corps had abandoned many of theirs at Borny; there were two retreats within three days; their Emperor had fled and left them, and the men were dispirited. Under the pressure of all these evils, the Marshal determined to place himself between his enemies and await them, so he elected to make a stand at St. Privat. Here the forces under Prince Frederick Charles, flushed by the victory they had gained, reinforced by fresh troops, and animated by the presence of the king, could reach him by a short march of five miles. The division which had crossed the lower Moselle had only to ascend a similar distance by their much-loved wooded valleys in that of the Orne, and so he placed himself there. No doubt the position was naturally strong, but then he could only retire on Metz;



there was not the slightest chance of onward progress from this point; it was strong for defence only, and utterly useless as a point of attack; and, so far as tactics or strategy were concerned, he might just as well have retired on Metz at once. To get into this very useless and unpleasant position was difficult for him. The roads were not many, and were so encumbered with baggage-waggons, that to reach the point he wanted to gain, his artillery had to descend upon Metz, cross the flat plain there, and ascend by the road to Briey through Woippy. Hence, although the distance from Rezonville to St. Privat was only about seven miles across country, the artillery had twenty miles of difficult hilly road to traverse before it could be of use to him; down the hills it came with us, as we returned from the battlefield on the morning of the 17th, and we were heartily glad to be rid of its company; leaving it to toil on its dusty, noisy way, whilst we re-entered the city for that food and rest we so much needed. The cavalry turned off at the village of Gravelotte, and passed by Vernéville, whilst the infantry spread itself out in long lines, wearily and dispirited, along the hot plâteau, as the heat of the day told upon their bodies and their spirits. There was not a drop of water anywhere; the streams were all dried up, and the wine of the *cantinières* was, like the men, soon exhausted. Men fell out at every opportunity, and the stragglers were excessively numerous. Such was the condition of the troops whom Marshal Bazaine was massing on the blazing hills of



Amanvilliers and St. Privat. Meanwhile the Prussians were drawing round upon us. They were left quite undisturbed to cross the Moselle at Pont à Mousson and Hauconcourt, and could thus bring up what fresh forces they wanted. These were pushed on under cover of the woods right up to Ste. Marie-aux-Chênes on our right, and followed our retreating lines over the battle-field of yesterday up to the village of Gravelotte, so that when night fell they absolutely out-flanked us at both ends of our line.

Canrobert, with the 6th corps, was camped on the high lands of St. Privat; Ladmirault and the 4th corps between St. Privat and Amanvilliers, forming, with Frossard and the 2nd corps, the centre of the position, whilst Lebœuf and the 3rd corps extended down towards Gravelotte. The Marshal and the Imperial Guard occupied Châtel, perched on the edge of the ravine which separates this high table-land from St. Quentin. All night long both armies were preparing for the morrow. The Prussians were throwing up earth-works on the high hills round Ste. Marie-aux-Chênes, and we were doing the same at St. Privat. The 18th came, and each side seemed reluctant to commence that battle which, from the position of the ground, must be a desperate one. Bazaine could not attack, he could only calmly wait till his enemy should choose which point he would attack upon; so the enemy leisurely inspected him to find the weakest point; it felt him all over to discern the joint in his harness, and he soon discovered it.

From the Prussian batteries at Vernéville to Lebœuf's position in front of Amanvilliers runs a long straight ridge of land, and on this point was a small farm called Montigny le Grange. That was where the first shells fell at 11.30, and all at once the artillery thundered out all along the line. Taking advantage of the two woods of Dosenillons and de la Cusse, the Prussians pushed forward enormous masses of men on to this point, at the same time making a strong demonstration from Ste. Marie-aux-Chênes on the position of St. Privat. On they poured them. Our batteries of mitrailleuses established on the heights mowed them down at 1200 to 1400 yards distance in long black rows. There was no science in their attack, it was simply brute force and stupidity combined; the more we killed, the more there seemed to be to kill. After a time they knew it would be physically impossible for us to keep on killing them, both our men and our ammunition would be exhausted, so on they kept pouring fresh troops after fresh troops in murderous wantonness. To crush by force of numbers seemed the only idea. There was no attempt to outflank us, which might so easily have been done, as their line was longer than ours and we could not advance, they holding the roads in check. If instead of amusing themselves by stopping to destroy a railway bridge at Richmond they had worked up the Orne, they would have compelled us to retire with hardly firing a shot; if they had attacked our left from the Bois de Vaux, where they had established themselves, all our long extended line would

have been useless ; but we were simply beaten, not by tactics, but because we could not butcher any more. At last, our ammunition failed us, and then the Generals lost their heads. Regiments were ordered into impossible places, overlapping each other in the clumsiest fashion, simply placed where they could be the most conveniently killed, and then forgotten ; no supplies of ammunition were brought up, and Canrobert's corps was absolutely pushing back the enemy from his position on our right, really bending him back, when the last round his artillery had was fired. At the same time the 67th stood for three hours right in front of a wood, being leisurely shot down by the Prussians without a single cartouch to fire ; not a single non-commissioned officer came away from that wood ; and two-thirds of the regiment remained with them. An ambulance was pitched at a place appointed by Frossard, who, in half an hour afterwards, had so far forgotten where it was that he ordered some artillery immediately in front of it. Of course, the Prussian fire comes plunging into it to silence this, and over it into our ambulance, to silence many there. Bursting in the midst of the poor maimed, wounded, and amputated men come the shells, and the horrors of war are intensified to a pitch beyond the power of the most devilish imagination to surpass. Good God ! this is glorious—splendid work, War ! The profession of arms is certainly the noblest calling when it is conducted thus ; here are poor men killed over and over again, that is, they go through the horrors of death many times ; and what with their

Generals and what with their doctors, it's a wonder there are any left. Certainly Glory is very beautiful when it is encountered in a shelled ambulance ; and one is rather puzzled to define what is Murder, or what not. It seems to me that somebody ought to be hanged for this, and then the tragedy would be completed.

A regiment of the 4th corps—of which I am sorry I have not preserved the number ; I had it, but the police forgot to return it to me when they took my papers away one day ; there were several things they didn't return, and this was of them—this regiment was tremendously punished on the 16th, and went in, or rather was placed in position here with a muster-roll of 1100, and came out 68. The doctor of that regiment told me this himself, and swore most horrible vengeance on those who murdered so many of his friends. It was very fortunate for human nature that the intimate alliance which King William had entered into with Divine Providence did not extend so far as to induce the latter to endow the former with the power invested in a late commander of the Israelitish armies, named Joshua. Had that day's sun been stayed, not a Frenchman there would have lived, and but very few of the component parts of the invading army, excepting those who were so fortunate as to come from Berlin. Truly, indeed, the soldiers say, in speaking of that day, "It was not war, it was a massacre." All the ammunition being expended, we had nothing to do but to withdraw, and now commenced a scene of most disgraceful confusion. Seeing the forces retire, and perhaps being

rather more than usually sworn at, those wretched auxiliaries took fright, and a regular stampede occurred amongst them; their terror threw them into an even greater confusion than usual. They rendered the road utterly impassable. Waggon after waggon was emptied. Huge piles of provisions were set fire to. Sugar, coffee, biscuit, fodder, private baggage, anything and everything was heaped together, and more than 100,000 francs' worth of provisions were there and then set fire to under the pretext of preventing them falling into the hands of the enemy. All along the road from the village of Gravelotte, from which our left was rapidly retreating under a heavy fire from the Prussian advancing forces, the ditches were choked with huge boxes of biscuit bearing the familiar English record of their weight, and the inscription, "Navy Biscuits," in most stumpy British characters. Broken open by their fall, they scattered their contents all over the road, which were ground into the dust by the wheels of the waggons. Whole cart-loads of sugar lay on the roadside; the soldiers filled their sacks with, or shouldered great loaves of it, and sold them in Metz for a few glasses of wine or spirits; everything that could be destroyed was, and the vehicles rolled empty down the hill in one mad panic. A quartermaster in French uniform galloped by. "Fly—fly for your lives!" he cried, and he fled. It was of course afterwards said that he was a Prussian spy in disguise; such things always were said, all these things were done by Prussian spies, who acted the character they assumed to

a marvel, and are always on the spot at the right time—clever fellows. The Prussian batteries had now crept round to St. Privat, following our retiring silent artillery, silent from want of ammunition, and began to rake our lines. The noise of the panic in the rear reached the soldiers; it spread like wildfire, whatever that may be—it seized hold upon them at once; encampments were abandoned, arms were flung away, knapsacks, great-coats, everything which could encumber flight was cast aside; *sauve-qui-peut* was the order of the day, and if that quarter-master had been a spy, he would have ridden forward to the Prussians, and Bazaine's army would have been annihilated. Fortunately the enemy did not know of it; he did not follow up the retreating rabble—indeed, I have heard that something similar occurred on his side, too, but as I only heard of it from some prisoners, I do not know if it is true. Night kindly and charitably covered us and our disgrace. Some of our men held the quarries of Amanvilliers, and kept up a semblance of a resistance. Canrobert's silent artillery held bravely in the rear, and probably the Prussians feared a feint; but the major part of the army rushed away down into the ravine, and never stopped until it found itself, panting and exhausted, safely under cover of St. Quentin and Plappeville. Some few troops remained on the ground all night in front of Amanvilliers. Pradier's division of Ladmirault's corps held their ground till seven in the morning of the 19th, having been twenty-one consecutive hours

under arms and without food. On our left the 2nd battalion of the 80th held the little inn of St. Hubert until 3 P.M., checking the advance of the Prussians until their shells set fire to the place, and only allowed 86 of our men to come away. As for the Guard they did nothing, they stayed at Châtel St. Germain, perfectly safe, and the Marshal stayed with them. He had had enough of erratic charges on the 16th, and did not want to see any more Black Brunswickers, so he kept at a very safe distance. One shell, it is true, did reach the quarters of the Guards, so they claim to have been under fire that day; their list of killed, wounded, and missing amounted to 1.

Thus terminated that murderous, needless day of St. Privat, or as the Prussians call it Gravelotte, a day nothing could have converted into a useful victory for the French, and one which was only made into a Prussian one by wholesale slaughter. Very bravely fought their soldiers, they marched to certain death with heroic coolness; right up the slope they came, only to die the faster the nearer they approached; up to within two hundred yards some made their way, and there they rested for ever; nor was it until our ammunition failed us, and our men were physically exhausted, that one ever reached our lines. Incessant marching, three days' fighting, without food, without rest, and without ammunition, our men gave way, overcome more by these things than even by the double number of their foes without: it was their foes within which conquered them, and many a man lay down and died there without a

wound, slain solely by too much fatigue and too little food. For three days some of them had eaten nothing but unripe grapes, and so of course they died. What our losses were we never knew ; but these two days' fighting at Rezonville and here must have cost us at least 30,000 men, and this day's fight must have been trebly murderous to the Prussians, and for what?—not a single thing was gained by all that slaughter. The untenable and useless position was abandoned, and what was left of the army now retired upon Metz, where it might just as well have taken up its quarters after the 16th, if, as the Marshal demonstrated by his taking up so defensive a position, it found itself too ill provided, and too ill provisioned to proceed. On the 20th came out this order of the day, a collective sort of "order," embracing all the fighting of this bloody week.

“ GENERAL ORDER.

“ Officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers of the army of the Rhine. You have fought three glorious battles, in which the enemy has suffered grievous losses, and has left in our hands a standard, some cannons, and 700 prisoners. The country applauds your success.

“ The Emperor delegates me to congratulate you, and assure you of his gratitude. He will reward those amongst you who have had the good fortune to distinguish themselves.

“ The struggle is but commencing, it will be long and



furious, for who is there amongst us who would not shed his last drop of blood to free his native soil ?

“ Let each one of us, inspired by the love of our dear country, redouble his courage in the field, and bear with resignation fatigues and privations.

“ Soldiers,—Never forget the motto inscribed on your eagles. *Valour and discipline*, and victory is certain, for all France is rising behind you.

“ At the Grand Quarter-Général of Ban St. Martin;

“ 20th August, 1870.

“ The Marshal of France, Commander-in-Chief.

“ (Signed) BAZAINE.”

Three large battles, and only that! One standard; “some,” that is to say, two cannons and 700 prisoners. We knew we lost two eagles, and a good many more than two cannons, and I hope many more than 700 prisoners. I say hope, for if not our list of dead and wounded must be great indeed. The country applauds, and the Emperor is grateful; verily the survivors have indeed their reward, but I cannot help feeling that the dead have been needlessly sacrificed. At the same time that the Marshal’s “order of the day” appeared, came out also an official communication from the quartier-général. It, of course, endeavoured to palliate these repeated disasters, and congratulates everybody that for two days the army has not been harassed by the enemy, and that they have been quietly allowed to take up those positions round Metz appointed for them by the Marshal.

But as these positions were behind the forts, it struck all who thought upon the subject, that the cause for congratulation was not much ; the enemy, we thought, might congratulate himself more on the fact that he was allowed to take up his position on the other side of them equally quietly. "It is unfortunately true," says this correspondence, "that certain regiments had not received a sufficient quantity of ammunition, and that at certain points we have to deplore the existence of momentary panics, which in some degree compromised the issue of the day; and of which the ill effect was felt in the town, giving a certain feeling of faint-heartedness, soon, however, overcome. These are only accidental occurrences, and we can truly say that the enemy's plan of the 18th has not succeeded." As, however, Bazaine's army was now completely cut off from all the rest of France; and as our communications were entirely stopped, none but the very sanguine amongst us felt much satisfaction at the thought that whatever other plans the enemy might have had, he had succeeded thus far, and a faint shadow of the coming events began to envelope us. MacMahon was our hope, and we relied on him much more than on Marshal Bazaine, possibly because we knew so much less of him. We were told that he was coming from Chalons to our help, so we waited for the good time and MacMahon coming together; unfortunately neither came so far as Metz.

After these generalities, I must return to personal history. The morning after the disorderly retreat from St. Privat, which carried us all into Metz, and which

closed us in there, I essayed to return to the field, in the hope of rendering what aid I could to the wounded ; so, early in the morning I started, laden with bandages and those other little appliances my experience at Rezonville had taught me so much the necessity of. It was a bright clear day as I went off through the Ban St. Martin, where the Guards were already beginning to encamp themselves in what afterwards proved to be their seventy days' home. Passing on to the village of Plappeville to obtain the requisite instructions as to where I might venture to go and where not, and picking up a companion or two, we ascended the hill, and crossed at the depression which divides the large fort usually known in Metz as Les Carriers, but as usually called out of it by the name of the village which it dominates (Plappeville), from the higher, but smaller, fort, St. Quentin. Here we came on some of the camps pitched last night, and where camp life seemed as well established as though the soldiers had been here for a week, and as though there had been no such thing as the defeat of yesterday. Naturally enough, the men are looking jaded and fagged ; some have not had their clothes off for a week ; many have been in active exercise for the last six-and-twenty hours ; and it is six-and-thirty since the majority of those here have had any food. No wonder that cooking is regarded as such an interesting occupation ! As we descend the hill to the south-west we twist and turn about, and reach the little village of Lessy, a small, picturesque-looking collection of houses seven kilometres from Metz, and situated

in the midst of vineyards. Its church is crowded with wounded, and the village cross rises up from the centre of a pile of arms—such are the odd antitheses of war! I became used to them in time, and passed them by unnoticed; but this first contact with them struck me forcibly. About half-a-mile more of descent brought us into the valley leading to St. Privat; in front of us jutted a bare, rocky crag, crowned by the ruined castle of St. Germain, with a little village nestling at its foot. We heard of many wounded there—those who had struggled thus far from yesterday's fight, but lacked the strength to climb the hill we came down. On taking a look round, I saw some Prussian guns creep over the hill to our left, and in a few more minutes out rang the sharp crack of a needle-gun right in front of us. This was soon replied to from the vineyards all around us. The Prussian guns on the height sang out an ominous morning hymn, and St. Quentin replied antiphonally. The bullets whistled unpleasantly near our heads, and now and then a shell would burst behind us. To advance was impossible, and it was almost equally so to retire. Standing still was our only chance, nor was that particularly pleasant; and we all dismounted to make ourselves as small as possible. We waited until a little lull in the firing took place, and then mounting our horses again, we made the best of our way up the hill, dodging for friendly shelter behind any little rising ground which presented itself, and were not sorry when we found ourselves once more in the village

of Lessy. Here we waited for some little time in the anticipation that there might be some attack from the victorious army of yesterday, but nothing came of it; so, after doing all we could for the wounded there, we made our way back to Metz, noting this time what had escaped us before, that the vineyards were filled with sharp-shooters. Nothing affords for the marksman a better cover than a vineyard; the thick foliage screens his crouching figure most effectually, and the gray vine-stakes assimilate so completely with the glisten of his arm, that he is completely hidden. What a lot of blood those vineyards have received round Metz! I wonder if the next crop, when there grows one, will have a peculiar *bouquet*!—but I fear it will be some years before this country is a fruitful one again. When I last saw those hill sides there was not a vegetable vestige left on them, and it will take at least five or six years to get these vineyards in order again.

Whether it was the short firing or not I don't know: some people have pet theories about the effect of artillery in producing rain, theories I could never work out to any practical issue, although this has been one of the *wettest* seasons they have had for many years round Metz; whether this little affair or the artillery of yesterday did cause it, I cannot say; but before we reached Metz on came a perfectly tropical thunder-storm. All man's imitative thunder and lightning was reduced to insignificance, and in a few minutes every road was a stream, and every camp a puddle. I spurred my way back to Metz wet

through, only to be stopped at the gates, and compelled, in very uncomfortable circumstances, to produce my papers. It seemed to take a long time to examine them, and waiting there to be saturated made me very impatient, but at last I was allowed once more to enter, and was glad to find myself under cover.

In the last chapter I mentioned our small band of volunteers who went out to assist the wounded after the battle of Rezonville, with two newly-arrived English surgeons. Mr. Pratt and I returned direct, he to fulfil his duties at the Polygon Hospital, to which he had just been attached, I to write letters home : but the others did not come back ; we were full of anxiety for them. They had been captured by a sudden advance of the Prussians on Rezonville, where they stayed in search of breakfast ; they were then told off to a Prussian ambulance to assist the wounded there, but, on the discovery of the body of General Marguenat (6th corps), two of them, together with a couple of Prussian aumoniers, were to-day sent into our lines with it as an escort. Dr. Ward and some others still remained in the hands of the enemy, but, to our mental relief, returned safe and sound on the 22nd, none the worse for their adventure ; but some citizens of Metz, who went out at the same time, remained prisoners in the enemy's hands the whole time of the siege. For one of these I was very sorry ; his capture was attended with melancholy results : his wife and infant child, born whilst he was in captivity, both died, and his return to Metz after its capitulation would

only be to find his city captured, his home desolated, and those he loved no more. It was rather a severe penalty to pay for assisting to assuage the sufferings of others, this desolation entailed on himself and his family. If all the incidental misery induced by war could only be brought together, the loss, the agony, and the suffering, on even the greatest battle-field, would be as nothing compared to those unseen, unknown horrors which follow it. Shocking, horrible as the battle-field is, it represents but the least portion of the curse of war. Widows and orphans, devastated homes, crushed hopes, grey hairs brought down in sorrow to the grave—all these help to make up the phantom Glory. Never did the most hideous Idol of the most savage people receive a more unholy sacrifice than this which we, who pride ourselves on being civilised and christianised, offer up to this worse than Juggernaut Glory. Beat the tom-toms—I beg pardon, sound the trumpets, and cry out, “Vive la gloire et vive la guerre.”

## CHAPTER VI.

### METZ, PAST.

WHILST we are resting from all this carnage let us take a look at Metz, past and present. Its history is a very interesting one ; much of it is written very legibly on the town itself, and if I had had leisure and a quiet mind, I could have spent my time very happily in the midst of such records of the history of civilisation. Often in the events of the existing siege old episodes crept up with new faces, and the names of half the villages around us are written in the old chronicles as scenes of similar import to those now being acted in them. Placed in the debateable ground which divided, or rather which overlapped the Latin and the Teuton power, Metz has always played a principal part in the drama of history, and its plain has been the scene of battle and bloodshed in every age. I am not going to commence, as did one chronicle with which I whiled away some of the dulness of the siege, with a history of Metz before the deluge, but if you are frightened you can skip this chapter entirely ; I think it an interesting one, and one which throws some light on present events, although the lamp which illumines them was kindled so very long ago.



Situated on the junction of two rivers, one in early days, when craft were small, navigable even unto the Rhine, it was just the place for early settlers; and the Belgæ, the most go-a-head of the Gallic race, soon seized upon it, and, of course, Rome soon seized upon them. These settlers, the *Mediomatrici*, amalgamating themselves and being associated with the victorious Romans, formed the sixth Roman legion of the *Pseudo-Comitatenses*, and Metz grew up as the Roman city of *Divodurum*. Here they built an amphitheatre; it stood where the *Redoute de Pâte* now stands. There was a *nau-machia* down by the river, where Roman galleys and Belgic coracles fought mimic combats. Luxurious baths rose up by the *Porte St. Thiébault*, where the granite of the *Vosges* and the porphyry of *Egypt* vied with each other, and a grand old bath of the latter now does duty as a baptismal font in the cathedral. There were other baths down on the river, and Roman *Divodurum* must have been rather a pleasant place to live in; I dare say the late *Titus Varius Clemens*, procurator for *Belgium*, prefect of the *Spanish auxiliaries* and of the *British cavalry*, made himself very comfortable. I often thought of him, and wondered if he was a relation of that *Saint Clement*, a converted consul, whom the *Messins* claim as their first bishop, as I, not exactly dropped a tear upon, but brushed the dust off his tombstone in the museum, where there are so many interesting records of the Roman occupation. They are heaped up there, too, in such wild confusion, that you enjoy the pleasure of discovery. Bold

Mediæval sculpture, delicate Renaissance carving, and fragments of all ages are piled together, and your want of knowledge is not insulted by that regular chronological arrangement which shocks your ignorance, and renders orthodox museums so painful to the sensitive. You may pick an odd bit out here and there, fancy yourself a discoverer, and value the piece all the more for the supposition ; and I rather pride myself on the fact that I discovered my noble friend of the British light horse. Perhaps he lived in the big palace which occupied the hill, now of the Holy Cross, the highest point of the city ; at any rate, some of these other prefects did. This Titus Cœlius, the "friend of Augustus," no doubt did. Cæsar's friends were sure to be well provided for then as now, and Marcus Turanius, who led the Macedonians here, and who "left his very dear wife, Hedonnia," to sleep for ever by the Moselle, these, with many another, no doubt, looked out over the valley from that portico. Out of this stone heap we can almost re-people Roman Metz. Here are the priests of Jupiter, who proudly swept their flame-coloured robes against Virinius, the bath man, as he stands, cheek-by-jowl, with Gratianus the furrier ; perhaps the founder of the trade in Metz, for it is celebrated for its furriery to this day. Potters, hunters, dyers, all trades and professions, have left their mortuary records here, with many of those soldiers whom those six roads the Romans made to converge at this point brought to Metz. The water ought yet to reach us from Gorze, whence the Romans brought it. Time has destroyed the

arches of the aqueduct, it is true, but a portion of the water-way along the hill sides is yet of Roman work, though no water comes; it is dry now those wretched Prussians have cut off our supply, and they won't let me go out to Jouy to look at the arches. They are as bad as the Huns under Attila, these other Northmen, only it is to be hoped that they will not make such a clean sweep of Metz as their predecessors did that Easter eve in 451, when they acted even worse than Prussians yet have done, and burnt down all the town, excepting one little church, which stood where the cathedral stands now. Some of these very Roman remains we have been looking at bear to this day the mark of that fire they kindled more than fourteen hundred years ago, so long does it take to remove the handmarks of war.

The fertility of the valley of the Moselle soon, however, made Metz spring up again, and Clovis constituted it the capital of the newly-created kingdom of Austrasia, placing his son Thierry on the throne. Then Bavaria and Saxony were dependencies on the capital—now these naughty sons of theirs are beleaguering their mother city; and Prussia hadn't even a name in history, not even as a predatory band of savages serving under Polish masters. Soon Metz became again a centre of luxury and refinement. Theodebert brought good spoils from Genoa and Tuscany here, and a later Roman civilisation found itself here reflected, linking itself with the past evidences of the Latin power. Here, too, sprang the stem of that much abused and much overrated Gari-

baldi, who is now drawing his feeble sword for, and so much confusion upon, France ; for Clothaire, the fourth king of Austrasia, who was much given to wives, having five others, gave his queen, Valdrad, to his vassal, Garibald, Duke of Bavaria, because he wanted to marry Theodebalt's widow, and had not room for any more in his palace or his affections. It is from the issue of these two Garibaldi claims to spring. That beautiful and unfortunate Brunehault, too, she whose sad fate formed the stock topic of half the romance literature of Europe, she, too, is connected with Metz, having married Sigebert the fifth king, and the fame of her struggles with the charming but wicked Fredegond have been sung by poets of all lands and in all Mediæval times. Hardly a picture gallery of Europe is found without some illustration from her memory : half-a-dozen pictures of her death crowd in upon mine as I write,—Her long grey hair streaming on the ground, her feet tied to the tails of those infuriated wild horses, which are to drag her to so bitter a death ;—She forms a striking subject for a sensation picture. Le Roi Dagobert, too, the man so much sung about in such curious guise, the Solomon of France in a matrimonial view, he, too, sat on the throne of Metz. His father, Clothaire II., placed him here as a sort of apprentice to the kingly trade, under the wise tutelage of Pepin de Landen and Arnoulf, afterwards St. Arnoulf, but then Bishop of Metz ; and from these two sprang the race of those Carlovingian kings, who absorbed both France and Germany. St. Arnoulf was a native of

Lorraine, being born at Lay near Nancy, and was brought up in the Austrasian court here. He was a good soldier, a wise statesman, and twenty-ninth bishop of Metz, and his eldest son, Anségise, married the daughter of Pepin, the mayor of the palace. From the union of these two came the race of Charlemagne; so that if we are to have historical squabbles about the possession of Metz, it would be well for that little town to annex both France and Germany, and thus settle the vexed question as to whether they are a French or a German race. Charlemagne acknowledged his indebtedness to Metz, and was mindful of the home of his great-great-great-grandfather and mother, and in memory of them he established large schools here; and in the churches here, too, were sung for the first time in the west those Gregorian chants about which so many bitter controversies have since arisen. When the big kingdom this German-Frenchman had grouped together crumbled, Lothaire took this part of it to himself, and gave a name to it. Lotharii Regnum, the scribes wrote it; Loherregne, the minstrels sung it; and the people call it Lorraine to this day. As the French—or rather those who ultimately became the French—after the fashion of their kind, squabbled amongst themselves, and the Germans grew stronger, Germany absorbed this latter kingdom, but Metz was the last Lorraine town to succumb in 945, but only for a short time, for in 978, that is in the next generation, she threw off the German yoke, and became free again. Will it take another generation to do this now? does t

world go no faster now-a-days than it did then ? *Nous verrons.*

The Normans and the Hungarians were at this time troubling France and Germany, but none of them ever could reach Metz, now growing into a free city. The Messins would have nothing to do with anybody's politics but their own, though they would take everybody's money. They even had the audacity to refuse to allow the Crusade to be preached within their walls. They didn't care about holy places. Eastern questions were not interesting to them ; they took to money-making and to making money, establishing a mint of their own at a very early period, and retained both customs until 1662 ; one of them yet exists. Enjoying peace while all their neighbours were at war, they grew rich, and re-established a sort of mediæval translation of their ancient Roman municipality, with an annually elected Maître Échevin for its head. Two hundred and forty villages enrolled themselves as belonging to and forming part of the Messin Republic, and the history of Metz at this period is of great political interest. Of course, as they waxed richer, their neighbours quarrelled with them ; there was something to be gained by doing it. So of course they got drawn into war, and then as a natural result came taxation, in consequence of which, in 1235, each person,—man, woman, and child,—paid one penny per week to pay off the debt incurred. Even the clergy were not exempt, for these Messins were rather stubborn people, and, if anything, were rather hard

upon the parsons. But the Jews fared worse, of course, it was the habit of the time. These had to pay a heavy octroi on entering the city ; and, to mark what good Christians these Messins were, although they taxed the churchmen, they whimsically made each Jew pay a penny for every year Christ lived on earth before they could reside in the city. Thirty-three pence must the Jew pay ; but after that he was treated much as other men, and Israelites flocked here in great numbers, notwithstanding the three-and-thirty pence, so we may suppose it paid. There was a mint here, and wherever a mint was established, there the Jews did congregate. Of course they were massacred at stated periods ; they were such a fecund people there was no keeping up the balance of power if this course was not adopted.

Since the time of Titus they had not indulged in war ; it was therefore necessary to kill them off in some other way. Nevertheless, they multiplied exceedingly, and had a quarter of the town assigned them and were gated with as much severity as though they were Christians at Oxford, and, as a paying property, they were allowed to remain for periodical battues. With all these advantages Metz grew richer and more powerful, and as a natural consequence the clergy wanted to plunder them ; so in 1324 the Archbishop of Treves called to him his friend the King of Bohemia,—Bohemians joined issue with the parsons in those good old times, instead of rather being at issue with them, as in these degenerate days,—and together with the Duke of Lorraine and the Duke of Bar

endeavoured to suppress these bourgeois. The Messins were however prepared—they did then much as we have just done; they razed all the houses in the suburbs, destroyed all the gardens, and for the first time in history mounted cannons on their walls. Metz has the very distinguished honour of having been the first city in Europe to do this. Possibly in China they did it before, but as yet we know so little of the history locked up there, that, at present, Metz may claim the honour of being the first town in history so well prepared to kill other people. The Florentines made cannons in 1326, in 1339 the town of Cambrai possessed “dis canons, chinq de fer et chinq de métal,” “et qui sont en la garde et en la defense de la ville,” the Moors had played these new “Devil’s-organ pipes” in 1343 for the first time, and we used them at the battle of Crecy in 1346. If you want to know more about them let me refer you to the work of one L. Napoleon Bonaparte, President of that Republic, and who had just then sworn: “In the presence of God and before the French people, represented by the National Assembly, to rest faithful to the democratic Republic, one and indivisible, and to fulfil all those duties imposed upon him by the constitution.”

His book is entitled “*Études sur le passé et l’avenir de l’Artillerie*,” its effect was to imbue the afterwards Imperial author with the idea that French artillery was perfection; its latest development is our friend the *mitrailleuse*, and neither the idea nor its latest development did much good in the recent campaign.



The cannons of the Messins repulsed their foes, but in the end the canons ecclesiastical won, and the clergy managed to exempt themselves from many restrictions the lay element, turning for once the tables, had imposed upon them. Five months did the siege endure, and then the contending parties came to terms. Yet not through one of their seventeen gates would the Messins of those days let the enemy pass, nor from any one of their sixty-eight towers floated any other standard than their own. It was a free city, and it determined to remain so, and in consequence was the scene of many a conference between those who would not intrust themselves within each other's gates. It was at one of these, in 1354, that Luxembourg was erected into a Duchy, and here, two years afterwards, was finally arranged that "Golden Bull" which settled the constitution of the German Empire, and which remained in force till 1805. This document stipulated the inviolability of the electors, settled those very important German questions of rank and precedence, and the honours due to each grade, but its last stipulation was one I fear not always fulfilled; it therein decreed that "the electors should cause their children to be well instructed in ancient and modern languages." Having settled all these things, they proceeded to put some of them into practice, and on Christmas Eve, 1356, an enormous banquet was given on the Banks of the Sielle, when the Emperor was served according to the regulations thus agreed upon by seven electors on horseback, and changed his crowns with his

courses, wearing successively the iron, the silver, and the golden crown. There was the Emperor Charles IV. and all the princes of Germany, the dauphin of France (King John being courteously entertained at Windsor by the Black Prince, could not come), the Counts of Poitou and of Anjou, and I should have to babble on like dear old gossip Froissart if I were to enumerate half the swells Metz entertained that Christmas. They had feasting, and miracle plays, for Metz prides herself as being the first town where these took place, and they were common here long before Paris took to them as a fashionable novelty. They had wonderful pageants, and they ended by drowning all the butchers. This respectable body had strong German proclivities, and proposed that the whole of the foreign princes and the local authorities should be murdered *secundum artem* in the night, and thus the Emperor would be without a rival, but the Emperor peached, and the butchers were thrown over the parapet of the Pont des Morts, in accordance with an ancient and laudable custom, and the guests of the city went on their way rejoicing.

After this, the good people of Metz seem to have become somewhat arrogant, entertaining swells does not appear to have agreed with them, and they were not yet reconciled to the clergy, being described to the Pope as *gens sans foi ni loi, et ne croyant mie en Dieu*, and what with the neighbouring parsons and the neighbouring nobles, they were getting into hot water again. The water boiled in 1429. Then, in the short space of three months,

the city received 6,059 letters of defiance, and a league against it was formed by the dukes of Bavaria, of Baden, the Archbishop of Cologne, and "les sirs de Rodernach et de Boulai." These, with 20,000 infantry and 10,000 cavalry, occupied the hill of Ste. Barbe I have so often to speak of. They sat down at Crepy and at Peltre; but the free citizens of Metz had kept up the habit of making cannon, and these Bavarians and Badenens brought none with them then, so the Messins refused even to close their gates against them. The big army, unable to do anything else, quarrelled amongst themselves, and then taking themselves off, left peace in Metz. So rude and arrogant did Metz now become, so regardless of the politeness of society, that its citizens in May, 1444, absolutely stole all the baggage of the Duchess of Lorraine, and this, too, as she was going to church at Pont à Mousson, in search of certain indulgences then granted by Pope Eugène. Of course she demanded redress, and her husband, René of Anjou, the artist and poet, King of Sicily and Naples, and father of our sixth Henry's queen, persuaded Charles VII., who had just driven us English out of France, to take up the quarrel. The Pay-Messin would round off his dominions nicely, so he determined to recover the lady's wardrobe, and laid siege to Metz. Again the old familiar names crop up, the Faubourg des Allemandes is burnt, Le Vallières is destroyed, Les Bordes, where our young fort is, was occupied, Le Grange aux Dames, St. Eloi, and Horgne aux Sablon are filled—this time with French

troops, and Metz is blockaded again. Eleven thousand seven hundred and fifty French cavalry do Uhlans' duty, and cut off all communication, and come right up to the city's walls. The town was reduced to the greatest extremities. Priests and laymen fought alike on its walls, and fed alike within them. Perquisitions were made for food, and everything thrown into a common stock, and with a wisdom sadly wanting now, nine new mills, turned by horses, for grinding the corn were established. The dogged obstinacy of the Messins prevailed, and the French army, suffering from "the inclemency of the season," drew off, and a treaty of peace was signed by which Charles and his belligerent friends bound themselves over to keep the peace for ten years. Of course on their part the Messins had to pay money, and as a proof of the exactitude of the treasurer's department of that day, it cost them 124,221*l.* 12*s.* 11*d.* Messin. They also absolved the ever impecunious King René from all his debts. Charles took and held Epinal from the Bishop of Metz, to whom it owed allegiance, and it was evident that the power of Metz was on the wane. Metz now got into trouble with the Papal chair, and between August, 1462, and October, 1465, no less than five bulls of excommunication were launched against the Messins; but they turned out the canons, and set so heretical an example of the possibility of living without these luxuries, that the Pope gave way, and the citizens of Metz let the canons in again; though they do not seem to have lived very happily together on their reunion, for to such a pitch

did their animosity go, that on the cathedral catching fire, not a lay man would go to the assistance of the canons, who were told to excommunicate it ; so half the building perished. Finally, money settled the question, and the clerics had to pay taxes like other men, and their goods and viands were to be subjected to the same octroi as those of the civilians, excepting only such things as were bought for the fabric of the cathedral. The canons were however exempted from military service, and from mounting the guard, "except in the case of attack or invasion ;" but for this relaxation they had to pay an annual sum of 36 francs Messin ; but as the Messin franc was 13s. 6*d.* it made a good round sum for those days. This exemption money was paid up to the year 1648, when Metz became definitely united to France, and thus freed from guarding and defending itself. They were a sturdy stubborn lot those Messins, and would brook no interference with their liberties, whatever liberties they might take with others.

Louis XI., the crafty king, now tried his hand upon them, and, firstly, tried to persuade them that it would be much better to be protected from the Dukes of Lorraine, and then threatened them with his vengeance if they did not range themselves under the lilies of France ; but it would not do ; they told him that they had no quarrel with the Duke of Lorraine, and that they did not intend to definitely separate themselves from the German Empire. So they sent the French king's letter on to the German emperor, and of course the king,

though he denied having written it, still tried to gain Metz. The Emperor, on his part, exempted the Messins from bearing arms against the Turks, or in the quarrels of the Palatinate, the which, as they never considered themselves under the obligation to do so, proved only a snare, and they ultimately were requested to pay for the privilege of being released from a burden they had never borne. Meanwhile, in 1473, the emissaries of the French king tried to surprise the town, and on the evening of the 9th of April they sent two carts, which duly arrived at the Porte Serpenoise. These were laden with barrels containing arms, and attended by soldiers in the guise of merchants. One cart stopped on the drawbridge to prevent its being raised, the men seized their arms, killed the gate-keeper, and shouted "Calabre! Calabre! the town is gained;" for these Dukes of Lorraine, under whose pretext they entered, still claimed to be kings of Sicily and dukes of Calabria. They cried, however, too soon, for there was a baker there, one Harel by name, who sprang up one of the winding staircases, let down the portcullis, and raised the alarm. Out rushed the inhabitants with hatchets or anything handy. Shut in from their friends and with their foes, there was soon very little left of these Lorrainers, and the Messins captured four standards and fifty-two prisoners. When Louis sent to reclaim these, the Messins sent him word, impudent people that they were, that he was welcome to come and look for them if he chose, which he didn't, and these banners hung for three centuries in a chapel destroyed,

in 1751, to make way for the present Place d'Armes. What became of the Lorrainers is not recorded ; but the Porte Serpenoise to this day bears an inscription stating that Metz was saved by Harel the baker. After this, France and Germany kept up a perpetual squabble as to whom Metz ought to belong. And all this time Metz kept up a paying neutrality. It was a sort of city of refuge in those troublous times, and our own Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, found it a convenient place to fly to after he had surreptitiously married his early love, the Princess Mary, widow of Louis XII., and sister to Henry VIII. Here he mitigated the rigours of the king, his brother-in-law's, wrath, by much jousting, and solaced his separation from his royal wife by many gallant adventures, the records of which yet remain in the *Chronique Scandaleuse* of Metz. It is true, Mary was his third wife, and as he afterwards married a fourth, there is little doubt but that he expiated his domestic sins. The time was, however, close at hand when both France and Germany thought it would be the best thing to make Metz pay handsomely for the luxury of Freedom instead of finding Freedom pay, and Charles V. cited them to the Diet of Worms. It was in vain they pleaded that with Augsbourg and Aix-la-Chapelle theirs was a free city. In vain they pleaded that whatever contribution to the empire they had given was voluntary—that was only a recognition of right, so they had to pay more, involuntarily now, and Metz, from being very rich, began to find itself poor. She had to pay Charles V. for her liberty,



and Francis I. claimed the same price ; between the two Metz began to find the luxury costly ; so they engaged the best orators they could to plead their cause, now at one Court, and then at another. Amongst these we find the name of that wonderful man Cornelius Agrippa, the man of science (indeed the "Vanity of Science" man), and consequently the magician of his day. He served Metz from 1518 to 1520, and was at last turned out from here by the clergy, as he had been from Paris, on the charge of sorcery, for he successfully defended a young girl of Woippy, who had been accused of witchcraft. Her mother had been burned for the same crime a few years before, therefore she must be guilty. She was seized and tortured by Savini the Grand Inquisitor and a Benedictine, when Agrippa interfered so happily for the girl, yet it was universally decreed that none but a greater wizard could so demonstrate the innocence of a witch, and his triumph ruined him.

He spoke freely against the Benedictines, who preached as freely against him, so his appointment was cancelled, and he had to leave the city. Metz, having been so long an unbelieving sort of place, was becoming very superstitious just now. In two months they burnt alive thirty-three witches and wizards on the river side. There was no Agrippa to defend them, therefore the Grand Inquisitor had it all his own way. Whether it was because they lost Agrippa's eloquence, or whether it was that the same spirit which persecuted him, and which classed witchcraft and Lutherism together, pre-



vailed, or whether it was that the Messins didn't like paying so much money, I cannot say, but incline to an admixture of the two latter opinions. Be it from what cause it may, Charles V. went out of favour, and Henry II. came in, and became the "Protector of Metz" —the first king who ever bore the title. He was not slow to avail himself of the opportunity thus offered, and on Easter Day, 1552, Metz became a French town, and so remained until October 29, 1870. For three hundred years it has been French ; it elected so to be by the will of its people, and the French entered amidst rejoicings. The last change was very different.

Charles V., of course, could not submit patiently to this, and immediately despatched a large army to take military possession of the town before the French could occupy it in force ; but Henry was too quick for him, and sent the young Duc de Guise there with the title and power of Lieutenant-General. The town was provisioned, and 4,500 infantry, with 444 cavalry, formed its garrison. The Emperor could not come very quickly ; he was laid up with the gout at Boulai ; and it was October before Alavarez, the Duke of Alva, who afterwards achieved so cruel a renown in the Low Countries, made his appearance in front of Metz. On the 20th they sat down on St. Julien and Bellecroix, and did nothing for ten days, during which time the Duc de Guise mounted his cannon and was ready. I cannot enter into detail of this very interesting siege here ; it is quite worthy of a separate

study ; and my object in this *resumé* of the history of Metz is simply to generalise the changes it has undergone, and clear up some of that vague fog which enshrouds the minds of many as to whether it is really a German or a French town, or if it ever was either.

It was a month longer before the Emperor came up the valley from Thionville, and he brought 42,000 Germans, 8,000 Spaniards, 4,800 Italians, 7,000 pioneers, and 114 pieces of artillery with him, making, with the troops already brought by Alavarez, about 100,000 men—a very large army in those days. They did not wait quite so long as the Prussians now have done, but the bombardment began next day, and continued without intermission. Breaches were made in the walls often, but as often defended and repaired. Fourteen thousand shots were fired at the brave garrison, and after sixty-five days' investment the polyglot army of the German Empire raised the siege, and went away. "Fortune, like other fickle females," exclaims the retiring Emperor, "forsakes the old to smile upon the young," and the young Duke of Guise won not only the smiles of Dame Fortune, but also the affections of the people of Metz by his personal valour and his wise direction of the defence. The town was saved, but the suburbs were all destroyed, innumerable churches without the walls pulled down, and more than 30,000 soldiers lay dead on the field unburied, and the enemy was this time also driven off by "the inclemency of the season." Seasons, I have noticed, are always inclement to those

who fail. France having thus saved Metz, of course kept it, and from that time it ceased to have a separate political history. Gradually its peculiar rights and customs dwindled away, and Metz assimilated itself to and was absorbed into the rest of France ; and by the Treaty of Westphalia, in 1648, it formed, with Toul and Verdun, the province of the Trois Evêchés, which was then ceded to France by the Holy Roman Empire. Such is the past history of this interesting little town—a history which, if my space and your patience would permit me, is quite worthy of greater development, but in which there is not exhibited much pretext for Prussian occupation beyond that of conquest—a pretext always open to the strongest. Metz, until she voluntarily amalgamated herself with France, was a 'free city, and never formed an integral part of the German dominion, and all that is written as to its reversion to its former owners is now-a-days simply an ignorant or a wilful perversion of history.

So much for Metz past. As to Metz present, we must take a look at that in another chapter.

## CHAPTER VII.

### METZ, PRESENT.

**METZ** is, I should think, a pleasant place to live in in quiet times. Situated, as I have before said, at the junction of the Moselle and the Sielle, it is perched upon a little raised promontory, formed by the detritus brought down by those two rivers. Not content with this, it spreads itself out on both sides of those rivers, and also occupies three little islands they have formed for themselves, and which need fifteen bridges to unite them into one city. The town itself is enclosed by a jagged line of fortifications, so that its plan looks like a circular saw which has met with an accident ; but one glance at the map will give you a better idea of its outline than any form of words will convey. Words are but a very clumsy invention yet, and I regret much that I cannot give you any sketches by which to illustrate and strengthen my description. I was, however, forbidden to sketch, and so rigorously was the law which prevented me enforced, that I was once arrested for attempting to do so inside a church, so after that I gave up all attempts.

Suppose we enter the town together from the railway

station, and I will try as briefly as I can to give you a sort of binocular view of it. With one eye we will regard it as I first saw it, and with the other take a glimpse at it as I saw it for the last time. Entering, then, by the Porte Serpenoise, we cross a couple of drawbridges, and see on our left hand the large glacis of the citadel. It is an earthwork of about Vauban's date, and replaces an older one built shortly after the French occupation of Metz I have already described. Inside it is a very interesting round Templar church, but we can't go and see it—they won't let us—so we pass under the double arched gateway reading, as we enter, this inscription, which records the Baker's doings:—

LE 9 AVRIL 1473  
 A LA PORTE SERPENOISE  
 METZ SURPRISE PAR L'ENNEMI  
 EST SAUVÉE  
 PAR LE BOULANGER HARELLE.

This gateway passed we find ourselves where I so often regretted finding myself—"inside Metz." We are surrounded by high walls and earthworks, and come upon a long curvilinear tunnel, which burrows under the enceinte. When first I saw this it was a broad vaulted archway, when I came away it was encumbered with wooden uprights, and supported a casemated chamber, in which the garrison were to seek refuge during that bombardment which never came. Threading our way through these supporting timbers, we reach the broad open Avenue Serpenoise, bordered on each side

with the familiar little lime trees which grow so very small in most French towns. This was the main thoroughfare of ancient Roman Divodurum, and there is a good deal of the city left yet, five feet under our feet. On our right is a large and high-walled garden, and behind it, hidden by the trees which tower over the enclosure, is the Bishop's palace. I never saw the palace, but the Bishop I often saw; he was very energetic amongst the sick and wounded, and so won the goodwill of all, that even the Jews did not object to his bearing the image of The Crucified into their synagogue, which they had converted into a hospital. His garden walls are posted all over with tantalising announcements of cheap trips everywhere. You may go to Paris and back for a trifle, or enjoy three days at Dieppe, Ostend, or wherever you like, for next to nothing, and a very few francs will take you through the picturesque beauties of the Vosges. It is too bad to tell such white, blue, red and yellow lies on the walls of a Bishop's palace, and I don't believe that Alphonso Liguori himself could extenuate such a crime even by the most extended probabiliarism.

Opposite to this irritating harlequinade of misrepresentation is a huge building like an ugly Italian palace; that is the caserne of the engineers. There once stood a cemetery and a house of the Celestines. It was crowded with sculpture, and was a perfect museum of Mediæval art, but then the military engineers came—need I say what happened? Military engineers in all countries are very much the same, so all these things passed

away, and we have a neat plain edifice of the French military engineering style of 1840, dressing up to the front with mathematical—nay more, with military exactitude. When first I saw it, the pavement in front was piled high with huge barrels filled with wine and brandy; pyramids of boxes of navy biscuits diversified the scene, but the wine and the brandy were very nearly all drunk when I came away. The biscuits had disappeared long ago, and the pavement was as flat and as bare as the face of the building itself. A little further on, to the left, is the Place Royale; in normal times, the exercising ground of the engineers, but when I first saw it a confused crowd of baggage waggons, biting horses, and swearing men. Alas! when I last saw it, there were long streets of covered railway waggons there without horses, and the men were poor wounded soldiers, peering pensively out from their hammocks, or hobbling painfully over the gritty gravel of the square, swearing *sotto voce* at the pebbles. A big black bronze statue rises up from it; it is that of Marshal Ney—"the bravest of the brave"—and they shot him—for treason. That statue set a great many persons thinking in Metz, but then, as that other Marshal their thoughts turned to was not the bravest of the brave, they didn't shoot him. Our right hand is flanked by pleasant looking cafés, with tubs of pomegranate and oleander trees in front of them, and gaily striped awnings stretch out over the pavement, making with the many-hued military seated, imbibing strange compounds, underneath their shade

some charming bits of colour. The marble tables are jewelled with emerald and opal absinthe, amber vermuth, ruby grenate, and variously viscid syrups. Tall German-looking glasses of sweet beer, and many things pretty to look at but nasty to take, to a free-born Briton who longs for his "bitter." Unless you want an experimental drink we will cross the broad square and wander into the pleasant shady gardens of the Esplanade. Broad-leaved and many-tinted plants are here skilfully arranged in beds. Seats are there in plenty, and the graceful nude figure of La Pucelle empties her classic vase of clear, sparkling water with a cooling splash into the little lake. "Donné par A. Johnson,"—given by an Englishman! a nude graceful figure too! it was incredible. The name looks very Scotch, but then a Scotchman would never do such a thing. Explanation proved that she was the gift of an Irishman, who lived long, and succeeded to much property in Metz. She soon ceased to pour out her silver stream from her amphora—those Prussians stopped the supply, and the lake soon became a dust-bin. As yet, under the trees was a delightful promenade, bits of bright colour picked themselves out everywhere, and overhead were emeralds and turquoise, jacinths and jaspers, and lapis lazuli. It was the vault of Aladdin's palace you saw! as you lounged on a seat and looked through the glorious foliage up to the clear blue sky, clouded only by the smoke from your pipe, and the sad thought that you could not get out of Metz. That last thought always pulled one short up whenever a reverie



ran away with one—no more musing after that; so let us come from under the trees out on to the ramparts which overlook the valley.

Below us is the green flat island of St. Simphorien bound up by the blue ribbon of the Moselle. Those low white buildings, half hidden amongst tall poplars, are the powder magazines and manufactories of the Ile du Saulcy, and in front rises the grand hill of St. Quentin, like a sitting sphinx gazing out towards the land of the foe. A long straight row of everlasting poplars forms its plinth, that is, the highway to what was France: it is along that flat straight road the Emperor went to and we returned from Gravelotte. Looking up the valley, the village of Ste. Ruffine crops up, and cuts out against the sky, and the little fringe that tops the wooded hills which form the background marks the scene of our last bloody battle. Further up the river, but low down in the plain, nestling under that fatal Bois des Ognons, you can just see rising out of the trees the tall chimneys of the foundries at Ars. They are smoking away night and day those chimneys, and they say our enemies are casting shot and shell there to use against us. Turn round; the sight of that sign of industry is not pleasant. Out to our right long lines of rolling wooded hills stretch themselves away on the road to Thionville, and this building which blocks up the view is the Palais de Justice. It is a palace of Mercy now, for the red crossed flag flaps lazily at one corner, and tells those Prussians over there that it is full of wounded men.

Soon, too, all the bright flowers of the esplanade are trampled down ; soon the broad gravel walks are covered with hospital tents crowded with suffering soldiers ; soon, too, the green island of Saulcy is white over with them ; and soon, too soon, are these emptied by fever. Come along. The palace in front of us is a good specimen of French Renaissance of the last century, and was once interestingly handsome ; its walls were covered with bas-reliefs relative to the sojourn of Louis XV. in Metz, and inside and out it was covered with history ; but when the people became mad during the Revolution they broke down with axes and hammers the carved work thereof, and, like all peoples under great excitement, took to destroying everything that was beautiful. It is no good going straight on now ; that street leads past the École d'Application, and if you ever get to the end of this book you'll have to go there with me many a time. That little street in front of us was where the hôtel of the Duke of Suffolk was, but it is all pulled down now ; so let us turn back to the corner of the Rue des Clercs, which takes its name from being the ancient dwelling-place of those Cathedral canons who so much disturbed the peace of Metz, and of whom so much mention was made in the last chapter. Let us go past the big Hôtel de l'Europe, where the Emperor first lodged, and where all the heavy swells with heavy purses stay. It is no good trying to get in ; they put colonels up in the attics, and, as that is the lowest grade they know of there, they give them the highest places ; but there is a pleasant

garden in front where you can sit, and, for the price of a cup of coffee, have all the *éclat* of belonging to such a princely, dukely, and countly company; and it is perfectly astonishing to find how many pass their days here, and their nights in some much more modest quarters.

Good society for half a franc is not to be got every day, so they make the most of it, and you can repeat to your friends or your newspaper what the Marquis de Quelquechose or the Duc de Tel-et-tel told you, with a savoury unction. Such communications are always confidential, I notice, and are told accordingly. Will you go? It isn't much in my way, but I can stand it for once, if you like. No! well then, come along. That smaller hotel opposite, beyond the dark archway, is—that is, was when I first reached Metz—the head-quarters of General St. Saveur, the grand prévôt, and the crowd hanging about the door is waiting to see what is to be done with that last batch of spies. For many a day—in fact, until he went out of the town and took up his quarters at the Ban St. Martin—there always was that crowd, and there always was that last batch of spies there. Here they come, poor wretches; little miserable under-fed looking creatures, they mostly are peasants from somewhere in the neighbourhood, without money enough to find those forty days' provisions all must have who enter Metz, and so they hang about between the two armies, existing as they can on plunder, until one of them catches them. Then, as a rule, they are too frightened to speak the truth, thinking it is that last fowl they stole they are captured for, and so take to

lying. Lying is the trade of the spy, so of course they are considered as belonging to the profession, and the logical result is prison. Here comes the General; he is remarkably clean, remarkably neat, and remarkably handsome, and I am sure it must be a great nuisance to him to have to find board and lodging for so many. If he could but teach his gendarmes a little discretion, how much happier he and you and I should be; for it's even betting that we are not tapped on the shoulder before we get much further. I was arrested by one of his men as I was going to call on the General himself the other day. You meet with many strange surprises here just now; but the strangest and most pleasant of all is to pass a day without being arrested. But here we are at the intersection of the main transverse thoroughfare, for Metz, like all towns of Roman planning, retains yet the rectangular arrangement of its principal streets. This, at which we have arrived, has four different names, though it is not a long one. Down the hill to the left is where I live, the Hôtel du Nord, and where, during the siege, we opened the abode of genius and the home of all the talents—for there is now established the “Cercle du Literature et du Commerce”—an odd combination; but where every one who can be vouched for as not being a spy, and who is suspected of having brains, has the *entrée*, so of course you and I may go there.

I am very grateful for the admission accorded me, for it afforded a very pleasant relief to the monotony of the siege, but we won't go down there just now; we will

cross this street, and plunge into the gloomy shadow of the narrow one in face of us. It is only short, and now that we are at the end of it, look up. There! isn't that fine? That is the cathedral, the pride of Metz. Look how sharply its lace-like, open-work spire cuts out against the beautifully-blue sky. You see the octagonal balcony there half way up the spire: that is our look-out over the plain, to see what our friends, the Prussians, are doing. This thick black rope, which runs up to it, is a bundle of telegraph wires, by which we can talk to the commanders of the different forts and tell them what is going on beyond their lower range of vision. I can't take you up there with me. Madame la Commandante at the bottom here, the smooth-faced, kindly-looking old woman, wouldn't let me; for though she only sells tapers and beads and blessed medals, she is in military command, and if you attempted to creep behind her chair and essay an entry by that very little door there, she would call up half-a-dozen of those lounging soldiers who hang about the Place d'Armes in front, and you would find out that you had made a mistake. I'm rather proud of my privilege of being the only civilian allowed to go up there. I won it by hard work, so I don't want to make it common. Captain Lehagre, the officer on duty there, looked very suspiciously on me at first; but the old man, who has lived for thirty years in the root of the spire, was so pleased to have some one to bring sip, that I think he dissipated the military a civilian more than I per-

sonally ever did. It is wonderfully light and elegant, this cathedral, isn't it? There is not much grandeur about it; it is too light for that. It is the poetry of engineering—a rare thing—rather than architecture as a fine art. The windows seem too large, the supports too slender, and there is a mediæval conservatory look about it which, though very charming, is fatal to dignity. There are 36,700 square feet of glass in it, so no wonder it looks light. Architect though I am, I never saw any building of the magnitude with such small supports, and I always find myself wondering at the marvellous knowledge of equipoise these old fellows had. It isn't built, it's balanced; and if a shell were to touch it!—Pray don't let us entertain the idea. I often trembled to think what its fate might be if those rude Northmen were to be so barbarous.

The present cathedral is not of very ancient date, and that little doorway standing by the print-seller's shop there is the oldest bit about it; it belonged to the old church of St. Etienne, which this usurper swallowed up. This is a charmingly rich specimen of early French Gothic, having its tympanum richly sculptured, and yet retains many traces of painting and gilding. The cathedral itself is somewhat peculiar,—its towers being placed not at the west end, but on the sides half way down the nave. Unfortunately we can only see the clerestory. There is the Café Français, standing like the “abomination of desolation” spoken of by the Prophet Daniel in the place where it ought not, and which completely hides

the aisle ; but the elegant belfry, with its openwork tower and openwork spire, rises up into the clear sky as though it would wing its way to heaven. There is a peculiar ethereal aspect about it so unusual, that it requires a mental and a mathematical effort to convince one that it will neither fly away nor tumble down—to stand seems an impossibility. It is curious—rarely curious—to note how homogeneous this cathedral is, considering the length of time it occupied in building. Unlike most mediæval edifices, the original intention seems most strictly to have been adhered to. The date of the design is that of the thirteenth century, yet although it was not completed till the fifteenth, there is but little modification in the leading idea, though indications of the date of each portion are visible when the minor details are examined. The absence of a gable to the transepts strikes the eye accustomed to this feature as a defect. Their roofs, which are hipped back, rise to the same height as those of the nave and choir, and impart a flatness to the outline from a distance which even the openwork spire and the bristling pinnacles fail to relieve sufficiently. Like the history of Metz, there is a strong German flavour about it ; its architectural detail is a true reflex of the time. French and German sentiment are inextricably intermingled. This black statue in the foreground, which turns its back upon us, is that of Fabert, Marshal of France, son of a printer at Metz, from whose press issued some marvellously-executed books, and many engravings of the various pageants and

gay doings in the early part of the seventeenth century, the which, if my money would let me, I should long to buy, but with the increasing price of provisions, the decreasing state of my purse, and the uncertainty as to how long this siege may last, I am obliged to resist the great temptation. Faber, père, was four times maître-échevin of Metz, and was decorated with the Order of St. Michael by Louis XIII. Fabert, the Marshal, was born in 1599, and died in 1662, Governor of Sédan. His statue became our Pasquin in Metz; but we won't stop to remark upon all the parts this counterfeit presentment of the man has played, but cross the square (Place Napoleon it calls itself, but Place d'Armes the Messins call it), and enter the cathedral.

To make this place they took away the cathedral cloisters, all the conventual buildings, and half a dozen chapels, and substituted a commonplace square. But then he was a military engineer who did it, so what could you expect. Our maledictions rest on the head of M. de Belle-Isle, the governor of the fortress in 1755, who in place of all this history gave us the bald work of Blondel in the Hôtel de Ville to our left, and a combination between a military prison and a fire engine station right in front of us. Of course there is a small crowd in front of that; that is where they bring all the "spies" to, and those men with the wonderful brass helmets are the firemen, who are just now told off for the particular duty of guarding them. But here we are at the door of the cathedral. Madame la Commandante



greet us with a friendly smile, and I hope you remark the fact that there are no beggars here, no blind, halt, or lame, and no one thrusts a horrible sore in front of you to wring from your disgust what your pity might not give. There are no beggars in Metz! I cannot say if it were always so, but people assure me that in Metz there never was want of work for the willing, so they expelled the idle who would not work, and took charitable care of those who could not. If this be so, I would advise a mixed commission of poor law commissioners and guardians of the poor to pay a visit to this once happy land, and learn how such things were. Inside, the cathedral seems somewhat short, because we enter it at the middle of the side, but the effect of colour is very fine. All the eastern windows are filled with rich stained glass, some of it the superb sixteenth century work of Valentine Bousch, an Alsatian artist, who worked here from 1520 to 1528, and whose kilns and studio M. de Belle-Isle demolished when he "improved" the town. There is also some fine glass-work of Herman de Munster of the latter part of the fourteenth century, and much fine modern glass, by M. Maréchal, who has filled so many of the churches here with really fine art work, and whose fame is very widely spread over the continent. He is Mayor of Metz just now, his workshops are shut up, and his artists are studying from the death in the Mobile and National Guards. When they will ever reassemble, who can tell? What a grand mass of colour it would be if all these huge windows were filled! but it speaks

wonderfully well for the Messins that they resisted the iconoclastic feeling of each revolution and have preserved us thus much.

When we turn westward our eye always rests on that little corner where so many tapers burn and so many women kneel. Up above them rises the "Cuve-de-Cæsar" —the old Roman bath I spoke of, and which now does duty for a font. The rich "wine-colour" of the porphyry; the subdued blues and greys of the women's costume; their white head-dresses; the sparkling light of a score or so of tapers, and the somewhat gaudily but lovingly decorated statue of the Blessed Virgin, make up a picture very full of feeling. Now and then a rainbow ray of colour descends from the stained glass above on all this, almost making us accept its omen. May all these dear loving women's prayers be granted; they are praying tearfully for the safety of husbands, sons, and sweethearts. We won't think a word about creed here. I don't know if you who thus accompany me are a Jew, Turk, heretic, heathen, or polyedrical Christian, but such a sight of so much earnest prayer does us all heart-good, and I am not ashamed to say that often and often have I sought that quiet corner to think of those loved ones I have left at home and to ask God to let me return to them out of all these dangers, and then that rainbow ray has cheered me oftentimes. Very sentimental, very foolish, no doubt, and not in the slightest degree philosophical, but when you and grim death walk arm-in-arm together, I am not quite sure but that a little sentiment of that kind

takes the chill out of his bones, so don't sneer at it. If you understand it you won't, and if you don't I'm sorry for you. It is time to go after that, so tread softly, and cross the choir, we'll go out at the other doorway.

Here is a sudden change. We are out on a large raised platform, the "parvise" of the olden time, where out-door preaching was done, where periodical "revivals" took place, and where converted prizefighters exhibited themselves then as now. At present it is filled with young, brave franc-tireurs, who are in the ridiculous agony of goose-step, and painfully conscious of it, so we won't stare too long at them, but descend the many steps which elevate this platform above the level of Place de Chambre. Here, at their base, in olden times were performed those miracle plays for which Metz was celebrated, the tall wall which holds up the parvise was where the "painted cloths" which formed their scenes were hung, and in the cathedral which towered up above them, other and perhaps less popular explanations of these "mysteries" were given. There in front were the city walls; standing on their ramparts, looking down upon the motley crowd who gazed upon, and the quaint performers who acted, these droll mummeries, backed up by a select crowd of ecclesiastics and grand dames craning over the parapet of the parvise, the cathedral rising grandly up behind them must have presented a wonderful picture of mediæval life to the spectator's view.

Here, too, dwelt those knights of Malta, whose "chamber" gave its name to the place, and the Rue

Petit St. Jean, in front of us, marks the precise place of their dwelling, and conserves the name of their tutelary saint. As we turn away, on our right, the large public market faces us, and which occupies the site of an ancient Roman temple to Victory. I wish the goddess would favour us just now. We cross the "place," and reach the Pont des Roches. Those three locomotive engines there smoking away most foully on our right hand are doing stationary duty, in pumping up the dirty water of the river into the reservoir in the upper part of the town, to replace that pure water the Prussians have deprived us of; and that camp, on the other hand, under the trees, at the other end of the bridge, is composed of artillery men, whose reserve fourgons are packed in front of them. Where their *tentes d'abri* are pitched is Le Jardin d'Amour; it does not look like it just now. The trees are all damaged by the horses, who have eaten away their bark; they are smoked and blackened by camp fires, and the short-jacketed, dark-clothed, stout little men, don't exactly recall Cupid. We are on a little island, sacred to illusions, for not only is there the garden of love, but in front of us is the theatre, and beyond, the prefecture, where the Emperor lived during his stay in Metz. The wooded grove at the other point of the island is occupied by the nearly empty ambulance of the Geneva men, though the other hospitals in the town are crowded.

We thread our way past the artillery waggons, past an empty silent fountain, which looks desolately dry; past

the long line of big Norman horses of the Corps Franc, of which and of their masters I shall have much more to say ; past the telegraph office, from which no messages can go ; past the deserted-looking prefecture, and cross from this little island over to the larger one of Chambière, by the Pont de Moreau, and find ourselves in the Rue Vincentrue. The name seems strange, doesn't it ? but there, a great number of the street names of Metz are thus constructed. We find Jurue, Chandellerue, Chapelrue, Fournirue, Nexirue, all taking the prefix rue, as well as using it for an affix. It seems as though, in early days, these Messins adopted the German custom of adding "street" to the name, and not the French one, of adding the name to the street ; but when the French took possession, they introduced their own system, and the Messins preserve the old fashion in spite of their new masters, so we have this oddity of Street Vincent Street presented to us. Whilst we have walked along, talking of these things, we have reached the site of one of the old Roman baths, and which still retains a record of them in the "Rue du Therme." The two branches of the Moselle, which form the little island we have just left, unite again at this point, and the river at this junction is crossed by the Pont St. George. Here, looking up the river, you have a very picturesque view. On the right hand are the square pyramidally-capped towers of St. Vincent. All the odd irregularity of river-side construction groups most effectively just here, and the wooded little island forms a charming feature ; at this end the

trees have not much suffered, and if the doctors of the Geneva convention did not do much else, Metz owes them a debt of gratitude for having preserved these.

Looking down the stream, you see the "Rhine Port," where the vessels used to come; and the grilled bridge, which crosses the river lower down, opened and shut its gate when the city's dues had been paid. There are no craft now on the stream, it is covered with baulks of timber, which might be needed for defence; a few small boats are fishing for such small fry as they can get, and the banks are covered with washerwomen. On our right is the Quai de l'Arsenal, or as it is more frequently called, the Quai des Juifs. That is the quarter of the People. Their houses are very quaint. A large magazine, in which to store away their merchandise forms the ground floor, the dwelling house is placed above, and the place is full of deep shadows and the odd bric-a-bac of commerce.

Large balconies jut out, and there sits, knitting or sewing, many a pretty Jewish maiden with gay-coloured kerchief, black eyes, and olive skin. No paternal law forbids them here to "clamber up to the casements nor to thrust their heads into the public streets;" or if there is, they do not obey it! but we must not, for all this, be tempted to wander there just now. We'll take a last look round, and recollect that it was to the bridge of England's patron Saint, and on his feast-day, that the clergy of the cathedral came every year to bless the water of the river, and all who dwelt thereon. Psalms were

sung, incense was burned, the river was signed with the sign of the cross, water for the font of the cathedral was drawn from it, and the solemn procession returned. We will return, too. I should like to take you further, to ramble out to the quaint old mediæval *Porte des Allemands*, to take you round the walls and mark their growth ; to visit with you the many interesting churches and historical places there are in Metz ; but I fear you would grow weary of such a gossiping companion, so we will return. First turn to the right : that is the *Mont-de-Piété*, the national pawnbroking establishment ; and here, at the corner of the *Rue de Chèvremont*, lived *Valentine Bousch* the glass painter, whose works we have mentally seen. Here, too, was born *Jean Louis Rœderer*—not he of the *Champagne*, but the *littérateur* and politician of the Republic, he who persuaded *Louis XVI.* and his family to go to the *National Assembly*, whence they never returned to the *Tuileries* again, and he who assisted *Joseph Buonaparte* in his futile endeavour to organise the kingdom of *Naples*. There is a charming old house behind the cutler's shop there with rich *Renaissance* sculpture ; and if that doesn't interest you, I am sure his two fine dogs will. They are the motive power of the establishment, and turn a twenty-foot wheel which drives all the machinery for his trade. Here we are at the *Bibliothèque*, a favourite haunt of mine—you ought to go in to see a marvellous *Rembrandt* here—the *Porte Drapeau*—it is a glorious picture, brilliant in colour, and with such light in it as few but *Rembrandt*

could fix on canvas ; there are some few other good pictures here, and, as usual, a lot of rubbish ; but if it wasn't siege time one would enjoy the good ones more. Passing two more graceful but dry fountains we ascend the hill and reach the Place Ste. Croix. You can just get a glimpse of the old embattled palace of the Austraian kings, a very interesting old edifice, now a filthy stable for cavalry regiments downstairs and a military store above. Here, where we stand, stood the Roman Palace we discoursed about when we began to look at the history of Metz. Nothing now above ground remains, but the soil is rich with fragments, and a few British barrow-hunters would be very useful here. Descending again, we cross the Rue Fournirue, the scene of some of Suffolk's amours, and reach the main cross-street with the many names and the Rue Serpenoise. I should much like to have taken you to some of the 67 ambulances we have in Metz, especially if you who have thus accompanied me are at all given to public platform speaking, and to the utterance of *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*. I should like to take you and show you some of its sweetness. Down to our left as we stand leave-taking here lies the Coislin, a barrack, built by Henri Charles du Camboul, duc de Coislin, ninety-first bishop of Metz, who, in 1726, built this soldiers' home to prevent the indiscriminate billeting which prevailed at this time, contaminating his flock. It might have been a good barrack then, at any rate it was a noble work, but as a hospital it is the home of pyemia and gangrene.



Poor soldiers there are amputated two or three times over, not to save their life—that is impossible ; a cut finger in such a poison cell, as some of these wards are, is certain death, but to lessen the subtle death-dealer's influence, and deprive it of food. They must die, and they suffer this martyrdom to save others. This is both sweet and decorous, is it not ? and when you next preach up the nobility of war, pray reflect on this side of it. While men are men there must be war, but let us recognise it as an evil, do not let us propagate it by any false sentiment of glory. If you are a brother Mason, I should like to take you to our masonic ambulance, established in our "Lodge," No 19, Rue de la Fontaine. It would shew you how, there, side by side, maimed and battered by this "ultimate reasoning of kings," a strange feeling of friendship is evoked amongst men who have added another tie to humanity. You, if you are not a brother, may call it folly, but see this Prussian and that Frenchman there. This folly has done more than all wisdom could do, and having perhaps no word in common, they have there found a common language and a community of sentiment which may do much to soften down those asperities this barbarous war has ruffled up. Into the ambulance in the Jewish schools I could also take you, and show you a devoted Rabbi, standing with his hat on, praying side by side with a bare-headed tonsured priest. In others we should meet good, noble-hearted gentlewomen, who, for Christ's sake, have left all and followed him ; who, giving up the luxuries of home, the instincts of

womanhood, are here doing all they can to infuse somewhat of the quality of mercy into all this sad work of man's worst passions. In all you would find scenes which would burn themselves into your brain, and make you sigh and pause whenever you utter that short word—war. But I forget, we are standing in the street. Will you come and take horse with me at the Hôtel de Nord? No! It is not nearly so bad as you think it to be, and if you won't:—I must. I am sorry to part with you, it is so pleasant to have a quiet companion to talk to; but I haven't shown you a tenth part of Metz. I hope we may meet another day. *Au revoir—sans adieu!*

## CHAPTER VIII.

### BLOCKADED.

EXHAUSTED by those three hard battles of Borny, Rézonville, and St. Privat, both armies, worn out by marching and counter-marching whilst we have been looking at Metz, lay panting on the hill sides in the hot August sun. Day after day long convoys of wounded kept coming in. Our streets were filled with the mournful processions of ambulance carts, mule cacolets, and litters. Often would you see the tired-out priest mounted on a cart-side stammering out the last words of hope and comfort as the clattering vehicle jolted the last drop of life's blood from some poor soldier on to the rugged, stony streets of Metz. The wounded came in thousands. Where to put them or what to do with them we did not know. All the public buildings overflowed with them : the numerous convents, where hardly ever man had entered before, were filled with them ; and the good, patient sisters found a wholesome outlet for all their pent-up love and charity. All the barracks were turned into hospitals, and all the garrison

turned out into tents. The huge "Polygon," a temporary and admirably-constructed hospital, though yet unfinished, could not contain a tithe of all this suffering ; and temporary shelter was made by "perching" long rows of boards together thus  $\Lambda$ . Hotels placed as many rooms as they could spare at the disposal of the doctors ; and hardly a private house of any size but received willingly as many as its dimensions and the means of its occupiers could accommodate. Gentile and Jew, Jesuit priest and Protestant pastor, rich and poor, all worked together, and for days not a person in Metz could be found to do any other duty than was in some way connected with the wounded.

At first there was naturally much confusion ; everybody was in everybody else's way ; but gradually out of all this chaos came order. Under the shady trees of the Esplanade sprang up long ghostly rows of white hospital tents. The arid plain of the Place Royale, where the cadets of the Imperial Engineers were wont to manoeuvre, was, by the ingenuity of M. Dietz, the resident engineer of the Chemin de Fer de l'Est, covered with long streets of railway vans, and into each of these six or eight hammocks were slung. The damp Isle of Saulcy, where the powder works were, was, unfortunately, covered with tents and sheds, and the most crowded places were gradually thinned, where death had not already done so, and the surplus wounded moved into this rapidly-provided accommodation. The crowd of attendants thinned off too ; some were offended that their services were not

made more of ; some found themselves manifestly unfit for the work ; and others were so unfitted for it that the fact had to be made manifest to them. It is, however, to the glory of Metz that an enormous number gave themselves up most entirely and devotedly to the work, especially the women.

I lack words adequately to describe my admiration for the women of Metz,—not for their personal beauty, for nature does not bestow such favours lavishly here, and, like most mixed races, they are not handsome ; not for their political or even patriotic sentiments—the political female I abhor, and the patriotic one is usually a fool and always a nuisance,—but their devoted attendance to the sick and wounded, their steady continuance in good-doing amongst the most horrible sights and stenches, is beyond the praise of men. Man can never adequately thank them, and God alone can sufficiently reward them, for this self-sacrifice. If Frenchmen had only been as self-sacrificing as the Messin women, France would not have presented us with the deplorable spectacle she now does. The women did not quarrel amongst themselves, nor were they jealous of each other. The men did, and do ; they were and are, and poor France suffers.

When we extricated ourselves from all this care for others, the position we ourselves were in came home to us. We were blockaded ! we gasped at the thought. Blockaded ! it could never be. Oh no ! MacMahon was coming to our relief, and the presumptuous Prussian

would find in a few days that he had entrapped himself. After all, there was something in what the Marshal said. He may have played a wise game in thus drawing the enemy round Metz, where all France could attack him, so we began to hope again ; nor was it without a chuckle of satisfaction that we saw the Prussian so readily falling into the trap.

“Do not let us forget '92. Let us remember how France gave answer to the insolence of the Duke of Brunswick. Let us recollect that for three weeks Paris sent out two thousand volunteers each day, and recall the glorious day of Valmy,” said all Metz with one voice. I did remember, recollect, and recall these things ; but I did not forget what I saw in the print-shops in Paris, nor that Valmy led to the Republic.

A week passed away, and no news came. “But no news is good news,” said the people unanimously. “Let the Prussian wait till MacMahon comes up, that is all !” And they laughed at the thought of how they had limed the twig. Nevertheless, they were a prudent, thrifty people, these Messins ; so on the 24th of August, whilst they were waiting for MacMahon to come and drive those foolish men outside away, they held a meeting at the Hôtel de Ville, to try and float a limited liability company for Insurance against Bombardment. They couldn't quite agree whether the war risk was to be 5 or 10 per cent., or how hazardous policies were to be arranged, and they finally dissolved the meeting because they were not quite sure whether such an insurance

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Down from the heights of Plappeville came the guards; round from Montigny came the cavalry, and through the mud and mire they tramped. Artillery ploughed huge furrows in the roads, and we came to the conclusion that to move in such weather something serious must be at hand, and so it was. "The A with five-

and-twenty thousand men, marched all the way up the hill, and then marched down again." All that very wet day did those poor troops stand draining themselves as they best could on the long clayey slopes of St. Julien, right in face of the enemy. For more than thirteen hours stood many of those regiments there without an order to move; some of the cavalry were fifteen hours in the saddle that day, and then had to return to broken up quarters, to pitch tents as best they could in muddy lakes, and to find that all those little impedimenta an army always loses at change of camping ground, had been uselessly abandoned. Meanwhile, the general had been well taken care of; he had been snugly and comfortably housed in the fine old château of Grimont—the weather was too bad to move, so he stayed there, and went comfortably back to his quarters, which had not been broken up.

Of course it was not wet for the Prussians; their roads were not impassable from mud and water. That peculiar alliance which King William had entered into with Divine Providence must naturally prevent that being the case. Equally, of course, MacMahon, whom we all believed to be coming towards us, would not suffer from the like cause. Frossard might be—and was—our "Jonah," but he could not be induced to take to the water, nor was the army strong enough to throw him over. The will was good, but the force was not equal to it.

What the real history of that needless misery was, we never knew. It was said that General Coffinières insisted on our going out to seek MacMahon as Mac-

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Mahon didn't come to us, and that the great division, which afterwards widened itself so that all could see it, commenced at the general council of war, which preceded and led to this movement ; that this was the beginning of that " little rift within the lute," which led to so much discord. If this were so, it was strange that as Mac-Mahon was supposed to be coming from Chalons on the west, we should make a demonstration on the east to seek him ; but whatever the cause was which led to that fiasco, the secret was better kept than many a greater one afterwards, and it was another of the many mysteries in this siege of Metz that never was unravelled. That divergence occurred from this moment is the only thing certain. The council of war was presided over, of course, by the Marshal, a man who always kept his own counsel—the only thing he ever kept ; Lebœuf and Canrobert were purposely left at Metz, to see that the counsel and the council should both be of imperial tendency. Frossard was left to see that these did this, and the chivalrous adhesion of poor old Changarnier to the Imperial cause was looked upon with suspicion by them all ; they would take his advice so far as it went, and pooh-pooh it when it wavered from their line, and with an old man this was easily done.

Poor old Changarnier ! he was an old man ; not only had his years aged him, but his ideas were old, very old in fashion of thought, for he was both honest and moral, and I might say almost the only representative of those old-fashioned and unpopular qualities at the council of

war. He was the only man who sought nothing for himself there, and consequently all suspected him. Born in 1793, under the Reign of Terror, he never was a Republican, and first took service under Louis XVIII., a simple guard in the service of his king. He cherished always the love, firstly of his country, and after that of the dynasty he drew his first sword for. For seventeen years a leader of note in Africa, the noble conqueror of the not less noble Abd-el-Kader, he found himself afterwards the protector of his countrymen from themselves. Struggling against that bribery which won over the army to the newborn Imperial cause in '51 ; struggling against Canrobert and Louis Napoleon then, he declared that "for the inauguration of an era of the Cæsars he would never find a battalion, a company, nor a squad," so of course, when that 2nd of December came which was now so soon to be avenged, he was first imprisoned. He, too, like his jailor, became a dweller in the land of Ham, and after that he was sent away into exile. Now his country needed him, he forgot the Cæsar, he forgave his injuries, and he placed himself alongside, though under, the men who had maligned, injured, ruined him. Noble-hearted old man, it was a waste of virtue ; such a pearl was misplaced, and so they rent him ; yet his very presence kept men together in those later times, when every honest man became disgusted with the selfishness which was rampant, and the dishonour which was coming ; even now his presence kept up our hopes, and, in spite of the useless foolish "military promenade" of this wet day, they rose.

The evening of the 26th was our highest pitch of hope—we never passed that degree of esperance—and it became a sort of fixed point to which ever afterwards we reverted as a standard. The town was wild with excitement. Special editions of all our little newspapers were published ; every café was crowded, and though we all now had to turn out of these at nine o'clock, there was not an open space of ground which was not occupied by the excited populace till long after midnight. A Chasseur had arrived; he had ridden all the way from Verdun without drawing rein. “ MacMahon,” he said, “ had reached that town on the afternoon of the 25th, where he had met and routed the Prussians with enormous slaughter, 140 breech-loading cannon had been captured, and 5 generals had been made prisoners. He himself had ridden forward as an *éclaircur*, and not a Prussian had he found.” Alas! he wanted sundry “ grogues,” and had no money, so he seized the proper moment, told us what we wished to hear, and under these circumstances we of course believed him. He was taken to General Coffinières, the Commandant of the town, and after a rigid examination, was locked up for the night, kept in detention for three weeks, tried by a court-martial and sentenced to hard labour for three months, and that was the end of that wretched Chasseur. We were all sold. I went to the post-office and inquired if there would be a chance of sending a letter on the morrow ; they assured me there would, that they had orders to get a mail ready to send

off at seven in the morning, so if I wanted any letters to go they must be in by six. They too were deceived.

Now, as we had had no communication with the outer world since the 17th, all the inner world set to at once and wrote. All night long did I, and many another such as I, sit up writing, and the scene at six o'clock next morning at the post-office was marvellous. The little street in which it is was thronged—I don't know how it is, but post-offices are always in little streets—this overflowed with people, it was only by much muscular exertion that my letters were deposited, and I congratulated myself most heartily when they were safely in. I wonder what became of them. I have very strong suspicions that they were spelled over by the police when all my other papers were examined. They never came to England after Metz was supposed to be free; but there are many mysteries connected with the post-office at Metz which I have not yet been able to solve. We had let ourselves deceive ourselves too readily. When the cheat was discovered we were furious with everybody else, and after our fury came depression, and things began to look very serious.

The Prussians now cut off our water supply from the Gorze—supply that the old Romans had brought to Metz, and which yet came part of the way along its old aqueduct. It was barbarous; but then what could be expected but barbarism from such people. Were not they barbarians in the days of the Romans?—and once a barbarian always a barbarian. We began to take to invective



tive. It was a bad sign, and I didn't like it, and thought it looked still more serious. But General Coffinières set those three engines we saw by the Pont des Roches to work to pump up the Moselle into the old reservoirs which supplied the town; he dammed up the Sielle to flood the ditches and make a long lake of the valley down which the river runs, and, like King William, he took Divine Providence into partnership, and made the most of the bad weather. Not that he made a nominal and sleeping partner of the D. P., only called upon to back his bills on credulity, &c.; nothing of the sort; he seized the advantages sent him, and was not given to cant, so I put my faith in General Coffinières; and if General Coffinières had put a little more faith in himself, I believe Metz would have held out for many another month. What a difference to the history of France it would have made had it done so!

The bad weather grew worse, and it reached its greatest depth of badness in a fearful storm on the 27th. It was an awful night, that of the 27th of August—the lightning literally “ran along the ground,” and many horses were killed in camp by it, and the Prussians, for the first time, fired seriously at us. They had established a battery at Augny, so they needs must go and try it; and they pounded away at where they thought the fort St. Privat was, in a manner perfectly disgusting to a “special correspondent” who had been up writing all the night before. I do not think a wetter or a more miserable night was ever passed than that

which I and those poor fellows who formed our avant garde at Montigny spent in front of the new battery at Augny that night. It was my first night in the trenches round Metz, and looking back through all the discomforts I have since passed through, I still shudder at its memory. Knee-deep in water, nowhere to sit down, unable to keep even a pipe alight, the very memory of it is miserable, and I quite forgot the 28th in sleep. I don't think anything happened on the 28th—at any rate, if it did, I'm very glad I didn't know it. There was a rattle of musketry in the fosse by the Porte Serpenoise as I came back. What it was I didn't then know, and was too tired to inquire, but afterwards found out that it was the death-rattle of the only spy we ever shot in Metz.

After this our troops were occupied in re-camping themselves, and in pushing out small bodies of sharpshooters here and there, feeling whereabouts the enemy really was, for we never saw him. Following the traditions of their ancestors who ages ago surged down from those hyperborean regions they had the misfortune to be born in, they sought shelter and security in the woods, where, we were told, they burrowed holes and lived in troglodytic fashion. Were they not barbarians? Could any civilised Frenchman doubt it? Rumours, too, came in of awful cruelties committed, of houses plundered, of women murdered, and worse used than murdered—all the atrocities that each army always attributes to the other cropped up in regulation order, and all the tales of individual prowess I had heard from my youth upwards

were localised and re-named. Even the never-dying Irishman, who solely and alone surrounded his three, four, or five prisoners, found a reflex in a Chasseur. Ah, these Chasseurs! On foot, this one surrounded six—I think it was six—Uhlans, bringing them and their horses into Metz; but I never could find out which regiment of Chasseurs that brave descendant of the Irishman belonged to, so this is not evidence, it is only hearsay. One anecdote came in, and I believe it to be true. It demonstrates the fierce character of that Prussian cavalry so forcibly, and as I never heard it attributed yet to any other army, I think it may stand the test of investigation. Whilst the Prussian troops were gradually investing us, these ruthless rough-riders rode into every village when least expected. In one of these a poor old woman was washing what little store of linen was yet left her. She was very old, and her grey hair sprouted in silver tufts from her golden skin. The young women all had fled, and I fear, as young women will, had taken most of the linen with them. At any rate, she alone was left, and was thus engaged, when up rode some half-a-score of huge dragoons. They halt in front of her; they speak their barbarous tongue. The foremost man dismounts and draws his sword. Poor old woman, she falls upon her knees and raises up her wrinkled hands and shrill treble voice for mercy. It is in vain. Not all those cries, not those silver hairs, nor even yet that golden skin, can keep that ruthless man away. Neither age nor ugliness protects her. Raising his sword with one hand,

he stretches out the other towards her, and grasps—her soap; this he cuts in two, pockets the one-half, places the other on the well-wall, and growling out something like "Pfrdn, m'd'm" from his hairy lips, retires. Poor woman! the shock was too much for her; she lost her temper, and swore at those retreating Teutons for being—thieves.

These little things then had great uses. We had no letters. Our newspapers had no news, and so long as we had something to laugh at, it kept us from quarrelling and politics; so, with such small things as these, we kept ourselves amused, and diverted our thoughts occasionally from all that misery and suffering we each had every day some contact with. Poor wounded soldiers! all this wet weather slaughtered them by hundreds. In the tented ambulance of the Ile de Sauley the water came down from heaven and up from the Moselle. The tents were flooded, and more than one poor amputated man was drowned on his sodden straw bed before help could reach him. The "Polygon," built on the Ile Chambière, leaked horribly, and day and night the monotonous drip-drip-drip of the water on the soaked beds and wounded men was maddening to us who watched, and murdering to those we watched by. This was indeed Glory, and on the 31st of August we went in search of more of it. The weather had cleared up; the hot sun quickly dried up the limestone roads; and in the grey of the early morning the troops began to move.

Over the temporary bridges to the Ile Chambière they

came, and passed on, rejoining behind the Fort Bellecroix the various corps which had come from the other camps. Here our first misgiving awaited us. We were in hopes it was going to be an attempt to make a real *trouée*—a serious intention to cut a way through the wall of Prussians which day by day kept growing thicker around us. But here was the baggage, which was evidently not going. The tents were not packed, and the army was not in the order for a long march. Still we had faith. Unfortunately our eyes were opened afterwards; and when we reflected by the light of that knowledge which succeeded faith, we became convinced that even then it was not the Marshal's intention to leave Metz. In describing this battle, however, I shall endeavour to represent it only by the light I then saw it by, and regard it in a military point of view solely. How far its blunders were those of intention I cannot say; but if they were blunders of intention they were crimes, and should be punished as such; and if they were blunders of ignorance they are almost equally criminal.

Ignorance to the common soldier may be bliss, to the officer it is a misfortune, but in a Commander-in-chief it is a crime.

Before describing the attack on the Prussian lines it may be just as well to take a short bird's-eye view of the position as seen from Metz, and a glance at the map will greatly assist us at this point. Looking out towards the sun, which is just rising, we see close to us the high hill of St. Julien, up the western side of

which winds the little village of that name, and whose summit is capped by the long horizontal lines of its as yet unfinished fort. From this point runs out the long straight crest of a continued hill, descending somewhat at first, and then gradually rising again until it reaches the culminating point crowned by the lofty steeple of a church. That steeple marks Ste. Barbe—a little village which henceforth has a name in history under the very appropriate invocation of the patroness of artillery and fire-arms. Having an elevation of some 90 feet above even the fort-crowned hill of St. Julien, and rising some 400 feet above the flat plain of the Moselle, the importance of the situation is evident at once. Marvellous indeed would it be in any other army than that of France that such a hill should have been left unguarded; but the enemy was quietly allowed to take possession of it, and thenceforth it was one of the watchdogs of Metz. On the sloping ground which gently falls to the south of this long-crested hill are the villages of Servigny, Nouilly, and Mey, whilst placed on the little stream which cuts its quiet way at the bottom of the valley are the villages of Valliers and Vautoux, and on the opposite side of the stream, on a very gently ascending slope, are those of Noisseville and Montoy. On the northern slope, which runs down to the Moselle rapidly, indeed almost declivitously, at St. Julien, but flattening as the valley widens, are the villages of Vremy, Faily, Charly, and Chieulles, almost all of which played their part in this two days' tragedy.

Roughly speaking, the area of the battle-field was that of a scalene triangle, whose apex was at St. Julien, and whose base extended from Charly to Montoy; its longest side being about six miles in length, while its base would be about five miles. That was the area of the main portion of the fight. Detached skirmishing would of course extend its dimensions very considerably, but the chief interest lies within these bounds. The importance of the position of Ste. Barbe was immediately recognised by the Prussians, and the place, strong by nature, was strengthened by art. Epaulements were thrown up along the hill-sides. Redoubts were erected wherever any jutting spur of higher ground projected into either of the two valleys which it dominated, and whoever held Ste. Barbe held possession of the road to Sarrelouis on the one side, and the lower hills, which yet were high enough to guard the valley of the Moselle, on the other. It is necessary to be somewhat discursive, perhaps, on this point at first, in order to render more intelligible the description of a battle cut by the formation of the ground into two distinct parts, and extending over two days.

Although it was early morning when the march began, it was nearly four o'clock in the afternoon before the first shot was fired. On the left was the corps of Marshal Canrobert, in the centre was that of Lebœuf, and on the right that of Frossard. There appears to have been some want of preconcerted plan amongst them—something which could not be settled without a long and

serious delay : for our forces rested nearly twelve hours on the slope of St. Julien without doing anything—resting, too, right in full view of the enemy, who had ample time to bring up his reinforcements to the point so deliberately threatened. Marshal Bazaine stopped comfortably at his ease in the Château Grimont, reinforcing himself, and surrounded by his faithful Imperial Guard, who took no part in the proceedings. At last the army moves. On go the dragoons, with their glistening helmets. Glad of a move they must be, too ; some six or eight hours have they been grilling their brains in the Dutch oven which covers their cranium. General De Clérambault leads them off the first, that they may guard our extreme right against any surprise. The Moselle does this duty for us on the left, and is thoroughly to be relied upon. There are a few short words yet to be spoken to the Marshals. Canrobert, the echo of Bazaine, gives his last orders as the clock strikes four, and all are on the march. Straight out from the Fort St. Julien, towards the village of Chiculles, runs the road for Buzonville. That is the line of Marshal Canrobert and the 6th Corps ; he has to guard it and all the land lying between it and the river, and so much of the rising ground up to the crest of the long-ridged hill as he can manage. Along the crest goes Marshal Lebœuf, this day taking the place before occupied by Bazaine, and leading on that third corps d'armée which the Commander-in-chief led when the war began. He has to march along the crest of the hill straight on to Ste. Barbe



if he can, co-operating with Canrobert on his left, and touching with his right the second corps of Frossard. Between Marshals Canrobert and Lebœuf marches the division of General Ladmirault, whilst the aged General Changarnier occupies a corresponding position between Marshal Lebœuf and Frossard. Thus they diverge, and the worst of it is they do diverge ; for even thus early there was a good deal of divergence visible, not only on the field, but also in the council. Canrobert pushes forward with the intention of reaching Malroy, and cutting the enemy's communication by the river. Our artillery creeps out in front of St. Julien. A battery of mitrailleuses places itself by that much fought for but now abandoned wood of Mey, and a lively cannonade begins. Vany and Chieulles are attacked by the 10th and 4th Regiments of the Line, with the desire to turn the enemy back upon himself and drive him into the river. Ladmirault's corps marches right up to the village of Servigny, where for some unknown reason it waits for two hours under a heavy shower of shells. At last the charge is sounded. At the village they go. There is what is very rare now-a-days ; there is hand-to-hand work, and bayonet crosses bayonet at every corner. Each house is a fortress, but it must be carried. Our long 24-guns of St. Julien silence a Prussian battery at Gras which troubles us, and Servigny is once more French. Two hours it took to take it, and two hours under such circumstances is very long. During this long struggle here the villages of Chieulles and Vany

are carried, and Canrobert's corps almost touches the walls of Faily. The 12th Line are pushed forward in open order on Charly, and its sharpshooters creep under cover of the rolling broken ground up to within three hundred yards of a Prussian battery there. For two hours and a half do they pepper at it until at last it is compelled to retire behind the wood, which backs up the little village.

If Canrobert would only now make a dash at Malroy it could be carried from the right, as this battery covers the road, but the opportunity is not seized, and it never occurs again. Meanwhile, the extreme right of our forces has pushed its cavalry on to Coincy, arresting the progress of the Prussians, who, called by the heavy firing, came up from Remilly and Courcelles at the gallop. The dragoons dismount and hold the village, the Prussians file off.

Montauban pushes up the 1st division of the 3rd corps to Montoy, and forces his way right up to Flanville, where, touching the line of attack assigned to Frossard, he finds himself hardly strong enough for the work, and sends to the commander of the 2nd corps for assistance. None comes; Frossard wants to be well taken care of, and for an hour and a half Montauban holds, unsupported, this post, till at last, poor fellow, he falls. At length up comes General Magnin with his division (2nd corps), and taking charge of his own and that of Montauban, launches forth the 62nd and 18th battalions of the Chasseurs-à-pied, and the 51st of the line. At the

village they go, the 62nd leading, with drums and trumpets playing. On come the 51st; "à-la-baionnette" they shout, and plunge into the village, whilst the 18th deploys to the right, and covers the road to Retonfay, along which the Prussians retreat, with a line of fire and dead men. It was a brilliant bit of work, but it cost dear, and the 62nd left 13 officers and 400 men on that little bit of road which leads on to Flanville. In the centre Nouilly has been carried by the 95th and the 32nd of the line, under Lebœuf, at least by what is left of these two regiments; they have both suffered heavily in this war, and the 32nd has lost more than 1,000 rank and file, and 45 officers, since it came to Metz. Nouilly carried, they push impetuously forward, and serve Noisseville the same, and as the last sun in August sets the whole line is ours. Charly, Faily, Servigny, Noisseville, Flanville, Coincy, are all carried. But alas, night comes on, and those ten hours which we wasted this morning are sadly wanted now. Advance in the dark without more strength we cannot. We do not know where nor how strong the enemy is; but he knows our position only too well, and keeps up an almost continual fire upon us. But, worst of all, Canrobert has not pushed on far enough, and the bridges of Malroy are yet in the hands of the Prussians, who keep pouring fresh troops into the threatened position. These in their turn come down upon us, and between ten and eleven at night we have an attack in considerable force on the villages of Noisseville and Servigny. The Prussians do not

venture in, and we do not venture out ; so the firing serves more to check an advance of either foe than any other purpose. This was the position of things when late at night we returned to Metz, hopeful that during that night we should bring up fresh forces, and that tomorrow would be a grand day in history. Accordingly, at five in the morning I was again on the battle-field, this time wending my way to the right wing, which to my great surprise I found unstrengthened. Not a single fresh soldier had been brought up in the night. I hasten to the head-quarters of Marshal Leboeuf. They are in a little roadside inn, deeply buried in the small ravine of Lauvallier, formed by the same small stream which has ploughed out the willow-fringed valley of Colomby. In front of the little inn, on a bench against the wall, sat the Marshal, and sleeping by his side was the too old General Changarnier. Poor old man ! he is tired with yesterday's hard work and this night's ill rest. He tried to renew his youth, and piped out at times with but the faint echo of that voice which was so loudly heard in Africa, "*Allons, mes enfants ! allons !*" Poor old man, if he is of any use it is in the Council-room rather than the field, and I was heartily sorry to see him there. Now I find it is only too true that we have no reinforcements. Nothing has been done to strengthen our weak points, and the enemy has had all the night to make preparations for to-day's hard work. Of course he has taken advantage of it. All night long by those bridges Canrobert should and could have taken, has he been pouring

in fresh troops from his Right. All night long, from Ars la Quenexy, and Courcelles, from Remilly and Corney, by that road Frossard ought to have cut, has he been bringing up fresh men. And we, with all the Imperial Guard behind us, with lots of fresh troops in Metz, have not moved a man, not brought forward a single gun.

And this is supposed to be war. A war supposed to be led by Generals and Marshals of France, the nation which prides itself on being essentially a military one. It was incredible, but, therefore, it was true.

The day's work had begun already. As yet we on the right are rather tranquil, but the centre is engaged in warm work; so I clamber up the hill and make for Noisseville. It is a vortex of fire. I fear I shall not be believed when I state that the whistling sound of the shells in the air was as continuous and as loud as the sound produced by a locomotive blowing off steam in a railway station. It was the only comparison I could make at the time, nor have I since been able to find a more truthful one; and for about twenty minutes this noise never stopped. Up the hill now comes a battery of mitrailleuses. I am sorry to see it, for it means that we cannot hold out much longer, and are preparing to make it rather hot for the Prussians as they enter. They are ranged in position. The village is on fire in several places. Many poor wounded fellows make their way to us, and tell us they are outnumbered. Meanwhile fresh soldier is brought up. The Commander-in-

Chief and the Reserve are all at St. Julien at their first breakfast, and these poor fellows, who fought all yesterday afternoon, almost all through the night, now have to bear the brunt again. They can stand it no longer, and, borne back by numbers, they retire. Now begins the horrible grind of the mitrailleuses. Never before have I been so close to them, for I am in the midst of them here. No combination of letters can describe the sound their five-and-twenty mouths give utterance to. Gr-r-r-rutt is the nearest symbol, but the sound itself is too horrible to be expressed. It heaves the diaphragm of the stomach, almost breaks that of the ears, and nearly produces results akin to sea sickness. Gr-r-r-rutt it goes as the Prussians rush forward, and the column wavers and spreads, leaving a large black patch on the ground. Gr-r-r-rutt, gr-r-r-rutt from each, and the first advance is checked for ever. But it is our turn now to suffer, and shell after shell comes right amongst us, making our position much too hot to hold. Some of our horses are knocked over, but as yet none of our men are hit. But the shells fall too thickly to be endured, and we can hardly see for the dust and the shower of stones they throw up; so we must move off, and once more Noisseville is Prussian. We race up the Sarrelouis road, hoping we may make a stand there. Marshal Lebœuf is on horseback now, and rides up to us. Wherever there was anything going on, he was well up to the front; he may be vain, jealous, immoral, all this, but he is brave as a lion, if indeed that beast be any braver than the one whose

in fresh troops from his Right. All night long, from Ars la Quenexy, and Courcelles, from Remilly and Corney, by that road Frossard ought to have cut, has he been bringing up fresh men. And we, with all the Imperial Guard behind us, with lots of fresh troops in Metz, have not moved a man, not brought forward a single gun.

And this is supposed to be war. A war supposed to be led by Generals and Marshals of France, the nation which prides itself on being essentially a military one. It was incredible, but, therefore, it was true.

The day's work had begun already. As yet we on the right are rather tranquil, but the centre is engaged in warm work ; so I clamber up the hill and make for Noisseville. It is a vortex of fire. I fear I shall not be believed when I state that the whistling sound of the shells in the air was as continuous and as loud as the sound produced by a locomotive blowing off steam in a railway station. It was the only comparison I could make at the time, nor have I since been able to find a more truthful one ; and for about twenty minutes this noise never stopped. Up the hill now comes a battery of mitrailleuses. I am sorry to see it, for it means that we cannot hold out much longer, and are preparing to make it rather hot for the Prussians as they enter. They are ranged in position. The village is on fire in several places. Many poor wounded fellows make their way to the rear, and tell us they are outnumbered. Meanwhile not a fresh soldier is brought up. The Commander-in-

name the Marshal bears. He branches off to the right, whilst some of his staff and I ride on. Hardly are we parted when a shell comes plunging into the middle of us. It ploughs up a huge piece of the macadamised road, and when the dust allows us to see we find on the ground poor Captain Vaudrimey of the Staff, whose words were scarcely out of my ears. Poor fellow! it is no use. There is by his side a piece of iron sharp as a knife and jagged as a saw, and it has cut deep into his lungs. Poor young fellow! he was just entering life by its brightest portal, and was on the point of being married. Now he is dead. Before we could get him to the roadside he died, and there we left him. Half a dozen of the cavalry who are with us are hit too, and as they live we must look after them. So we help them all we can, and send them down the hill to the little inn beside which is an ambulance, and they take the dead body of their Captain with them. I said there was an ambulance there; there were two. The army surgeons had established theirs in the inn itself, but in a farmyard over the way were a few of the International Society of Geneva with their white caps and brassards, and with all their wonderful appliances for transport. I am glad to mention this circumstance, as it is the only time I ever saw one of their ambulances where it might be useful, and almost the only time I ever saw any of its officers near a field of battle. It is true they did nothing, but then they were there.

Finding the Prussian fire a little too warm, and seeing that we were being pushed back in the centre, I went to



the extremest right, hoping that by closing in upon the enemy there our division might even yet outflank them and change the fortune of the day by creating a diversion in their rear. Round, then, by the valley I go to Montoy, past the old battle-ground of Colomby, where many a mound and many a cross—some yet wreathed with garlands of faded leaves and flowers—mark out the resting-places of some German officers, and tell how heavy must their loss have been on that sad Sunday I last saw them there. As for the men, they are buried and forgotten. No wife nor child can ever hang a garland over their grave. They died fighting, “With God for King and Fatherland,” their helmets say; but, at any rate, they are dead, and are supposed to be covered with glory. What widow, what orphan could wish more? It will not do to think about such things just now: so we turn up the hill again and find the road which mounts it lined with dark-clothed *Chasseurs-à-pied*, men so like the Prussians in their uniform that we start at first, thinking that we have fallen into an ambuscade. This is a harmless mistake, but already have they fallen by French bullets from the similarity their uniform bears when seen at a distance to that of the foe. Crouching down on the ground, they lie ready to spring up in a moment, if needs be. They don't wait long, for the order comes to deploy in skirmishing order and advance. Hurrah! we are going forward; we shall win yet. Up comes, at a swinging pace the 25th, and we rush together for the big villa with the large grounds there. Hurrah! we are first;

its wall shelters us, and the game begins. Rattle all along the line goes the musketry ; pop, pop, from the vineyards on our left goes the sharp-shooters' quiet fire. There is a Prussian battery right in front of us, but we drive the men away from the guns. We are rushing forward, when all at once sounds the retreat.

Good Heaven ! What has happened ! We had almost snatched the victory. One's heart almost stops suddenly still. The troops obey the sound, and sulkily retire. As we turn to come back we see an isolated patch of French soldiers out on the hill in front of us. Who they are, or what they do there, no one knows. It turns out to be a portion of the 2nd corps, which, touching on the right of the 3rd, had been forgotten both by the Marshal and the General. Once it indeed was remembered, and two counter-orders reached it at the same moment, and they did not know which to obey, so they sent back for *written* instructions which never came. They remained in front of Flanville, having the honour of being the last men to retire from this useless slaughter, only reaching our lines fully an hour after every other man was within them. The Prussians advance, they re-establish themselves at their guns, and shell us horribly. All around us the shells drop, and I am suddenly awakened to the fact that I am between the two fires, and in comfortable killing distance from both of them. Action follows reflection rapidly, and I execute a strategic movement to the rear, worthy of a French General. But the shells fall awfully near, and once I really believed I was hit ;

in fact I was: a piece of shell whizzed over my right shoulder, just scratching my ear. The whole side of my head seemed numbed by the feeling, and the face contused, and it was only by manual experiment that I knew I still carried two ears on my head. Thank God, I came safely out of the range of the Prussians, and got under cover of the rising ground. It was now a retreat all along our line. Slowly we returned down the hill, and very sadly too. We established battery after battery: but as we had given up the heights to the Prussians, their fire was longer than ours. No sooner were we in position than their shells came plunging into us, and we had to draw back again. It was thus, little by little, that we returned towards Metz, and by middle-day we had lost all we took the night before. There, as we climbed the hill again, we came in sight of all those reserves massed on St. Julien. There, too, we saw the grim old grey-towered chateau from which the Marshal viewed the fight, and where he had his breakfast. "Beaten again from want of a General," exclaims each one; and a good many fists were shaken towards Grimont.

Fighting over, we steal a hurried crust of bread and a glass of wine at an ambulance, and then go in search of what wounded we can find. But, inasmuch as the Prussians occupy the field of battle after, I regret to say, the usual fashion, we are rather dubious about advancing, as we don't wear brassards now. The Geneva men have cured us of that, and we have no desire to be mistaken for them. Whilst we are hesitating, up rides an orderly

from Marshal Lebœuf. "The Marshal wants to speak with us." We follow : it is to ask us to try and recover the body of the poor Captain who was killed by our side this morning. That is authority enough for us, so down into the valley we go again, with some trepidation, it is true, for the enemy might take us for *francs tireurs*, and then we should have no chance. But down we go until we see a priest. Him we seize upon : he is a passport for us, and, moreover, he tells us the sad news that there are a lot of wounded down by the stream there. We follow him, and find it is too true ; dead, dying, and wounded. The deadly shells have made sad havoc here. Where there should be five men there is a heap of fragments. We knew there ought to be five by the heads which lay scattered about, but only by this. Here lie poor fellows half torn in two, to whom the brave, patient priest has already offered the only consolation they could receive in this world. Others lie there less dangerously wounded : these we transport at once, and send back for more help. Meanwhile we look around to find out where we are. There in front of us is the large villa we held this morning, and these poor fellows must have been murdered by our retreat. A black and white flag hangs out at one corner of the villa now, and a white one with a red cross at the other. It is a Prussian ambulance, and we seek there for help, if it can be afforded. Here we find some fifty of our wounded, with some hundreds of theirs, and making arrangement for the transport of our poor fellows to our own ambulances, we take our first

convoy up the hill again, forgetting all about our poor dead Captain's body at the time. Ultimately it was recovered, and he lies buried where his friends can find his resting-place. We ourselves had one poor fellow die as we bore him away ; and, as I waited at our outpost for the rest of our wounded, I saw him buried as the sun set. Poor fellow, I found in his pockets two letters—the one to his mother, the other, I suppose, to his sweetheart. To post them was impossible ; so, seeking the gendarme attached to his corps, I gave them up to him.

Thus sadly ended our last hopeful day at Metz. Never again had we any confidence in the military qualities of the Commander-in-Chief. We saw a movement, commenced at daybreak, suspended until evening, in view of the enemy. We saw an army sent out with divided councils. We saw the movement arrested when a night's march could have carried the position. We saw a force, weakened by a fair day's work and a long night's watch, left unsuccoured. We saw our victory snatched from us when, in spite of these disadvantages, we had almost grasped it ; and the shock was too rude. Confidence refused to grow again, and when we found political trickery added to military incapacity, we ceased to consider our Commander-in-Chief either wise or honest.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE FALL OF THE EMPIRE.

*September 2.*

“WHAT says the Marshal?” That was the inquiry next day. Not one single word. Not a single word did he vouchsafe in exchange for all this useless blood and bravery. There is nothing a soldier looks for with such keenness as the “Order of the Day” after a battle, and this silence of the Marshal depressed the army and the population of the town. We excused the silence at first. General Decaen died on the 2nd, from the effects of the wound he had received at Borny on the 14th of August. Poor fellow! he was buried on the 3rd of September, and all the Marshals and Generals in the army attended his funeral; and Bazaine might refrain from issuing a general order on that account, perhaps. Having assisted at the taking of Algiers, and at the capture of the Malakoff, Decaen was here killed by his horse falling on his wounded knee. The wound itself was slight, but want of early attention and this fall combined caused severe inflammation, and he died. He was a valued officer, and much esteemed by his men. It is

said that the Prussians meant making an attack on our position that day, but hearing that all the Generals would be thus engaged, they refrained, some say from courtesy, but others say they knew that if our soldiers were left to themselves victory would be more likely to visit us, and that the staunchest ally of Prussia was the incapacity of the Generals of France. The funeral over, we again looked out for the Marshal's order. But nothing ever came ; and the soldiers grew sulky and the citizens became sad. We did not joke any more at the position the Prussians had placed themselves or us in now ; it was beginning to look serious, even to Frenchmen.

Day by day we wondered why MacMahon never came. Even the most sanguine did not dare venture to express the opinion that no news was good news now. The fine weather paid us but a very short visit ; and dull, dreary days of waiting and of wet were weary to get through. The army was settling down in despair, and symptoms of insubordination began to show themselves. Officers lost confidence in their chiefs. Men openly said that they were slaughtered by the incapacity of their officers. The people in the town said that the army did them no service ; and the army said the people in the town plundered them. Everybody found fault with everybody else. Very thankful, indeed, was I that I had now balloons to build ; it gave me something to do. What I did I have thrown together in another chapter ; so there is no necessity to revert more particularly to it here. This employment had another advantage also : it obtained for me a regular

Laisser-passer, by which I was enabled to go where and when I liked, and which formed the basis of many a pleasant acquaintance with officers in camp ; in fact, I became a personage in Metz for a little while, and was, after that exaltation, freed from the perpetual irritation of arrest. Any gendarme who chose could stop any one he did not quite like the look of, and it was by no means flattering to me to find how little my looks pleased them. Moreover, to be accosted in a *café*, and made to produce your passport, was by no means pleasant. It attracted rather too much attention to be agreeable to a retiring disposition ; and, as my English passport was always a puzzle, the crowd of commentators on it was frequently more numerous than necessary, so that I hailed my Laisser-passer with delight, as freeing me from the attentions of these white-braided men.

During the first few days of September nothing of importance occurred. The Prussians threw up fresh batteries in various directions, and our forts would fire at and try to dislodge them, sometimes with success, but after a while the enemy learned the range of our guns, and established themselves just outside it. Things were going on in this sleepy fashion when I was startled on the morning of the 7th by a small note brought to my bedroom-door. "MacMahon has been defeated at Sédan ; the Emperor has been taken prisoner ; the army surrendered at discretion," that was all it said. In a quarter of an hour I was at the "Division ;" nothing



was known there ; in half an hour I was at the Quartier-Général, and there no news existed. It was thought impossible, in fact it was known not to be true, and I was deemed a "blagueur." To give my authority for my news was not possible without placing that authority in an awkward position, but I still held my opinion, yet at the same time my peace. On the night of the 9th, in the midst of an almost tropical storm of rain, all at once burst out a most furious cannonade all round us. In spite of the wet the population turned out. Every piece the Prussians had mounted fired at us. Our forts replied ; the heavens seemed to hail fire as the shells burst on the hill-sides. Some fell on the Ile Symphorien sent from the Prussian batteries at Ars ; some fell in the camp at Plappeville from the enemy's works at Rozerieulles. At Montigny some few did a little damage, but twelve or fourteen killed and wounded was all the results we knew of from an hour and half of the heaviest firing we ever had against Metz. It is MacMahon who approaches, said half the town. Let us make a sortie, they said, and they rushed to the gates in order to "interview" the Marshal on the subject, but the gates were closed, and without the watchword none could pass. The other half of the town had received some faint echo of the truth, and knew that MacMahon came not ; for on the 8th came in 600 prisoners, in exchange for those we had sent out before, and some of these knew that MacMahon had met with a check on his road from Chalons to Metz. Nevertheless as they had

believed the good news brought by the chasseur before, and found it false, they now disbelieved the bad news, or only believed it partially.

Next morning explanations of this heavy firing were sought, but none could be found : the very absence of an explanation was suspicious. The only probable one of the many alleged causes for all the expenditure of powder was, that an enormous body of French prisoners from Sédan was passing Metz, and that this was to impress them with an idea how vigorously we were being bombarded ; but the Prussians were not much given to waste their ammunition for nothing, and we never had a definite solution of the mystery accorded us. The 11th brought us more news ; it brought us a German newspaper, the *Kreutz*, and there we read the news of those disastrous days of Sédan, the fall of the Empire, and the establishment of a new form of government. This was scorned as a lie, a base fabrication. The journal itself was a Bismarckian organ ; indeed it was not the journal itself, but a special copy made on purpose to send into Metz. No one would take a calm view of the situation, few believed the news, and those who did, dare not say so. You must recollect, however, that for very nearly a month we had had no news of the outer world ; we had seen no gathering of the storm, it fell upon the people all at once ; and human credulity has bounds, especially when suddenly called upon to believe the truth.

Even so late as the 15th of September, the unbelieving and stony-hearted portion of Metz refused to accredit any-

thing coming from so suspicious a quarter as the German *Cross*. "It isn't the first time," says the Journal of Metz, issued on this date, and it was a Republican journal too,— "it isn't the first time that the Prussians have played us such a trick. In 1793 when the Republican soldiers under Kléber and Dubayet were besieged at Mayence"—mark the sarcasm, Mayence *v.* Metz—"the Prussians caused special editions of German journals to be printed for the special purpose of letting the French armies know that they had been smashed up. These lies didn't shake the courage of the besieged, and the courage of these *Mayençais* chalked out for us a line to walk on." "It is easy now to understand," says the same journal, "why the Prussians have never produced a French journal containing the false news given by the German *Gazette of the Cross*." Even so late as the 16th, when a French journal, *Le Volontaire*, was produced from the boots of a brigadier of the engineers, who had been a prisoner at Ars and exchanged;—even at this date, and with this evidence, the sceptics would not believe. The journal was unknown to many; having only commenced its career at Paris in July, it had not yet been extensively known in Metz; the type was examined by printers, and declared to be a base German imitation of a French fount, only capable of misleading the unlearned and unwary, and, as usual, people hugged their unbelief because faith and their wishes did not accord. Gradually it dawned upon them that this news might be true; and though the reverse of the French arms was severely

felt, I am bound to admit that neither the people of Metz nor yet the army greatly deplored the loss of either the Emperor or the Empire. Metz, as I have said before, was not enthusiastic in the Imperial cause, and they who rejoiced at the downfall of the Napoleonic Dynasty were many more than they who wept. Many, whilst denying strenuously the possibility of such a defeat as Sédan, readily believed the other portion of the news brought by the same journal. "The two facts are absolutely independent of one another," they said; "as for the fall of the Empire, that is no secret. We know that the Emperor, after having compromised France by his incapacity, by his faults, by the shackles which his blind obstinacy has fettered the national defence with, has long since been ready to fall. The vices of the Imperial system, now rendered visible, even to the blindest, by the events which have just occurred, have precipitated his dynasty into the bottomless pit." I am quoting literally the opinions expressed and published in the journal which considered itself to be the representative of the intellect of Metz. When such a journal dare express such sentiments in a town under military law, it is a sign that there must be a considerable portion of public opinion to back it. But it is not at all to be wondered at that two days afterwards all the editors of the Messin journals were had up before the Prefect and told to moderate their language, and as they were a race of men not much trusted by French authorities, they had to send their proof sheets of every issue to General Cof-

finières before it could be printed, and thus commenced another internal struggle which led to many unpleasant results, and to which I shall again revert.

Bazaine said nothing, not a word, not a single word. The army knew not what to think, and was greatly agitated; at first it was overwhelmed with the magnitude of the disaster to the service, and the personal loss each individual in it might have suffered in such a wholesale carnage as that which must have preceded so huge a catastrophe. Then came the question, what are we? to whom now do we owe allegiance? and personal politics began to obtrude themselves into everything. Of course the political feeling of so large a number of men as were there assembled varied greatly. I don't mean of course the privates, they, like privates in all armies, simply had no politics, or if they had they were but a reflection of those of the principal officers of their respective regiments.

But amongst these officers there was a broadly-defined line of demarcation. The African regiments might be considered chiefly as Orleanist or any other 'ist, except Imperialist—but decidedly not Republican. They were men who wished to serve in the army of France, and to have as little to do with the Emperor as possible—to be soldiers ready against that time when the King should have his own again—but who that king was they did not agree upon. The Guards and elegant regiments were, of course, chiefly Imperialist—that was natural; it paid best; promotion and pleasure abounded in the Guards, and there was wonderful luck there, if you only played

your cards well. Equally naturally the officers of Artillery and Engineers were given to Republican proclivities. Artillery and engineering officers in France, like those of the same services in our own country, are generally too clever to be entrusted with high commands. We, it is to be hoped, are getting over this prejudice against brains; the French have not yet shown much inclination to do so. A cavalry man who could sit a horse well and look pretty at reviews was much more likely to rise to be a General under the artificial forcing of the Imperial system than the cleverest engineer, or the most brilliant artillerist, whose functions are simply useful, and who cannot exhibit himself in any ornamental capacity. Promotion came not from sunny smiles of an Empress to them, and they saw the rapid rise of younger men—*officiers des salons* only, elegant perambulating machines for the exposition of military millinery—with an envy and a jealousy which usually drove them to the opposite pole of politics. Almost to a man the French Engineers and Artillery, excepting, of course, the wondrously-dressed artillery of the Guard, were of Republican tendencies. So Bazaine, having a difficult task to play, took refuge in silence. This silence was not wisdom. Silence is not always the mark of the wise; a good straightforward proclamation would have smothered the discussion now rising when it was but a little spark. He didn't make one, so it grew into a flame. Coffinières, on the other hand, took a more manly part; but then Coffinières was honest, and on the 13th he issued the

following proclamation—the first historical document which related to us in Metz the important events which had taken place twelve days ago :—

“INHABITANTS OF METZ.

“We have read in a German journal—the *Gazette de la Croix*—the very sad news of the fate of a French army crushed by the number of its enemies after a three days’ struggle under the walls of Sédan. This journal also announces the establishment of a new government by the Representatives of the country. We have no other evidence of these events, but we are not able to contradict this.

“In these very grave circumstances, our only thought should be for France. The duty of each one of us, whether as simple citizens or as officers, is to remain at our posts, and to vie with each other in defending Metz. In this solemn moment France, our country, is summed up for each one of us in the one word METZ! that city which has so many times before successfully resisted our country’s foe.

“Your patriotism, of which you have already given such proofs by your care for our wounded soldiers, will never fail. By your resistance you will make yourselves honoured and respected, even by your enemies. The memory of the deeds of your ancestors will sustain you in the coming struggle.

“The army which is about our walls, and which has already shown its valour and its heroism in the combats

of Borny, Gravelotte, and Servigny, will not leave you. With you it will resist the enemy which surrounds us, and this resistance will give the Government time to create the means of saving France — of saving our country.

“ Metz, 13th September, 1870.

“ L. COFFINIÈRES,

“ General de Division, Commandant Supérieur  
de la Place de Metz.

“ PAUL ODENT,

“ FELIX MARÉCHAL,

“ Préfet de la Moselle.

“ Maire de Metz.”

This did not say much, but it showed so evident an intention to hide nothing from us which we ought to know, that General Coffinières won much more the confidence of the town than Bazaine did of the army. It soon became known, too, that this proclamation to the town was issued by Coffinières in spite of the protestation of Bazaine, and that a very stormy meeting had taken place the previous evening at the Ban St. Martin, when the question was discussed. “ Say nothing,” said Bazaine. “ Say all that it is wise to say,” said Coffinières, and he said it. The split was visible enough now; and notwithstanding the last paragraph of the proclamation, it was evident that the intentions of the Marshal and the Commandant were not the same.

This proclamation had one remarkable effect; it broke through the silence of the Marshal. The army was indignant that it should be left in ignorance of that which



the town was informed, and, for once, the passive resistance of the Commander-in-Chief gave way. On the 16th, therefore, three days after the date of General Coffinière's proclamation to the inhabitants of Metz, the following order of the day was issued :—

“ TO THE ARMY OF THE RHINE.

“ According to two French journals of the 7th and 10th of September, brought to the Grand Quartier Général by a French prisoner who has been able to effect his escape from the enemy's lines, His Majesty the Emperor Napoleon has been interned in Germany, after the battle of Sédan, and the Empress, with the Prince Imperial, having quitted Paris on the 4th of September, an executive power, under the title of the Government for National Defence, has constituted itself in Paris. The members who compose this are General TROCHU, President, Governor of Paris ; and the Deputies of Paris,

“ JULES FAVRE	E. PELLETAN
“ GAMBETTA	JULES FERRY
“ GARNIER PAGES	JULES SIMON
“ CRÉMIEUX	E. PICARD
“ GLAIS-BIZOIN	H. ROCHEFORT
“ E. ARAGO	DE KÉRATRY

(Prefect de Police).

“ Generals, officers, and soldiers of the Army of the Rhine, our military obligation towards the country in danger rests the same.

“ Let us continue, then, to serve it with devotion, and with equal energy defend its territory from the stranger, and social order against evil passions.

“ I am convinced that your morale, of which you have already given such proof, will rise to the height of the circumstances, and that you will add new claims to the admiration of France.

“ Bau St. Martin, 16th September, 1870.”

This satisfied no one. The lovers of things as they had been, said it was foolish to recognize a self-constituted body who had no *locus standi*, who were not even elected by the people,—who could have no function, inasmuch as, though the Emperor was a prisoner, yet he had never abdicated, and that by law the Empress was still Regent, though temporarily absent from the country. The other side, who wished for things to be better than they had been, said, “ This is an insult ; it gives no adhesion to the Government of National Defence,—the only government which exists in France. It threatens us under the name of social passions.” And Metz, like poor France, split herself up into useless fractions. Coteries began to be formed ; Imperialist meetings were held here ; Republican meetings were held there ; Orleanist and Legitimist meetings were held wherever two or three could be gathered together ; and each of these was divided against itself. There was the party of the Regency, the party of the Restoration, and this latter was divided into the old Emperor’s or the young one’s faction. There was the Republic, one and indivisible, the Confederated Republic of different states, but how many there were to be, or what they were to be called,

no one could tell ; there was the Red and Rights of Man Republican party, and Orleanists and Legitimists had half-a-dozen different candidates to support, where half-a-dozen could be found to support their various claims. The outward and visible signs of these inward sentiments were many. Republicans punched out the head of Napoleon from their decoration of the Legion d'Honneur. Orleanists sported silver *fleurs-de-lys* on their scarf-pins and shirt-links ; and the variety in cravats was a political study in itself. Confusion was king, and confusion alone reigned. Like the autumn leaves which were now falling, men's opinions were blown about with every wind, and that the wind bloweth where it listeth ballooning taught me daily. With all of these parties I mixed. I took their opinions medicinally, to correct an undue tendency to any one disease, but it was rather like living in a lunatic asylum until I became used to it.

There was another subject which now began to force itself upon our notice and distract it from politics ; it was provisions. Now that we were indefinitely blockaded, our faith in '92, and the two thousand volunteers per day, grew less. The Republic had come, but not our Valmy. The victory was the other way this time, and it was necessary that we should eat. Already suspicious-looking viands had made their way to table ; already modest or almost immodest-looking little yellow notices had begun to be stuck up at the corners of our streets, informing us that a "Boucherie Chevaline" had been opened at such and such a place ;

already it had been notified to us that it was getting difficult to find food for our horses, and it now dawned upon us that the horses were finding food for us. We had been treated to a learned disquisition on the value of horses' flesh as food, and amongst other arguments adduced in its favour was singularly enough the one that "the Germans, our ancestors, had a great predilection for it—especially the flesh of white ones." Certainly the sins of these ancient fathers were being visited on us, children of theirs,—if, indeed, their children we were. It was more satisfactory to learn that "if there was any difference between it and beef, it was in favour of the horse — there being just as much difference as there was between mutton and venison"; but its chiefest merit was that it possessed a larger quantity of "osmazôme." Ah! M. Samson, I have often thanked you for that word. When the horses we had afterwards were very tough, I reflected that there was a great deal of "osmazôme," and rejoiced thereat, though what it is I really don't yet know. Still we clung to the idea that our own particular viand was beef—even though we knew poor So-and-so was cheating himself into the belief that the horseflesh we knew he was eating was really beef. There were a few cows left us yet, but they were as sacred as if we had been Brahmins. They lived in the dry ditches behind the citadel, and were kept for the little milk they gave, which was required for the wounded and the sick. Pork we occasionally had, but a live pig was sold at about three francs the pound, and as our purses, as well as our

stomachs, were gradually approaching that condition of things which nature is said to abhor, it was rarely that the luxury of the unclean beast could be indulged in. Milk, butter, and cheese had long since passed away. Some time before this the last bit of cheese I saw was sold for five francs the pound, and potatoes sold at a penny each, and we had neither sugar nor salt. As for drinkables, we had plenty of wine then; but, alas! the Prussians had cut off our water supply at Gorze, and we were expected to drink veritable Eau de Moselle, the which, as we had no commissioners for rivers there, was not in the most inviting condition. That I strictly declined to take; in fact, I became a total abstainer from all unfermented liquors—on principle; and whilst a drop of anything else liquid existed in Metz I rigorously refrained from touching the thick, yellow, slimy compound, which refused filtration, and with which the Prussians hoped to poison us all.

On the 10th General Coffinières issued notice, “by order of His Excellency Marshal Bazaine,” that all persons having more barley, oats, hay, or straw, than would suffice for their “justifiable necessity” for thirty days, were, within three days from this date, to deliver such surplus at the magazines, on the Isle of Saulcy, and that a receipt for the same would be given them, entitling them to secure either a stipulated price per quintal, or a similar quantity of like fodder *after the war*. Those who did not comply were to have the provisions in question taken from them at a greatly reduced price, and

no fodder of any description was allowed, after this, to be sent out of the town. On the 14th, the municipal council was called together, and for the first time the question of food was seriously brought under their consideration. There it was then definitely stated, that as horseflesh had for some time been regularly rising in price, they were striving all they could to obtain from the army a regular daily consignment of horses to the abattoirs, and by "this means, and also by fixing the price of the viand, if it should become necessary," bring the butchers to reason. The butchers had to be brought to reason, for, as butchers will, they kept up the price so long as possible, and that price just now was very long indeed. The keenest housewife couldn't get a choice cut of the fillet under four francs the pound, and an ordinary bit of "long ribs," with not an ounce of fat, was two francs fifty. No member of a municipal council could stand such prices, and it was ultimately decided that in consideration of Marshal Bazaine letting the town have the horses of the army at a reduced price, which as he had taken our fodder was but just, the inferior joints should be sold at ten centimes the kilogramme, that is at one half-penny the pound, the middle cuts at fifty centimes the kilogramme, or two pence halfpenny the pound, and *viande de choix (filet excepté)*, at one franc the kilogramme, or five pence the pound; and from this price it never varied, so that feeding was not dear, whatever dining might be; but then to feed was a necessity, to dine a luxury; a very expensive luxury too, at this time,

and after this an impossibility unless one was a General. All our lesser luxuries of life, too, were gradually disappearing; day by day some accustomed accessory, which use had made us consider almost a necessity, made itself conspicuous by its absence, or only existed at prohibitory prices to us strangers whose money resources could not be replenished, it having become evident to us now that what money we possessed would have to be husbanded with the most jealous economy. However good one's credit might be, whatever amount of letters of credit might be possessed, nothing that was not gold or French *billets de banque*, was of use, and the prospect was not cheering. Worst of all—there was no more tobacco. It may seem a little matter, but it was not. Go into that shop; there, follow those soldiers, and then see! Look at them, as Madame behind the clean counter and in front of the empty shelves barely raises her eyes from her knitting to look up and say, "*Pas du tabac.*" "*Pas du tabac*" is repeated in tones varying from the deepest despair to the highest indignation, as the inquirer conveys the mournful news to his comrades, and they are paralysed. Tell those men to form a part of the grand' gardes, to go to almost certain death, and there is not a murmur, not a hesitation; hunger and want of rest are borne cheerfully; but that there should be no tobacco is a grief too great to be patiently endured, and there is almost an *émeute*. Some few of us who were wise or warned in time laid in a little store, and it is astonishing how many friends we acquired at that time; but the worst of it was



that they all smoked. After a long period of deprivation this necessity of life was restored us. There was plenty in store at Metz, it seemed ; but the man with the right number of buttons had gone away, because the tobacco factory was turned into an ambulance, and until he could be found we could get no more tobacco.

His return to his duties was cordially welcomed, rarely ever was any man's more so, for as our stock diminished we began to speculate what effect this war would have upon smokers. The Crimean war, by forced familiarity with lighter tobaccos and contact with the French, induced and introduced the habit of smoking cigarettes into England where they were hardly known before. The American war, by depriving us of our supplies, created the demand for the innumerable abominations sold under the veracious title of mixtures. Would this influx of fuming Germans compel us to abandon it ? The thought is dreadful ; let us change the subject.

As for the army, it did nothing but quarrel within itself, and Bazaine the rather fostered these dissensions in it than tried to heal them ; he could thus deal with it in sections rather than as a whole, and that he was now self-seeking was evident. *La Patrie, c'est Moi*, was henceforward his maxim. To hold out and wait was his fixed idea. Not that there was now any military necessity for his waiting here ; what that course must result in was patent to all, he had done all the good he could by waiting ; he had remained with us until our forts were made in some degree tenable, until we had had time to mount the



city's walls with guns, and until our National Guard was organised ; to wait now was but to exhaust uselessly his provisions, and those of the fortress. In fact, after this date, he but added the numbers of his army to those of the other enemy, which was besieging Metz. As for the force we had, it was more than ample at this time to have cut its way out in any direction. I myself saw on the 15th of September, the returns of our available force. On that day we had 138,000 men, fit in every respect to take the field ; 6,000 cavalry were then able to be mounted, besides having horses available for a large body of artillery ; and I firmly believe that at this time the Prussian forces which beleaguered us could not have brought anything like that number in the field. The rains had washed a large portion of their army into their mother earth ; they died from dysentery and fever in large numbers daily. Personally I know that at this time, at many points, there were but little more than sentries there, and no force capable of making a resistance. I have been out at night with our "éclaireurs," and seen only hundreds where we were led to suppose thousands existed. I have seen camp fires lighted in the woods, where no camps were, merely that their smoke might rise up and impress us watchers in Metz with the awe of the numbers of our enemies, which lay lurking in those woods around us. Many a time have I stumbled over those diabolical wires they would wind from tree to tree, and then lie still as death, not daring even to rub my barked and bleeding shin, but lying still, expecting each

moment to hear the dull thud of a needle-gun bullet in some very adjacent tree ; and many a time I might have rubbed that shin in comfort, for there was no one near enough to fire at me. Wire fencing ought not to be allowed either in the hunting or the battle field. Yet we were told that the Prussians were all around us, hid in every wood, and by consequence every wood was considered an army. How strongly this feeling was impressed upon the minds of the leading officers is best illustrated by the following fact, which occurred in my presence :—

I, as I have before stated, was the only civilian in Metz who was allowed to ascend the tower of the Cathedral, which was used as an observatory, provided with telescopes, and fitted up as a telegraph station, communicating with the office of the commandant of the place, the quarter-general of the Marshal, and with each of the forts. We were on the lookout one day, when an officer of the Etat Major, who had been earnestly and long looking through the telescope, exclaimed, "*Mon Dieu, they are advancing en echelon!*" "Where, my captain?" I exclaimed. "There!" said he, pointing to some long black lines stretching across a distant field. I looked, and said, "Yes, my captain, they are the same army which shuts us up in Metz." "What do you mean, sir?" said he, in some slight ire at the rather sarcastic tone of my remark. "The shadows of the poplars, captain," was my reply ; and on further examination it turned out to be as I had said. A long row

of poplars were "end on" to us, and the raking rays of the setting sun flung their long shadows over the fields, presenting no great dissemblance to lines of Prussian troops. From that day, *les ombres des peupliers* passed into a synonym for the supposititious army which surrounded us; and though there may have been a more solid substance in many of the woods, yet it was thoroughly believed by a very large number of us, that most of our enemies were of the same impalpable character; and we all thought that it was perfectly possible to make a successful *trouée*, at least we were all willing to try. It seemed to us that to bring up numbers from the circumference of so wide a circle to the threatened point, was then almost impossible. The rain had made the country impassable. Only by the main high roads could an army now proceed, and these main high roads all radiated from, they did not encircle Metz. Strasbourg was waiting for relief. Thionville was daily expecting us, and if France could not come to our help, it was the duty of her army to go to her assistance. This was evident to us all; it was daily and hourly said, and Metz was willing to risk all the horrors of a bombardment if it were needful rather than she should be disgraced by seeing an idle army wasting itself and her provisionments under her walls. The army was ready and anxious too. The town was willing to part with it, and defend itself. But to all now it became evident that Bazaine refused to act on the aggressive. He would not compromise himself in any way,—to play a waiting game was his policy. If a strong republican party could be

formed, he could then sell his sword and his services to them. If, as we all thought probable then, Prussia would do anything to avoid the firebrand of a republic so near her borders—borders which seemed to enlarge day by day; if she would the rather foster a regency or repeat the history of those Hundred days which followed the parallel epoch in the great Napoleon's fate—then Bazaine's power would be at its culminating point. The Thane of Glamis, the Thane of Cawdor, and perhaps—It was that *peut-être* which ruled over all; it is that *peut-être* which lost to France her finest fortress, the masterpiece of Vauban—the school and touchstone of all her greatest military engineers: and that *peut-être* will probably make the Moselle rather than the Rhine her future boundary. Bazaine was no true Marshal of *France*: it was not his country but himself he wished to serve, and that ambition which he displayed in Mexico has been pre-eminently visible here. By this light alone can the military inactivity of that army of the unseen Rhine, which sat down so long and sadly by the waters of the Moselle, be read. From this cause alone did that cavalry, the pride of France, do nothing but eat its own horses, and it is this sin which will be written between the lines of military history when Time and her daughter, Truth, or Bismarck and Bazaine (not that the terms are in any way synonymous), allow us to judge more righteously than we yet can the rights and wrongs of the Siege of Metz.

## CHAPTER X.

### OUR BALLOONS.

*September.*

THE sole anxiety from which I painfully suffered at Metz was the utter absence of all communication with England. The monotony of dull dreary days without fighting was wearisome ; the certain knowledge that to-morrow and to-morrow would but bring you horse for dinner was anything but appetising ; but in all this there was no ever-gnawing anxiety. It was only when I thought of home, and of the inability to fulfil that purpose for which I had come to Metz, that despair seized upon me.

I had tried in vain to send messengers through the lines with letters. A man's life was too dear a price to pay even for success,—for failure, it looked too like murder. Nor was I the only one who tried. Companies of us were formed, we clubbed our means together, and offered great rewards, but all in vain. One gentleman, Mr. Servier, the director of the Gas Works, advertised in the public journals that he would give 500 francs to any one who would take a letter through the

Prussian lines in order to send it to Paris, and a further sum of 500 francs to any one who would bring us any news from that external part of France we were so isolated from. The editors of the different journals joined their purses and offered 1000 francs to any one who would go to Luxembourg and return with a pocketful of French or Belgian newspapers. The money tempted many to try, but none came back. Many a letter went off; one or two returned to me after wandering for days from hiding place to hiding place. Some, alas! I know were buried in the clothes of the messenger, who was killed in endeavouring to get through; and one lay hidden with its porter in a village within the lines from the 1st of September until the entry of the Prussians into Metz, and was returned to me at Luxembourg by the peasant who was to have taken it to that place at least two months before.

During the affair of the 31st of August, he slipped out in the night by the road to Lorry, making his way to the small town of Auboué, of which he was a native. Here for several days he rested, seeking means of further progress, but finding none. Passage on this side being found to be impossible, he endeavoured to return to Metz; he was then captured by the Prussians, searched, and interrogated; but, by a wonderful accident my letter, which was in his hat, was not discovered. Had it been, it would have conveyed no intelligence to the enemy, for I consider that a correspondent at the seat of war should

above all things honourably guard from any risk of misuse the information he may acquire.

I may perhaps here interpolate the opinions on this point of an officer holding high rank in the army of the Rhine, and having more personal influence than even that rank alone would ensure. He, like most French military men, had a very unwholesome hatred of the press. He had seen it only from the French side, and as a rule I cannot congratulate the French journals on their representatives. It was his theory, and that of most other of the officers in high command, that a correspondent was simply an unpaid spy of the opposite party. "He tells all he knows when he knows anything," said he, "and when he knows nothing he tells lies, and sometimes his great lies are more dangerous than the little truth he knows." There is a great deal of truth in this sarcasm, and the only way in which I could plead the cause of the true correspondent was by agreeing that he ought to restrict himself only to the description of events which had occurred, never to theorise on probable results, and to be willing to be hanged forthwith in case of his making a communication in any way useful to the enemy. Holding this opinion myself, not one of my letters could have been of the slightest use to the Prussians; still I regret they had so many of them. It could have done them no harm to have forwarded them to England, instead of sending, as they did some of them, to the Marshal; but they were not so courteous as we hoped they were, and so my letters never

reached their destination. The one I now refer to was carried from village to village, and at last its bearer was imprisoned in a small farmhouse until the siege was broken up, and he and I entered Luxembourg well-nigh together.

Other means failing, I endeavoured to be my own postman, taking my own life in my hand in preference to buying another man's. On the first occasion I presented myself at the Prussian outposts in open day, showing my passport properly signed by the Prussian authorities in London, and demanded, by the potent name of "We Granville, &c.," that I should be allowed "to pass freely without let or hindrance." But it was all in vain. "We Granville" was powerless, and the "name of Her Majesty" couldn't help me. The strict order had been given that none should enter and that none should leave Metz. They gave me beer, they gave me dinner, they gave me cigars; but they would not give me leave to pass, and I had to return by the way I came, still sadder and more anxious than before. Again I tried, this time as a very stupid *paysan* with blouse and sabots but no brains, and in the dusk of the evening, when I hoped twilight and good fortune might both aid me. Neither did; and my hopes were rudely crushed. "Halt! la!" with a metallic sort of click, soon stopped my rambles, and I had to render myself a prisoner to a stalwart German. A short march brought me to the guardhouse, and a sharp interrogation was commenced; but I was very stupid, almost an idiot. I knew of at



least 300 soldiers being in Metz, but my inability to discriminate numbers was a weakness so palpable that they took pity on me. They kindly gave me dark rye bread, excellent cheese, beer to wash them down with, and a delicious bundle of soft clean straw to lie down upon. Officers came and stared at me, and fortunately one man knew the village I was bound for, and my description of it, though I had never been there, so tallied with his knowledge that he almost wept with me when I found he knew my mother. This saved me, and I was glad I had learned my lesson so well from a native of the village I encountered in Metz before I started. They kept me half the night, and before daybreak led me stumbling in my sabots to a distant outpost, and turned my face Metzward, with a friendly intimation that if I didn't march straight on they would put a bullet into me, an intimation I was sufficiently intelligent to comprehend. My troubles were not yet over, for the French outposts did fire at me. So I set to work grubbing up a few potatoes, which I knew they would let me bring into camp, and then, selling these for a few sous, I found my way back to Metz and reason; but many a day after that did my heels bear testimony of the hardness of those sabots.

I had proved the impossibility for a person unacquainted with the woods and by-ways to get out, by personal experience. Even the natives I had sent out, and who professed to be able to find their way blindfold, could not do it. The earth was closed against me; the

water of the river ran to Prussia, so I must try the air. It was the failure of more certain means which induced the thought. I pondered it well over, and became convinced that I could manage it, but I feared the thing would be thought so wild and chimerical that I never expected to have the idea entertained in those high quarters it was necessary to apply to, for permission to practise aerostation. High quarters I had already found were not always of the highest intelligence, and often resented interference from a lower stratum. The more I pondered on the subject the more I realised the possibility of its execution. I mentioned it to a M. Betanier, a young gentleman attached to the administration of the Ponts et Chaussées who mentioned it to his chief, who mentioned it to Colonel Goulier, the chief of the military engineering school, who mentioned it to General Coffinières, who mentioned it to Marshal Bazaine ; and thus after the fashion of a well-known erection of a domestic mansion which had amused my youth, the scheme grew, and I was requested to wait upon General Coffinières and explain my views.

It now became a serious practical question, and I therefore prepared a few drawings and calculations, which I laid before Lieutenant Bréguet, of the Corps Franc du Chemin de Fer de l'Est,—a long title which we usually shortened down to the first two words.

The Corps Franc was one of those numerous bodies of men who, legally called upon to serve their country in the Mobile Guard, sought other and more exclusive

means of doing so. It was from this cause that so many bodies of *francs tireurs* became established. It was thus that the Intendancy, the Postes, et Trésors, became so thronged with young men, and it was from this desire for individuality that every general found himself supplied with so many secretaries. Some of these bodies wore very smart uniforms, some of them bore countless buttons; and a good many of the bodies and the buttons were utterly useless. The Corps Franc was a body without many buttons. They were intended to re-establish the broken-down railways which the fleeing Prussians would destroy, as, beaten and dispirited, they fled before the army of the Rhine, and sought refuge on the shores of the Baltic. The actual circumstances of the war not requiring this service of them, they found themselves at Metz with nothing to do. All the officers were men of scientific attainments, embracing, as their muster roll did, the names of well-known chemists, engineers, electricians, and other kindred spirits, and amongst them was Lieutenant Bréguet, the representative of a well-known firm of horologers and makers of scientific instruments in Paris. Wounded by his boot in a forced march from Pont-à-Mousson to avoid capture by the Prussians when that place was taken, I had made his acquaintance when time hung heavy over both of us, and we had talked ourselves into friendship. I knew his high scientific attainments, and laid the scheme before him. He saw at once the practicability of the affair, and on the 27th of August we went and had our first interview with

General Coffinières. The General smoked a pipe over it, entered very minutely into the detail of the scheme, and eventually approved of it.

Our proposition was, firstly, to begin by building small balloons for the transport of letters, and then to proceed to the construction of a larger one, to be used first as a captive balloon, by which we could mount to a sufficient height to survey the enemy's doings in the valleys beyond us, communicating these by telegraph to our friends, and then fly away to some safe quarter with those despatches the Marshal always said he so much wished to send. We were introduced to Colonel Goulier, the second in command, and, therefore, the real working commandant, of the great Military Engineering College here, or to give its lengthy but proper title—L'École d'Application de l'Artillerie et du Génie.

Colonel Goulier is a small-made dapper little man, who, entering the school as a sous-lieutenant in his youth, has never left it, but steadily worked his way up—by merit and, which is rare, not by favour—to the highest position he can attain. Without wife or children, the school has been to him a home, its pupils children, and from five in the morning till ten at night he was there always in the bosom of his numerous family, and his grief at parting from his school home for Prussia is, I verily believe, a greater grief to him than the downfall of France, which causes it. An excellent mathematician and a precisian of the first water, he, if he had known as much of the world as he did of his slide rule, would have been an in-

valuable coadjutor ; but, unfortunately, the accuracy of his experiments and the exact description of every detail, were with him the final end of all things ; and great as was his learning, we found him frequently in the way when rapid progress was our chiefest aim.

Our object was to construct a balloon with the utmost rapidity, his to make it with the uttermost scientific accuracy. The two might have been conjoined if we had had plenty of time, and if we had been in an open town, having free communication with others in which we could obtain those things which were lacking in Metz. As it was, that which we could not find, we had to make, and under the circumstances this added very greatly to our labours.

To our select body of balloon makers was now added Captain Schultz, of the artillery, the ingenious inventor of the mitrailleuse, a clever thoughtful man, to whom also the idea of rendering available postal balloons had occurred at much the same time as to me. I was, however, the first to place the idea in a tangible shape before the Government, and, in consequence, was created "aëros-tatic commander-in-chief." Captain Schultz's idea was to build the postal balloons with cotton cloth—the ordinary printed goods sent out from Manchester, and which still bore their English labels. Our idea was paper for our postal ones, and silk for the larger essay. This divergence of idea did not in any way impede our progress, and we each worked willingly for the success of all.

Our first care was to make a perquisition in the town, seeking for paper, cotton, and silk sufficient for our purpose, finding, where we could, caoutchouc for the covering, and benzine and spirits of turpentine for its solution, and then to lay an embargo on them for the purposes of the State. Even the cord for our net was not forgotten, and all the little ropemakers' shops were hunted up, and their stock was turned over in order that we might find what was suitable, and secure it. With much seeking all was found, and we even succeeded in obtaining the retention of some caoutchouc works at the little village of Sablons, the which, being within the military zone that surrounds the fortifications, had been condemned to be pulled down, and they were soon the only buildings standing in the wide circle of desolation which surrounded Metz. As an instance of how little things impeded our progress, I may mention that the primary idea was to use pure hydrogen for our ascensional power, in order not only to save our supply of coal gas, which already threatened shortness, but also to reduce by its greater ascending force the diameter of our balloons, and our labour. It was in vain; the weather had been hot, the drinkers of cool liquids many, and all the sulphuric acid with which we wished to generate our gas had been used up for making *siphons* of *eaux gazeuses*; so we had drunk up all our balloons. Hundreds of similar little disappointments we encountered daily, and the labour seemed never ending. At last, after various trials, we found the things we wanted, and set to work.

The large *grenier* in the roof of the school was placed at our disposal, and a fine long room it was, with a huge open-timbered half church-like roof; for the School of Engineering was once a peaceful monastery. Built originally for the Dominicans in the early part of the thirteenth century, its wide-naved church formed now the *salle des manœuvres*, and fragments of its early architecture jutted out from its walls, above modern cannons and between those highly-prized little barrels which some skilled or lucky pointer had struck at some unusual distance, and which bore the date of his fortunate attempt, handing down his name to an envious and admiring posterity. Its ancient sancte-bellcote was turned into a small observatory, whence I often watched the progress of the siege and witnessed the burning of many a village. The Dominicans disappeared and the Benedictines replaced them, building luxurious cloisters and vast halls, filled now with an admirable series of models of cannons and divers systems of fortification. In ordinary times some 120 sous-lieutenants of artillery and engineers are installed here learning that art and mystery of destruction which was now finding so practical an illustration before them. At present the building, like most of the public or state buildings at Metz, was converted into an ambulance. All the senior pupils were away in the field, and the junior ones made the chemical laboratory their kitchen, dined in the mineralogical museum, and slept where they could.

That was the situation in which I found myself when

formally installed as balloon maker in ordinary to the army of the Rhine. Early in the morning of the 4th of September I laid out the lines for our first balloon, cut the pasteboard pattern for the sectional pieces which were to compose it, and we set to work. Our first balloon was three metres in diameter, and constructed of the ordinary white lining paper used by paper stainers, the edges pasted together with common paste. This was soon completed, and we carried it in triumph to the gas-works a mile out of the town, to inflate and varnish it. Inflate it temporarily for this purpose with gas we could not afford to do. Our stock of coal was small, and we must not waste our gas. We turned an old tar barrel up on end, fixed a gaspipe in the top, lighted straw beneath it, and inflated our balloon after the ancient fashion of Montgolfier. It swelled magnificently, "swelled visibly before our werry eyes," as the immortal Weller would have said. It was a moment of joy, and we set to work to coat it over with boiled oil in order to render it impervious to the escape of gas. It was finished; a first-born baby could hardly be a greater joy and wonder. The workmen descended, and all went well, when an excited Frenchman, in his gleeful haste, drove a ladder right through it. All our hopes vanished; our work was destroyed, and nothing was left us but to return in dudgeon back to Metz.

Disappointed, but not daunted, we set to work again; and this time varnish without inflation; and now our triumph is complete. We finally inflate it, weigh it,



test its ascensional power, pat its fat white sides, and go back gleefully to Metz to say that we are ready. Now is issued a notice to each corps of the army, that, on and after the 13th of September, letters would be received if they were written on slips of thin paper (*pelure d'oignon*) 2 inches wide by  $3\frac{3}{4}$  inches long. The letters were to be written on one side and the address on the other, very much after the fashion of the annoying little postal cards which have sprung up in England during my sojourn in Metz. A *bureau de poste aérostatique* was established at the "division," as the quarters of the commandant of the town were called. Here all letters were received by men bearing the requisite number of buttons, whose duty it was to read them, and see that nothing beyond the bare announcement of the existence of the writer and the state of his health was contained in them. They were then tied up in bundles of a hundred at a time, and kept in readiness, and on the 15th of September our first balloon was launched. The Corps Franc had erected a large shed, open at the top, in which we could inflate the balloons without hindrance or risk from the wind. When our balloon was ready, the packet of letters was brought to us by a much be-buttoned functionary. We fastened it up in an india-rubber cloth, and attached to it the following notice:—

“ The person finding this packet, and who will take it to the nearest post-office, or to the Maire of the commune, and there ask for a receipt for it, will receive in

exchange a reward of 100 francs.—Metz, le 10<sup>th</sup> Septembre, 1870.

“Le Général de Division, COFFINIÈRES.”

All was ready, the anchor was attached, the cords were loosed, up went the balloon and 8,000 letters with it. We shouted for joy, we wished it *bon voyage*, we shook each other's hands frantically, and rushed off to a little hill hard by. Here we had established our observatory; there was a theodolite, a powerful telescope, and a compass there; and so far as we could see we watched and noted the course and speed of our *aérostat*. This first went nearly due south, in the direction of Vesoul and Besançon, and at the rate of about thirty miles an hour. We watched it for nearly an hour, when the clouds hid it from our sight, and we went back to Metz rejoicing that the first “state balloon” had departed. I say the first “state balloon,” because these long delays and perpetual experiments had made us impatient, and quiet little balloons had been sent up on private account some few days before. These were now put a stop to, and even we were not allowed to send off our aerial messengers without an order, at first, from the Commandant in Chief of the town, but afterwards as he became gradually absorbed by the Marshal, it was necessary to have the permission for their dispatch from the Commander in Chief of the army of the Rhine. Our success being established, we went to work with more energy. Our large *grenier* was too small for us; we overflowed it,

and long tables stretched themselves down the cloisters. The *salle des manœuvres* was occupied by us. We made many improvements in our manufacture, and ultimately arrived at the conclusion that for our paper balloons the diameter of five metres was the best size, and that a thin paper lined with muslin was the most convenient material.

Our process of manufacture was as follows :—Down the long tables we stretched the muslin, and on this we pasted the paper. When dry we gave the paper two coats of collodion, and then cut the huge seeth, thus formed, into sections of the requisite size and shape. These were glued together, having the muslin side outwards. They were then taken into the *salle des manœuvres*, there inflated with atmospheric air by means of a huge fan bellows, and then painted with an impervious coating. After many experiments, we found the best mixture for this purpose was made with common glue, boiled oil, and glycerine. This was at once supple, almost impermeable, and easy of application. We progressed rapidly ; each day we had a balloon ready. On the 17th we inflated one in the morning, but it met with an accident, occasioned by our small space at the gas works being over-crowded with all the world of Metz, who had come to see the wonder ; and ever after that we closed our doors, and resolutely refused admission to all. So we went back to Metz, brought out another, and that day sent off 25,000 more letters.

On the 20th the cotton balloon of Captain Schultz was

ready. It was a beauty. Like our paper balloons, it was five metres in diameter. The cotton received three coats of caoutchouc dissolved in benzine, and was perfectly impervious. Its greatest fault was its weight, for it weighed 20 kilos. or about 44lbs., whereas our paper ones only weighed half so much ; but then his was impermeable, and ours lost a good deal of gas. It was inflated, and the ascent was splendid. We congratulated the Captain, and acknowledged that our paper ones were beaten. Up straight into the air it went, with 45,000 letters attached to it, bearing them off in the direction of Amiens. Up it goes—will it never stop ? Up it goes, until it attains the enormous altitude of 3,500 metres. We tremble for it. It turns,—it slowly comes towards us again, having struck another current of air. Something has happened to it—what, we can't tell ; but it begins to descend, and after passing over our heads, strikes again the lower current and begins to fall. We race for a carriage in which to follow it. Colonel Goulier pulls out his slide rule, and tells us where it will fall, and we rush away. The point he indicates is just between the French and Prussian lines. Away we drive in frantic haste. Sentries don't know what to make of us as we race past the town walls, through the outworks, and along the long, straight road towards Magny. Bah ! here is a convoy of unthreshed corn coming in from the village ; for once I don't rejoice at the sight, although it is food at once for man and beast, for it impedes our pace. Alas ! we are too late ; it has fallen just where Colonel Goulier said it would,

but the French outposts have not budged an inch. The Prussians fired at it, brought it down, and with half a hundred cavalry, picked it up and carried it off in triumph. All our labour was lost, and poor Captain Schultz reduced to the depth of despair, after having soared to the height of bliss. We swore a good deal at the outposts, but they said they had received no order to catch balloons, and almost the only instance of discipline I can recollect in the army round Metz is this which lost us our balloon.

What was the precise cause of its failure we never learned; some of us said its escape-valve was not large enough, and that it burst in consequence; others of us said it was too large, and lost gas too rapidly, and for this cause more than any other we regretted that we could not secure its remains. As touching this escape-valve we had many battles, I insisting on having it made as small as possible, alleging that the escape through the substance of the paper and defects of manufacture was almost sufficient; Colonel Goulier, who calculated to a decimal the expansive force of gas at every foot of altitude, desiring to have the valve as large as possible. Which was right, or which was wrong, we never had any means of deciding, so we fought away on each occasion. I only know, since my return to England, that the only balloons by which my letters reached their destination, were precisely those in which the escape-valve was reduced to its smallest dimensions, and I therefore conclude that the others did not travel

far enough to get beyond the reach of our Prussian enemies ; but from what cause Captain Schultz's balloon came to so untimely an end, we never learned.

Poor Captain Schultz ! Never was he allowed to try again, and though his idea was an excellent one, and his balloons would float longer than ours when the fault which occasioned the loss of the first one was remedied, yet he never was allowed to make another. They might be too good. His balloons took four times as long to make as ours, and cost three times as much. We could make one a day at a cost of about 200 francs each ; and though time might be an object yet expense need be none. I pleaded hard for him, convinced as I was of the value of his scheme, and proposed that the expense should be covered by charging a small sum for the postage of each letter ; but all was in vain. Captain Schultz belonged to the artillery ; the artillery, as a corps, were not Imperialists, and political feeling now began to influence everything.

We still kept working away building paper balloons, improving each one, and ending by adding an hydraulic apparatus to serve as an automatic ballast, and so correct the too rapid ascent, and the loss of gas by the sudden expansion thus created. This hydraulic ballast consisted of a flask holding about two litres of water ; its neck was corked, turned downwards, and two glass tubes, a long one and a short one, inserted in it. The long one admitted the air, the short one emitted the water, and the gradual leakage thus created corrected

the sudden ascensional power of our balloons. To one of our balloons we appended a couple of carrier pigeons, with a notice attached to their cage offering a supplementary reward of another 100 francs for anyone who would send them back with news of the outer world. Poor birds! their fate was pie. The balloon was captured by a distant band of devouring Prussians, who ate the pigeons, and sent us word back by a *parlementaire* that they were both welcome and tender, so we never dispatched any more. I do not know if our postal balloon service with pigeon-postmen preceded any attempt at Paris, or if we at Metz may claim the invention of the idea.

There was something singularly appropriate in our essay being made at Metz, for this city, which claims to be the scene of the origin of so many things, claims also to have been that where the first serious attempt at aëros-tation was made. Pilastre de Rosier—a man of great science, and a founder of a chemical school of some note here—was a native of Metz, and in the autumn of 1783 started for the first aerial voyage ever made by man. Local tradition states that the first attempt was made from Metz in October; but be this as it may, it is certain that in November he made the first known balloon voyage from Paris. Unfortunately he afterwards encountered the usual fate of most aeronauts, and was killed. He fell on the coast of Boulogne in an attempt made to cross the channel on the 15th of June, 1785. On this occasion he mounted with a double balloon, the upper one charged

with hydrogen, the lower one a Montgolfier, or fire-balloon, with some supposition that he might by the difference of their ascensional powers find out some means of steering them. He mounted to a great height, when the Montgolfier being by a change of current brought in contact with the other balloon, the two caught fire, and he came whirling down to earth again. He aspired too high, and like Icarus suffered. Perhaps some day we shall find out that Dædalus and his son took to ballooning, and that the wax which melted was that which fastened together the seams of the young man's balloons, his weight was not so great as his father's, and so he rose higher. There is a very pretty theory for some one to work out, and it beats hollow the idea of the fabled wings being sails of ships. Yes, probably balloons were re-invented by Dædalus, for there is nothing new under the sun. Whatever is, has been. Yet our scheme to us at Metz was an invention, and though our success was not much, we felt very proud of it. One of these balloons was sent to the Government at Tours, who kindly sent portions of it to my friends in England, to whom, for further security, I had written sundry short letters on the interior of the structure itself.

Now came our time of trial. We were too successful; we were attracting too much attention. Some of my letters which I had thus forwarded, had fallen into the hands of the Prussians, who sent them back to the Marshal. I fell into disgrace and my balloons too.



I am anxious here to exonerate myself from any charge of making an unfair use of this means of communication. I told General Coffinières on our first interview that I was chiefly prompted to engage in this work by the desire to forward letters to England. I disclaimed all pretence of doing it from any higher motive, and when asked to make a charge for my services I repudiated all idea of payment, on the ground that I should serve myself as well as them, and that this was all that I required. Holding, as I do, very distinct opinions as to the duty of a correspondent in the field, I should not convey the slightest information useful to the enemy, however priceless such a communication might be to an English journal ; and I am sure that such information, even if forwarded, would be most loyally suppressed by that journal I had the honour of representing. It cannot, therefore, be on any grounds of state necessity that my letters were abstracted and kept. Had any legal means of taking hold of me existed in my letters, I am quite sure that those legal means would have been taken, and the absence of this must be an additional proof of the perfect innocency of those letters which any balloon bore, but of which, alas, so few have been received. I am very much afraid it was childish annoyance at finding the balloon-maker was a newspaper correspondent whom they could not get rid of, which brought our balloons to an untimely end.

There is another proof also afforded by this sending my letters back to the Marshal, a valuable one, too : it is

the proof of the intimate accord which even at this date was existing between the head-quarters of the two armies, and one which, when added to other facts, corroborates the rumour that so soon after Sédan, Bismarck and Bazaine were already haggling about the price to be paid for the army of the Rhine and the city of Metz. After this, days of waiting and weariness ensued. Often had we the balloon inflated, and no letters came. When the wind was unfavourable, that is, when it blew right for Prussia, we were told to send off a balloon. When it blew towards Belgium or Luxembourg we were not permitted to launch it. Annoyed by this evident intention merely to keep us employed for public amusement, but for no useful purpose, I gave up all future attempt to thus communicate with the outer world, and my last balloon was dispatched at 3.30 on the 3rd of October. The affair terminated: and when I left Metz there yet existed several postal balloons quite ready, and some thousands of letters written to accompany them. More than 150,000 letters we did send off, and I sincerely hope that many an anxious household was made the happier from the fact that the *Manchester Guardian* had a correspondent in the besieged city of Metz.

As for our major scheme of the big balloon, it gradually dwindled away. We read all the very interesting documents relating to the use of balloons in the wars of the great revolution. The official reports of them yet exist in the library of our late workshop. We read the excellent memoir on the modern use of balloons in war pre-

pared by an intelligent French officer who observed them in the American war. We made drawings and experiments without number, and we found, forgotten and almost destroyed in a corner of the lumber-room, the old balloon used the night before the battle of Fleurus. We found the net which held it almost perfect, and proposed to utilise this for our own ; but, in spite of the impetus given to our scheme by this treasure trove, it was not allowed to be done. We made a careful estimate ; the cost would have been 14,000f. for a balloon 13 metres in diameter, and the Marshal did not value the information of the enemy's position at so high a price ;—men were cheaper. When this was said to be too much, Prince Murat came forward and offered to pay a portion or the whole of the cost, if he too might accompany me in it, after we had used it as a captive balloon. The Marquis de la Motte Fenélon came forward and offered to pay another portion. Money, materials, men, were all ready, but the Marshal was not. Our bubble burst ; we were allowed to do nothing, and I ceased to be a balloon-maker, with the full assurance that my labours were looked upon with jealousy, and that the Marshal neither willed nor wished success to any attempt to give the rest of the world the true history of the position of himself or his army at Metz. His game could be played on our side of the Prussian lines by one alone, and that one had for his sole end himself.

## CHAPTER XI.

### STREET SCENES.

*September.*

As there was nothing of military interest going on, and as my "perquisitions" for materials necessary for the construction, actual and prospective, of our balloons led me much into our streets, I came much in contact with the picturesque every-day character of a city in a state of siege. Many of these scenes were noted down at the moment, and enclosed in the letter whose fate I have related in the preceding Chapter, and being verbal photographs of every-day life as I then saw it, I extract these from it as they were then written, amplifying them in some cases to include events which occurred even at a later period ; but as a rule they faithfully record the uneventful tenor of our existence in those times of weary waiting which were so hard to bear.

Day after day passed wearily by, cold and wet, dull and disagreeable, having no event by which we could mark their passing. The gates of the town were only opened two hours in the morning, between six and eight, and two hours in the evening, between five and seven ; and even when you got out there was nowhere to go, for

within some three or four miles in any direction, the Prussian outpost was reached, and if once caught within those lines, there was not much probable chance of a return, nor yet of further progress; and as they had an unfortunate habit of shooting first and making inquiries afterwards, the preliminary proceedings were unpleasant. Indeed, it was somewhat difficult for a stranger to get into the immediately surrounding French lines, and a "safe conduct" was requisite for this, a boon not conferred without much inquiry, and sometimes given with an unpleasant addition; an instance of which occurred to an American gentleman—a correspondent for the *New York Times*, I believe—the last day there was a chance of reaching Thionville. He, wishful of obtaining all the news he could, applied for a "safe conduct" to the Commandant in Chief of the place here, General Coffinières, a name of lugubrious portent to British ears, but whose owner I have always found to be a courteous gentleman and a good soldier. The General immediately took pen in hand; the American inwardly rejoiced, but, alas, he rejoiced too soon, for the General wrote him a safe conduct to the gates of the town only, and appended to it a gendarme, with strict orders to see him outside Metz in an hour, and take care he did not re-enter it. Why or for what, none but the General could tell, and it was not always wise to be inquisitive. What became of the American is as yet uncertain; all we know was that he left by the Porte-de-France, and was never seen or heard of afterwards.

My self-imposed duties having caused me to be thrown much in contact with General Coffinières, I learned to know him more, and the more I knew of him the more I learned to respect him. He was a large-built, kindly-hearted man of nearly sixty years of age; but, like many large-built kindly-hearted men, he had no great strength of mind. Thinking always more for others than of himself, the selfish man had a great advantage over him; and that extremely selfish man, Bazaine, thwarted, worried, and at last completely mastered him. Educated first in the *École Polytechnique*, and afterwards passing his novitiate in the Engineering School at Metz, he entered the Engineers in 1831, holding, as I have already said most Engineering officers do, Republican opinions. After distinguishing himself in Africa, he was called upon by General Lamoriciere, who both knew and appreciated him, to take the direction of his branch of the service during the Republic of 1849. From this post he rose rapidly, and during the Crimean war, with great distinction, served under Marshal Neil at the taking of Sebastopol, and at the conclusion of that war was made a General of Brigade. On his return to France, he was made Commander of the Polytechnique School he had been a pupil in, and where he remained until he got his division in 1865. On receiving this appointment, he was made a member of the Committee of Fortifications, and put upon the Commissions of Public Works and Coast Defences. He thus brought much wisdom and experience to bear upon the very difficult position he was now

placed in. It is a most fortunate circumstance for Metz that it had so wise and so kindly-hearted a commandant, for the post was first offered to the favourite Frossard, but luckily by him declined, and Metz gained enormously by the exchange. Had General Coffinières' head been as strong as his heart was kind; had he been as vigorous in mind as he was vigorous in body, he might have made himself master of the situation, and the fate of Metz might have been perhaps more happy, but he was undecided. Even his signature to proclamations showed this; some times he would be "Coffinières" simply; at other times he indulged in the full length of his name, L. F. Coffinières de Nordeck; whilst L. and F. would change places or appear singly and individually as a prefix. This indecision as regards himself was highly characteristic; but though taking no thought for himself, he was always thinking of the well-being of the people. No detail was too small for him to consider, no personal effort too great for him to make, and no one ever appealed to General Coffinières, who did not find a kindly, courteous welcome, if the errand they came upon in any way concerned the welfare of the people of Metz. Personally generous and charitable, he organised and largely supported all charitable aids, and though the very onerous duties of his office occupied him early and late, he found time for many of those private acts of charity he, I am sure, is the last person who would wish to find recorded on earth. Of this I am quite sure, that when the obloquy, which his official connection with

Marshal Bazaine brought upon him, shall have been dissipated by time, the character of General Coffinières will stand out all the more brightly from its temporary immersion in the dark cloud which has thus obscured it. Him we often saw in the streets, quietly going about his business without fuss or feathers, and without a large retinue of gold lace and buttons.

It is true a great many arrests were made, and General Coffinières had to bear the blame of them, when, as was usual, they were found to be needless ; but he was only the final referee, and not the initiator of the arrest. Spy-hunting, too, was rather a favourite sport just now with a good many people, and one week they bagged sixty-six suspected ones. Some of these they were nearly being in at the death of, and would have torn them to pieces if the Gendarmes had not had to whip these hounds off. One poor man who was suspected went and hanged himself ; whether there was any ground for the accusation brought against him I never learned, and being dead he kept his own counsel. Arrests, in fact, at this time were made every day without any reason ; some, indeed, by a palpable mistake, as the only resident Englishman here found out to his cost in this wise. There came here about the same time as myself a mad doctor, lately in the Indian army, whose head had been turned by sun-strokes and brandy pawnee, and who, poor man, thought he could settle subtle points of strategy and give the Emperor and his staff much useful information and advice. At first he was amusing, but ultimately became a nuisance, and was at last arrested.



Unfortunately he spoke no French, and of the many interpreters here in beautiful black and blue uniforms few can speak any English. Under these circumstances, Mr. Hamilton, the English tutor at the Jesuit College here, was sent for in all haste, yet, though that haste was much, it was too slow, and the doctor had been sent to the military prison for safety, where Mr. Hamilton was directed to follow him. Here a complication occurred, unpleasant but humorous, for the prison authorities, having two Englishmen before them instead of one, thought the best thing they could do would be to lock them both up, which they did. Shortly after came an order for the release of the doctor, who was immediately sent out of the town, carrying his baggage with him. Even yet his troubles were not ended, for he was despatched with such haste that he had no safe conduct to the French outposts given him; in consequence of which, after an hour's struggle along the road with his portmanteau on his back, he was brought back again into Metz, and held in custody until a proper passport could be made out; when once again he set out on his travels, breathing out threatenings and vengeance against the French authorities, determined to bring the matter to a warlike crisis on his return to England. Meanwhile the poor tutor was forgotten in prison; no order had been made for his arrest; he didn't exist on paper, so he was nowhere. His wife sought him frantically, and his friends made leisurely inquiries for him. At last, after five days' detention, he was accidentally discovered by an officer

going his rounds in the military prison, and released with profound apologies, the which do not quite seem to have reconciled him to the indignity or the discomfort he had undergone.

In another instance, a young Danish nobleman, a good friend of mine, a brave young fellow, a student at Heidelberg when the war broke out, and who, bearing a hatred against the Prussian spoilers of his own country, imported it and himself here at the outset of the war. He, too, has been arrested, and for ten long days confined in prison, and at last released. He was on the battle-field of Borny, and acted as a *franc-tireur* there against his country's ancient foe. Wrong no doubt it was in a neutral, but, at any rate, it showed a decided friendship for the cause of France. At Gravelotte he was my companion in our night-long search, and was one of those who were taken prisoners by the Prussians, as were nearly all of our small band, who went out to help the wounded. Seven days were some of them detained, but my friend with some of the others, and together with two Prussian *aumoniers*, was sent back on the third day as the escort to the body of a dead French general. This really formed the basis of his arrest, for a few words passed between him and the Prussian *aumonier*, who, when afterwards taken prisoner, wrote to the Count asking him to procure him some of those trifling little things a man without anything but what he wears is apt to want. It was enough ; he must be a spy ; he was arrested, his rooms searched, and then it became evident

he was a traitor. There was a long letter, a very long one ; for when posts do not depart letters will grow longer. It was written, too, in an unknown tongue. Not an interpreter in the service could make anything of it. Was it cypher ? Some declared it was ; but at last it turned only to be an affectionate chatty letter to his mother in Danish, the which after much study was declared to be, like himself, quite innocent, and both of them were given up after ten days' detention in the military prison.

Meanwhile, spies go in and spies go out with impunity, one riding right through the place in the uniform of a sous-intendant the other day, asking all sorts of questions about our supplies, and only betraying himself by inquiring where the bread for the army was baked, a question so needless for a commissariat officer to make, and which so utterly astonished the gendarme to whom it was put, that before he could reply the clever Prussian had read the history of the mistake he had made and decamped. Orders were sent round to all the gates to let no sous-intendant out that night without strict examination, and those who found themselves in the town had to prove themselves to be themselves before they could join their quarters ; but our spy was a great deal too clever for the gendarmes, and I shouldn't wonder if he rode out as a mounted gendarme, and perhaps arrested an actual sous-intendant on the way.

One spy they have managed to catch, a real one this time, and he was shot in the fosse on Sunday morning, the 28th of August—it was his death-rattle which I heard as I

entered by the Porte Serpenoise after that very wet night in the trenches. There he was shot, a fate almost too noble for him, for he took pay from both sides, and probably served neither, though the French attribute their disaster at Reichshofen to the intelligence he gave the Prussians, perhaps unjustly, as every disaster is attributed to the same cause, and foreigners have a very difficult part to play at such a time to avoid being considered as enemies, however good and amicable their intentions. Doubtless there were an innumerable number of spies then in Metz; moreover, in the Prussian army there are many who have worked long in the numerous factories and foundries, which in times of peace made this a busy and a thriving district; they know well the neighbourhood and town, and others, still resident here, provide them with recent intelligence. Again, with a wisdom worthy of Bismarck, the Prussian army has organised an "intelligence department," with different grades, promotions, and good pay. By this means the sting of reproach is taken away from the word "spy," and it is possible to conceive a man full of patriotic enthusiasm and a taste for adventure entering such service without necessarily being the reprobate a spy usually is. Nicholas Schull seems to have had somewhat of the better qualities of a man in him, and to have been one of intelligence and fortitude. A Hungarian by birth, a scion of the noble house of Degelmann, educated in Vienna, a naturalised American, and long dwelling in Mexico as a partisan of the late Emperor Maximilian, from whom he received the decoration of

the order of Guadeloupe, he was a man who had seen much of the world and of its ways. Rather tall, and looking taller from the fact that his figure was upright and spare, Schull seemed more like a native of the country of his adoption than that of his birth—an illusion strengthened by his wearing his reddish-brown beard without the moustache, and at the first glimpse he might readily be taken for an American. He was captured on the night of the 10th of August on the railway from whence he was surveying those new earth-works which we raise in every direction to strengthen the already strong fortress of Metz. It seems that about the 19th of July last he was presented to General Ducrot at Strasburg, announcing himself as the sworn enemy of Prussia and as equally the sworn friend of France. Without much hesitation or inquiry his services seem to have been accepted, for on the 11th he left Strasburg and returned again on the 26th with a certain amount of information, sufficient, indeed, to induce the General to give him 800 francs in German cash with which to enter the Prussian camp and carry out his object. From that time until his arrest the French military authorities saw nothing of him. That he did visit the Prussian camp is certain, for on his arrest there was found on him a *laissez passer* from Soleski, the quartermaster-general of the Prussian army at Mayence, and dated the 6th of August, requiring all military authorities to let him go where and when he would. With his appointment from General Ducrot and this from General Soleski, he had the entire

run of both armies, the which thing I heartily longed for then, for the weariness of Metz was hard to bear. Schull seems to have moved about actively, and the French say that he conveyed intelligence as to the disposition and numbers of their forces at Wissemburg and Reichshofen, and, having finished his business there, came on to Metz to perform the same function ; but no real evidence of this was produced at the trial. The most incriminating thing against him was the medal carried by all the Prussian spies to be produced as a voucher of their being enrolled in the Intelligence Department. This and 1000 francs in gold were quite enough without the *laisser passer*, which, strange to say, was written not in German but in French, and the Council of War, after a few minutes' deliberation, condemned him to death. Schull heard his sentence without betraying any emotion, and demanded his *pourvoir en revision* with calm tone, as though it were an ordinary request. This appeal, the right of all condemned to death in France, was immediately accorded ; but was of no avail. His sentence was approved of by the council of revision, and at five o'clock that Sunday morning, in a drizzling rain, his prison door opened for the last time for him. Half a mile's walk through the town took him to the fosse of the citadel. A few minutes' waiting there whilst his sentence was read over to him, that sharp, rapid rattle followed, and, with four holes through his breast, he fell, and so ended the first convicted of the numerous spies here in Metz. He ended his life stoically ; he simply

requested that he might be buried decently, and that a couple of prayer-books might be sent to his children, both of which requests were accorded him, and a simple stone in the Chambièrre Cemetery marks his grave.

All this created a strong excitement here, for we had nothing to talk about but that which went on within the town; and as we had no real fighting since the 18th, and no external news since the day after, even the tragedy of a spy was a relief to the monotony of a strictly-besieged place. Indeed, it was often a real pleasure to find that some of one's friends had been arrested; it gave one something to do to try and obtain their release. Perhaps the police authorities did it for this purpose; there seems to be no other valid reason in many cases.

As for the streets of Metz, they are full of interest for the stranger, but an ancient denizen of the city like myself gets tired of them. I call myself an ancient denizen of the city, for it seemed to me that I grew from middle life into old age there, and that the weeks which passed were years—long weary years, too. Nevertheless, these streets were full of interest. Now a group of soldiers, of all ranks and conditions of men, chatting gaily together, passed by, presenting an enormous variety of costume, especially buttons; in fact, the one idea of the lunatic who devised most of these uniforms was buttons. He certainly had not a soul above buttons,—he revelled in them. In whatever most inconvenient place you can imagine,

there you will find buttons, in gold, in silver, covered with cloth or wrapped round with braid,—they are everywhere ; and I counted 125 on the not very broad breast of a young cavalry officer one day—on his breast alone. Behind him, especially in inconvenient places, were lots more, and if ammunition had failed us, as they said was likely, a very formidable supply of shot could easily have been provided from this source alone. Now a *cantinière* in the uniform of her regiment, plus short petticoats, flitted hurriedly by, making her purchase of such of the goods of this life we had left us then ; and they were getting fewer and fewer day by day. When she was slim the effect was pretty, and one *cantinière* of the Guides, with her jaunty bearskin cap, her braided jacket, and gilt spurs, was “*chique*” from top to toe,—not pretty, not young, by no means either, but eminently picturesque. In general they were fat, forty, and by no means fair ; and then the effect was grotesque to the extent of being ridiculous, raising that very rare thing just now, a smile. Broad-hatted *abbés* and *aumoniers* give a valuable bit of black to all this mass of colour, the latter being just then very black indeed, for they were breaking out into beards, which, after some thirty or forty years strict repression by the razor, sprouted in the most erratic manner at their unaccustomed liberty ; and, in place of the smooth sleek cheek of the ordinary priest, the countenance looked like a damaged clothes brush. Amongst them appeared at one time another sort of *aumonier*, a tall man, in a tall hat, with a long



tight cassock, and a weak-looking face between the two : that was the Prince De Radziwil, a Pole, a priest, and a prisoner on parole. He entered the French lines after the battle of Gravelotte, with the body of the general I spoke of before, and was not allowed to return, from a false quantity in French. He stated, on his first interrogation, that he had raised a company at his own expense. The audacity of such a man entering the lines and saying so was so unparalleled, that he was immediately sent on to Metz. So paralysed were the authorities at such a man that they took no precaution to bandage his eyes, but sent him with an escort right through the lines. Oh, that Tower of Babel ! If it had not been for the ambition of those pre-historic architects, what an amount of confusion would have been saved us all, and Prince Radziwil need not have been made a prisoner ; for on his second interrogation here, it seems the poor man meant to say he followed the campaign at his own charges, and was not on the strength of the army or connected with it, except as a consoler of the wounded and the dying. His northern tongue proved an unruly member, in refusing to recognise the difference between "*campagne*" and "*compagnie*." That little vowel did it, but to undo it was a matter of many words and much consideration ; and the moral of it is that the stranger must mind his "i." Having seen the French lines, he might convey information if he went back ; so was relegated to an hotel on parole, allowed to walk about the city that he might learn more of it, and was a trouble

to the authorities they hardly knew how to rid themselves of.

Now occurs a gap in the crowd, and from out of the midst of all this colour stepped a short thick-set man, with a light canvas jacket and thick leather gaiters; under one arm hangs a large game bag, with the profusion of netting and fringes which accompany the sporting appendage here, and over the other arm sloped a chassepot. All raise their hats to him; many stepped up to him and exchange a hurried word or two as he walked rapidly along, with his swinging step. That was Hitter—his name almost tempts a pun. He achieved a reputation here by going out in front of the *avant poste* and bringing down the Prussian videttes and sentinels, and especially by interrupting convoys of provisions and forage. One night he captured four waggon loads of corn, shooting down the escort, and, mounting alongside the foremost driver, pistol in hand, compelled him and his fellow natives of the country—by no means reluctantly, I fancy—to bring them into Metz. This morning he shook his head rather mournfully. He had only killed six during the night, and thought that a poor night's work. Good heavens! We smile at his discomfiture, so hardened does war make us. Six empty homes and six dead men were nothing to us then; and it was more with a pondering mind as to whether it is right to shoot down sentinels and *avant postes* than with a horror at their death that I turn away. Hitter afterwards organised a regular body of sharp-shooters for nightwork,

and many a deadly ruse did they practise on the Prussians. One favourite one was to take out a tin can with them, and approach the Prussian outposts as near as possible. Then tying a long string to this new implement in warfare, they carefully place it on the ground. Moving away and warping this string round a tree, they would proceed, quietly and cautiously creeping through the underwood, at right angles from it. Hiding themselves in what they considered the best position, one of them pulls the string. Ting—ting—tingle, sounds the can as it rolls a little way down hill. Cautious Prussian heads peep out from unsuspected places. The string is pulled again, vigorously then. Tangle—tink—tank—tingle—sounds from the suspected spot, and the Prussians rise up and blaze away at it. Their fire has been drawn, and Hitter's men have the outpost at their mercy ; if they are many they shoot them, if they are few they take them prisoners, and occasionally they get shot themselves. But Hitter achieved a greater reputation than even these doings brought him. The Marshal sent for him one day, wanting to decorate him. He had, however, waited so long before doing so, that either Hitter's vanity, which was sensitive, was wounded, or else by this time decorations bestowed by Bazaine were hardly looked upon as honours. Whatever might be the cause, Hitter refused it. The Marshal insisted on its acceptance. "Well," said Hitter, "if you do make me take the thing, I'll wear it, but on my back, and very low down, too." The Marshal was vanquished ; and

Hitter walks the streets to this day tail-less. He was brave, no doubt ; but still I don't like shooting outposts. Murder and war seem to be too nearly allied here to be honourable, and the contemplation afforded by the next group seems much more pleasant. It is a squad of young intelligent-looking men who hurry rapidly up the street ; they are clad in light grey trousers and caps, dark blue pilot-cloth coats, and white gaiters. Fresh, healthy, and clean,—they are the *francs tireurs* of Metz ; a band of sharp-shooters, good shots all of them, who volunteer for outpost duty with a patriotism and self-abnegation worthy of all praise. Day and night they are at their duty, and, until maddened by a wicked proclamation of the Prussians, they did soldierly duty only, and did not “pot” needlessly. They represent the volunteer element of England. Defence not Defiance is their watchword, and yet the Prussians have issued a proclamation in which they brand them as *traitors*, and condemn them to instant execution without further judgment ; and yet the Prussian army is composed of Landwehr ! They are usually considered a logical people, those Germans ! but it certainly must be out of their own inner conscientiousness that they have evolved the reasoning which produced such consequences. Looking on these *francs tireurs* as they march up the street then, I considered such young men to be an honour to any country, and a far more pleasing spectacle than the numerous loungers at the hotels here, who putting forward the fact of their being shut up in Metz as an excuse for not joining their own

Mobile or National Guard, do nothing beyond go out after a battle is over, and under the pretext of relieving the wounded, keep out of harm's way, and write inflated letters to the papers. I have read of hairbreadth escapes, of venturous exploits,—that the Prussian balls have broken the bottles they carried, and smashed their lanterns, and of many other hazardous risks they have run ; but I have never yet seen any of them in a position to encounter these dangers, though I have often been with them on the spot where those wonderful events have occurred without being cognisant of the fact. Their letters will doubtlessly be copied into the French journals when these idlers get to their native towns again, and peace comes, and these idlers will then be heroes. Meanwhile the others do their duty and say nothing, are not made much of by the authorities, and don't wear many buttons ; but they are more frequently seen crouching down amongst the distant vines than in the hotels and cafés, and therefore the generals and staff officers don't see much of them. The others are always present with them ; but bad as things look I still hope that the day is not far distant when all these things will be changed, when the right man will find the right place, and when good officers will be more plentiful and buttons much scarcer.

A bright-coloured general crops up every now and then, with a many-hued staff behind him ; and now comes a long line of patient, meek-eyed mules, picking their stealthy, cat-like way along, waving their long ears

from side to side with wise-looking wags, and oscillating the appendage at the other end with rhythmic regularity. Wonderfully quaint, patient animals, they are the beast of all work here, and from a sick man to a sack of potatoes nothing comes amiss to them. The horses are already beginning to look thinner ; the wet weather has not agreed with them either, and their coats stand out rough and bristly from their skin. Poor creatures ! before long we saw them staggering and dying in our streets. Not a day could we pass the town gates without finding one or two dead in our way,—the last struggle over the drawbridges had been too much for them, and they died. They did not long remain there ; they were soon set upon, and in a few minutes flesh, bones, and hide had disappeared, leaving but a bloody puddle in the road to tell us that some few people had found a good dinner. Once at the *Porte des Allemands* I was witness of a “fouflage” of this description, which, in spite of the then dolorous state of things in general, had its comic side.

A *cantinière* had left her cart just outside the gate whilst she waddled off to the Fort Bellecroix hard by to find out what was wanting there. Her poor horse could not wait for her return, but tumbled down to die. No sooner was he on his knees than half-a-score of soldiers were on theirs. His throat was cut, his skin slipped off, and his body dissected with much more haste than science. Quickly to work went every knife. All that was portable was soon cut off, and then very carefully set to work these

soldiers to reconstruct him. The bones are put neatly together again, the hide dragged over the carcase, and the harness arranged as though the animal had only lain down in the shafts. The men ran off with their surreptitious flesh, and presently comes back the *cantinière*. She sees her horse is down, and waddles a little faster. When within ear-shot she commences 'cre-nom-ing him. As the horse doesn't move, she breaks into an elephantine trot, nor does she discover the cheat until she reaches her cart. Poor fat old lady!—apoplexy very nearly ensued; but when she recovered speech she was truly eloquent. After a long course of study in all varieties of French swearing, I found myself capable of decreeing her to be a genius. The ingenuity of the oaths she uttered was a triumph. Exhausting herself and her vocabulary, she took to hysteria, when, I am sorry to say, I left her. I didn't know where she kept her "sperits."

Horses died, and we ate them; but mules, like donkeys don't die; though unlike donkeys, you can't eat them when killed. Donkeys are delicious, only getting scarce. You never see them in the streets now; they are all being fattened up, as the price of donkey rules high in the market. Seriously, donkey's flesh is very fair eating, and a well-hung haunch of donkey is uncommonly like a well-hung haunch of red-deer venison. The street panorama has passed on, whilst we have discussed the quadrupeds; but *à propos* of donkeys, what is this that comes riding that tall horse, and wearing such a wondrous head-dress? The head-dress is magnificent; the man beneath it isn't

## CHAPTER XII.

### OUR FORAGING EXPEDITIONS.

*September 22 to October 2.*

OUR inactivity was in some degree broken by little affairs at our outposts ; for, as it now became evident that the siege would be a long one, it was necessary to extend our ground as much as possible. The wider we made our circle, the more fodder we obtained for our horses, and occasionally we obtained a field of potatoes for ourselves. These little re-occupations of French territory by our troops were made without much cost, and manifested to us that if the Prussians were in such great force in front of us as the quartier-général wished us to believe, it was not their intention to fight but to famish us, so from the middle to the end of September, we extended our line very considerably.

Between the Sielle and the Moselle our increase was an important one. Magny was evacuated by the Prussians so soon as an outwork we had commenced at La Horgue showed symptoms of becoming dangerous, and then we pushed our lines nearer to Augny and Frescati ; thus we gained a large and valuable acquisition of cultivated



much,—but the head-dress! It is black : it is shiny ; it is rather Assyrian in shape, and has much gold braid about it ; and its nearest typographical symbol would be two reversed parentheses united at the top by a hyphen. ) ( It must be done in type, for he is a man of letters. I beg his pardon, *the* man of letters ; that is Mons. De Bains, the historiographer of the Army of the Rhine, the sole man allowed to write the history of its victorious march to Berlin, and whose work will be anxiously looked for : he came to play Tacitus (who, by the way, was a præfect of Belgic Gaul) to Cæsar. Without literary training himself, he hates all who have it ; raised from a dependent position in some little embassy, he here tries to be the autocrat, and they do say that it is his jealousy which has driven away all the really literary men who at the outset sought Metz for literary purposes. His hat is very fine, so let us make way for him. Bon voyage, M. De Bains.

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1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that this is crucial for the company's financial health and for providing reliable information to stakeholders.

2. The second part outlines the specific procedures for recording transactions. It details the steps from initial entry to final review, ensuring that all necessary information is captured and verified.

3. The third part addresses the role of different departments in the recording process. It clarifies the responsibilities of the accounting, sales, and operations teams to ensure a smooth and efficient workflow.

4. The fourth part discusses the use of technology in record-keeping. It highlights the benefits of using accounting software to automate data entry and reduce the risk of human error.

5. The fifth part covers the importance of regular audits and reconciliations. It explains how these practices help to identify discrepancies early and maintain the integrity of the financial records.

6. The sixth part provides a summary of the key points discussed in the document. It reiterates the importance of accuracy, consistency, and transparency in all financial reporting.

7. The seventh part concludes the document with a final statement on the company's commitment to financial excellence and transparency. It expresses confidence in the accuracy and reliability of the recorded information.

8. The eighth part provides contact information for further inquiries. It lists the names and titles of the relevant staff members and provides their phone numbers and email addresses.

9. The ninth part includes a disclaimer. It states that the information provided is for informational purposes only and should not be used as a substitute for professional advice.

10. The tenth part is a signature block. It contains the names and titles of the authorized signatories, along with their respective departments.

to be well stocked. The Prussians had established large stores at Remilly, Courcelles, and Peltre. Why should not we despoil, or attempt to despoil, these, and so revictual our exhausted magazines? But the Marshal was very difficult to move. Nor was it until he heard that a petition was in circulation in the town that he could be shamed into making any movement. This petition stated that the inhabitants of the town believed that the time had come when agitation on their part was necessary; "that even the want of success of any movement would even be better than inaction; and that, without presuming to discuss or even indicate military operations, simple common sense demonstrated clearly enough to them that energetic enterprises rapidly conducted with the strength of the forces yet at disposal, might now have considerable and, perhaps, decisive results. No doubt," they said, "there is danger in such attempts; but will waiting make the danger less? What help can we now expect from others? Is it by political questions mixing themselves wrongly with military questions that this idleness is forced upon us?" they asked. The answer, if one had been truthfully given, would have said "YES." Waiting, indeed, would only make matters worse; it was evident to wait for Vinoy and his National Guards was useless, and the Volunteers of '92, like the patriotic feelings which called them forth, were asleep. It was Metz, as General Coffinières had said, that was the sole thing for us to consider. "We neither desire to recriminate, nor to give offence, by inter-

meddling, but we want to do something and to have something done." Now, as this petition circulated for a week or ten days in all the various "cercles," "reunions," and other coteries, not only within the town but also in the camp itself, and as it was so well received in both, the Marshal found himself compelled to rouse himself from his lethargy and do something. Accordingly, a series of forages, on a more extensive scale, was commenced.

The army needed action, it was getting very discontented ; indeed, more than that, almost mutinous ; and a patriotic conspiracy was formed to rush out and capture Prince Frederick Charles and Prince Louis of Hesse, who were then supposed to be together at Jouy. These things alarmed the Marshal ; and on the 22nd of September, after breakfast, of course (and the Generals breakfast late and long), we commenced the first of what have received in England, I find, the name of " Bazaine's sorties." We rubbed our hands with glee : we positively smiled again : and our hopes, which were touching zero, rose rapidly to blood-heat. We were to commence gradually, feel our way, and then make some grand sortie ; but fortunately we didn't know then what a deal of feeling that way would take, or where it would ultimately lead to, or that the only sortie made would be as prisoners to Prussia. About noon on the 22nd, the first movement began. Lebœuf's corps was to have the honour of displaying the first symptom of that new life we had hoped the army was imbued with ; so St. Julian

opened the ball, and we canter off to the as yet unfinished fortalice of des Bordes to see the maiden effort of a new piece of 24 which they have just got into position there.

For six weeks have a large body of men been working here. I saw the first lines of the fort laid out as I passed it on my way to pay my forced and first visit to Marshal Bazaine. To-day I am at it when it fires its first gun. What an enormous time seems to have passed between these two periods! These six weeks—by the way it isn't quite six weeks yet—seem to make up a very large portion of my life. It is five weeks to-day since we were blockaded, and I haven't had a letter since I left England. I wonder if they will ever get any of those I have sent off half-an-hour since in a balloon from the gas-works down amongst the poplars there behind me. I think all these things over as we are waiting whilst the first gun is being pointed—it is a long 24; at last it is ready, the pointer steps back, the commandant of the fort is up on the top of the casemate close to me. Some little alteration is wanted in the direction of the gun. There is a large gathering of Artillery officers and Engineers—Captain Schultz is there, and a dozen of his children, the mitrailleuses, with him. Marshal Lebœuf, and a brilliant staff—very brilliant in the sunshine—is there; and as for the Marshal, he is so covered with stars of metal and stripes of ribbon, that you can hardly see him. Oddly enough, I was reading Henri Bayle's letters last night. What was it he said? Oh! I recollect now. "Quand

je vois un homme se pavanant avec plusieurs ordres à la boutonnière, je suppose involontairement le nombre infini de bassesses, de platitudes, et souvent des noires trahisons qu'il a du." That word "pavanant" is very expressive; he does peacock himself, does Marshal Lebœuf. "Bang!" My wonderings and wanderings are put a stop to in an instant—away goes the first shell from des Bordes—every eye is screwed to a field-glass or a telescope. Ingenious stands of clods of earth have been built to support them, and the attitude of everybody is comically absurd; bent, twisted, curled up, or stretched out, everybody is looking out for that first shell. "Short!" is the word from all at once, "but straight!" say some, so the gun is elevated again, and now the day's work begins, and des Bordes is inaugurated. *À propos* des Bordes, before we leave it, it may be as well to mention a fact connected with it which throws considerable light upon the extent to which that little split which we saw commencing in the Council of War had widened; it was now an open rupture, and this little fort wedged it open still further. By the "Articles of War," the commandant of the place had the surveillance of all the outworks of that place, and the appointment of their garrison, but the question was now raised if this fort should not be considered as a field-work, and so placed under the direction of Marshal Lebœuf. Of course Marshal Bazaine sided with Lebœuf against General Coffinières, and it is an absolute fact that this little fort, lying midway between the larger ones of St.

Julian and Queleu, and called upon to coöperate with them both, was placed under the command of an officer whose very name was withheld from the Commandant of the place. If, therefore, the commandant of Queleu needed the assistance of des Bordes, or desired to send an instruction to him, he had firstly to communicate with General Coffinières, who had to communicate with Marshal Bazaine, who had to communicate with Marshal Lebœuf, who then, when of course it was too late, sent word to the commandant of des Bordes. That was, indeed, "how not to do it," and the piece of red tape in which that order was enrolled was as nearly nine miles long as possible. Under these circumstances, it can be understood that though des Bordes might bark a good deal, it did not bite much. Whilst I have been telling you all this, the Marshal has ridden away, so we will ride after him. Troops come up from the camp behind us; some small amount of artillery rumbles up; and it begins to get exciting. The soldiers move on, keeping well down under the crest of the hill; for from Mercy-le-Haut, which the Prussians hold, they can see all the French do if they are not careful. Meanwhile, the enemy's sharpshooters slink down into the vines which still clothe the hill-sides outside our camp. As the fire increases, we ride away to the left in the direction of the old battleground of the 1st of September. The men of Lebœuf's corps keep coming down from St. Julian and creeping into the valley. Both sides are waking up a little, and there is an evidence that the artillery is getting angry;



so down into the valley we race, plunge through the small rivulet, and into the village of Vantoux. There we come to a stop. The artillery is jammed in with infantry, who can't go on because there is some artillery which won't. At last a gap occurs; into it I squeeze my horse, then leave his heels to make further room, and we are out of the pack. To the rear of Mey we find a couple of batteries of "sixes" pounding away at a small cottage by the side of the road which leads to the Prussian fortress of St. Barbe. Very bad practice do they make too. Shell after shell falls short, though the distance is not great; nor are the artillerymen disturbed at their work. The wood of Mey protects us from the Prussian fire, and the French sharpshooters are in advance. They wriggle along on their bellies like quaint coleopterous insects, with blue wing-cases, red legs, and steel antennæ, suggesting wondrous combination, worthy of the pencil of Du Maurier. These keep the Prussian infantry back, and there is nothing to disturb us. At last the range is got. Crash goes shell after shell into the building. The angle is knocked in and the Prussians knocked out. Up jump the French infantry and run for the house. Spurs smite horses' sides, and we race to see who can be first in, when—pshut! and my horse is upright. It was not all quite so easy to get there as it looked. Only about half the Prussians ran away, leaving others to give us a warm reception. Fortunately they were too impatient, or it might have been much worse for us. As it was, they brought down two or three of the

men, and a bullet struck the off fore-foot of my poor horse. He reared, and got the bit between his teeth, and was off with me to Prussia. Stop him I couldn't; swing him round was all I could manage to do. The continued firing still frightened him, and he ran away with all his speed. Right in front of me was a vineyard, and the grey oak stakes to which the vines were tied looked as sharp, as grey, and as steel-like as bayonets. Stop I couldn't. To charge that *chevaux de frise* was more than I liked to do; so there was nothing for it but to fold my arms over my field-glass, to save that at least, and hoist myself out of the saddle. It was very hard that ground, very; and I limped for several days after, but my horse came to sad grief. He was badly cut by the stakes, and though I might have cured him if I could have kept him long enough, I had to reverse the process, and he had to keep me. Poor beast, he was much better to ride than to eat; though, as he came to an untimely end before the fodder did, he was a very favourable specimen of the viand.

Limping about I stopped for a little while to see the result of an attempt on Noisseville, the little village in front of us, which has been taken and re-taken several times in this war's history, and which we were going at again now. After the French had finally driven the last Prussian out of the small house which was so hard to get, they set fire to it, determining that the enemy should not have the chance of annoying them again from that point. Making this house a turning point, they threw out a con-

siderable number of skirmishers and advanced towards this little village, which has already had such a drenching of French and German blood. They could not tell if it was occupied. Not a bluecoat was seen ; all was perfectly still. A shell or two from field-pieces was tried ; not a shot could be drawn. St. Julian sends in one of his long 24 shells at it. Crash it goes into the first house on the left, and there is a great big hole in it. Still not a movement. St. Julian tries the right side this time, and the house on the other side of the street is hit, with the same happy result. Still no sign. The French stop and praise the admirable practice St. Julian makes, but after the ruse of the little house they don't know what to expect from the big village. Meanwhile the men creep steadily on. Crack goes the chassépot whenever anyone thinks he sees something, and the thought seems to be a frequent one. Still they won't reply. Are they there or are they not ? It is very puzzling. I can't understand it, so I limp over to the other side of the hill, and there crawling out of the wood of Faily I see a big black snake, half a mile long, it looks ; and it is a column of Prussian cavalry. In spite of a sprained leg from my fall, I positively run back again until I get to an officer and tell him what I have seen. Off he trots incredulously, to look for himself, but he comes back at a gallop, sends my damaged horse to me, and seeks the officer in command. Three words settle the question ; the retreat is sounded, and the men draw back again. And now begins the fire. Noisleville is not empty now. The dragon's teeth are sown.

Out of every loophole, from behind every wall, from every little hedge springs up armed men. And they fire away with an impetuosity which makes up for their past patience. Luckily the French are not quite near enough, and they dare not pursue. The French artillery comes on to the front and holds the enemy in check, and we gradually get safe under the shelter of our big friends the guns of St. Julian again, I having the honourable distinction of being the last man to leave the field. Not because I sought the honour,—it was thrust upon me; I can without any false modesty say I do not like such honours. It was because my horse was lame and lagged behind. I left him near the fort, and walked back. It was a glorious sight that evening view of Metz; the valley was filled with deep blue river mist, the grand hill of St. Quentin rose up into the evening sky and glowed almost amethystine in the red rays of the autumn sunset; the fairy-like *flèche* of the cathedral cut out, in strong black lines, its lace-like architecture, against the burning line of light, whilst the tall poplars remaining on the hill side close by rose up in the coming twilight like old cypress trees. It was Turneresque in colour, and would need the pen of a Ruskin to describe, but I thought as I came down Mont St. Julian that I could see where that glorious knowledge of light had come from for which Turner's great, perhaps greater predecessor, was renowned: I mean Claude Gelée, called Lorraine.

Next day a smaller affair, commencing at four in the evening, took place. I was not at it, unfortunately, I

was much too stiff from my fall of yesterday to walk, and my horse was in no condition to be ridden. It appears, however, that a portion of our left of yesterday, not having had much to do, were anxious to force out the Prussians from their observatory at Mercy-le-Haut and from the Grange-aux-Bois, so they took a mitrailleuse with them, and very soon explored the premises ; but as this was merely a feeler for a further and more definite assault on this position, they contented themselves with taking notes, and collecting a few newspapers. It may sound strange, but one of the things most sought for, next to food, on these expeditions, was newspapers. They were " paper chases," with a little additional excitement. Everywhere, especially in those places where scraps of newspapers are wont to be found, was a rigorous search made. Not a Prussian fell, but he was searched instantly, and I have no doubt but that some of our doings in the search for news appeared duly heightened in Prussian journals, and English ones too of Prussian proclivities, as the " barbarous conduct of French soldiers to Prussian wounded." Certainly we rifled their pockets, not for money—that we never found in abundance ; even if we had found it, it would have been useless to us, the very filthy lucre of silbern groschen, and such like imitations of real money would have been untranslatable in Metz, so there was no temptation to take it ; but newspapers had a market value, dependant upon their date. A recent one would fetch two or three napoleons (we were still imperialistic enough to stick to the name, though the red

and righteous called them *pièces de vingt*); but newspapers of later dates would descend so low as 1f.50, and at Mercy-le-Haut there was a good take: paper was plentiful.

Every day now our outposts would be more seriously attacked, and it seemed as though each side was determined to harass the other. We captured a good many Prussians, and lost a good many men ourselves. Meanwhile the town was not idle. Put into better heart by the activity of the last few days, it determined to show what it could do; so on Sunday, the 25th, there was a grand review of the National Guard. The Place d'Armes, in front of the cathedral, was the point of assembly, and soon it was crowded. From every street leading into it came brown-bloused men, for the uniform of the National Guard at Metz is that one so hated by the Prussians, a blouse. A brown linen cap forms the head dress, round which, and on the collar of the blouse is sewn a piece of worsted binding, of the colour of the wearer's particular corps.

We had four corps in Metz, mustering altogether, with our volunteer artillery, some 7,000 men, fairly drilled, but miserably equipped. Their arms consisted of old fashioned percussion muzzle loaders, of some three or four different patterns, but for none of which did there exist any ammunition. Yet all this time there was an enormous number of chassapots in store, and now plenty of ammunition for them, for we had set to work and made a very large quantity at Metz. The National Guard

was, however, not much liked by the authorities, especially by the commander-in-chief. It was popular; that itself was a crime; it was of decidedly republican tendencies, which was worse; and worst of all, it did not trust in either the faith or the knowledge of His Excellency Marshal Bazaine. The sole object of the National Guard was to defend Metz from the forces which surrounded it, and I am sure they really did not know whether that one under the Marshal Bazaine or that under Prince Frederic Charles was its greatest enemy. This opposition naturally made the force highly popular in Metz, especially with the women. Mothers saw their new-born children die from want of more nutritious food than could now be obtained, and with tears in their eyes they buckled on the sword-belt and giberne on their husbands and their sons. Grey-headed old men and young striplings stood side by side and did willing night duty on the ramparts; even he who had married a wife made no excuse, but came, and his wife wished it. Vapourers, of course, there were in abundance, who talked loudly in the market place, where they could be seen and heard of men, and who, of course, when the time came, were not to be found; but on my word I believe they were all bachelors; had they been married, their wives would have driven them forth with the distaff, or whatever else does duty for that obsolete utensil in a well-regulated modern household.

Under these circumstances it was determined to have a grand demonstrative review. Hardly a man stayed away, and they filed out of the square with bands play-

ing and flags flying, in excellent style. One notable subject of remark was, that the flag bore no eagle, an evidence that there was no Imperialism in the National Guards. Down the hill they marched by various routes, to the long straight line of the Rue des Remparts, where, forming a long, straight brown streak, they were reviewed by their colonel, and then they filed off again. Each one felt himself an heroic defender of his country, and rushed back to the female adulation which awaited him.

Even yet the town and the army were not satisfied. Our *fourrages* had manifested the fact that in no place towards which we had advanced was the enemy in sufficient force to offer a serious resistance. We had always started after breakfast, and returned comfortably in time for dinner ; but then it was true we never brought home much for dinner with us, so it was determined that on the morning of the 27th we should start early, and go where there was something more than a negative knowledge to be obtained. Early, therefore, at break of day, there should be a strong reconnaissance in force effected in three different directions : one towards Peltre, with the view of breaking up the large collection of provisions there accumulated for the use of the Prussian troops. Peltre is the nearest railway station to Metz on the line which connects it with Prussia, and was therefore the great commissariat station for the Prussian camp to the westward ; the stations of Courcelles and Rémilly fulfilling this duty for the eastern portion. To Peltre the Prussians had constructed a temporary railway



from the two latter places. It was, therefore, a double good to do to destroy their provisions and get some for ourselves. Moreover there might also be the opportunity of finding a means of sending at least some few men through with despatches. All was ready and in order, and very early in the morning, before the sun was up, we were away.

With a view to creating further confusion, and with the hopes of obtaining greater success, two other expeditions had also been arranged ; one towards Courcelles, and the other down the valley towards Thionville ; but the main point of attack was this on Peltre. General Lapasset was ready with his brigade, together with six pieces of artillery. The railway still existed, and was available for some considerable portion of the road. A train was formed, and some of the French troops were placed in the carriages, a field-piece or two mounted on some vans in front, and the engine placed behind the train. Alongside the line marched the rest of the troops, and with a battery of mitrailleuses took up their position above the wood of Basse Bevoie. Quietly round towards the château of Crepy creep the infantry, and the affair begins. Until now the Prussians have had no notice of the approach of the troops ; but once awakened, it was real earnest hard work. Rattle after rattle of musketry fire rings out from one side or the other ; but at last the Prussians are routed, and this point is carried. Meanwhile another portion of our force pushes on rapidly to the village, where, before the Prussians have recovered

from their surprise, we were on them. They run to a convent—the Convent of the Sisters of Providence it was called—its walls are already loopholed ; but under a deadly fire an entrance is forced, and now commences a horrible sight for those poor peace-loving sisters. That strange animal, man, invaded their peaceful sanctuary, and brought death with him. Their church was a charnel-house ; the very sanctuary was stained with blood ; and the house of mercy became the house of vengeance, for there was no mercy there. The Prussians craved, the French gave, no quarter, and flight there was none. The railway station close to it is carried ; men are killed at every step ; but there is something more precious than men here. The inferior biped must be killed ; but these patient-looking quadrupeds must be saved at any price. They are living beef and mutton ; and what is man compared with that ? Slay, wound, and mutilate the one if you will, but pray take care of the cows and sheep. Cattle trucks are broken open, sheep pens are invaded ; the cows are driven up the line, and the little sheep are tucked under the arm or borne on the shoulder in the most pastoral manner. It is truly an ovation. Sugar, coffee, hay, straw, anything and everything, is wanted, and it is all there, so our railway carriages are filled and sent back again.

Queleu keeps thundering away over our heads, bullets rattle about the roofs. We are in a hurry to get away if we can without bringing down upon us more of those Teutons, whose brothers we have awakened and sent to

sleep so rudely ; so we pile up everything portable in wild confusion, and away we go. Some push forward, but where they went to none as yet can say. There were letters for England in the pocket of one of them ; but I much fear, as they never reached their destination, that their bearer reached too soon a prison or the grave.

Back, delighted with the morning's work, we come, bringing with us somewhere about 100 prisoners, and having lost comparatively few of our own men. It is a veritable triumphal entry into Metz. Men come in laden with the spoil. From a cross-bar borne on the shoulders of the stalwart sapeurs hangs a huge pig. Him they decked with vine leaves, and have placed a Prussian helmet on his head, while from his breast hangs a placard proclaiming him to be le Roi Guillaume. Another follows, led in triumph by the leg, and struck, hardly lovingly, by the hard handed soldiers, who at each blow demand his name, translating the squeals he utters in return to Bismarck, Bismarck. Laughing and merry, they come up the line and parade the town. Children run out into streets to look at those strange animals the cows ; mothers pat their sleek sides, and beg a drop of surreptitious milk for baby, and everybody is rejoicing. Have not we got forty cows ? Isn't that a matter of glee ? Yes, but five times forty men at least were lost in doing it ; so no wonder beef is expensive and milk so dear.

Meanwhile the 90th and the 60th of the Line, from the 3rd Corps, and acting under General Montaudan, make another attack upon Mercy, and find that their coming

has not been unexpected. The Prussians have, since our last visit, turned it into a fortress. The windows are boarded up and loopholed, and they have constructed an abatis of trees in front of the château. They are soon driven out of the first line of fallen trees, and then comes the attack upon the house itself. From each window streams out a continuous line of bullets; firing from our side does little good, so, taking their axes in their hands, our sapeurs rush up, making for the blank wall spaces between the windows as rapidly as they can. Doors are smashed in, the wooden protection of the windows cut to pieces, and with a shout of "Vive la France!" at them rush the soldiers. It is vengeance now; the quick blood of the Frenchman is on fire, and the dogged resistance of the Teuton rendered more determined than before. Each room on the ground-floor is a slaughter-house, and, as it is impossible to ascend the staircase, and the garrison won't yield, the infuriated soldiers heap up everything inflammable and set fire to it. Good God! it is horrible to think what demons war makes of men! Every despairing face that appears at the upper windows is shot at before the man who owns it has time to cry for quarter. The flames and the smoke mount upwards, higher and higher ascends the smoke, higher and higher leap the flames, taking death with them, and that that death may be a speedy one is the only mercy to be hoped for now at Mercy-le-Haut. Les Grange-aux-Bois and the château of Colombey are attacked at the same time. At the former we find in the out-buildings a con-

siderable quantity of corn, enough, indeed, to load eighty small forage waggons with. These we lade in all haste, as stronger forces of the enemy are coming up ; their shells already burst amongst us, and we are anxious to get all we can. So soon as this is done, off go the waggons and fighting begins ; but whilst we have been engaged in the barns, the Prussians have set fire to the house and decamp under cover of the smoke. At Colombey they give us a very warm welcome by setting fire to the wood so soon as we are fairly in it, and then firing long volleys into our troops, who, blinded by the smoke, are more anxious to make their escape from the suffocating smell of the burning undergrowth than to shoot a Prussian. We lose a great many there, and finding it impossible to proceed, our men are called off, blackened and begrimed, to return homewards.

Over on the other side of the water Pichon's Brigade of the 6th Corps, under Marshal Canrobert, issues from the village of Woippy, and spreads itself over the plain down to the Moselle, gradually working forward towards Maxe. The Prussian batteries on the right bank of the Moselle treat them to a heavy cannonade, but as they have taken very open order, the loss is not great, and closing in on the village, the small Prussian force which held it is driven out or retires. Now the village itself is shelled from the batteries, but we get good heavy loads, and off we go back again. At the same time another portion of this corps attacks the position of Ladonchamps, and carries it, capturing the soldiers and officers who held it

but Prussian reinforcements coming up, it was necessary for our forces to retire. And now all around us rise up huge columns of smoke in the air, for the enemy determines to burn up what we have left. The whole village of Peltre is in a blaze ; the long forks of flame start up into the dense smoke-clouds which roll over the valley : all that day and all that night does it blaze away.

The Grange-aux-Bois is yet in flames ; the wood and château of Colombey are burning ; and as we retire the Prussians advance and burn La Maxe. From this date until the Marshal began to treat definitely for the capitulation of the place, scarcely a day passed but that the investing forces set fire to some farm or some village ; and the horizon was black by day and red by night from the smoke and fire of these barbarous incendiaries.

We took advantage of these excursions to enclose some fresh bit of green land, to add some little bit of food to our exhausted territory. Occasionally the Prussians would attempt to retake the positions we had thus forced them from, but they never succeeded. On the 1st of October they made a night attack on Lessy, in which some severe fighting took place ; yet we held the position, and, I fancy, inflicted quite as much damage on them as they occasioned us ; and on the same day a great many of their officers were killed in front of Ladonchamps.

Ladonchamps was a position very much coveted by both sides, and one which cost a good many lives to each of them. Early in the history of the blockade

the Prussians seized upon the fine old Château of Ladonchamps; a building full of history, and which has played many an important rôle in that of Metz. It was here that the old Republican burghers of Metz met the Emperor Charles the Fifth, and made him swear a solemn oath to observe the privileges of the city and the freedom of the people before they would admit him, and in each of the many sieges Ladonchamps has been a place of slaughter. The position was again important, and it was necessary that the French troops should carry it. A field battery was brought against it, but, strange to say, it did not reply; there were the guns and there was a sentinel, but not a shot could we draw. Presently huge rolls of smoke rise up from behind the château; it is evident the farm at least is burnt, and a rush is made to save the house. A few musket shots are fired. The Prussians evacuate, and we enter, to find that the guns we have so much feared are simply portions of those poplar trees which have done so much to keep us imprisoned in Metz. They are neatly mounted on the wheels of broken carts, and the "sentinel" was stuffed with straw. Such ruses were not uncommon in the war; they caused many a mirthful moment, and relieved the weary tediousness of the siege; nor, after the chagrin of the "sell" had passed over, did they cause any other feeling than that of good humour. We had already fought once or twice over this position and had held it several times for short periods, and then were driven out, but the Prussians held it now. From

some cause or another, which we could never unravel, there used to be a regular daily meeting of officers in front of the château, but further along the road to Thionville. What it all portended we could not tell; yet fearing it might portend something evil, it was thought best to put a stop to it, and that day was the last they ever met. A mitrailleuse was brought up, and placed in position to command the point of rendezvous. They came as usual, and—Gr-r-rut. As the smoke cleared up we could see some limping off, some running away, but, I am sorry to say, we also saw a good many dark-looking patches on the ground. After an hour an ambulance drove up, hung out a white flag, and then crawled away again, very slowly, heavily and sorrowfully laden. War certainly is a great civiliser, especially in these days of chivalry. Next morning it was determined that once more Ladonchamps should be ours; so at two o'clock in the morning General Gibbon walked in, with two battalions of the 28th, and the soldiers forgot to come out again, for they held possession of it as long as Marshal Bazaine would let them. The Prussians tried, at eight o'clock, to dislodge them, and established a battery at Les Petites Tapes for the purpose of shelling them out; but our battery at the little farm of St. Eloy fortunately had a piece or two of "twelves" ready, and instead of our being turned out of Ladonchamps, the occupiers of Les Petites Tapes were knocked to pieces, and had to take themselves off in bits. Two companies of French Engineers went out, and threw up



some additional earthworks on the road side ; and, in spite of every assault, from the 2nd of October till the last day of Metz, Ladonchamps remained ours, and formed the centre of one of the only large movements which ever afterwards took place, and which we must relate in another Chapter.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### AN OUTPOST.

WHEN not engaged in building balloons, when no foraging party was going on, the visit to some of our outposts provided me with many a pleasant ride or walk ; and I look back upon many of them with a fondness and a pleasure I shall find, I fear, much difficulty in imparting to my readers. To me the thought of them brings back the memory of many a quiet chat in some sheltered corner where a safe look-out down many a wooded valley could be had too, and of many a quiet pipe smoked in silence on some lofty ridge when to speak above a whisper would have caused us to hear a sharp crack ring out from the valley below us, and to find a lump of lead at no great distance. All day long, and all night too, was firing kept up between the two armies in a perfectly needless manner. Not an hour passed without some interchange of lead at our outposts. Not a day passed but some one of our forts had a duel with the enemy's batteries, excepting only those few still days which preceded, and by their very silence seemed a mournful presage of, our surrender.

Nothing was gained, though much ammunition was lost by this—perhaps some twenty or thirty men a day might be hit on our side, and probably the same number on the other ; but unless either side were attempting to construct an additional work, or the military exigencies of the situation induced this desultory firing, it always seemed to me a needless waste of men and material to keep it up. Still there was a fascination in it which was very great, and the tendency to take a shot was almost irresistible at times, and personally I have felt very angry with myself for the desire that was so strong upon me to try and hit that black thing down there amongst the bushes ; nor was the desire always lessened when that black thing down amongst the bushes took a shot at me. We must, therefore, give the soldiers on each side credit for the same feelings, and add to them that natural animosity which I, as a neutral in the struggle, was released from feeling.

I do not know whether all the neutrals on the other side put quite so strong a restraint upon themselves ; for when the *Times* military correspondent shared my room with me on his first, and my last, night in Metz, an old straw hat which hung there seemed to smite him with remorse. “ Surely that isn’t yours,” said he, “ you didn’t go round to the outposts in that thing, did you ? ” I confess I felt a little hurt at hearing my long-cherished old straw hat stigmatised as a “ thing.” I knew it was ugly, and I had begun to find out it was old, but to hear it called a “ thing ” was a trial I little expected to have

to endure. I pleaded the good qualities of, and the long acquaintance I had had with, my hat, and was commencing an exordium upon its merits as a head-piece, when he ruthlessly cut me short by an exclamation of "By George! to think that it should have been you!" Explanation followed, and it then turned out that my old straw hat was well known beyond our French circle at Metz, extended as that was, and that the Prussian marksmen had honoured it with much attention. Nay, I am by no means sure, from some little hesitation on his part, that my that night's welcome guest had not himself tried to bring down that hat. If so, I'm very glad he was so bad a shot. On further questioning on a point to me at least of some personal interest, it turned out that I was considered to be some personage of much more importance than a mere "correspondent," from the fact that I always had so many officers round me. I'm sorry to dispel the illusion, for, though I had some few personal friends amongst them, it was not for my own sake, or to do me honour, that I was so attended; but my staff arose from the fact that my field-glass was better than most others in Metz, and they always wanted to use it. Under these circumstances, I usually found something going on whenever I visited our outposts.

Many times since my return I have been surprised at the absence of that knowledge which had become so familiar to me that I have almost thought everyone else knew it too, until some question had revealed the general ignorance upon the special point in question. But on

very few subjects connected with the siege of Metz have I been more surprised than at the ignorance prevailing as to the length of our own lines without the walls, and the magnitude of the area we occupied. Briefly, then, we held a space of ground having nowhere a radius of less than two miles from the centre of the town, and in some directions this radial line was fully three miles long. Roughly speaking, our position might be described as an ellipse, whose longer axis extended from north to south for a distance of between six and seven miles in length, having our position of Ladonchamps and the village of Magny for its two extremities. Its shorter axis, extending from east to west for a distance of between four and five miles, had the farm Bellecroix and the little village of Lessy for the extreme points. We, therefore, allowing for the variation in this line occasioned by the broken nature of the ground, had some eighteen or twenty miles of line to keep. If you will take the trouble to turn to the map, you will see what a large area this line circumscribed.

Almost everywhere along this line did we find something to do. Here a wood opposed us, and there a vineyard; and both wood and vineyard had troublesome occupants; now a deserted farm building would be held to-day by us, to-morrow by the foe. Whole villages changed their nationality over and over again; sometimes we were surprised, and sometimes we surprised the Prussians. In fact, towards the end of September we had very considerably enlarged the circle which at first

enclosed us, a convincing proof that the enemy was not in reality stronger than ourselves. The villages of Magny, Ste. Ruffine, Lorry, Mey, and Nouilly, all of which were at one time occupied by the Prussians, were re-occupied and either finally held by us, or rendered untenable for either side. Instead of closing in upon us, as might have been expected, the circle of the besiegers grew larger towards the end than it had been at the commencement of the siege. Had the Prussians been so overwhelmingly strong as the Marshal wished us to believe, they would have closed in upon us and crushed us. They would never have yielded up to us those coveted little bits of verdure we sought for for our horses' sakes, or this or that potato-field we often pushed our line in front of, not for the sake of territory, but for *pommes de terre*. The constant changes of our position not only gave interest to the visit, but led with other things to the knowledge of those intentions of the Marshal which filled us all with so much discontent and so much dismay.

If I had power enough, I should like to take you with me, firstly up to St. Julien, for it is from this point I have already described some portion of the country to you. It was from here we started, in imagination, together, when you went with me to the battle of Ste. Barbe. On leaving the town we are close down to the level of the Moselle; and whether we leave by the picturesque old medieval Porte des Allemandes, with its quaintly arcaded courtyard and its conically-roofed

towers, which carry us back so far into the history of the former struggles of Metz, or whether we leave by the ugly modern gateway which leads on to the flat Ile Chambière, we have to pass that very formidable outwork the Fort Bellecroix. This is a detached addition to the great system of enclosure formed by Vauban, and was added by Cormontaigne, to whose care Metz owes many other of its exterior defences. It is an enormous fortress this same Bellecroix, and covers the whole of the eastern side of the town. When first I saw it, it was a beautiful mass of verdure, and its glacis was clothed with fine trees which had grown up in the long interval since this fortress was constructed. Now there is not a tree to be seen, and scarcely a blade of grass, and the hard and ugly lines which engineers delight in stand out in painful clearness. Passing this, and skirting the Moselle, which bends off with a graceful sweep to our left, we come to the huge skeleton of an enormous tannery. It was once a wood and plaster building, constructed in carpentry after the fashion of the old half-timbered halls we have in Lancashire and Cheshire. Now nothing but the roof and the bones remain. Every thing which could shelter an enemy has been removed ; a few hides hang over the framework ; the once neat garden which surrounded it is trodden down ; and the little stream which runs through the valley is choked with *débris*, crushed out of shape by fallen poplars, and wanders aimlessly in floods and puddles through the grounds and well-kept walks it once gave beauty to. Such are some of the first fruits of war.

For a mile's breadth around the town there is nothing visible but spoliation and ruin. Passing on, the road begins to ascend, and we enter the long straggling village of St. Julien. It must be in time of peace a charming spot. The trim gardens and good roomy villas which jut out from the hill-side look down on the Moselle and Metz, and turn their faces to the setting sun, all betoken ease and wealth, whilst the large, but now closed, *cafés* which line the streets give substantial evidence of how favourite a ramble this must have been for the dwellers in the town. Now the streets are filled with idling soldiers, the *cafés* are turned into barracks, the road is lined with broken country carts, and the peculiar air of neglect which seems always to accompany an army hangs over the place.

On our left, down that broad walk there between those two white pillars with the tubs of aloes on them, and against which lean that knot of lounging officers,—down there, in the big white house which almost cuts off our view over the valley, lives Marshal Lebœuf. It is a charming place, and seems suited to be the sybaritic home of one who has achieved the proud title of being the finest exquisite in the imperial army. Why should he seek other glory? Is not that sufficient reputation for a marshal of France? At any rate it is to be feared it is the sole reputation he ever will acquire, save that evil one which attaches to him already of having, by his vanity and his sycophancy, ruined this army of the Rhine.



Up the rapidly ascending slope we climb, the road becomes so steep now that it twists and turns about violently in its endeavour to wriggle up the hill, and is so tortuous, that the little village is obliged to stop behind, and there we leave it. Cutting off some of these turns by a bridle-path through the brown-leaved grey-staked vines, we reach a higher plateau, and come upon the camp of the Chasseurs de Vincennes. It is not merely a "tented field" here, for these ingenious and ever-active little men have built themselves a little town. Here we come upon a circular building made with the boughs of willow, poplar, or pine. It has upright walls, a conical roof, and an outer wattled fence some five feet away from the main central structure. It is quite startling in the resemblance it bears to the huts of the Belgæ and the Gauls sculptured on the Trajan column at Rome. The baggy-breeched, long-coated, and kepi-headed soldiers who surround it bear a wonderful likeness to the graven images of the ancient defenders of this very country, and our thoughts carry us back to those other wars which were fought round here between the Latin and the Teuton races, who are still struggling for the victory. In other places we find huts built of turfs neatly cut and squared, the joints regularly marked with lines of small white pebbles; and the primitive architecture of the camp is both interesting and suggestive. These Chasseurs seem to rewrite many a forgotten chapter in the history of habitation. Nor does their labour stop at architecture. Engineering is practised, too, and now we

find a small toy windmill erected on which automation soldiers go through all the evolutions of manual and platoon by means of strings and wires with a regularity much more Prussian than French. Each little rivulet is dammed up and turns some small water mill, where mimic planks are sawn into matches by tiny saws, or even where the coffee roaster is turned by this improvised machinery.

Wonderfully ingenious in all these little things are the infantry in general, but especially so are the Chasseurs de Vincennes. Their camp presents a marked contrast to a cavalry one. Once off his horse the trooper never knows what to do with himself, but moodily stalks about in his long cloak. Now, alas! he has not even that great resource, a curb-chain to polish; he has nothing to do, and he does it. Contented with his little *tente d'abri*, he never attempts to ameliorate his condition, and from the height of his few extra inches looks down with supreme contempt alike upon the pastime or the prudence of his brother soldier who fights or goes a-foot.

Following an officer or two, arm-in-arm it may be with a private, we leave the camp, and reach, at nearly the summit of the hill, a little roadside building, well known to all who have partaken of the miseries of the siege of Metz. It is the Café Infortuné. The name is dolorous and the *café* is not large, but M. Infortuné at this time belies his name—Fortuné, not Infortuné, it should be; his café is always full, for he has two remarkably pretty daughters within, and a glorious view

all over the valley without, and as it is a long pull up the hill everybody stops here;—to admire the prospect, of course. You cannot stop without at least a glass of wine, and if the Hebe who brings it is good-looking the wine is none the worse for it;—so you sometimes take another, and, what with the wine, the pretty faces of his daughters, and the fine view, M. Infortuné must have found the war a great increaser of his purse. Perched on the steep hill-side, you here look right over the valley of the Moselle; with its broad flat plain, now utterly devoid of all visible life. The large farms, almost recalling ancient Roman villas by their size and innumerable surroundings, are deserted and silent. No cattle graze the plain, and, save here and there a wandering horse in search of some few mouthfuls, nothing moves. Long brown lines cross the valley in various directions; they are our earthworks. Now and then a white puff of smoke issues from a bush, and some seconds afterwards a dull thud reaches us up here; and sometimes from the big wood which runs up the opposite hill there comes a bigger puff and a louder thud, and then perhaps a black line pushes itself out from the foot of the hill like a long black slug creeping out for an evening ramble, and the little thuds and the louder thuds become more numerous. If the black slug crawls slowly towards us, out rings behind us the loud bass of a big 24-pounder from the Fort St. Julien, and after short interval of whizz-whizz comes a faint sort of echo of the first sound. It is a big shell gone on its errand, and the sudden fountain of dust

which springs up in front of the black object tells it that there is a limit to its audacity. The slug melts ; you can just see some little black dots here and there, and from each little black dot there comes every now and then a little white cloud. More shells are thrown, more shots from behind our earthworks, and after a little time the black dots re-assemble, and the slug crawls back, leaving a few black dots in its trail. That is a small attack upon our outworks. Sometimes it is a blue line, and not a black one ; and then we try to occupy some old farm building which has been perhaps bathed in French and German blood many times already, but which may be wanted for some temporary purpose again, so more must be shed.

But our wine is finished, so we make our bow to Mesdemoiselles Infortuné and push on. The fort lies to the right of us. It is large, ugly, and quite new. There are the usual dull-looking features about it. The same monotonous slopes, not yet grassed over ; and the *débris* of the materials used in construction yet lie round it in unpleasant confusion. We won't go in to-day ; but as the fresh wind sets down the valley, and the white islands in the clear blue sky float merrily over us, their shadows race one another over the flat plain and play at hide and seek amongst the hills, so it is just the day to stand on a breezy promontory and enjoy a quiet pipe. On our left is the newly-made position of Châtillon—a fortified spur of the hill, on which we can step out, and see the as yet hidden Moselle, for it has run almost

to earth beneath us, and only now and then, when a bright silver gleam shot up through some small opening in the dense mass of low trees and high bushes which clothed the long steep bank could you tell that it kept us such close company. Looking eastward you see the long widening valley melting away into the blue haze, until hills blend with clouds, and which is earth or which is sky it is impossible to define. As the shadows come floating towards us they pick out here a village spire or there a large grange in strong relief, and rising away in the far distance is an object now white, now black, as sunlight or as shade define it. That is Thionville—the brave fortress whose little garrison shames our large force at Metz. It issued out and captured lots of provisions; it even sent an envoy here to us whilst we did nothing. But then, you see, there was not even one marshal there, and it is even somewhat doubtful if they had a general, and they defied the foe a month longer than did we in Metz.

Let us follow the wooded hill a little further. Steady! don't break the boughs: keep quiet. Who are these? They are the *francs tireurs*. Is it because they are amateurs they look so fierce? No: they lost a favourite fellow-soldier yesterday. Poor Vaillant! his name became him well, and just out there in the wood to the left he fell dead. Hardly a shop was open in Metz the day they buried him. Young, brave, and handsome, of an old Messin family, he was well known and much loved in his native town, and almost worshipped in his corps.

But it is not only this which makes them savage. Read this paper. It was found affixed to the doors of the farm down there which we captured the other day ;—

“ PROCLAMATION.

“ The Commandant in Chief of the second German army again makes it known that each individual who does not belong to the regular French army or Garde Mobile found bearing arms, under the name of *franc tireur* or other designation, will be considered as a traitor, and hanged or shot at the place where he is taken without further consideration.”

As you read this proclamation, you do not wonder that the lines about their mouths are so hard, and that there is steely glint in their eyes as they hand it to you. It is dated the 31st of August, and is evidently not the first of the sort, as it is “ again ” made known. Now, as some ignorance prevails in England as to who or what *francs tireurs* are, it may bring the question more personally home to us if I say that these young men are equivalent to our own volunteers ; they are regularly drilled and officered ; they wear a distinctive dress ; they are mostly drawn from the better educated classes ; and they are to be hanged or shot without trial, and as traitors, too. Traitors ! because they defend their country. Think of that, you English volunteers. What would you do ? What they did : they determined, too, that each individual found bearing arms and not belonging to

France should be shot without further consideration, and after this they gave no quarter, it was war to the death at this point.

It is a simple matter of history what Prussia herself did in 1813, when she was invaded ;—how that on the 13th of February she ordered detachments of “free-shooters” to be added to each infantry battalion ;—how that no exemption from military service was then allowed, in uniform or out : each must do his devoir against the foe. Here are the orders then given to her citizens : “ At the enemy’s approach all the inhabitants of villages must withdraw with their cattle and goods, and carry away or destroy flour and corn, beer and wine, burn their mills and boats, fill up wells, cut bridges, and set fire to all crops approaching maturity.” This is what she thought of a parallel invasion : “ The combat to which you are called sanctifies all means. The most terrible are the best. Not only shall you continually harass the enemy ; you shall also lay violent hands on marauders.”

That was what Prussia said in 1817. She has grown wiser since then. A Prussian who defended his country was a patriot ; a Frenchman who does so is a traitor—Traitor, indeed ! we straighten our back, lift up our head, and—Ping ! a branch is lopped off above us. That is because we raised our head a little too high. Here we must be humble-minded, and of lowly condition. Kill when you can, but don’t get too excited ; it’s dangerous. But there are half a dozen shots in reply ; and so the deadly game keeps on here continually.

Men who could issue such a proclamation as that deserve no mercy, and the enraged *franc tireur* will crawl on hands and knees for half a day to bring down some officer of that German army which could issue so cold-blooded a licence to murder. The *franc tireur's* uniform may be a blouse, the officer's is broadcloth, yet both are soldiers; and in 1867 I saw in Paris a whole body of these *francs tireurs* in *blouses* reviewed before King William, nor did he then consider them other than as soldiers. Why should he now? Then they were picturesque; now they are inconvenient. But depend upon it, such a proclamation as this will make them more inconvenient still, and if, as seems too probable, the horrors of a guerilla war are yet in store for France and Prussia, private butchery will be added to wholesale slaughter, and this proclamation will be read and quoted as a means to incite to revenge every Frenchman who can bear an arm.

Let us creep cautiously back; I am getting savage; and as I think of many volunteer friends at home I find it rather hard to maintain a strict neutrality, so it is better to creep out of the wood. We wander up to the old château of Grimont—a fine old building, with massive square high-roofed towers at the angles. Three months ago it was a luxurious home. Three months ago it lay half hidden in a wood the growth of centuries. Three months ago its gardens were the most carefully kept and the richest cultured of any in this beautiful valley of the Moselle. Now, the house is a barrack; the



trees are felled ; the gardens a heap of abomination. Such is war. There is a big cloud comes over nature and our thoughts ; and we trudge moodily back again, sad at heart as we think of all the evil passions roused and all the ill deeds done within these last three months, and wonder why. Thus wondering we wander down into the valley, and climb up the slippery hillside opposite, keeping pretty close to cover, and get into our outworks at the Farm Bellecroix. They tell a strange tale here, and one which I could never unfold plainly. For many days past a buxom young damsel came in and out of the lines at this point laden each morning with a full basket of vegetables, and returning each night with her basket empty but apparently heavy. Her pass was duly signed, so there was no attempt made to stop her. Last night her basket was so heavy she could hardly carry it, and her back assumed rather more than a graceful Grecian bend under its weight. The courteous soldiers insisted on relieving her of her burden—it was heavy indeed. It was filled with those new chassepot cartridges we had been so industriously making at Metz. Often have we found of late that the enemy's outposts have fired at longer ranges than usual, often have we found a chassepot bullet at our feet or in our wounded. Arms we knew they had captured in great quantities here on this very spot, and at Sédan, but we often wondered where they found the ammunition. Little till then did we think that we had been making it for them, but they utilized our industry most unpleasantly. As for the young

woman she was equal to the occasion. Whilst the astonished sentries were unpacking her basket, she tumbled them and it over, and sped away down the hill to Lauvalliere, and before they could recover themselves or their arms she was some distance a-head, dodging behind the long rows of poplars which as usual yet line the roads outside the lines. An attempt at pursuit was prevented by the fire of the Prussian sentries, who unlike our own, seem always to be wide awake at their outposts, and between anger and mirth we walk back to Metz again.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### LADONCHAMPS—SÉMÉCOURT.

*October 3—7.*

ONE of my greatest surprises on my road home, and one which has continued ever since I reached it, was and is the news I did and yet do hear of what the French did in Metz. I have heard of rejoicings within that city, which only mourned ; of meadows covered with cattle, where neither grass nor cattle were ; but the greatest of all surprises is the accounts I hear of the sorties the French were said to have made ; and more than all am I surprised at the dignity and importance attached to the little affair which has been called, in Prussian despatches, by the portentous name of the “ battle of Sémécourt.” The French are by no means inclined to make the least of any of their doings ; a retiring modesty is not their chiefest failing,—indeed, a tendency to exaggeration is occasionally visible in the description of their own deeds of military daring ; and it is, therefore, more flattering to find that which we considered simply a grand foraging expedition elevated by our adversary into the dignity of an engagement.

It is true the pressure of the discontent engendered by idleness and hopelessness in our army had squeezed out a sort of promise from the Marshal that some sortie should be attempted ; and it is equally true that it was said such a sortie was intended to be made in the direction of Thionville. So much faith was placed in this that a movable battery, consisting of a mitrailleuse mounted on a railway truck, and protected by a wrought-iron blindage, to traverse the railway, was provided. So long talked of beforehand was this supposititious sortie, that in a letter written on the 4th October, but one which I never found an opportunity to send, and which lies before me now, I describe my attempt to join it ; and from which, as recording the actual events which preceded this foraging party, I borrow somewhat.

Late on the evening of the 3rd of October came a little message to me that an attempt to reach Thionville would be made at four o'clock on the morning of the morrow. What route would be taken I could not definitely learn. Some said that the direct route along the valley would be chosen ; but even I could not believe the stupidity of the French generals to be equal to a blunder so great as this. I had already seen the batteries established by the Prussians at Malroy and Argancy, on the right bank of the Moselle, and I had seen plans of the batteries constructed at Sémécourt and those hills which formed the left bank, and between these two our road lay. It may surprise you to hear that we had plans of these batteries, but there were not wanting in our army plenty of brave men

who were ready and willing for any adventurous enterprise, and night after night, bearing only a pocket compass, a pistol, and a poignard, they issued out to learn the position of the enemy. No fusils did they carry, no sentinel did they ever pick off from safe shelter—not a blow was struck, not a shot was fired, excepting when defence required it, and then the poignard was to have the preference over the pistol; but not a battery did the Prussians ever establish without those brave men being there. Knowing well, then, how formidable were the batteries flanking each side of this road, I was sceptical as to its being the one we should take, but inclined to the opinion that the rumour had been given out to mislead the enemy, and that the higher ground above the batteries on one side or the other of the valley would be taken.

Four o'clock in the morning of the 4th of October came. My knapsack, already packed with the few things I most needed, was on my shoulders, bread and chocolate were in my pockets—chocolate which I had religiously preserved for such an emergency, and which remained untouched the whole duration of the siege,—the brandy-flask was filled to the stopper, and I started forth hopeful, at any rate, of some adventure, and half hopeful of pressing on with the troops so far as they could go, then making a diversion on my own account to the nearest frontier. Armed solely with a walking-stick, I started. My horse was eaten, and I could not afford now to keep another. Forage was hard to find, and uncommonly dear to buy,

and my purse was much lighter than my heart at this time, so I must needs go a-foot.

Down through the dark and silent streets I went groping my way to the Porte Chambière. Here, at any rate, I should be conveniently situated for any movement. If the murderous road was to be taken, I had but to cross one of the three temporary bridges which unite the Ile Chambière with the left side of the valley, or cross by the suspension-bridge which unites it to the right, should the old route by Ste. Barbe be once again attempted. Here, too, was a large camp of what once was cavalry, but alas ! which now consisted only of horse soldiers on foot. Here, too, was the abattoir of the town, where the horses which could live no longer were daily killed ; and here, too, deplorable to say, was the Polygon, the largest ambulance of Metz. In the first there was no movement, but much expectation. In the second were poor patient creatures waiting tranquilly a relief from their lingering starvation. Many were dead already ; they had died in the lair of the abattoir before the butcher's knife could reach them, and I wondered if we ate them too. But in the third was human misery in every form : poor mutilated men whom the ruthless war had knocked into a mass of suffering ; men whom exposure to the noxious atmosphere of the camp, whom long and weary day and night work in the trenches through this unusually inclement weather had smitten down with ague, with rheumatic and typhoid fevers, and who, by the wisdom and care of the authorities, were now dying in an hospital placed on

an island of mud, between a camp and a slaughter-house. Over all hung a thick white fever-feeding fog, from out of which loomed every now and then the long red-cloaked carbineer, looking like a monstrous blood-stained spectre haunting this isle of horrors. Stumbling over the extended legs of dead horses, entangled now and then in tent ropes, and always splashing mid-leg deep in mud, we sought the tents of sleeping friends, whom we ruthlessly roused from their slumbers to hear the news, or came upon knots of our more expectant ones whom rumours had deprived of sleep, and whom hope kept wakeful and watchful. Nothing was known here, though much was expected.

St. Julien was silent. It was evident that nothing would take place on the right side of the water. So we wended our muddy way through all the indescribable foulness of a French camp, until we reached the river to the left. A few dropping shots in the neighbourhood of Woippy made us look hard through the fog into each other's eyes, and hasten off in that direction. We crossed the bridges, feeling their unparapeted edges rather than seeing them, and groped our way into the camp of the Chasseurs d'Afrique, who, like their brother cavaliers of the carbineers, are now afoot. As the ground rose from the bed of the river and the fog became thinner, we could see their sentries, with their long white great-coats, their pointed hoods erect in the air, a broad-striped blanket flung around them, and their carbines slung across their shoulders, looking like Arabs of the desert, carrying us

away in thought far, far away from Metz. It was wonderfully picturesque, though awfully cold, but disappointment chilled us worse than the weather, for we found our hoped-for sortie was postponed. "Wait a day or two," says a gallant officer who has seen some twenty years of service; "wait a day or two. Prince Frederick Charles has sent word to say he is not quite ready yet." Such was the common feeling as to the relationship existing between the two head-quarters at this time. The fire at Woippy has ceased; it is only an outpost affair, and that is nothing now; so, weary at heart, we turn back into Metz, and, sick with another deferred hope, we seek our hotel, to breakfast once more on the perpetual horse.

What has all this to do with the affair of the 7th? Much. It is a specimen of many another morning—a sample of many another broken hope. But it also shows how careful the Marshal was to take no step until it had been thoroughly ventilated—until it had become common report, and that report had had time to reach the enemy, for spies were many and reticent men on the Council of War were few, and deserters went over daily. It may also serve to illustrate, to those who care to participate in them, some of the hopes and fears of "a special correspondent at the seat of war."

Other news succeeded this. Each day brought some new surmise, some new canard. Now it was that a serious attempt would be made to revictual Metz by a raid on the enemy's store of supplies at Peltre or Courcelles, and



to hold out to the bitter end. Again it was that an attempt would be made to force a passage to the Vosges, leaving but a garrison in Metz ; but faith was extinct, and we were incredulous.

At last reliable information came to me that on the 7th a foraging party would seek to obtain some store of corn said to exist in the farm of Les Grandes Tapes, a farm situated right in the centre of the wide alluvial valley of the Moselle, and almost equidistant from the batteries of Sémécourt and Malroy. Right through this plain passed the road to Thionville, and I had some faint hope that if anything very serious occurred there would be time and opportunity, in the confusion and bustle of the engagement, to slip away and find some means of gaining that liberty I so much longed for, some means of obtaining that communication with England, the absence of which was the most anxious trial I suffered in Metz. The morning was fine and hopeful, but all was yet still, and I feared that it was one more to be added to the many false hopes I had had to abandon. I waited and waited ; the early hours passed away, and it was not until between ten and eleven that the order to move was given. The Marshal had not finished his breakfast, they said. Once in the camp, it was palpable that nothing serious was meant for that day. The tents were all left standing, and the knapsacks were in most cases piled in front of them. The reserve of the artillery was not even harnessed, and it became evident that nothing more than a foraging expedition was intended, or at any rate, nothing

more serious than a demonstration in sufficient force to draw the fire and ascertain the range of those batteries whose existence, bloodless as yet, the French were well acquainted with. Some of them had given mouth, but others had hitherto been silent; and these might be mounted in the same manner as that battery at Ladonchamps, which held the besieged in awe for many a day, for all we knew. Once we were sold; we laughed that time, but we did not like the same ruse to be repeated twice, so we determined to see with so many eyes, that if there were an advantage to be gained, we could look well to it. There were other ruses, however, which had a different tendency, and engendered an ill-feeling which never healed, and were thus the cause of many a death. It was commonly reported—so commonly that I almost think it must be true—that it was a frequent custom of the Prussian troops to elevate the butt-end of the musket in the air as a token of surrender, but on the French troops rushing forward to take the Prussians prisoners, the deadly gun was lowered, the butt brought to the shoulder, and a murderous fire poured into the advancing and unprepared French. This disgraceful proceeding caused the death of many a soldier who found himself without ammunition or whose retreat was cut off,—slain in consequence of the bad faith of his comrades, when he in good faith desired to yield himself a prisoner, as fight was possible no longer.

Ladonchamps was taken by the 28th Regiment five days ago; they held it afterwards up to the very day

of the surrender of Metz, and they to-day formed the *avant garde* of the French lines. To the right of it were Great and Little Maxe, and in front the two large farms of Great and Little Tapes. In all of these the French expected to find, if not much food for themselves, at least some fodder for their horses, and it was in search of both of these they went. That it was never intended to be a sortie in the true military sense of the word is evident from the late period at which the expedition started ; and noon was past before the first shot was fired.

The Imperial Guard, who since the 16th of August had not fired a shot, nor even moved from their encampment, came down from the hills of Plappeville and defiled into the valley of the Moselle. Several regiments of infantry, under the direction of that brave General Ladmirault, the pet general of the army, since his display of bravery and knowledge at Borny and Rezonville, pushed their way through the woods to the left in the direction of Nassoy and Feves. The sixth corps sent some few regiments to assist the Guard ; and together we marched along into the valley. The timely warning we had given the Prussians, and the late hour at which our movement was made, insured a warm reception for us. Not only were their fixed batteries at Feves, Sémécourt, Amelung, and Argancy ready for us, but they had time to deploy upon the field a considerable number of field-pieces, all converging on our line of advance. To them replied the French batteries of Woippy and Ladonchamps, and the little battery at the farm of

St. Eloy, which did good service to-day, and checked the advance of the enemy. Greatly astonished must the Prussian generals be when they reconnoitre from an inside point of view this little battery of some few small field-pieces. I have seen on their own plans of the enceinte of Metz a grand earthwork marked down here, and the English maps which have been drawn from like sources give such an earthwork here as we should have liked to have possessed ; but small as it was, it and the large idea the Prussians had of it, stood us in good stead this day. On went the French infantry,—nothing stayed them. Shell after shell fell amongst them, but they knew the nearer they got the less likely they were to be stopped. Up rises the brave General Gibbon, who carries to-day for the first time his *galon* as a general in the field. “Never fear, my lads,” cries he, “I’ll serve as a bastion for you ;” and, placing himself at the head of his brigade, on he goes ; not for long though,—he is hit, and he falls mortally wounded. Poor fellow, the flowers the loving hands of his soldiers strewed on his grave by the side of the little church of Woippy hard by, had scarcely withered when I left Metz.

On rush the Guards, their impetuous charge unchecked by the hail of bullets which greets them. The shock of exploding shells makes the ground tremble, but not them. Fire succeeds fire. The smoke of the sacrifice rises not to heaven, but hangs like Cain’s upon the earth. Volley after volley thins their ranks, but never checks their fire ; inch by inch the ground is won. Les Grandes Tapes is

reached. Twice round the outworks go the "franche compagnie" of the 12th Regiment of the Line—there are only 75 of them, but each man is a host, picked men all of them, and well picked too. At last a "coign of vantage" is espied, and with a shout they leap the trenches, the Guards come up, and Les Grandes Tapes is ours. Down on their knees fall the Polish regiments which form the 58th and 59th Landwehr; those who don't are spitted on the bayonets of the maddened soldiers. To raise the butt-end of the needle-gun in the air is no longer regarded as an appeal for mercy, and such as do it die. In the out-buildings, in the house, room by room, the French enter, and death with them. Some 80 or 100 prisoners are made, but as for the rest, they are all dead men. The prisoners are led off to the rear, meeting on the way my very good friend the *aumonier* of the Voltigeurs of the Guard. Down again on their knees they fall, not this time to ask for life, but for a blessing; they seize and kiss his hand, the sacred image he wears round his neck is seized and passed from hand to hand, from lip to lip, with a fervour of gratitude; whilst in broken French they tell the tale of fathers borne from long distant homes, of wives and children left behind them, of friends who have fallen by their side, and how that they were brought here to slay a people that they loved by the will of a King they did not care for. The fourgons come up, there is good store there. The unthreshed corn is trebly valuable; it is good for man and beast, and after that the beast is food for man, so unthreshed corn is much sought after. The

trooper loves it, too ; it keeps him a trooper a little longer, and he will do a great deal to avoid being reduced to the indignity of a foot-soldier. Indeed, I have seen in all the din of battle, a horse-soldier dismount and fill the small forage net he carries with some choice handfuls of green weeds for his much-loved famished horse. The artillery of the Guard, with their wonderfully-clothed men and still yet good-looking horses, come rattling up. They advance to the very verge of the enemy's fire. His shells explode in a thick line in front of them, throwing up a cloud of earth and dust. Shells from Prussian batteries fall thickly on the farm they occupied themselves this morning, but steadily at work keep our men loading their waggons. Our artillery prevents their infantry coming up to interrupt proceedings.

The Voltigeurs and Chasseurs push on meanwhile, and even carry an entrenched battery of twelve guns at Amelung. The 25th and 26th of the Line have hunted through the wood of Woippy, and mastered the little colline of St. Agatha, and carried the farm of Bellevue. If we could only get a battery there, we could flank those murderous guns at Sémécourt. Whilst this is going on in the valley, a diversion is created on the right bank of the river by the third corps, under General Aymard, in order to draw off some of the enemy's fire. Servigny, Noisseville, Mey, and Nouilly were threatened, and a good number of the enemy were thus engaged. During the latter part of the fight a very singular effect was produced. A sudden stillness spread over everything ;



Fragments of blood-stained clothes lie about everywhere, maimed and wounded men are littered down on every floor. Rapid though somewhat rough surgery is going on all round us, and at the back waits a railway train, with its carriages fitted up as ambulances to carry such as can be transported back to the larger hospitals at Metz. On the ground in front of us lies a Prussian soldier—he has not a scratch except a very slight flesh wound on the ankle. He is in a delirium, and ultimately dies from cerebral excitement—the cruel say fear; perhaps it was the thought of home which killed him; who can say what struggle is going on behind that impenetrable veil?

Depositing our bleeding burdens, we leave this saddening, sickening place, glad to get away from the sight of so much "glory" into the cool and darkening evening. The horizon is lit up with flames. Huge columns of black smoke rise upward in the still air. The Prussians, fearing we might occupy them at some future time, have set fire to the large farms of St. Agatha and Bellevue—that is another phase of glory.

Long lines of troops keep coming back, bringing with them their trophies of the day in the shape of anything portable or potable, especially potable, laughing and merry some, sad and serious others. Amidst a merry group I saw a rakish-looking infantry man, with a Prussian helmet on his head and the tail of a pig in his hand. The struggles of the two animals were very amusing. I stop with others to look and laugh. "Is that the only pig?" I ask of an officer standing by.



"By no means, sir," is his reply, "there goes another." I turn, and see a very large stomach on horseback going by, with a moderately-sized man behind it. They are the Marshal, and they are going home to dinner. It is the last time the combination is exhibited to the troops, for never after that day till the one on which he fled from Metz to Wilhelmshöhe did the Marshal pass the threshold of his luxurious quarters at the Ban St. Martin. The road being somewhat clearer now, we go forward again. There may be yet left some poor wounded soldier on the field, and these night fogs are almost death—so as the night falls and the mist rises we pass our barrier and push on. Along under the poplars we go, still meeting a few troops on their homeward march. A field battery to our left keeps up a solemn rhythm to make sure no Prussian should rapidly advance to throw the homeward movement into disorder. We meet line after line—many, alas! wounded and faint—until at last we reach once more the old château of Ladonchamps.

The road is barricaded ; there is a strong guard there, and as we stop to talk with the captain of the grand' gardes, formed this night by the 28th Regiment of the Line, the captors of the château, we hear a faint cry for help a-head. To our demand if all is safe there, we receive the reply that there is yet a regiment of infantry in advance of us, so, fearing nothing, we go forward. Not far though, for up to us comes creeping, so silently and so still, a grey-coated sentinel that we start as he whispers in our ear, "Be careful ; they ad-

vance." There was no mistaking to whom he applied the personal pronoun. "They are French, the captain told us a regiment was a-head;" we whispered back in return. He seemed doubtful. I peeped through my field-glass, and peering into the blue fog of river-mist and powder-smoke, I saw high up a small bright spark.—An instant passed, I saw another quite low down. "They are cavalry," I exclaimed; "a man smokes a cigar, and his horse struck his foot against a pebble." "Then they are Prussians," he exclaimed. "Go back as quickly as you can to the barrier." "But listen; they sing; it is a French chanson, too, they sing." We hesitate a moment or two—is this another ruse?—but all at once the charge is sounded. There is no disguise now. Horses' hoofs plough the ground. Shouting in German, now come on their riders. We run as fast as we can, but they come faster, and just as we reach the shelter of the barricade out comes a roll of carbine fire. Up to the very barricade they come with a loud Hurrah! The Frenchmen are ready. The fire is returned at closer quarters too. They are checked. We hear many an oath and many a tumble, and many a riderless horse runs almost into the outworks. By this time the infantry are up, and a stream of fire runs all along the front. These few moments have given me breath again, and finding the fascines of which the barricade are made by no means so impervious as I should have liked them to have been, I made a sudden rush to the more secure shelter of the earthworks which flanked the road. Here

I could more calmly listen to all that was going on. Till they were carried I was pretty safe, and I occupied myself by observing the condition of the French soldiers under fire. Nervous and excited, they fired at random—seldom did they fire from the shoulder. The chasse-pot was loaded and re-loaded with the utmost rapidity and fired from the thigh, behind the rampart. Rarely did they mount the banquette to fire over the earthworks. I verily believe more French bullets struck in the epaulment's crest than did Prussian ones, and it became questionable if the friend or the foe were the most dangerous. It was really a *feu d'enfer*. Close to our heads whizzed the bullets, and it was quite possible to distinguish by the sound how near they were. When close to they utter an irritating angry "piñh;" a little farther off, they give you the information that you are safe by a friendly "ping;" but every now and then they utter "pöb," and "pöb" is a dead or wounded man. Thankful indeed was I that I and "pöb" were not the same, and on the first lull I endeavoured to seek the more substantial shelter of a stable at no great distance off. Scarcely was the shelter of the earthworks quitted than the storm of lead began again. To stop was death, to go on seemed the same, but something akin to fear impelled me on, and I rushed for the outhouse. Here I found some dozen soldiers—one or two wounded, but the rest safe and sound. "Get out, you rascals," I exclaimed. It is so easy to be brave when you are safe! "Go and fight for your country." But I was met by the

appealing cry, "Please, sir, I'm the cook"—so my heart smote me. When the food is poor one need take great care of the cook. We took care of ourselves and turned the others out. Meanwhile the hailstorm of death went on. Now, too, they began to shell our position, the earth shook with the shock of the shells and the reply of our small field-pieces, which kept the place, and for a while I fully expected it would have been taken. So certain did I feel that I should be a prisoner that I began to destroy all the letters I had in my pocket, for amongst them were some from the Quartier-Général on the very innocent subject of balloons, but couched in such extremely inflated official language that "the subject of our former communication" might mean almost anything. The mercies of the Prussians to civilians found on the field are not tender, and if we were taken I knew it would be quite hard enough to make one's case clear even without a line of French correspondence. Now again came a lull on both sides. An officer approaches, and says all his ammunition is spent: "Will you go for some more?" The question is rather embarrassing, but in the end I won't, unless he will send a soldier with me, as I am just as likely to be shot by a French sentinel as by a Prussian soldier. I step out and the fire begins again. On come the Prussians once more. "'Rah, 'rah, 'rah," is shouted out around us, for they are in such a hurry that "hurrah" won't be waited for. I am outside the stable and can't get back. A friendly tree shelters me, but the bullets come crashing in its boughs and lopping off

branches, and I fear the play may last a little too long ; but at last it stops. There is the hurried sound of French feet coming up the road, the hurrah is on our side now, for the 9th come up at the double and bring ammunition with them. A good long parting volley runs all along our line, and no return comes back. Shots drop individually ; now and then they come ; at last it is only now, and there is no more then, so we pick up the wounded and put them as comfortably together as we can, and back again into Metz we go, reaching it, to the equal joy of our friends and ourselves, about eleven at night, having had quite enough of the seventh of October.

What became of the French regiment supposed to be in front of us I never learned ; but that it should be so supposed to be there, illustrates forcibly the want of knowledge and the want of information so painfully conspicuous in the French army. I presume it returned by some other route, as we did not lose many prisoners that day, though we captured 800 of those various peoples the Prussians put forward to be killed or captured on all occasions, but I don't think we found a single soldier from Prussia proper amongst them. When will the newly-absorbed German States awake to the fact that their children are being slain to prevent them ever dreaming of Freedom ? Alas, I fear, too late !

## CHAPTER XV.

### PRESS AND PROVISIONS.

THE French did not gain much on the 7th October; they did not hold an inch of land more on the morning of the 8th than they did before. The position of the Grand Tapes was evacuated, and immediately seized on by the enemy, who lost no time in re-establishing themselves there in stronger fashion, and erecting a battery which ever afterwards held the French in check, preventing any further movement in that direction. Even if we now wished to make a veritable sortie by that road, we could not. That point created a connecting link between the batteries on each side of the valley, and closed us in more strongly than ever on that side. No hope now existed of our being able to effect a junction with the beleaguered but well-provisioned garrison at Thionville. From this brave little place one of those much-despised beings—a Moblot—made his way the very day of our battle. He came to tell us that they had lots of provisions if we could only go and get them, and that *they* had succeeded in making a grand *fourrage*,

capturing and conveying within the walls of the town 5000 head of the enemy's cattle. The knowledge that so small a garrison could do so much, made us the more discontented with our own forced inactivity or misdirected action. What the French losses on the Ladonchamps were was officially made known by order of the Marshal,—the only time that such an official statement was made. To this day we have no official return of the Battle of Borny, fought on the 14th; of Rezonville, on the 16th; of St. Privat, on the 18th of August; none of the affair on the 31st of August and 1st of September. Only of this one was any official return made. It may be asked why this comparatively unimportant affair was honoured by a special return when the far graver battles which had preceded it remained unnoticed? It was not that the day was highly honourable to the French; they gained no victory, they captured no important position, and the state of the siege would have been precisely the same if no such loss had been suffered. Why, then, was it so particularly recorded? It happened thus, and it forms an important indication in the many which showed how the current had set in at Metz. On the 8th of October the *Indépendant de la Moselle* stated that on "Thursday the 6th 514 cannon-shots were fired by the Prussian batteries against that position of Ladonchamps they so much wished to re-capture, and that this heavy fire only killed two and wounded four men." That was the absolute fact. The shots were counted by the officer on duty at

the observatory of the Cathedral, and the loss was mentioned to me by several officers on duty in the château ; but in moralising on this fact in a subsequent number, by a typographical error the date was changed from the 6th to that of the 7th of October, and the number of shots from 514 to 512. This was more than the Marshal could stand. His sole object in making the *fouirage* of the 7th was to show the army how formidable was the Prussian fire, to silence for ever those clamourers for work and liberty he so much hated ; and therefore to extinguish all hope for future sorties he tells us of this murderous affair. Not one ray of hope would he let us have, even by a mistake, if he could extinguish it, and a typographical error of the hated press forced from him that which the tears and prayers of relatives had failed to wring—a list of losses.

Never yet has any return been made from that Army of the Rhine of those who have died in its ranks. Mothers, wives, sisters may wait in vain. The father knows not yet if his son still lives, and relatives only know of those who die in German hospitals by the sad kindness of the foe. The press incurred still further displeasure by publishing those lists of wounded officers who were found in our own ambulances, which lists the Marshal wished and tried hard to suppress. It is strange that a great Marshal of France, then the actual holder of the destinies of his country, should be influenced by such small feelings ! Can you wonder the soldiers had no love for him ; that the officers had no confidence in him ; that he



who begrudged the small comfort of sad knowledge to the widow and the poor mourner was spoken ill of by all men? It is not to be wondered at. The soldiers loved him not; the officers placed no faith in him; and no man cried God bless him. The publication of this return and the withholding the others revealed to all that which some men knew before, and which most men suspected,—that henceforth no true attempt to make a sortie would be made, nor was there ever after even the pretence of an attempt.

Here is the sole official list ever furnished respecting our losses during the siege of Metz, and mark particularly Bazaine's scrupulous desire for veracity. "It is stated in the *Indépendant de la Moselle* of the 11th of October, that "on the 7th of October 512 projectiles sent by the enemy's batteries have killed but two of our soldiers." As it is important that the truth should be known to all the world, the *Indépendant de la Moselle* is invited to make known to its readers, that on the 7th our losses were as follows:—

" Officers—killed	.	.	.	11
„ wounded	.	.	.	53
Rank and file—killed	.	.	.	90
„ wounded	.	.	.	981

"This movement had simply for its object the collection of provisions of all kinds which might be found at Great and Little Tapes, in order to augment our resources, and

at the same time to assure ourselves of the enemy's forces on the route to Thionville. (*Communiqué.*)”

Did the Marshal imagine that the people of Metz for one moment thought that the movement had any other ostensible object? Did he suppose that they could consider such a movement of a small portion of the army who marched without baggage, who left their tents standing, was to be a veritable *trouée*? Surely the Marshal could not suppose that the people of Metz yet placed sufficient faith in his honour as to think him capable of doing anything to relieve either them or the army from their present involuntary dishonour. The Marshal knew too well the sentiments entertained of him and his conduct, to suppose either of these things. There was not a single “cercle” or “réunion” in which his agents were not, and the speeches of the members of the closely-guarded “Cercle du Nord,” the supposed intellectual club of Metz, were daily reported to him, and we knew it. We availed ourselves of this very means of sending to him those desires, those criticisms, and those truths he refused to hear in any other way. But we also knew that there was another object in this excursion; it was to demonstrate to those who thus urged him on to some activity, how murderous he could make that activity when he chose. He revenged himself on the malcontents with idleness in that way, and we feared to ask him for any more such industry.

Crushing one portion of those who placed no faith in

him, he now determined to crush another, and on the press and all connected with it he now turned the vials of his wrath. No doubt extraordinary times need extraordinary precautions, and it is quite evident that the press of a town in a state of siege requires careful watching, and even at times something more—judicious repression. Newspapers are easily sent into the enemy's lines, and the information therein contained may be of the greatest service, but when that repression is injudiciously exercised, when everything inserted in the journals which might encourage the people is excised, and every damnatory circumstance is communicated, such repression and communication has an opposite effect to that which is intended. The facts or statements excised have an undue importance attached to them, and the facts forwarded from official quarters are always regarded as possessing a special tendency, and that tendency was in our case supposed to be prejudicial to the interests of France and of Metz. I have before stated that the editors of the various papers were ordered to submit their proofs to General Coffinières before going to press. At first this revision was confined to military statements, but now, alas! political purpose was the sole object looked forward to, and the Commandant had permitted the Marshal to take out of his hands those powers the Commandant should have held himself. The Marshal had expressed himself truly when, in an unguarded moment, he exclaimed, "What matters it where the Emperor is! I am Emperor at Metz;" and so he

tried to be—an absolute ruler ; and like all absolute rulers, a suppresser of the press.

I have before me now a copy of the *Indépendant*, in which appears an able patriotic article on the subject of the “odious proclamation” of the Prussian commanders against the *francs-tireurs*, which will be found in the next chapter. It calls attention to the barbarous fact, and terminates with a copy of the proclamation at length. “In Prussia,” says the writer, “every man between the ages of seventeen and forty-five is a soldier. How, then, is it that in France a man is not allowed to take up arms and repel the invader of his country ? Our *francs-tireurs* are soldiers, held to the service by the same law : paid as soldiers, bearing a distinctive costume, they are a distinct branch of the service. Yet once made captive, they are to be shot or hanged. Such a thing is surely an outrage of the law of nations. We hope that this question will be officially debated by means of *parlementaires*. If this barbarous order is not withdrawn by the enemy, the Prussians will find that the captains of the *francs-tireurs* will use reprisals against them, and hang every Prussian who falls into their hands. The war is transforming itself into a savage war of extermination. Surely it is possible for men to fight loyally and do their duty to their country without this. What matters it if a combatant wears a blouse or a paletot ? He is a Frenchman, he is a soldier, and not an assassin. He has the same rights as any other soldier, and whoso kills him when made captive commits a crime, and crimes demand

punishment." Now, there is nothing here but what might be passed by the most cold-blooded editor in the dingiest back-room of any London printing-house. Indeed, it did pass the scrutiny of General Coffinières, and a part of the impression was struck off. Printing was going on as usual, when, about 11 o'clock at night, up rides an *estafette* from the Quartier-Général demanding the suppression of the article and the destruction of all the printed copies. What was to be done? a stock article had to be inserted, that proof revised by the Commandant, and the poor sub-editor was at his wits' ends. The author of the article, M. G. d'Aviau de Piolant, a correspondent of the *Française*, a Parisian journal, wrote an indignant letter on the suppression of his article, in which he declines writing again as he cannot consent to remove all phrases capable of displeasing the Prussians, and winds up with such a thoroughly French characteristic that I cannot refrain quoting it from his "suppressed" letter. "My pen," says M. de Piolant, "is French, and will remain French. As a journalist in Metz I break it to-day: but you may be sure I shall take care of the pieces; the day is not far distant when I hope they will serve me to write history." He did break it, I saw the pieces; and I am glad to see that he has put them together again in his country's cause, and is now writing at Tours the "Deeds of the Army of the Loire." He promises us a history of the present war, the which promise I hope he may fulfil. Well-educated and half a soldier, he is fully competent to perform the task.

M. de Piolant hit one of the nails on the head when he referred to the extreme tenderness shown to the sensitive feelings of MM. les Prussiens. This was palpably remarkable. Not an article could appear now in any journal wherein any one word capable of offending them might be found. The *Courrier de la Moselle* had a whole article suppressed because the tenour of the article was somewhat in disfavour of the enemy who was at our very doors ; and the Editors of each of the Messin journals found that all attempts to raise the spirits of the population to any pitch of patriotic enthusiasm caused their columns to be curtailed. Such considerate tenderness could have but one motive, and that motive we greatly feared was not the welfare of France.

It may naturally be supposed that in such a time, when the dynasty of the country was overthrown, when new laws were made, when the whole government of the country was changed, that these important topics would be discussed in the public journals—it was not now allowed. Even the small amount of news we could obtain of that which was passing at Paris was not permitted to appear, and such an announcement as the following was not calculated to appease our appetite for information. I extract it literally from the *Courrier de la Moselle* of the 4th October :—

“ *Extraits du Figaro du 6 Septembre.*

**La prise des Tuileries.**

. . . . .  
 . . . . .”

That was all we were allowed publicly to know. It did not say much, but it made us think the more.

After waiting for nearly a month, we naturally wanted to know something more than that; and as, of course, the proof-sheets were to be seen in certain places, the repression of these things did infinitely more harm than good. There was one rigid law laid down—the word Republic must be suppressed. Any article which contained that fatal word, even if it were but an extract from history, in which the word appeared, was immediately ordered out. At last things came to such a pitch, that one day the editors of all the journals agreed to suppress or print in points only all the news received from the Quartier-Général, and refused to insert any communication in which the word “capitulation” occurred. It was now an open war—bad for both parties—everything which could irritate the other was done. Bazaine, like many another tyrant, struggled with the Press. Pamphlets printed nowhere, containing sometimes real and sometimes fictitious news, were circulated with a secrecy most amusingly public, and it may well be understood how anxious we were to find some truthful source of news, when so much false was bruited abroad, and how that soldiers were bribed to bring us every scrap they could. If such a scrap once got to the Quartier-Général, we never saw it again. In short, Bazaine treated us as foolish parents frequently and injudiciously treat their children when they ask a question. They are told the subject is beyond their comprehension, and if that

does not satisfy them, they are spoken crossly to, and the nurse is sent for to take them away.

We didn't like such fatherly treatment, and as children so treated will, we began to look out for ourselves, and came to the conclusion, as they do, that our would-be-wise "governor" was either ignorant or mendacious, and our general opinion inclined to the latter. Our newspapers were filled with histories of other sieges—with memoirs of brave men who had fought for their country, and who contrasted forcibly with our present rulers. In themselves, our newspapers were curiosities. All the ordinary printing paper had disappeared, and they now came out in very questionable guise—to-day perhaps on thin tissue paper, to-morrow on thick dark wrapping paper—all sorts, shapes, and sizes of paper did they appear upon—pink, yellow, green, deep-blue—of every colour and quality of paper; the Messin journals issued during the siege form a curious typographical collection.

From our mental to our bodily food is a natural transition; the two alike were very much restricted just now, yet there was a good deal of difference; our mental food might be as varied as we pleased, so long as it was not substantial; but the other was perhaps a trifle too substantial, and not sufficiently varied. Bread and horse-flesh was what we fed upon, and our rations of the former were getting small. So early as the 16th of September' all private stores of corn were ordered to be thrown into a common stock, a fixed price being agreed upon for the purchase of the corn, and a fixed price agreed upon for



the sale of the bread. Yet I am sorry to say there were many who,—undeterred by the memorable fate of that Bishop of Metz, having no fear of the rats which ate him, or of their descendants, not even dreading the curse pronounced on the withholder of corn,—hoarded large quantities in hidden places, and never obeyed this law. Almost at the very commencement of the siege the commissariat officers placed the paucity of provisions before the Commander-in-Chief, and officially demanded a reduction of the rations. The loss of great quantities at Forbach, the wanton destruction after the last battle, which resulted in our blockade, and the speculation consequent on the confusion which reigned supreme, had greatly diminished the commissariat stores, and it was evident that if the siege were prolonged there would soon come a time of great scarcity. The Marshal would not consent to reduce the rations. For at least three quarters of the time we had 8,000 officers drawing double rations in camp, and feeding in here also. Taking double rations for fifty days, this gave an equivalent to 800,000 single rations, which, with their consumption of the provisions of the town, may safely be computed at 1,000,000 full rations, where only 400,000, taking even full single rations for the officers, were necessary. Supposing we reduce these single rations one-fourth—a very moderate reduction—on this point of mismanagement alone there was a waste of 700,000 full rations, or of 875,000 rations reduced by one-fourth only. On the 10th of September only, the Commander-in-Chief listened

to the reiterated demands and warnings of the Commissariat, and consented to reduce the rations of the army from 750 to 700 grammes of bread. This reduction was to be made without saying anything to the troops, and the unfortunate sous-intendants had a hard time of it when they encountered sharp-witted, sharp-tongued, and large-stomached soldiers who discovered the difference. Those soldiers who had money were still allowed to seek supplementary food in the town, and in consequence of this, General Coffinières issued, on the 24th of September, an order prohibiting the exportation of any food without the gates; but there was a fortnight between the two orders, and the army had been eating unnecessarily all that time. Indeed, that didn't stop the waste, for if they could not take food out with them, they could come in to gorge themselves; and they did so. To such an extent was this done, that it became necessary to prohibit the soldiers entering the town without a permit, whilst General Coffinières issued an order to officers in camp requesting them to abstain from abusing the hospitality of the civil population, and eating them up. In spite of all this, flour began to get short; all the confectioners' shops were shut up—not an ounce of flour was to be used for any other purpose than that of bread-making; and this was no longer to be white flour, but mixed with bran. Two days before, the *Væu National*, the journal of Metz which went in strongest for science and benefit of clergy combined, had prepared the people for this enormous change; it even alleged that brown

bread was eaten by the English! Indeed, the whole article was a transcription of Johnston's analysis of bread from the *Revue Britannique*.

In spite of this, the people would not believe that brown bread was wholesome, and the following order was the most unpopular one Coffinières ever issued in Metz :—

“The General of Division, commander-in-chief of the town, taking into consideration the necessity of economising the grain at the disposal of the town of Metz, in order to prolong the defence of this place, so important to the interests of the country, decrees that after Saturday, the 15th of this present month of October, there shall only be one sort of bread made with the whole component parts of wheat (flour and bran). This bread shall be sold at 45 centimes the kilogramme. Each baker will receive daily a quantity of flour in proportion to the portion of the population he is required to serve. The daily ration for each inhabitant or temporary resident is fixed ; that is to say, 400 grammes for each adult, 300 grammes for children between four and twelve years of age, 200 grammes for children between the ages of one and four. These rations will be delivered by bakers upon presentation of a card bearing the stamp of the Mairie, and indicating, together with the name of the baker, the name of the person and the number of rations which he is allowed to receive. It is forbidden to all bakers, other than those whose names are borne upon the card, to

deliver any bread to the bearer of it ; and it is equally forbidden to deliver any greater quantity than that indicated on it. The card, after the delivery of the bread, is to be returned to the person presenting it. The bread will be prepared with care and well baked. All infractions of this order will be severely punished.

“ F. COFFINIÈRES, the General, &c.

“ Metz, 14th October, 1870.”

The execution of this order was delayed two days in consequence of the difficulty of getting all the cards filled up ; but its publication brought the stern fact that bread was getting scarce before every one. So in these two days the richer sort laid in as much white flour as they could, for the prejudice against good, wholesome brown bread was very great—so great, indeed, that I have seen four francs paid—in the camp, too, by the soldiers—for a pound of dry, stale white bread a fortnight old, when good brown bread was served out to them for nothing. Not that they got too much of the brown, for their rations had been gradually dwindling down, until now it had come to 300 grammes per diem. The civil population of the town, hearing that they were allowed more than the soldiers, had petitioned that their rations might be reduced to the same quantity. “ Let us all fare alike,” they said ; and in three days more the whole ration was reduced to 300 grammes, the half ration to 200, and the quarter to 100 grammes.

Not even hunger, however, could abate the prejudice

against brown bread. "It looks ugly, and it smells nasty," was the comment of all ; yet, to tell the honest truth, I very much preferred it to the grey, spongy mass which had for some time now been given us.

Three hundred grammes is not quite three-quarters of a pound, so that, under ordinary circumstances, it would be fairly sufficient, but now, alas ! we had no vegetables. Horse-beans and lentils existed in small quantities ; but bread and horse were the staple food. There was no variety. Even when you went out to dinner you had to take your own bread with you ; but going out to dinner simply meant a feast of reason, with an interlude of horse-flesh ; other things were hardly obtainable. Even so far back as the 5th of October, I saw a leg of mutton bought for eight francs the pound, and it was the last I ever saw in Metz. Potatoes rose to one franc or one and a-half franc the pound, and then, taking fright at the enormity, disappeared altogether, and were never seen afterwards. Salad vegetables existed in places, but the places were very hard to find. Fowls fetched any price out of reason. I bid, a few days before I left, thirty-five francs for a scraggy one for a sick friend, but my neighbour was richer than I, and he rose to thirty-eight francs, and so he took it ; money was becoming scarce then. The lucky *avant poste* who could kill a rabbit under the pretext of firing at a Prussian was a wealthy man—forty francs was the least he might expect as a reward for his dexterity, plus the rabbit.

In the early part of October the Prefect of the Moselle

ssued a notice informing us that the chase was opened and that we might now shoot game of all kinds ; it made one's mouth water even to read the goodly list of flesh and fowl therein set forth as legal food ; but there was appended to it a brief little note stating that the military exigencies of the time necessitated the suspension of our sporting amusements within the camp. Without, we might shoot as much as we pleased, or be shot as much as others could. The Prussians laid no such embargo on the chase, and often would we hear an irritating battue going on quite close to our outposts, and, occasionally, some game thus driven out from cover would find its welcomed way into the lines. For a little while we had fish, small fry, of all sorts and sizes—gudgeon, little perchlings, minnows, anything—all was fish which came to net ; but, the worst of it was, there was not much which did so. The Prussians had spread nets across the river, above and below, to intercept not so much the fish as bottles, containing news, from reaching us from above stream, or going from us down below. On the 20th, the same careful guardian of the laws, who had given us legal permission to go out shooting, now issued one forbidding us to catch salmon-trout or ombre. There was something painfully ludicrous in watching people carefully spelling out these notices at the corners of the streets, because they had nothing else to do. So, what with the Prefect and what with the Prussians, neither game nor fish found their way to table. Eggs rose to one franc each, and sugar sold at five francs, and,

I am told, even at nine francs the pound ; but this was a luxury I abandoned early. So long as any was served out to us at the cafés, I took it and pocketed it for the sick in the ambulances, who dearly loved a bit of sugar. Coals we had none, and our supply of gas was almost exhausted when the end came. Our greatest want was salt. This was the cruelest deprivation of all ; nine francs has been paid for a pound of it, and he who could give a pinch to a friend was a valuable acquaintance, for our only absolute suffering arose from this cause. Horse-flesh requires some seasoning to make it palatable day by day. All sauces had disappeared, and our food was chevalresque in the extreme. Horse-flesh soup usually excellent ; boiled horse-flesh by no means bad, and often very good ; horse beans as a *legume*, varied by lentils occasionally and a *rôti* of horse—often tough beyond mastication, and always horsey—made our unvarying *menu*. This was tiresome, and not highly nutritious, as the animal had generally lived as long as possible and was only killed to prevent his dying ; but absolute hunger and famine never existed, nor did I ever hear of such a thing as deaths from want of food, excepting those of a Jew and a Turco, who died from famine rather than touch the unclean beast. I saw that Turco die. I tried to persuade him, firstly, that it was wrong to starve himself to death, but that he could not see ; if Allah willed it, it was the will of Allah, and that was enough for him. Then I'm afraid I lied horribly, and called it beef, but the poor man looked me through, and saw that

it was a lie, and I felt very wicked as I stood before him. Nothing availed. Poor fellow, he was badly cut up by a shell, and the wound suppurated awfully, and without such strengthening food as we could get him, he must die, and as the only thing we could get was the thing he would not eat, he did die. He folded his hands over his head, pressing down a slip of the Koran he wore in an amulet round his wrist, gave a deep sigh, and with an Allah il Allah, he faintly wailed his soul away. He and I were thrown much together. Like many another Turco, he could speak no French, but like most dwellers by the blue Mediterranean, he knew somewhat of Italian. This, and the somewhat I knew, formed all the means of communication that existed between that poor fellow and all the world beside; poor old Turco, I shall often think of him. There was a grey sort of oxidation came over his bronzed face as he died, his yellow eyes blanched a little, and his white teeth seemed to smile on me as he winged his soul away. Poor old Turco!

The army was often worse off than the town, more frequently from want of direction rather than from want of food, and our *avant postes* were occasionally left for forty-eight hours without victuals from want of instructions from the intendancy, and as no additional means of grinding corn, beyond the normal provision for the town, had been adopted, grain alone was often served out to the soldiers instead of bread, there not having been time to grind it. Mills are the most conservative of all things, they stick to the same places the longest of all things,



and the mills of Metz occupy the same places as they have done for the last 400 years, and are in somewhat the same condition, so the labour was immense. Even in the siege of 1444 nine horse-mills were established to assist the water-mills in grinding for that small garrison, but nothing was done now. 230,000 people take a great deal of grinding for, and the supply of grinding power, in a non-political sense, was only for 50,000. This grain the soldiers had to make the best use they could of, bruising it rather than grinding it in coffee mills, and boiling or baking as they best could the mangled mass. If we had only had some of those cases of biscuits that were thrown away at Gravelotte, how valuable they would have been. That wilful waste made woful want.

Bread, however, was not our only difficulty. Horse itself now became a serious question, and all the private horses of the inhabitants were put in requisition, and they had to surrender them at the "Place de la Comedie" every day at two o'clock, when the price would be assessed by valuers appointed, and the animal taken for food; but whatever the price that was given for the animal might be, the price of the horse-flesh continued the same. I attended a sale one day—it was the eighteenth day of October,—two months from that fatal 18th of August, which shut us up in Metz. We always reckoned from that date, it was our Hegira in more senses than one. On this day my old friends, the Corps Franc, sold a lot of their horses, because they could do nothing else with them; it was impossible to find food for them, not

all the science the Corps Franc embodied could manage that, and so they sold them to the butchers. They were fine large Norman horses ; in fact, they were the pick of the omnibus horses of Paris, and had cost not three months since, from 1,500 to 2,000 francs each. Many and many a drive had I had behind them ; in Metz, I mean, not in their Parisian days ; and some of them I had quite stroked an acquaintance with. Hardly a day last month, when we were balloontic, passed, that we didn't go somewhere together, and so, poor creatures, I went to see them turned off. It was a sorry spectacle, their big bones looked bigger than ever ; the once rounded quarters were flat and grooved with strange muscular prominences and depressions, and very few of them could raise a tail. The prices they fetched varied from 50 to 250 francs, not more, and I am sadly afraid I tried to eat some of them, for the next few days the back part of one's jaws had a very strained feeling for several hours after dinner. They would have puzzled the masticatory powers of a Yankee, those horses, and they thus prolonged the pleasures of the table most unduly.

I don't know whether it was from the extreme monotony of food or no ; whether it was the result of some yet unknown compensatory law of nature or not ; but there was very great diversity of feeling amongst us all in Metz just now—perhaps—who can say ? occasioned by want of diversity of feeding. We squabbled, and every man's tongue was against every man. Military matters we had none to discuss ; there were none ; little affairs at

our outposts took place, but from the 7th of October until the surrender, there was nothing else to do but to hold surreptitious political meetings, and quarrel with each other. The signs of the times were legible. The delirium which preceded death was upon us, and men's minds were wandering, for the last days of Metz were at hand.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### CAMP SKETCHES.

“HARRY LORREQUER” and “Charles O’Malley” used to be very pleasant reading when I was a boy, and those who have formed their idea of camp life on these exciting models will be fearfully disappointed at finding how dull and depressing the actuality is. Its monotony is grievous to be borne, and its chief variety is in smells, each one being worse than the former; and camp life is very far from being the gay, jolly life novelists have painted it. Having been so long in contact with it, and having seen it under so many different changes—in hope, in despair, in hot weather and weather bitterly cold, when it was passed in a cloud of dust and when it had to be fished for in a sea of mud—I shall have to generalise rather than particularise, and to condense into an aggregate rather than describe individual events. Indeed, there are few events to describe; for when camp life comes to be so prolonged, and passed in such inactivity as this was, nothing can be more miserable or unpleasant. A fortnight at Wimbledon, with Messrs. Spiers and Pond

to cater for us, with all the little comforts of life at hand, is an amusing change from the regular routine of ordinary existence. Even a week under canvas at Blackpool in the wet can be endured with a good grace, for it is known that it can't last long, and you get letters, newspapers, and bitter beer. But camp life with a besieged army, without any of these luxuries, is very different, and its monotony is wearisome in the extreme.

My first wonder at a French camp was the great rapidity with which it was formed, and it is a wonder which has never yet ceased to astonish me. I have seen a regiment of infantry arrive, and in five-and-twenty minutes I have seen the tents pitched, the men free from their accoutrements, the little camp range dug out, fires lighted, camp-kettles slung, the *pot au feu* simmering away, and the camp as much at home as though it had been there for a week. At cooking and camping nothing can equal the French soldier; at all the little things of life he is essentially great; he is a handy man, who can turn both his hands to anything.

Outside Metz—just beyond the Porte Serpenoise, and close to the railway-station,—was established in the early days of the siege a camp of refuge,—a sort of rendezvous for those detached fragments of regiments who were separated from their companions by the three great battles which took place immediately after my arrival, and which shut me up in Metz. It served also as a collecting ground for such soldiers who on those “strategic movements to the rear,” which succeeded those battles,

had been left behind to form the grand' gardes which protected the retreat. Here, their duty done, they reported themselves, and remained until the precise location of their regiment was known, or until they could be drafted into other regiments to make up those skeletons which had left their flesh behind them on the fields of Borny, Rezonville, and Gravelotte. It might have been expected that in such a camp all would be disorder and confusion, but there was neither here; and never was the handiness of the French soldier more brought out than in this camp, which would in any other army have been one of idleness. Having no regimental duties to perform, all the soldiers here were well employed on other works. Firstly, it was found that this was the weak side of the town. The fort of St. Privat, not that St. Privat where the battle was fought, for that is eight miles away as the crow flies, and twelve miles away by road; but this St. Privat is about two miles without the town, and the fort there, though marked on the maps, was then scarcely commenced, and was never finished during my stay. Strong, then, as this side looked on paper, it was in reality weak, and a considerable portion of the troops thus collected were employed in erecting a formidable demi-lune uniting the Redoubt du Pâté with the lunette d'Arcon, thus covering more effectually the hitherto weak Porte St. Thibault.

Under the direction of a most energetic commandant, this work was rapidly and well executed, and in a very short space of time extemporised casemates were con-

structed, three or four pieces of twenty-four were mounted ; some smaller pieces placed in position, and the camp was well protected. Not only was this done well and quickly, but almost immediately some twenty large ovens were constructed, in which some six-and-thirty thousand rations of excellent bread were baked every twenty-four hours. There were field ovens provided in great store when the army first took the field, but where they now were no one could tell. In the confusion which ensued on the ill-advised and badly executed concentration of the troops on Metz they were lost. Nothing daunted by this, the ingenious commandant and his handy men had found at the neighbouring railway-station a considerable quantity of rails. Trenches were dug in the ground. The bottoms were paved with bricks and quarries, and the sides and roofs constructed with this railway iron ; furnace doors were fitted to the fronts, and the whole covered up with earth ; and most excellent ovens thus made. Large tents were erected at the mouths to protect the men at work at them from rain and cold, larger tents joined on to these where the process of making the bread was performed, and in the rear huge stores were built for the reception of the clean fragrant loaves. Day and night these ovens never stopped, they were never out of repair, and even on the few last days of the siege there was yet a fire and a loaf to be found in this camp. Many a pleasant hour have I spent there with the highly intelligent officers who utilised this otherwise lost, labour ; and never did I once hear a

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wooden bridge this stone one now replaces. Everybody helped him, so there was no need of a public functionary. Metz has always been celebrated for its rope works, and it didn't take much cord. The town paid nothing for a gallows or a scaffold, and the Moselle buried or otherwise disposed of their dead for them. They were always a thrifty race, these Messins; and though this economy has been abandoned, yet a trace of the old blood still remains, and they are almost worthy of being Scotchmen. Having crossed this fixed bridge, we have three draw-bridges to pass and a labyrinth of fortifications to wind through before we are fairly out of the city, and then, turning off sharply to the right, and passing the Chinese-like railway-station of *Devant-les-Ponts*, we come upon the camp of the 3rd Chasseurs and the 1st Chasseurs d'Afrique.

It spreads up and down the glacis of the Fort Moselle, does this camp, pleasant enough in dry weather, but horrible indeed in wet. The ground is a thick pasty clay, as oleaginous as London mud and as tenacious as diachylon; and amongst the many wants in knowledge I suffered from in Metz, there was no want I felt more keenly than the absence of the knowledge of that secret by which London mud is turned into Dutch butter at Hamburg. This knowledge would have been a power indeed. Butter was wanted, and mud was plentiful; but I lacked science sufficient to make the counterfeit, and the opportunity was lost.

Pulling out one leg and putting in another, by slow de-

grees and with much muscular exertion the camp is entered. There are large empty square spaces in it now, for I am picturing one of my last visits there. Each space is a pool, but that pool was once what did duty for the stable. Now a stable in a cavalry camp is a very simple affair. A few stakes are driven into the ground in a line down the centre until they are only a few inches above the surface of the earth. Into each of these a ring is fixed, and through these rings a long rope stretched. That divides the square space into two; on each side of and to this rope the horses are fastened by a cord and fetterlock attached to the fore-foot. There they are, too close to lie down, quite close enough to kick and bite; and, as they cannot perform the first operation, they fulfil with double vigour the latter. Day and night—especially night—they keep up a constant warfare, and the noise of a cavalry camp has only to be heard once to be dreaded for ever. Dreadful as used to be the noise, the solemn stillness which now spread over it seemed yet more dreadful. The few horses still left wandered about the camp, broken spirited and tailless, for they had eaten each others' tails and manes. Shorn of their long flowing hair, which added so much to their beauty, these rat and rabbit ended Arab horses seemed ashamed to show themselves, and shrunk out of sight as though they were bashful maidens with their false back hair off. Poor creatures, when we do coax them to us—the horses, not the maidens I mean—by the exhibition of a stray crust, they come shambling up in a weak and feeble fashion.



Thin and spare in ordinary times as these Arab horses are, their bones now almost force their way through the tense skin, and the only equine race to which they bear at present any resemblance is that useful domestic quadruped so rare in France, the towel horse. If we didn't try to keep up our spirits by a joke at their expense, we must cry; for they are so patient and so meek in all their sufferings, and look with such a pitiful appealing eye right into yours, that without some stimulant, however weak, it would be unbearable.

Fortunately for the two regiments whose camp I am taking a retrospective view of, they lost their horses early; they were taken away to the abattoirs before they suffered much; and, though the grief at parting with the faithful quadruped who had borne one safely in war, in peace, in Africa, in Italy, and up to this malignant Metz, was great indeed, yet it was better than to see the poor beast pine and die from want of that food it was now impossible to find. Often and often have I sat in one of those tents, seeing large tears roll down the bronzed cheek of a big brave soldier as he talked of his four-footed friend, now eaten; and it was strange to note the difference when he spoke of a biped. "Pauvre Alexandre" might be hit, and left on the battle-field, and a big sigh would be heaved to his memory, his good qualities talked over, and his bad chance lamented; but there were no tears; it was the "fortune of war," and couldn't be helped. But with Bucephalus it was another matter. "Pauvre Bucéphale"—no other horse could

ever replace him. He carried many a memory as well as his master, and when once lost there seemed a large leaf torn out of the unrecorded diary of life.

Though my friends in camp here were spared the protracted misery of seeing their much-loved horses draw out a lingering life to a painful close, many of the other cavalry regiments were compelled to be the distressed witnesses of this long-enduring sadness. On the damp flat Ile Chambièrè, between the Polygon hospital and the public abattoir, was a very large cavalry camp, and here the horses died by hundreds. I have seen the poor creatures lie down to die with a patient resignation most piteous to witness. One poor horse I saw evidently intent upon an equine soliloquy :—

“ To be, or not to be,” &c.—“ to die, to sleep.”

That was the question. The poor beast gravely pondered it over, he shook his head from side to side, his ears, too weak to hold themselves erect, flapped mournfully on each side his bony head. The conclusion was arrived at, and nodding, not shaking, his head this time, the poor beast slowly stumbled down, gave a few kicks, and looking up into my face his eyes fogged over, their light went out, and he was dead ; and, as I turned away, my eyes fogged over too. Sometimes, and then it was horrible to behold, the poor beast, seemingly frightened at death, half raised itself—its fore feet planted in the mud, its head erect, each hair starting individually from its hide, its eyes bloodshot and protruding, apparently with all

the agony of fright, died, and became rigid, fixed, immovable. Even yet the memory of the sight of some of these comes back to me and half appals me still. Each morning saw numbers of the poor beasts dead, and, when I last crossed this camp, out of all the enormous number of horses which once peopled it, but one was left. He had a history of his own.

Poor animal! he laid himself down to die; but one of the convalescents from the Polygon, who had been as near to death himself, was passing at the moment, and a sentiment of pity prompted him to seek and find a few straws from a disused mattress, laid aside to be burned. Re-entering the Polygon he found them, and returning, sat himself down by the poor expiring beast. Straw by straw he fed him. The flaccid lips mumbled them awhile. At last he managed to eat a little. Another handful was fetched, and the horse raised his head: his life was saved. His history rapidly spread, and he became the one recipient of all those little acts of charity, which though perhaps not unrecorded in the great account book, had spent themselves unavailingly on all the equine crowd. The little bits of bread so many a trooper spared from his own scanty portion now all fell to his sole lot. Scarcely a doctor passed on his way to the neighbouring ambulance but brought him some small crust, and the horse revived. The white horse of the Ile Cambière became a notable of Metz, and when I came away I saw him trot, absolutely trot, towards me for my last gift. Let us hope that he

has found a kindly Prussian master ; and, now the abattoir does not want them, that the few poor horses still left of the grand cavalry of France are treated honourably as prisoners of war. When I first came to Metz we had upwards of 20,000 horses there ; when I left it there were 2400. The rest had all died and most of them had been eaten. Every day fifty were assigned from the army as a contribution to the town, an equivalent for those stores withdrawn from the town for the use of the army. The camps killed for their own consumption, and the others were sold at such prices as they would fetch, varying from 50 to 250 francs each, according to their market value as food. Many of these being private property were given to anyone who would promise to find them food ; but few were they who at the last were able to fulfil their promise, and a compromise with conscience was often effected by leading the poor beast to our outposts, and there turning him loose to forage for himself. In the town there was no fodder, though I have known (you will, I fear, hardly credit it, yet it is the truth) the horses of some of the many "exalted personages" we had amongst us fed with wheat ; at the time, too, when official notice was given that the people wanted bread ! This is no exaggeration : hundreds saw the same, and cried out with horror at the waste and wickedness.

It was bad enough that the horses should want food, but we poor humans were wanting this particular kind of food too, and we, with the selfishness so well deve-

loped in our nature, cried out against it loudly, but we could not tell how to feed the horses. Not a leaf-bearing tree existed within the lines,—excepting in the gardens where walked the Marshal and his Generals,—we even felled the trees for the sake of their bark and softer parts of the wood to give the horses. Nay, more, we tried crushing and bruising the harder parts to make it in some degree useful to them, but in vain. They ate the wood from habit, but it would not keep them alive. I have seen the whole woodwork of a waggon eaten up by them. Even the sheet-iron clothed bars which formed the stalls of the temporary stabling at the quartier-général had the iron-work bitten through, that the poor beasts might get at the wood. They ate everything, even their own excrement, and then we tried to feed them on their dead brethren. The dead horses were boiled, the soup given to the living, and the flesh dried and chopped up small. Some ate it and lived, and had we anything farinaceous to have mixed it with, no doubt it would have been nourishing food for beast ; we found it so for man, for it was what we lived on chiefly, but then we had acquired the habits of carnivoræ gradually, and the poor horse had to take to it all at once. He didn't take to it kindly, and so he died. Died everywhere—in camp, in our streets, at the gates of the town, everywhere—and no sooner did a horse tumble down to die, than a rush was made to prevent his doing so. They cut his throat and killed him. Then he was fit for food. Those last few

minutes made all the difference, and he was eaten accordingly.

These horses have carried me a long way from the point. So they must needs bring me back again to the camp of the Chasseurs, and there, dismounting, we will look at the tents which surround these square patches that once were stables, and whence we started. Close to us are the tents of the privates; these are the ordinary *tentes d'abri*, convenient enough for lying down, but too low to admit of either sitting or standing in. Straw, when it can be obtained, is shaken down over the ground. Dead leaves, dry sand, or anything which will cover the damp soil, comes in useful; and when straw failed the expedients were many, but the comforts not much, perhaps the best expedient being the hide of the poor horse who had borne his master in life, and who thus served him even after death.

All cooking had to be carried on out of doors, and much ingenuity was expended on kitchen ranges. Those of the highest order consisted of three or four bricks and a drain pipe; but drain pipes were a luxury not common, and the mess which owned a kitchen chimney was deemed an aristocratic circle, almost coming under the censure of indulgence in Imperial luxury. Once I saw the decayed trunk of an old tree used for this purpose, and so proud of it were its fortunate owners that they wreathed it with vine and ivy leaves, and hung out a flag until it became almost a Bacchic column. The fire-place of these camp stoves was about six inches wide and half a yard long,

slightly inclined upwards, and, what was marvellous, they always seemed to "draw," even in the dullest, wettest weather. A few sticks formed the fuel; an open can the *batterie de cuisine*; and then was added science. Some pieces of horseflesh stewed with care, unknown roots, poplar-leaves, wild herbs of various character, and hitherto unknown virtue, were added, until the contents became almost as numerous as those of the witches' cauldron in Macbeth. But the result:—Ah! what a savoury appetising whiff comes o'er the breeze. We'll see if we cannot find breakfast somewhere too.

We undo the first officer's tent we reach, for it is still closed up; we poke our heads in. A long bed just touches each side of the tent, and our friend is rolled up like a chrysalis. We are not sure which end to begin at, but at last we find he sleeps with his feet to the door, and commence to unroll him with the amount of care due to a mummy from the hands of distinguished antiquaries. At last we reach him, and with much labour he is again restored to life. He has been on night duty, and, though usually the best tempered and most amiable of men, does not seem so cordially inclined towards us as usual; but by slow degrees wakefulness and good temper return, and we back out to leave him room to rise, for there is hardly room for three people to pack themselves into his canvas bag.

At last he is up, and we search the mess tent together. This is about seven foot long and five foot wide at the

base, of oval shape, its summit being formed by a cross piece attached to the centre pole, which thus assumes the shape of the letter T. Two boards form our table, and soon there are eight of us seated there, our feet some few inches deep in a soft carpet of mud, and the backs of our heads pressed so tightly against the canvas that the wet trickles in cool and refreshing streams down our necks. We have horse-flesh, we have wine, bread we brought with us, having ingeniously smuggled it out through the gates. Deliciously fried and browned horses' brains form a pleasant second course ; and a dish of boiled rice, with cubes of bacon at rare intervals, winds up the repast. Occasionally we indulge in donkey, but donkey's rare, and only the gourmets who live in town get such luxuries as that. Such treats are reserved until those times when the officers breakfast in town with me. Good wine has accompanied our breakfast ; good coffee and good cognac follows it ; and then that luxury, never slighted and which never palls ;—a pipe.

Dinner in camp is much the same, excepting that two tallow candles, nailed to the side of the tent pole, gutter and run, and always want snuffing. They impart an additional flavour to the viands, and create a little excitement, for one never knows into which dish the next drop of tallow will fall ; as for wax candles, or the innumerable supposed substitutes for them, they disappeared almost immediately, and he is a lucky man, or a prudent one, who in these days can procure a common dip even by paying a franc for it.



Since my return I have heard much of the luxury of French officers, that they had velvet couches and mirrors in their tents, and that even the charms of female society were not unknown there ; but I never was so lucky as to find the particular quarter where these things were. It has been wisely, and even perhaps truly, said that outsiders see most of the game ; and being an insider I saw so little that I never even saw these things. I am not going to say that French officers are Paladins, or Bayards, or admirable Crichtons. Such men do not exist now-a-days ; it is not the thing to be a model man when you enter the army. But this I will say, that I don't think they were any better or any worse than a similar number of the officers of any other army. Amongst 8,000 there will, of course, be a good many who have more money than morals, and such men generally like to show the outer world how much of the former and how little of the latter they possess. But these men did their vice in town, it could be more comfortably done there, the better seen and the louder talked of ; and young vice generally likes to hear itself largely spoken of ; so it sought the town. The dwellers in tents in the camp had in sad truth no luxuries ; and, whatever may have fallen to the lot of those exalted personages who dwelt in houses and quarrelled with each other, the regimental officers of the French army as a rule " foreswore sack, and lived cleanly." Individual instances to the contrary could no doubt be found, and occasionally a luxurious meal was eaten ; but both were rare.

If special examples are to be taken as generalities, I could give a glorious example of how well the officers fed in camp by the record of my last breakfast there. We had fried bacon and potatoes—almost unheard-of luxuries—roast duck with olives! real beef with mixed pickles! a rice pudding made with milk! and lastly, the greatest triumph of all, cheese! Now, the secret of all this was that it was a last farewell breakfast, given to myself and to another civilian when it became certain that we should have to surrender. The regiment who gave it furnished the body guard to the Emperor when he fled the morning before Rezonville. Afterwards it was decimated or destroyed at Sédan, and the few officers who were left here considered under the circumstances it was better to break open the canteens of all their absent brethren, and this was the result. With the exception of the duck, which was caught at Ladonchamp, all the other viands were potted or preserved provisions, ransacked from the private hoards of dead or departed comrades. Doubtless, if such a breakfast were reported in an adverse sense, we should have a long moral reflection on the gluttony of the French officers, as compared with the simple habits of the Prussians. As it was, I ate it and didn't moralise, but was thankful for the welcome change from horse.

In one respect a French camp is particularly revolting. There is not the slightest provision for common decency. Moreover, the *débris* from the cooking, the offal and blood of the killed horses, and often the bodies of the dead ones,

lie about unremoved or unburied for days ; and the stench is fearful. I protested and preached, but in vain. I even petitioned to have a few men told off from each camp, undertaking to see that they brought about a more decent and sanitary state of things, but I could not obtain them or it. This was the more strange as the French soldier is by no means the dirty animal you might thus suppose him to be ; indeed, he is always washing his shirt or his gaiters or something. He is the nearest approach to a male washerwoman I ever saw, and he does take a bath, or at least wash himself, occasionally—practices, I should think, totally unknown in the German camp, from the condition of most of the prisoners when brought in. We thought we knew how it was they managed to get over so much ground in so short a space when we came to examine them. The populace they carried about with them, if drilled to the same degree as themselves, would have been—nay, perhaps, were—a valuable motive power. Yet, by a strange antithesis, I am told the German camps were comparatively clean. The French were superlatively filthy. How we escaped a pestilence I do not know, but certainly all that could be done to generate it was done, yet I believe, from what I have heard since my return, the death-rate from disease in the Prussian camp was much higher than with the French round Metz. How or why I cannot tell. Possibly our little *tentes d'abri* had a good deal to do with it, for whilst the Prussians, who slept in a puddle under small hovels made with the boughs of trees, were drenched with wet and

shivering with cold, the French were dry and, if anything, too warm. Camp life may be very romantic in idea, but in reality it is very prosaic and dull. The bivouac fire is very picturesque, but it burns your toes, and leaves the rest of you to freeze and shiver. War may be considered as a very noble science by those who have only to plan it and profit by it; but it is the dreariest, stupidest, and most unpleasant science in the world to apply yourself personally to, and about the clumsiest way of correcting a superabundance of population ever dreamt of, even after a due consideration of the propositions of the late Mr. Malthus.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE FRENCH ARMY IN THE FIELD.

WHEN first I joined my fortunes to those of the French army, it was with the hope of being able to learn much that would be useful to our own when circumstances should occur which would necessitate our army also being in the field. Hardly had I heard a word of English spoken before the news of increased armaments, and army reforms, were talked of; even now the air is full of rumours of far larger and more dreadful wars, and equally large and equally dreadful reforms, and there are well-grounded fears that the fire kindled by two men may involve three-quarters of the globe in its conflagration. God forbid that it should be so!

Only those who have looked on actual war can picture the thousand ills this grievous one brings in its train; and, though holding no utopian ideas as to a reign of peace on earth and good-will to men, I would earnestly pray that this last insanity of kings and peoples may not fall upon us. There are times when the dreadful necessity arises, when, bad as war is, it is the lesser of two

evils ; but the major evil must indeed be great when this choice has to be made. It was with the hope of studying that systemisation for, and the science of, war which was supposed to render the organisation of the French army superior to our own, that I so intimately connected myself with it, to learn the good and the evil, that my own country might adopt the one and avoid the other, so that when our turn came to choose the dread necessity of war we might not be behind-hand.

I do not pretend to military knowledge, nor do I claim to be an authority in tactics. I merely take the stand-point of an observer with an average amount of intelligence, and a freedom from all class prejudices, animated with a strong desire to learn all I can, and to trace a good or an evil to its cause. I have conversed with all grades of military men, from marshals to privates, and have been intimate with all branches of the service, from the Imperial Guard down to the Military Train. I say intimate, for in times such as those I passed at Metz, intimacy is of rapid growth ; acquaintance ripens quickly into friendship, or withers apace ; and as I purposely laid myself out for the reception of information, and made acquaintances, and I hope friends, wherever I could, perhaps the criticisms and comments even of a civilian may have a value.

His ex-Imperial Majesty has been so severe a critic on certain main features of organisation of the French army that it is needless to do more than draw attention to his opinions, the which it would be well to compare with

his other military criticisms on that same army organisation before he himself ruled over it. This comparison teaches the useful lesson that it is easier to find faults than to correct them.

No one can mix with any portion of the French army without being struck with that great evil of its primary formation, the conscription. It is this which makes it, firstly, an unwilling army. It is always an "evil chance," an "unlucky number," which makes a man a soldier, and it takes a long while to eradicate the feeling that in entering the army a man encounters a misfortune beyond his fellows—a punishment inflicted upon him for no crime of his own; and the feeling of resentment caused by this exists even in old soldiers. As for the few who enter the ranks voluntarily, as *replacements* of those whose money can save them from the disgrace of serving their country, they are the worst of all soldiers. If a man is that rare thing in the French army, a drunkard, or that much more common thing a thief, he is sure to be a *replacement*. Often the *replacement* wins his stripes, but before long he loses them, and he generally ends by being the servant of an officer and the sponge of his comrades until his time expires, when he drops out of view, until he turns up with a large T F marked upon him in a convict prison. Nor does the evil of the *replacement* system stop here. Often the *replacement* is paid for, he draws his clothing, is served with his arms on entering, and is furnished with daily rations, but withal has no existence except on

paper, and the crime of the *remplacement* spreads into other grades than the rank and file. Thus it is that the force of the French army differs so widely on paper from that force it finds itself able to place on the field.

All the officers with whom I have ever conversed on the subject agree that the ill-feeling created by the conscription deprives an army of much of its power, as the new arrivals revive the griefs of the older soldiers, and their advent is always followed by a period of discontent. There are but two systems on which an army can be wholesomely constructed ; that of the Prussian, where every one is obliged to serve, or that of the English, where no one practically is, whatever may be the almost obsolete laws relating to that point. Of these two systems it is the almost universal feeling of those officers who have given the future of France a consideration that the Prussian system is the one most advisable to follow ; the reason given for this being, singularly enough, that if it were purely voluntary there would be no army whatever in France. *Vive la gloire, et vive la guerre* is obsolete. The old military spirit of France has been crushed by the weight of buttons, and even the fact that the traditional bâton of a marshal is in every knapsack does not lighten the burden of it nor render it more willingly borne.

It is this bâton which has been held up to us in England as such a glorious thing—this rising from the ranks, which is to be the panacea for all evils, the gilder of all the rough-hewn horrors of war, and by which we



are to believe an ignorant man becomes wise, a fighting animal is converted into a philosopher, and a man who has always been looking out for his own interests is to become careful for those of others.

At the head of the army of the Rhine was a man who found this bâton of a marshal in his knapsack, nay, it is said that he even exchanged a drumstick for it. Marshal Bazaine, it is said, entered the ranks of the French army as a drummer boy, and became Marshal of France and Commander-in-Chief. How he rose now is not the time to tell ; what he has done is patent to all. But, because one man has sought self-interest alone, and the cause of his country never, it would be unwise and unfair to condemn the system which gave him the power to serve the one and betray the other, without further examination. It is, however, a well-known fact, that throughout the French service the men who rise from the ranks have risen by truckling to, and currying favour from, their superiors, by petty meannesses in peace, and, to give them their due, by obtrusive bravery in war.

Such men, when they reach the summit of their ambition, think only of themselves. To some this summit is the rank of captain, others raise their eyes so lofty as commandant, and some few even aspire to the much-bebraided cap of a general. Once their aim reached, they are idle, voluptuous, and almost cowardly ; they have gained the prize they sought, and seek to enjoy it as long as pos-

The idea of duty, as a virtue, is unknown to them.

*Noblesse oblige* is, of course, a maxim without a meaning ; selfish indulgence, and a due repression of all beneath them, is all they think of ; and such men break up the *esprit de corps* of a regiment most effectually. Let whatever can be said in favour of this system, the practical working of it is pernicious in the extreme. A regiment led by men who have honour to lose is more to be trusted than one led by those who have simply promotion to gain. And those regiments pre-eminent for their bravery and coolness will almost invariably be found to be under the command of men of family or of superior education.

In no regiments is the rapid progress of deterioration in courage consequent upon change in the social status of the officers so remarkable as in some of those of the once famous Zouaves. Once these regiments were officered by men of good family. They were composed of the most heterogeneous materials, and were excessively difficult to organise. Theirs was always the post of danger, and their coolness was so remarkable that the title of Zouave was synonymous with hero. Now their old officers are dead ; their bones lie in all the four quarters of the globe, and their names are written in the most brilliant passages of French military history. Their present officers are mostly men who have risen from the ranks, the word Zouave is rapidly becoming a by-word and a reproach, and the cause of this is the difference in the moral quality of their officers. Again, take the cool bravery of the Chasseurs d'Afrique. The history of these

regiments is a glorious chapter in the use of cavalry in time of war, and their officers are almost entirely men of the highest social grade. They have something they value to lose—honour; and the spirit of chivalry still exists amongst them. At the same time there is another and, perhaps, a greater evil to be avoided—the supposition that the science of war can be reached by a royal or an imperial road. Officers d'Antichambre, too conceited to learn their profession, and who have gained their grade by equally low morality, only practised in higher places, are an equal, nay, even a greater, evil, and the more so that these parasites are always found clinging to the highest places. Briefly then, the officer requires a military education; but he requires something more. He should have a position which a dereliction of duty would disgrace; and I sincerely trust that, whatever so-called reform may invade the British army, the miserable humbug of supposing that the majority of our officers might, could, would, or should rise from the ranks will never enter into it, or the equally great one be retained, that because a man had a grandfather the science of war comes to him by instinct. The Prussian service, by making the military profession a serious study, and at the same time by drawing its students from the upper classes, has presented us with a recent military lesson it will be wise to study carefully. At the same time the very much abused British system has the great merit of having done pretty well on the whole, anomalous as it seems to be; and it is to be hoped that

all changes will be considered but tentative ones, leading to better by-and-by, perhaps, but let us try them gradually.

As regards the form of the clothing of the troops I do not think we have anything much to learn, excepting perhaps the addition of the hood or capuchin to the greatcoat. The comfort of this appendage is enormous, especially on night duty, but to adopt it in our service we must lower the head-dress, a reform I fear much too great to be attempted in the English army; where the head-dress has hitherto received so much more attention than the head it covers. Yet the head-dress of the French infantry is much lighter, softer, and more convenient than our own; and incomparably superior to the leathern inconveniency the Prussian infantry are compelled to wear. As for the cavalry, Dutch ovens and muffs are equally in vogue there, and the lighter helmet or short busby of the Prussian cavalry is much preferable to either the French or English, though Dutch ovens are occasionally indulged in by Prussian regiments. Poor troopers, it seems to be very hard to find a good head-dress for you. The days of cavalry seem, however, to be numbered, and, except as acting as a sort of mounted police, or being used as a missile, their career has terminated. Their use in the present war has not been very great—they have acted as covering parties to the advance of an army, and been hurled at impossible positions, but they have not done great things in the war, except that great thing—die. It is

true the audacity of the Prussian Uhlán in taking possession of open and unguarded towns has given him a fictitious glory; but beyond creating consternation amongst unarmed civilians, the military value of their service has not been much. The long range both of cannon and small-arms will gradually extinguish the knight and the squire of the army, and gentlemen-at-arms will be all that will be left us. The romance of war is fast fading away; a good thing too, for when once it comes to be regarded in its truthful aspect of vulgar butchery, it will only be resorted to on the direst need, and duty not glory be regarded as the cause. The cavalry uniforms of the French service are even more preposterous than our own; but the uniform of the line is very good. There is also a great advantage in having all the line regiments in the same uniform. With the exception of here and there a different coloured shoulder-strap, all the regiments of French infantry of the line wear the long grey-blue coat, red pantaloons, and white gaiters; the one exception to this rule being the dark-blue coated Chasseurs de Vincennes—once the rifle regiments of the French army. This exception is a fatal one, for more than once during this war have they been fired into by their countrymen, who mistook them for the dark-hued enemy, the only difference between their uniform and that of the Prussian being in the shako and the gaiters, neither of which is distinguishable at a few hundred yards. With this exception, all the regiments of the line wear the same uniform—a

great advantage, for when it becomes needful to make up a regiment by individuals or companies detached from others, all that it is requisite to do is to change the small strap which bears the regimental number, and the uniformity is restored.

Officers and men are dressed alike, a little extra fineness in the cloth being the sole difference. This is, of course, undistinguishable at a few hundred yards, a matter of vital consequence to the officer in these days of long range and crack shots. The rank of the officer is very easily discerned by the number of bands of narrow gold or silver braid borne round the cap, and round each wrist, just above the cuff of the sleeve; one gold band denoting a sous-lieutenant, two a lieutenant, three a captain, four a commandant, and five a colonel; the difficulty of that interloper the lieutenant-colonel is overcome by giving him two bands of silver and three of gold where his buttons, as in the line, are yellow. In some regiments white buttons are borne, this distinction not being confined, as in our own service, to troops for internal defence only; in such a regiment the lieutenant-colonel bears three bands of silver and two of gold. All this is very simple and easy to distinguish, and presents many advantages over the invisible stars and crowns on the collar in our service, and which necessitates that collar being made stiff and uncomfortable. Moreover, epaulets are dispensed with except for dress parade, and an officer can lie down comfortably without fear of damaging this expensive appendage or hurting

his shoulder. The epaulette strap and the braid on his sleeve are quite sufficient to indicate his rank ; and as now-a-days a sabre cut on the shoulder is not to be expected, it is quite time this uncomfortable addition was disused. There is in the Prussian service much similarity between the dress of the officer and private, but their officers are easily distinguishable. They are much more frequently mounted than in the French, and when on foot the spike of their helmet is almost horizontal ;—they hold their chins so high. The surgeons of the French army are, fortunately for themselves, absolved from the absurdity of wearing a cocked hat and feathers, nor do they ever bear, though perhaps they are entitled to, a sword ; but they are, even in the French army, exposed to the misadventure of being taken for a general ; they wear wonderfully gold embroidered collars and cuffs on crimson velvet, and bear marvellous buttons with the oak and laurel and the staff of Æsculapius, which also appears on their caps. The thought has often suggested itself during this war that the surgeons of all armies should wear a distinctive cap and badge, say a white cap and the brassard round the arm ; of course the uniform, generally, must partake of the same character as the other officers of the regiment, but it would be easy to provide some mark conspicuous and common to all armies, for during the siege of Metz we had several medical officers fired at, and some killed, as their brilliant uniform marked them out very strongly, and I have no doubt they were supposed to be general officers. How

our cocked-hatted doctors would fare I am afraid even to suggest.

The question of auxiliary medical aid is one demanding very serious consideration. From all I have seen of the working of the long titled society of Geneva, I am not greatly impressed with its value. Indeed I do not think any independent society is good. Auxiliary aid is undoubtedly necessary, largely necessary at such times, but I think it would be much wiser to apportion such aid amongst different corps or regiments, and make it subsidiary to the regular medical staff of the army, rather than let it wander at its own erratic will how, when, and where it pleases. It is the few first hours when auxiliary aid is needed, and without such assistance is placed under strict military orders I do not see how that immediate aid is to be given, or how so much jealousy and ill-will as I found created by separatism at Metz is to be avoided. A certain number of these semi-civil doctors should be attached to the hospitals, and a certain number to the field staff of each regiment, their duties strictly defined, the performance of them insisted on, and no uniform allowed. The temptation to disport an uniform in public places is more than the civil mind can resist.

One very valuable addition to the clothing of both men and officers was added in this campaign, an addition entirely of a private character, and yet universal, a proof therefore of its comfort and use. This was the ceinture—a broad belt of twilled flannel three or four yards long and about 2 feet wide. Folded into two and wound



three or four times round the body, it is most invaluable by giving additional warmth to the renal and abdominal regions, and thus preventing diarrhoea and dysentery—those two scourges of an army in the field. I can personally speak of its value, having suffered severely from dysentery when first I came in contact with the foulnesses of the camp; but after I adopted the ceinture I had no ailment whatever. Drenched to the skin, blown dry again by bitterly cold winds, standing for hours in a footbath of cold mud, I attribute my own good health and the great immunity of the French army from disease to these ceintures. Moreover, when dinner hour came, and dinner did not, an extra turn was very useful. These ceintures were of bright crimson, blue, plaided, checked, and striped, and added much to the picturesqueness of the camp if they destroyed the uniform appearance of the regiment, for they were generally worn outside the jacket, partly for appearance sake and partly because of buttons. Should our army be called upon for active service I should urge the supply of this life-saving appendage. The cost is more than English soldiers would go to for themselves, four or five shillings is a good deal to spend in anything besides beer and 'baccy, but this four or five shillings would save many a man's life, and if provided as a part of the regimental costume, picturesqueness might be sacrificed to uniformity, and the military mind appeased.

The question of boots is also a very important one. The French soldier wears a moderately high shoe, very

much like our own infantry boot, but much lighter. Over this and the lower part of the pantaloons comes the white gaiter, fitting quite close and being very warm, too warm in fact; but as socks or stockings have no existence after the first week or two of marching, something is necessary to prevent the wet which drains down the trouser leg from entering the shoe and causing foot sores. When a French soldier does take his boot off, the assemblage of bits of rag and cunningly devised bandages round the ankle shows at once where the want is felt, and how difficult it is to get any rapidly attached garment to supply it. This the gaiter does not do. Mud works up under it and over the boot; to remove the gaiter and get rid of the gritty intrusion is a work of too much time, so the man marches on, and a foot sore is the consequence. From the examination I have made of Prussian infantry prisoners, and from the manner in which I saw the troops plunge fearlessly into the sea of mud I had to traverse on my escape from Metz, I have formed a very high opinion of the value of the Prussian boot. This is sufficiently wide to allow of the trouser being tucked in, and rises just high enough to reach, without compressing, the calf. In wet weather, if a fold of the trouser is arranged over the top of this boot no wet ever penetrates, for it is collected in the bag thus formed, and filters away without draining down into the boot, a matter of very great importance, for practically the strength of an infantry regiment depends on the strength and comfort of the boots. How good the Prussian boots

must be is shown by the long forced marches made by the troops. Wide round the ankle, and forming several creases, these boots in action form a species of bellows, sucking in and expelling at every motion a small amount of air, and thus keeping the foot well ventilated and, consequently, free from sores. Greased and oiled they are supple, and on the whole, I think, decidedly superior to our own.

After clothing, the most important question relating to the well-being of the soldier in the field is what he shall take with him—that is, his camping equipments and his arms. The first thing which strikes one on seeing a French soldier preparing for the march is, that he is a much-abused beast of burden. The enormous amount of material borne contrasts forcibly with the small amount of man which bears it. Firstly, he loads his back with his heavy cowhide knapsack, a hard hairy mass, ugly to look upon and ponderous to carry. To this is attached a pair of good stout shoes, which are slung toes downwards, and which, in consequence, become leathern buckets of water when it rains. It would be very easy to place a couple of side straps to the knapsack, so that the shoes could be placed one on each side, toes upward and soles outward. Thus they would always be kept moderately dry, and the perpetual bumping against the back of the arm avoided; but then the government pattern would require alteration, and that is truly an *affaire d'état*, a French synonym for an impossibility, nor is the English translation very different. After the shoes comes the *couverture*, a

thick warm rug or blanket of excellent material, long enough to cover the soldier from head to foot, with something to spare generally, as the men are short, and wide enough to enable him to tuck himself up in it. For transport this is rolled up and passes along the top and down both sides of the knapsack. Over this comes the portion of the *tente d'abri*, which makes a similar course, and is flanked by two straight sticks of wood with metal ferrules at the end, the which when united form the end poles of the small tent. Now comes the affair of the kitchen. Pots, pans, tin plates, a big spoon, and often a stewpan, make up another portion of his load, which is crowned with a bundle of firewood, till one is reminded of the pedestrian feat of Birnam Wood on its travels to Dunsinane. Nor is this all. Slung over his shoulder is his drinking flask of metal; some of these are of white metal, the others covered with dark cloth. Their shape varies much, many being of the old Dutch bottle pattern, whilst the others are canister-shaped; but the best I have seen are those supplied with an air tube and a spring valve for closing the mouth-piece. These vessels, which hold a litre, are very easy to drink out of, and to each is attached by a chain or strap a small metal cup, capable of containing about a quarter of a pint. Water from a brook or spring can be taken up with this and qualified with the *eau de vie* or wine from the flask, to mitigate the rigours of a long march. On the other side comes a havresack of canvas, large enough to hold about two days' full rations. When more is carried, the meat and bread of which those

rations consist are strapped to the knapsack, and add their weight to this already much cumbered appendage.

All this is laid on to the fighting man before a single weapon is added. The chassepot, the cartouch-box, and the sword bayonet, with their belts, have yet to be given him ; and I have weighed the paraphernalia of a man in full marching order, and found it to amount to very nearly 80 lb. avoirdupois.

The condition of a man who has marched some twelve or fourteen miles under a broiling sun, or waded through a slough of thick sticky mud with such a burden as this on his shoulders, is weariness personified. Indeed the military authorities themselves seem to have been conscious of its excess, for they have striven to lighten it ; but unfortunately they have commenced at the wrong end, and whittled away at the stock of the chassepot until it is far too slender. This is so reduced that it cannot stand the rough usage it must meet with in the field, and I have seen hundreds of them broken short off at the grip. Moreover, this lightening of the stock is the cause of another great evil ; the balance of the weapon is destroyed, so it resents this interference with the laws of equilibrium, and kicks dreadfully. Often and often have I seen the right cheek of the soldier bruised and blackened from this cause until he looked like a damaged prizefighter after a hard day's work. Nor is this the only evil which attends upon this reduction of the weight of the butt ; for when the heavy sword-bayonet is fixed, the want of balance is very greatly felt, and it is very difficult

to handle, and especially difficult to recover rapidly, and as a club arm the weapon is from its weakness totally useless.

Under these circumstances it is no wonder that the waste of arms in the French service is very great, and they have also an indirect influence on the waste of ammunition. The soldier having borne all this weight on his back, the greatest part of it impinging by the supporting straps on the front part of the shoulders, finds them sore, and his arms stiff, and dreads the kicking creature greatly. Consequently he fires from the hip, or rather from between the side and the arm, where the kick hits nothing. No aim can be taken by this means, and as the chassepot is very easy to load in and fire from this position, it follows that a rapid useless fire is continually kept up until all the ammunition is expended. In every engagement which took place round Metz, the continual cry was, "We were beaten from want of ammunition." It may be said that this is want of drill and want of discipline, and so it undoubtedly is; but flesh and muscle will become sore and tired, and it is then very hard to maintain the lessons of drill or keep up the semblance of discipline; but the primary evil is the weight of baggage borne by the soldier. Before, then, regarding the chassepot as an arm, let us consider in what way it would be wise to reduce this weight of baggage. It may be said that in our service this evil does not obtain. It is true our men carry about 60lb. only, 20lb. less than the weight borne by the French soldier, and our men are as a rule more stalwart

and strong. But there are many reflections on this point which may be pertinent to our own service. Not a single useless article is carried by the French soldier; and, as camping is much more frequent than fighting, the question of the well-being of the soldier whilst in repose is a very important one, the health of the troops very greatly depending upon this. The solution of the difficulty seemed to have been presented to, but not accepted by, the French authorities in the large numbers of mules which followed the French army in the field. These mules were very useful, and might have been made much more so. Attached to the ambulance service, their primary function was to carry the "cacolets" for the removal of the wounded; but they are a most invaluable adjunct to the transport service of an army, and would, I think, be of very great value in our own service. The tent sticks of the excellent *tente d'abri* might be easily so arranged as to form a rapidly-constructed cradle in which to pack the tent cloths, cooking utensils, and camp equipage generally. Packed uprightly, and so arranged as to project but little from the side of the mule, wherever a man could march or climb the mule could follow, and two or three attached to each company would be of enormous service, not only as means of transport, but also by giving the soldiers something to pet, would thus become well cared for without much trouble, and a "pet" is very valuable in a regiment at idle times. How hardy and how enduring these mules are, is shown by the fact that when the siege of Metz terminated the

mules were then in almost as good condition as when it commenced. Where a horse will die from want a mule will live luxuriously, and can exist an extraordinary length of time without feeding. The mule also has the very great advantage of being extremely indigestible, so that he is never eaten until the last extremity is reached, and then but in small quantities. As for their good qualities as hospital servants, they are well known. The cat-like step of the mule is much less trying than the less elastic pace of the horse, and the long horizontal pannier bed is much less painful to travel in than the ambulance cart. These beds could easily be utilised as officers' camp furniture, and thus every company would be provided with the means of transport of the tents, camp baggage, and the sick or wounded. The hindrance to the movement of the troops would be little or nothing, as after a short training a mule accommodates himself readily to a marching pace, and, excepting on those very rare occasions when very close order has to be taken, would never be found in the way. Whatever little inconvenience might arise, it would be more than counter-balanced by the advantage derived from reducing the burden borne by the men, and having an additional transport service which would not detach itself from its own company.

I have a very great conviction of the value of the mule as a military adjunct, and have contracted a strong affection for the quaint patient animal. In Poitou they are bred in large numbers, and there would be but very



little difficulty in obtaining almost any number readily ; and, as they seem to be indestructible, a large supply would last a long time. This argument on behalf of the employment of mules is, of course, based on the supposition that the light *tente d'abri* of the French service, or some equivalent to it, is adopted in our own. From what I have seen, I am persuaded that this system of isolating the men is both physically and morally greatly superior to the aggregated system of larger tents or sheds. The lowness of the tent compels a man to spend all his upright time out of it, and it has the other advantage of not being easily blown over, so all the advantage of fresh air is obtained without any disadvantage arising from too much of it. Often have I seen during the stormy weather which marked the close of the siege the officers' tents blown down, their effects scattered to the wind, and themselves scampering about the mud, endeavouring to retain the tent or recover their goods, whilst the men alongside them crawled leisurely out of their more humble but more secure habitations to render assistance. The isolation afforded is a great preventive of the spread of epidemic and contagious diseases, and affords a much greater facility of removal from an infected or infecting spot than can be obtained by the use of the larger and more cumbrous tent. There is also a very great advantage in being able to pick smaller places for encampment, such as a sheltered ledge of rock, the cover of a hedge, the rapid slope of a hill, and a thousand other snug corners, into which the little tent may be

squeezed, but where the big tent could not go. All these things may seem small matters to people who sleep at home at ease ; but the fate of an army is often determined by attention or inattention to little things—if indeed there are such things as little things in the huge, costly business of war.

The business of war is to kill or disable as many of our fellow-creatures as quickly as we possibly can in the most economical manner to ourselves. To do this we must keep both the animate and inanimate machines of destruction in as effective a condition as possible. The French seem most thoroughly to have comprehended this ; but the mistake made was that of considering the rapid, spasmodic action of light bodies more valuable than the slower, continued action of heavier ones.

Everything was done in a spasm—the war itself was begun in a spasm—it was to be a spasm—and the action of everything about the beginning of it was spasmodic. “Berlin in six weeks” was the ruling idea ; and in consequence the whole service was provisioned and prepared for a rapid attack, and not for a prolonged defence. The worst of it was that the recurrence of the spasms was not sufficiently close, though very intermittent, and intense prostration supervened after each attack. Yet the idea of a recurrence of the spasm was the prevalent one throughout the army.

This being the case, the French soldier was taught to do everything in a hurry—pack his tent and load himself

in haste—stagger at a trot under his heavy burden—tumble it off in a twinkling, and fire away like fury. This was the idea of drill and discipline inculcated. If he could take up his position in a run he was to do so ; so he frequently ran into error. His individuality was the primary idea, his correlation to the general body was lost sight of, and thus the force of the whole was expended in individual spasms. The generals relied on the rapid movements of their men for a short action ; but, as they never marched in the night, the wise saw concerning the tortoise and the hare found many a modern instance.

If a man could be in two places at once he would be as good as two men : but as he couldn't quite manage this, it seemed to be considered that the nearer he approached it the more nearly equal to two men he became. So he was hurried about from here to there, and then from there to here again, carrying his 80lb. with him. By this time he was so worn out that there was no fight left in him, and I verily believe that it was this confidence in the extreme mobility of the French soldier which at last reduced him to immobility. Now rapidity of movement is, no doubt, a great thing, but stability in fighting is a greater ; and without the moral support of discipline and drill this can never be obtained. Much as I have heard of the vaunted *élan* of the French troops, and in spite of what I have seen of the sudden burst they make, I should be very sorry to see the steady, so-  
ant of our own slower-going evolutions ex-

changed for it. Against Kabyles, half-caste Mexicans, Garibaldian rabble, and semi-barbarous mobs of that sort, irregular dash and individual daring are undoubtedly useful qualities—they are the weapons of the enemy ; but against well and steadily drilled troops only better drilled and more steady troops can stand. Africa, Mexico, and Rome have ruined the French military forces.

Drill and discipline are the mainstay of an army, and the idea that giving a man a shilling and wrapping him up in scarlet shoddy makes a soldier of him, is a mistake which I fear we are always repeating, though but very rarely committing to memory the lesson it teaches. The true definition of a soldier is :—that he is a man who sells his life to get a living ; but it takes about three years of that life before he learns how to sell it at the best advantage to his country ; and when a man has once acquired this knowledge he is priceless. Every inducement should be offered to such a man to continue the trade he has learned ; for the only way in which the small army of England can ever be worth maintaining is by making each unit of it as good and as efficient as possible. Union is strength, and knowledge is power ; and it is only by uniting the knowing ones that we can ever hope to be a strong military power. I trust that, whatever deluge of army reform may be waiting to swallow us up, it will always be remembered that war is the business of a soldier, and if he cannot earn as much at it as he can at any other, he won't stick to it. If we want good workmen we must give them good wages, and if we want good work done

we must give them good tools. Two new tools were tried on a large scale round Metz—the chassepot and the mitrailleuse.

The construction of the chassepot is so well known that no description is needed of it here. It has been so repeatedly described that I shall not enter into any technological explanation of the arm, but confine myself to the study of its use on the field. So far as the shooting of this gun from a fixed rest is concerned, it is an admirable arm; but, as a portable weapon, it has two great defects. One of these, the extreme lightness of the stock, I have already mentioned. The other is the want of some secure means of carrying the gun at half-cock. At present the only manner in which it can be removed from full to half-cock is by raising the handle which withdraws the piston half way between the perpendicular and the horizontal positions in which it is usually placed. There is no catch or stop at this point; the friction only of the piston in its socket holds it thus, and when a piece becomes at all worn this friction is very slight. The consequence of this is, that by the steady repetitive vibration of the march the weight of the bolt soon causes the piston to revolve to the one side or the other, as the chassepot is carried. If the arm is “ported” on the shoulder it soon assumes the full cock, and the least accidental catch of the trigger, or the impact of a sudden leap, discharges it. All day long these unpremeditated discharges are going on, and the number of accidents is very great from this cause. Once I was very nearly shot

by a man who, scrambling up a bank behind me, slipped, and dropped his chassepot. Off it went, and the bullet went right through the shoulder of his comrade whose elbow touched mine. This was so ordinary an incident that no notice whatever was taken of it, the wounded man simply going into hospital, and no reprimand beyond a few "cursory remarks" from myself and his comrades being administered to the other one. When the chassepot is carried in the hand, the upward jolting motion created by the "double" causes the lever to assume the perpendicular position, and then a sudden shock releases the piston, and down it falls on the ground. Trampled on, half buried, by the hurrying feet of those who follow, it is useless to look for it, and the rest of the gun is flung away, or the soldier wilfully puts his foot against the slender stock, snaps it, retires to the rear, reports an accident, and gets out of the scrimmage for that day. It is not glorious or heroic, but you don't often get glory and heroism at four sous a day, especially when Jeannette has had to be left in such a hurry. In action, and when well handled, the chassepot is a most formidable weapon. With a cool man at one end of it, he ought to soon be a cold man who came within 800 or 1,000 yards of it at the other. Nothing ought to get over those 200 yards, and live. But, unfortunately, the gun has been considered to be everything, and the shooter nothing. The consequence is, that at about 2,000 yards the firing begins, and is carried on at such a rate, and with so little judgment, that by the time the true effective range of the

weapon is reached the ammunition is expended, and there comes a pause. The needle-gun has its innings then, and, though the score is not always large, yet the firing is much better. By the time the next lot of ammunition is opened the men have got into their work, and then the bonâ fide shooting begins; and now the chassepot is indeed a deadly weapon. The greater weight of the bullet and its square-cut base cause it to inflict a much more serious wound than that made by the ovoid bullet of the needle-gun. When a chassepot bullet hits a bone it shatters it, the needle-gun bullet often glides round it, leaving a flesh wound only behind it, and that flesh wound a trifling one compared to the lacerated large exit orifice of the one made by the chassepot. The chassepot fouls a good deal, it is true, but any gun so used would do so; and the insertion of the finger at the breech generally cleans it sufficiently.

The mitrailleuse is but an assemblage of twenty-five chassepot barrels of somewhat larger calibre than ordinary, put into a small brass field-piece: that is the principle of it. The mechanism by which it is loaded and discharged is highly ingenious, but not easy to describe without the aid of diagrams. It is discharged by means of a handle in the rear, which causes a revolving wheel to impinge upon the capsules of cartridge consecutively. It is evident that this handle may be turned very rapidly or very slowly, so that the effect may be that of file or of volley firing. Theoretically the weapon is an excellent one, but its practical use is not so great as was expected.

The causes of its failure are many, the first being that there is no means of diverging or concentrating its fire at will. In fact, it does not scatter enough horizontally : and I myself have seen a man with seven mitrailleuse bullets in him. The military correspondent of *The Times* assured me he had seen another with nine bullets in him, and that he had been informed of one who had received twenty, the which, as the gun carries only twenty-five, seems hardly possible, if we are to consider them as all proceeding from the same. Taking, therefore, the man who received seven only, he absorbed six too many ; and it is evident that they were wasted. Again, although the range may be effective at 2,500 yards, and so virtually giving a fusillade at that distance, its use has not had the slightest influence on any attack where I have seen it brought into action, nor has it effected anything greater than a 7-lb shell would accomplish at the same distance. Now, as it takes four horses and seven men to attend to it, and four horses and three men to see that it gets enough to eat in the shape of ammunition, and as it requires about fifty-three yards by seven yards to move about in, I think as a field-piece it is a very expensive and useless weapon. As a fixed piece of position, or for the defence of a *tête du pont*, a gateway or a road, or for close quarter work at sea : in fact, in any position where the attacking party must be massed in narrow spaces, it is a very valuable arm. If, however, the enemy takes open order, the effect of the mitrailleuse is but small ; and from what I have seen of it



on the field, I cannot say that I think it an economical or useful addition to the science of murder.

The other offensive weapons of the French service call for no particular remark. Their artillery retains the old muzzle-loading principles, to which I am sorry to find we are reverting again. With the French at Metz it was usually considered that the superiority of the Prussian artillery over theirs arose from the fact that the breech-loading allowed the Prussians to fire quicker, and gave them a longer range. Their range for pieces of the same calibre was from 200 to 300 yards more than ours ; and it was the old system of muzzle-loading which was blamed for many of our defeats. The percutant shell fired by the Prussian artillery was by us deemed more certain than our fuze, and has the great advantage of showing the exact point at which it falls by the fountain of earth and stones thrown up. The calibre of the artillery of the two forces was much the same, but the nomenclature of artillery is very puzzling. Our *canon de quatre* threw a projectile weighing between nine and ten pounds ; our *pièce de sept* threw a massive zinc-studded shell of about fourteen pounds ; and our *pièce de douze*, an enormous shell of twenty-six pounds weight : but these *pièces de douze* are not often used in field work,—they are too cumbersome, and are really more pieces of position than field-pieces. The Prussian projectiles were heavier in proportion ; but the only two pieces of their artillery I had the pleasure of regarding from the stern were the two captured by Ladmirault's corps on the 14th of

August. They were of bronze, rifled, very long, and about four inches diameter, breech-loaders, closed by a wedge, on the Wahrendorf principle improved, and the workmanship exquisite; but the carriage was unnecessarily heavy, and these pieces must be very unwieldy in the field. The lead envelope which surrounded the Prussian shell was dreaded more than fragments of the shell itself, from the frightful wounds it inflicted. Indeed, I have seen lead, brass, and iron extracted from the same wound, the brass being furnished by the nipple.

One thing—and a very important thing too—to be remembered at the outset of a war is a supply of maps to the artillery. It will, I know, hardly be credited that at Metz, the head-quarters of the engineering and artillery schools of France, a sufficient supply of maps of their own immediate district was unobtainable. Maps of Germany existed in plenty; but the map of the *état major* for the country round Metz had to be reduced by photography and supplied in very limited numbers to the artillery, whilst each battery of the German army had a small and beautifully executed map of the district round Metz supplied in ample quantities at the outset—the distance from crest to crest of every hill figured on this map, and the elevation of every hill correctly given.

These little things win.

How should we stand? Where are our maps of outlying districts, say Aden or Bombay? I fear we should have to look for them in the cabinets of the Prussian or the Russian Ministers of War rather than in our own.

A strange report obtains credence that these maps were deposited at our War Office, and laid aside for engraving or otherwise copying, but when looked for they could not be found. Perhaps the authorities in England would answer as I heard an authority in France, when an artillery officer drew the small attention of that large authority to the character of the German maps I have referred to. "Sir," said the Authority, with severity, "if a French artillery officer cannot tell the distance of an enemy's battery or the height of his position, he is unworthy of his own." The answer was smart, but stupid—it is to be feared that we might be the latter without the former. Telemeters or range-finders existed, but only as curiosities, the scientific adjuncts of the French artillery were lamentably few, and I was grievously disappointed at finding so much less scientific knowledge amongst the officers of this branch of the service than I had expected. The work of Louis Napoleon, President of the French Republic, treated in a most able fashion the past history and the future prospects of artillery; but like many another thing written under his name, it bore no fruit; and least of all was the lesson learnt by the would-be teacher.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE COMING OF THE END.

October 10—24.

THE silence of the Marshal all this time was ominous. Never did he show himself to his troops, never did he vouchsafe one cheering word to a wounded or a desponding man. Often was he appealed to by officers in high command to issue some inspiriting order of the day, to say some word which might lighten the heavy burden of despair and discontent that was settling on the army. Some of his few good-wishers in the town—for there were a few even yet—urged him to make some sign.

All was in vain—not a sound came from the Marshal—never did he show himself outside the gates of the château he monopolised at Ban St. Martin. By day he smoked, and he played billiards by night. If rumour be true, he also had other amusements; and he scandalized the whole town of Metz by sending all over it for a *pâté de foie gras*, and offering any sum for the toothsome luxury, when the soldiers were—needlessly, I do believe,—reduced to 200 grammes of bread per day. Never once did he visit the camps to cheer the soldiers during

their long weary time of waiting. Never once did humanity dictate to him a visit to the ambulance, amongst those poor wounded who had fought under his orders. Like his master he was selfish and self-indulgent. He stayed waiting at home haggling for that price which he hoped to gain. *Parlementaires* began now to pass frequently, and we knew that he was playing us false. Political ambition, not military duty, was now the leading idea which led his thoughts. It was Senator, not Marshal, Bazaine who ruled us, and he dropped down in ordinary parlance to be *M'sieu*, the lowest form of vernacular degradation a Frenchman can be debased to. People now revived old stories of Mexico. Many of his officers told strange tales of the Marshal's doings there; and it was evident that from out of the *Ban St. Martin* no good thing could come. *Bourbaki* was fetched away in that strange mysterious manner, and was waited for in vain, and the latter days of September saw the commencement of that mysterious interlude played by *Mons. N.* We in Metz knew *Bourbaki* had left, but where to or for why none knew for certain. Some said for Paris to consult the government there, for we did not in those days know that there was no longer a government at Paris. Others said to bring back the young prince, and try what fortune or what favour France might find under *Napoleon IV.* There were rumours of a violent quarrel between *Bourbaki* and *Bazaine*, and those who knew *Bourbaki* thought this highly probable, but it was his mission, not himself, which excited our curiosity. *Bour-*

baki had done nothing, only once had he been on the field, and then he came so late—staying so long they said to have a new dish cooked for his breakfast in place of one which displeased him—that when he did arrive, it was only to snatch a laurel leaf from that branch others had gathered. But then Bourbaki belonged to the Guard, and anything told to the detriment of that gorgeous body was sure to find ready credence. The Guard had few friends, they made too many enemies, and Bazaine was so evidently playing the same game with them that Canrobert had played with the other portion of the army in '52, that the people and the unfavoured portion of the army were very suspicious of all they did. As to what Bourbaki did outside Metz, it does not enter greatly into the subject now in hand; he played so unimportant a character in this great drama that people never missed the actor. An occasional canard winged its way amongst us that he was imprisoned in Metz, and as he was supposed to have incurred the displeasure of Bazaine he almost became popular, but the best informed knew that he had left for Luxembourg in company with Dr. Buffet, and some other medicos who were well known amongst us. Boyer, the latest creature of the Marshal's, was now talked of as likely to be sent away, and the wildest rumours as to what all these goings and these comings meant prevailed; the word "treason" began to be freely used, for we all knew that Boyer, like Bazaine, would think only of self-interest, and that the honour of France would not find an exponent in him.

He had been made a general since this campaign began, in order that the Marshal might have another voice in the council, and we knew that wherever he went he would only expound the personal ideas and further the wishes of the Marshal. Bourbaki had not returned ; we heard he had tried to, but that the Prince Frederick Charles had refused him permission to pass the lines, and we consequently argued if Boyer could come and go, it was because such coming and going could only be deemed favourable to Prussian interest, and therefore we said that he, and he who sent him, alike were meditating treason.

Much consternation was created in the army at this time by a diligent inquiry being made as to whether the troops would surrender or not, and a letter was sent from the Quartier-Général to all the Commandants of the various corps, demanding their opinion in writing as well as a personal explanation, and broadly hinting that the army was to be considered not that of France, but of the Emperor. Of course I never saw this letter, but I was told its contents by those who did, and whose word I relied upon. The written replies were sent in ; some of them were not quite strong enough, and were sent back to be made more devotedly Imperialistic in their tone ; and a Council was called for the 10th, when the Capitulation was first openly entered into. The worst statements as to provisions and the health of the army were made, and it was even proposed to surrender at once. General Coffinières stuck out to the last, and suggested

one more—or rather, at least, one *bond fide* trouée and not a murderous imitation ; but it was of no avail, and Boyer was sent away on the 12th. Of course, all these things transpired, and as the army generally, and the town particularly, did not desire to surrender—did not believe in the necessity for it, both agreed that Bazaine was a traitor.

Now it is a very ugly word that traitor, and much too commonly follows French reverses to be always justly used ; but I certainly think Bazaine betrayed the trust reposed in him by France. His primary duty, it seems to me, and it so seemed to all of us in Metz, was to save his army, and to prolong the war so long as a Prussian remained in that country the Marshal was paid to defend. Had he cut his way out of Metz and enabled the town and its garrison to hold out till now, the fate of Strasbourg, and I fear of Paris, might have been, and be, very different. No doubt he glossed over this dereliction of primary duty in his own mind by calling it loyalty to his sovereign. The Emperor had said to him, “Remain at Metz until you are relieved,”—at least so Bazaine said, and therefore he would remain ; but unfortunately the Emperor’s very last proclamation, dated on his unfortunate fête day, said to the inhabitants of Metz, “In leaving *you* to oppose the invading enemy I rely upon *your* patriotism to defend this great city. *You* will not allow the foreigner to seize this bulwark of France ; *you* will emulate the army in courage and devotion.” As the Emperor wanted to take the army with its courage



and devotion with him, we did not see any force in Bazaine's argument, not believing his premises. Metz was quite prepared to emulate the courage and devotion which had already been displayed, nay, it even thought it might surpass them, and was willing to defend the great city if she had a chance ; but she feared she was going to be eaten up until defence was impossible, and then to be sold, for a price. What that price was she wanted much to know. Was it the Regency ? Rumours came that the King of Prussia had arranged that the Empress should come to Metz, and there make peace :— that Bourbaki had gone to fetch her, and failed, so now Boyer must go to complete the mission ; but they knew that whatever the price might be, Bazaine's share of it would be large. This prospect was not generally approved of by the Messins ; they had had enough of Imperialism and its long train of enervating vices. It cost too dear in money and in morals, and, as I have said before, they were rather Scotch those Messins, and looked upon both money and morals as things worth having. They did not believe in Bazaine, and they knew that the government of a woman, old enough to be discreet, though not too old to be deemed capable of an indiscretion, was always one of intrigue, and they had had enough of intrigue, so the idea of the Regency didn't please them. That the Marshal would not support the Republic, they feared ; for although many did not hold Republican principles, yet they were willing to accept it for the time being as an accomplished fact, under the

doubtful name of a National Committee for Defence. Prussians first, and politics afterwards, was their motto, and they wished the Marshal to adopt it as his, but he would not ; his was, Bazaine first, and after me the deluge. Now, too, by some strange and unexplained means, the town was all at once filled with the rumours of great successes of the French at Paris, and of the retreat of the Prussians from before it, of Nancy having risen to impede their headlong flight, of Luneville being in arms, and of a large body of Francs-tireurs being in the rear of our investing forces. The town was greatly excited, there was nothing false too improbable to be believed in. I went to the Fort Moselle, where the newly exchanged prisoners were kept, and there, perhaps, traced out some portion of the cause. I found some French soldiers, recently returned in exchange for Prussian prisoners. They had come, some from Strasbourg, and some from Mayence ; but one and all agreed that as they stayed at Nancy people shouted to them, "Say at Metz all goes well at Paris," and that shortly afterwards they heard the Prussians fire at the people. Now the word of a prisoner or a deserter is one of those things never to be believed in without strict proof, and as we had no means of proving this, I considered this unworthy of credence, but it was from these men's stories that the hope-giving report was accepted so readily, simply because its tenor tallied with the people's hopes and wishes. They demanded from General Coffinières if he knew anything of this good news, and he confessing

ignorance, they rushed off to the Quartier-Général, determined to get something from the Marshal, and so they did. They got this :—“The Marshal Commander in Chief of the Army of the Rhine, not having received any confirmation of the happy events of the war which have taken place before Paris, assures the inhabitants of Metz that nothing is hid from them, and begs them to have confidence in his loyalty. The Marshal has always communicated to the military authority of Metz the German and French journals which have fallen into his hands. He *profits by this occasion to assure them that since the blockade he has never received the least communication from the Government, notwithstanding all his attempts made to establish relations.* Whatever may come, one thought alone ought at this moment to absorb all others,—it is the defence of the country ; one cry alone should issue from each heart,—‘*Vive la France!*’—Ban St. Martin, 11th October, 1870.”

This was not even signed ; it gave no name to the Government. Did it mean the government for the time being at Wilhelmshöhe, or the one at Hastings, or that at Tours ?—though we did not then know it was there. We knew that the Marshal had tried to communicate with the two first, but through Prussian sources. We knew, also, that he had not communicated all the German and French journals fallen into his hands to the military authority at Metz ; we knew that there was a great deal hid from us, and we thought that he never now meant to do anything for the defence of the country. The populace was more than

ever doubtful, and so, with certain officers of the army, they followed the example of Paris, and formed a committee of defence for themselves. No doubt it was utterly wrong ; but then desperate men will do wrong. The army did not like to cross the Rhine as prisoners, and the people did not want the Prussians to violate the hitherto immaculate virginity of Metz, nor were they sensible enough to appreciate a Vaterland, and so they tried to establish a little government of their own, and from this moment something like an organized disaffection began. There had been for a long time the usual amount of disaffection any French town would produce to anything, but it had not hitherto become sufficiently genuine to organize itself. The first thing to be done was to rouse up the National Guard, and, with this object in view, a meeting of its officers was called, and they were shown the exact position of things so far as we could learn them. The simple question was, whether they would be Prussian, or whether they preferred to remain French : if the former, they had better do nothing ; if the latter, they must be prepared to sacrifice everything. Of course, they were prepared. Are not National Guards always prepared to sacrifice everything? The enthusiasm was immense ; every one demanded to be led at once to the enemy. Prussians, never ! whilst a boot remains to be eaten, never ! whilst a cartridge is in our pouch, never ! But they didn't eat their boots, and they had no cartridges, and so they were very much in the same condition when the effervescence passed off

as they were before, only somewhat flatter. Now came serious consideration, and then the wheat was winnowed, the chaff blown away, and a good solid store of real patriotic devotion found. Another meeting of those prepared to do something was called. It was proposed that they should take the defence of the town in their own hands, and request General Coffinières to take real actual military command of the place, to invite such of the officers of the army as were really in earnest, to place themselves in the town, and there assemble such troops as were prepared to do or die. As for themselves they would amalgamate with the army, the married stay in Metz, the single cut their way out with such troops as were to go. This was serious, earnest business. The question put to each man was, "Will you risk it?" Hardly a man blenched. They might have been made something of if they had been taken in hand earlier—those National Guards of Metz; and if General Coffinières had only had the spirit, he might have closed his gates on Bazaine and his Guards and let them go to Prussia if they would.

A letter was written to the Marshal, and circulated freely, commenting very strongly on his conduct of the earlier part of the war and his inactivity ever since the news of Sédan arrived, and containing these pertinent or impertinent questions, "Is it true that in the Council of War you discuss the question of Capitulation? We are almost tempted to believe it. Why have you not harassed and worn out the enemy each day, each hour?—

that was easy enough to do. Occupying the centre of the circle, as the army does, it could have inflicted daily, hourly loss on the enemy, which would weaken and demoralise it; at any rate, you might have made some serious attempt to have taken possession of the enemy's provisions. You have done nothing; and in a few days you will not have the means of fighting. Notwithstanding this, you are not going to sell us like sheep. For you and your acolytes there is a day of judgment." That was, of course, highly improper; it was insubordinate and mutinous, and, of course, the people who wrote it ought to have been shot; but the Marshal played billiards, and did nothing else. The townsfolk could stand it no longer, and they rushed *en masse* to the Hôtel de Ville. How they all came to do it at the same moment no one seemed to know; it was by some odylie force, I suppose, for I, too, rushed there. The Town Council were sitting at the time, and some of the crowd forced their way into the council chamber. They appealed to the Mayor to demand from the Commandant that the town and the forts should be placed in the hands of the people, or, at any rate, that the National Guard should be amalgamated with the garrison, and the Mayor and Council agreed to take the matter into serious consideration. Meanwhile, a cry arises from without. On the tricolor which hung out from the central window of the façade of the Hôtel de Ville, the people have espied the gilt eagle which crowned the staff. "Down with the Eagle!" they cry; "we have had enough of eagles;

away with them—down with them!” they shout frantically.

The council do not quite understand who or what it is that is to be done away with, and are rather nervously anxious on the subject, as popular indignation is somewhat apt to be indiscriminate; but a fresh incursion from below forces itself into the room. “Don’t you hear?” said these with unreasoning inquiry. “Don’t you hear that the people won’t have the eagle any more on the flag!” The council breathes again. It is only the gilt emblem of Imperialism which is to be sacrificed. They are sensibly relieved. That is all. “Ah well! open the window and throw it down,” is the order given. A burly blouse opens the window, takes off the eagle from the flag-pole (the attachment between the tricolor and the eagle was not very strong); he raises it aloft; stands a moment in an excellent attitude; flings it down to the ground, and, raising his hands to heaven, stands patiently to be applauded; then backs out, and, for fully two hours, is a hero. His reward was *choppes*. Meanwhile, out at the back door of the Hôtel de Ville, go the officers of the National Guard to the quarters of General Coffinières hard by. They see the General, and explain to him that the town is in a state of ferment from the fear which has seized them, that Marshal Bazaine is already treating with the enemy for their surrender. “Have you any intention of capitulating? Do you recognise the Committee for National Defence?” are the two questions put by an old officer of the army, now a captain of the

National Guard? And Coffinières there replied, *that he would never surrender the town which had been confided to him*. As for the Committee of Defence, said he, "I should, indeed, be wanting in patriotism if I refused to assist it." So far all was satisfactory, and the officers came out rejoicing. Things were looking up again, and the evening was a joyous one.

We reversed the process sung by King David, and our joy endured but the night season; it was sorrow that came to us in the morning.

At the meeting of the committee appointed by the Municipal Council to watch over the question of provisions, General Coffinières told them there was only food for three days' rations left for the army, and that in six days more the town would be reduced to the same condition, and therefore it would be wise to endeavour to gradually accustom the minds of the people to the fact, that the town must capitulate.

Had a thunderbolt—or, to take a much more common thing with us at that time, had a shell—exploded in their midst, the committee-men could not have been more startled. After the assurance of yesterday, this was incredible. Never till that moment had they thought seriously that they were so near the end of their provisions. Starvation in six days was a severe sentence. Once more despair seized upon the people, and in their despair they were furious.

A meeting *en masse* was determined for the evening. Large numbers assembled in front of the Hôtel de Ville,



and the Municipal Council gathered together to concert an address officially to the General. They sat long and talked much, and it was not until ten o'clock at night that the address was finally decided upon. It was a cloudy night, and the Place d'Armes was dark, excepting when now and then a strong ray of moonlight would stream through some opening in the clouds and light up the elegant fairy-like architecture of the Cathedral, picking out in strong contrast of light and shade all its beautiful features. The Hôtel de Ville, with a deep arcaded basement closed in by iron grilles, a classic building, was in face of us. Suddenly down its broad central staircase a gleam of light appears, growing brighter and brighter each moment. The centre grilles are thrown open, and the people enter, and descending to the staircase foot comes the procession of the burghers, headed by the Mayor. Taking his stand at the bottom of the stairs, attended on either side by lamp-bearers, whose burden sheds a dim quasi-religious light upon the scene, the Mayor, in a clear, loud voice, amidst the hushed stillness of all around, read this, the result of that long deliberation, and which assumed the form of an address to General Coffinières :—

“GENERAL,—The step taken by the officers of the National Guard has been inspired by their serious resolution to associate themselves energetically for the defence of the town. The garrison, to whom the defence is entrusted, may count upon the ardent rivalry of a population in-

capable of weakness when the time arrives. The united efforts of both will guard, even to the last extremity, the principal fortress of France and the nationality of Metz, both of which we hold most dear. The Municipal Council being the interpreter for the whole city, cannot avoid expressing its grievous astonishment at the tardy knowledge which you have given only to-day of the resources on which you can count for the maintenance of the place. The people, in submitting to the consequences with courage, will not accept in any form the responsibility of a situation of the approach of which they have had no warning, and of which they have had no knowledge. We beg you, General, to make known to the Marshal this expression of our sentiments, which we sum up in the cry of ‘ *Vive la France!* ’”

The crowd separated to the cry of “ *Vive la France!*” As we came away, a bright gleam of moonlight struck upon the bronze statue of Marshal Fabert, on which had been placed the tricolor flag and a crown of *immortelles*.

He, a native of Metz, and a governor of Sedan, was a marshal Metz was proud of, and on the pedestal of his statue is inscribed a sentence from a memorable speech of his to Louis XIV. :—

SI POUR EMPÊCHER QU'UNE PLACE  
QUE LE ROI M'A CONFIEE  
NE TOMBÂT AU POUVOIR DE L'ENNEMI  
IL FALLAIT METTRE À LA BRËCHE  
MA PERSONNE, MA FAMILLE, ET TOUT MON BIEN,  
JE NE BALANCAIS PAS UN MOMENT À LE FAIRE.

They thought this conveyed a reproach on their present governors, and thus attracted attention to it. When the freedom of the press is prevented, people are very ingenious at finding means of stinging their rulers.

They were too blind to see that from another point of view Bazaine might withhold the town from them; indeed, it was Bazaine's text, "The Emperor has confided Metz to me," and it was only in the name of the Emperor he would hold it now; it was presumed that the Committee of the National Defence was becoming a failure, and if he couldn't hold Metz in the Emperor's name or his own, he didn't care what became of it, yet doubtlessly he conceived himself to be a loyal servant. If the people would be republicans they should suffer for such a crime, thought the Marshal, and the people felt that to Republican France, and to the army, such a thought was treason. Who is Bazaine that he should rule over us? they cried, but it was all of no use. Coffinières might make known their sentiments to the Marshal as much as he liked, but the Marshal knew very well that it was not "*Vive la France!*" but victuals that ruled the question, and so long as he and his men went on eating, that question was answering itself very well, so why should he speak? Better even go to Wilhelmshöhe than serve a government which had not nominated him. No, he'd see them Prussians first. He had waited and waited in vain for the imploring call from the Committee of Defence to be its "dictator." He had waited in vain for the Empress to call him to her side. He had waited for the terms he

had asked from Bismarck, and as all these had served him, so he would serve the people of Metz, and all who thought with them ; as these had disappointed him, they too should be disappointed. To deal with him was impossible, to try and deal with the army without him was the next thing to be done, and the following address was sent into the camps, very numerous signed by the principal citizens, and a large portion of the National Guard :—

“ To our brothers of the Army.—The citizens and National Guard of Metz, inspired by the noble resolutions of its Municipal Council, come to offer you their fellowship in defending the threatened independence of our country. They are convinced that you will receive with pleasure this offer, and that with them you will oppose the idea of capitulation.

“ The honour of France and its flag, which you have always defended with such inimitable valour, the glory of our maiden city, our obligations to posterity impose upon us the stern duty of dying rather than renouncing the integrity of our territory.

“ We will shed with you our last drop of blood, we will share with you our last crust. Let us rise as one man, and victory is ours. Long live our brothers of the Army, Long live France, one and indivisible.”

It is not surprising that several officers were arrested after this, but the townspeople were getting really dangerous just now, and it would not do to excite them too much—there were too many in the army who would be glad to get an excuse for open mutiny, if mutiny it could

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of determined men, and, what is necessary to ensure unity, to avoid with care anything like want of discipline, sedition, and vain declamations; above all things, it is necessary that we should avoid politics, because politics will disturb the harmony which ought to reign amongst us.

“A government exists at present in France which has taken the title of the Government for the National Defence. We ought to recognise this government, and wait for those decisions which may be arrived at in the constitutional Assembly elected by the country. Whilst waiting for these decisions, we should rally to that cry you yourself have uttered—‘*Vive la France!*’

“You tell me that the people of Metz have been painfully surprised to learn that the provisionment of the town is very limited. It is, notwithstanding, easy to account for this when a population, civil and military, of more than 230,000 souls has drawn, during a period of two months, all its subsistence from such a place as Metz. Under these circumstances, there can but remain very limited resources.

“I have never made any mystery of the situation; the reduced rations served out to the army, the requisitions made in the town, the regulations made for the supply of bread, and the conversation I have had with the Mayor and with other inhabitants of the town, have sufficiently demonstrated the gradual consumption of our provisions. It will be, above all things, useless to recriminate and to throw the responsibility from one to another.

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On the 14th General Coffinières attended in the town hall, and gave his answer to the address of the mayor. It is rather long, but it is necessary in order to comprehend the history of those few days, to study it *in extenso*. Moreover, if it is simply served up in little pieces, it may be said that I am not telling the whole truth. The General's reply is well worth serious examination, as it illustrates so thoroughly the character of the man who made it:—it is as follows:—

“MR. MAYOR,—The Municipal Council of Metz has done me the honour to address me a letter, full of the noblest and most patriotic sentiments. I hasten to thank you for this manifestation, which has by no means surprised me, for I have never doubted the ardent friendship borne by the population of Metz to those troops charged with the defence of our fortress. You may equally rely upon the energy with which we shall do our duty. All that it is humanly possible to do shall be done without hesitation. I beg you, however, to say to your colleagues that to attain to this result, it is necessary, above all things, to have that calmness which is the characteristic



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of determined men, and, what is necessary to ensure unity, to avoid with care anything like want of discipline, sedition, and vain declamations ; above all things, it is necessary that we should avoid politics, because politics will disturb the harmony which ought to reign amongst us.

“ A government exists at present in France which has taken the title of the Government for the National Defence. We ought to recognise this government, and wait for those decisions which may be arrived at in the constitutional Assembly elected by the country. Whilst waiting for these decisions, we should rally to that cry you yourself have uttered—‘ *Vive la France !*’

“ You tell me that the people of Metz have been painfully surprised to learn that the provisionment of the town is very limited. It is, notwithstanding, easy to account for this when a population, civil and military, of more than 230,000 souls has drawn, during a period of two months, all its subsistence from such a place as Metz. Under these circumstances, there can but remain very limited resources.

“ I have never made any mystery of the situation ; the reduced rations served out to the army, the requisitions made in the town, the regulations made for the supply of bread, and the conversation I have had with the Mayor and with other inhabitants of the town, have sufficiently demonstrated the gradual consumption of our provisions. It will be, above all things, useless to recriminate and to throw the responsibility from one to another.

be called, so the officers were mostly released again. Bazaine was playing a political game, why should not they? and when such thoughts and such addresses as these go round the camp together, you may be sure there is not much discipline, so in order to choke off as much intercourse as possible between the camp and the town, the gates were now ordered to be closed at four o'clock,

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“Let us bravely face the difficulty we find ourselves in ; as you have said, let us submit ourselves to the consequences with courage, and with the determined resolution of making the best of the situation we possibly can.

“The General of Division,  
Commandant-in-Chief of the Fortress of Metz,  
“L. COFFINIÈRES.”

It was very like himself, that proclamation—a combination of good sense with weakness ; but in such a time as this people remarked much more the weakness than the good sense. It avoided the accusation of affording a tardy knowledge of the scant resources of the town in the very general statement that if they didn't know they ought to have done, and that was the chief point at present. It was felt that general conversations with Mr. Mayor and others were not quite sufficient notice of these grave circumstances. It will also be remarked how careful the General was to avoid anything like a promise to communicate, or a statement that he had communicated, with the Marshal, and this was another point the public wished to have some enlightenment upon. Everybody said that the discord between the two rival authorities had grown to such a pitch that now neither would communicate with the other, and this absence of notice of the final portion of the address confirmed the belief. It was evident that that harmony the General so desired to exist in the town of Metz had no existence beyond its walls, and the beautiful simplicity with which the pot was requested to

abstain from mentioning the hue of the kettle, together with the millennium-like supposition that we could in such a time abstain from politics, was sublimely weak. Poor General Coffinières! he lost a fine opportunity, and he is called a traitor to this day in consequence. Both of him and Bazaine we may say with Larochefoucauld, "On fait plus souvent des trahisons par faiblesse que par un dessein de trahir." The weakness did it in both of them; only, in the one case, the weakness arose from the heart, and in the other from the head. Bazaine sinned, and Coffinières blundered; therefore, according to Talleyrand, Coffinières was the worst of the two. I do not, however, think that history will agree with that eminent divine. The sole consolation to be derived from the General's answer was, that by it he formally acknowledged the existing Government, and our obligation to assist it. As for the poor people of Metz, those who loved their country, who looked, as provincials will, upon their maiden city, with its rich fund of history, as the centre of the universe, who thought that the interest of all France was bound up in their individual efforts, I was sorry for them. I was a stranger, and they had taken me in several times; but when it came to a real struggle—when I saw big tears roll down the cheeks of men who compressed their jaws till their teeth well-nigh cracked, rather than it should be thought they wept—when I saw all these things, and thought if Metz were Manchester, then I felt that, underlying all the chicanery of trade, under all the petty feelings engendered by a life of small commerce,

there existed a real patriotism ; when I saw men r  
willing seriously to die for their country, I honoure  
much as I pitied them ; I thought that even the cur  
war brought something better with it. Selfishness  
extinguished by a stern sense of duty, and I hoped  
even yet out of all this evil there might some good c

## CHAPTER XIX.

### OUR LAST HOPE.

THOUGH we had well nigh exhausted all the evils Pandora's box might have been stocked with, though we had become pretty familiar with Battle, with Murder, and with Sudden Death, although Plague, and her twin sister, Pestilence, were stalking round us with stealthy tread, and although Famine stared us in the face, yet we found Hope still left us ; like Mr. Micawber, we were always "waiting for something to turn up." The grand faculty of Hoping was still left us. On the 15th we hoped we could raise sufficient enthusiasm in the army to make an attempt to cut our way through those lines which we saw, or thought we saw, were thickening round us. If 'twere done, 'twere well that it were quickly done, or it would be too late. From my oft-frequented post at the top of the Cathedral I saw at this time—but only from this time—the Prussian troops. All through the earlier part of the siege they were invisible, hidden mysteriously amongst those awe-inspiring woods. Then I never saw them, but now they would advance out into

the open, go through their exercise and retire; hence we came to the conclusion that the troops round us were thickening. Why? Was it that the vultures were gathering round us to pounce upon us in huge numbers when we fell? Was it that Bazaine had called them there to over-awe us, and repress any attempt that we might make to free ourselves against his will? Was it that he had sent word that there must be for conscience' sake a numerical superiority of our enemies and his friends round us when he surrendered? Or was there any force yet coming to our relief from Lyons? from the clouds?—one was as likely as the other. We debated all these things over nightly, but still we hoped. “*Le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas,*” and our heart's wish cheated our head's reason. Often and often up on the top of the Cathedral there, looking down on Metz, whilst the kites and the pigeons and the jackdaws skimmed their aerial way between the murmuring city down below and my lonely watch up there,—often and often have I passed hour after hour, hopeful, like Sister Anne, of seeing “anybody a-coming.” Looking with long-eyes up the valley of the Sielle, scanning with the telescope the long serrated lines of hills to the west, searching each valley that led down from them for some hopeful movement, yet none ever came. The Prussian on his outlook from the old ruined castle of Saint Blaize and I have stared at each other for many an hour, each one wondering what he might see next. Often when an orderly has ridden from head-quarters at Corny through

Ars, up to the hills looking down upon us, often, indeed, has imagination played tricks with us, and as he spurred his horse, often have those two or three of us who were gathered together up there almost cheated ourselves into the belief that there must be something unusual astir, but nothing ever came ; yet, in spite of all this disappointment even, still we hoped. Northward, down the valley of the Moselle, we have looked out anxiously towards Thionville, conscious, alas ! almost shamefully conscious, how long, how vainly and how anxiously they there must have looked up that valley for that help the Marshal was too cowardly to send them. We almost blushed when we caught ourselves looking and longing in that direction, there seemed to be some imprint of that stigma which made our flesh sore. Often and often we have swept the rolling land to the east, trying to gather some small crumb of comfort and hope, when we saw no movement in the Prussian camp on the hills and riverside there, and making a huge loaf of comfort when a movement did take place. Our hope translated every movement into something in our favour. Blessed be Hope ! None but those who have descended so deeply into despair can know how blessed hope is. Even now, in this time, when everything seemed against us, we yet had hope, and on the night of the 15th our hope rose high. All round us we heard the enemy's guns, the cannon roared away in the distance, and the sound came rushing down the little gorges between the hills into the valley of the Moselle. Hurrah ; we shall be released at

last! There is some attack from the outside; now, surely, the Marshal will make a move, perhaps has done it. In the dark night, the sky flushed and flashed over with the cannon-light, and discharge after discharge came to us from afar, some said they heard distinctly the grind of the mitrailleuse and fancied the sound came nearer. Our friends were approaching, and to-morrow we should rush forth and do our devoir. Hurrah! Metz is saved! Alas! the phantom slipped away, and when the morrow came all was still. There was no sound from the hills now; climbing up those 365 steps which led to the cathedral top, I looked out keenly to the hills from whence we expected our aid to come, and there was no sign. How could it be; had some brave men come to rescue us, had they fought all night, had they too succumbed, and we had not gone out to help them. The thought was anguish to us all. We were wildly furious with the Marshal. He knew nothing, he said, but then he never did know anything, so that was nothing new. It was, perhaps, the bombardment of Thionville he told us, but then Thionville was in the north. Ah, well! then perhaps, it was the bombardment of Verdun—but then Verdun was so far off! Ah, well! then it was something else, and he rolled another cigarette, and went off to his billiards. Wilder and wilder grew the fury of the people, no name was bad enough for Bazaine now. Some swore to shoot him, some to burn down the house he lived in, and they were mad. I went off to the outposts on the west side of the city to hear what I could learn



there. At the new earthwork in front of Montigny, behind the unfinished fort of St. Privat, the sentinel on duty vowed he heard distinctly the mitrailleuse, he heard bands playing too. What could it be? all agreed it must have been a French attack on the enemy's lines, and that it was shameful to wait in idleness here whilst our brothers were shedding their blood for us out there. But here comes General Frossard. He, too, knows nothing; nor does he seem to care, he only wants to see a casemate we have been building there, "to see if it is neat enough to give those blessed angels the Prussians," says the engineer officer in charge of the works. I don't think I quote him literally when I say "blessed angels;" on that point I confess I may have altered his words a trifle, at any rate he did not look either blessed or angelic as he said good-bye to me and moved off, doubtlessly to smile blandly at the General. I take a long look round, and see nothing fresh. Yes, what's that? there is something in that poplar by the Grange-aux-Ormes there. The field-glass resolves that something into a man, and the Prussians have actually posted a sentinel up a poplar, and he can see right down into our works at St. Privat. Now I don't approve of shooting at sentinels, I don't think it right, but still I think if it were not something like 3000 yards away, I should like to try if I couldn't hit that poplar. It is rather too barefaced to get up to heaven's bedroom windows in that way to look over our backyard wall, but it is so like those Germans, isn't it?

Come along. Let's go up to Ste. Ruffine, and see

what they can make of it all up there. Let us hear what they have to say about last night's affair. We go back through the town, out at the Porte de France. We go past the Ban St. Martin, stopping at the Marshal's quarters, a green oasis in the desert there ; there yet stand trees with leaves on ; all else have been felled for our horses to eat ; but the Marshal loves a shady place. A couple of mitrailleuses guard the gate—mitrailleuses that made more noise in history than many of their fellows,—their fellows reported at the Prussians ; but these, I have since found, were reported to them, and their fame has gone out to the uttermost ends of the earth, in newspaper columns, as having been placed there for his protection ; they were really there for the exhibition of some improvements, so well did the Marshal keep up the comedy till the last, and so little did the Prussian spies know of their business. We take a glance at them, make a few inquiries, and, finding nothing known about last night's mystery, set our faces to the big hill, and toil up it, never stopping, even to admire the prospect, until we reach a mound jutting out from the hill-side, where the men are now at work making a stockade. That is the mount of Charles V. Underneath it lie the bones of his Spanish legion, who vainly essayed to take the town of Metz in 1552, and on their grave he planted his cannon to try and reduce the suburbs of this obstinate little place.

Our fort is half-a-mile away yet, and half-a-mile of hard climbing. Up and up the hill we go ; with a

struggle we reach the top, and the fort frowns down on us. Even yet the workmen are engaged on it ; they are building a couple of bastions to protect the entrance ; and busy sappers are hard at work throwing up earthworks along the escarp of the hill to protect this side, which no cannon defend from attack. New and hard, the ungrassed slopes, the bare earth "traverses," and the yet unfinished works form an ugly blot on the beauty of the scene.

The bright Moselle wanders in the plain, running riot in the broad meadows here after its escape from imprisonment amongst the hills yonder. Within our earthworks which surround the town all is brown and barren, making the green country beyond them look doubly bright and verdant. With us there is hardly a tree. Beyond our little bit of yet free France the woods are glowing with the many-hued tints of autumn's lavish palette. Russet oaks, golden-headed poplars, and deep-green firs look doubly inviting as seen from our bare prison. No wonder that a Frenchman here should hate a Prussian there. I almost hate him myself when I think that out yonder amongst those glowing hills I should be free to wander home again.

We see all this as we walk along the sloping, terraced top of this grand hill, and find our musing stopped by a sentry and some earthworks. Down there below him is the valley of which it is true we have the key, and yet into which we dare not venture. The last day I was there the shots from Rozerieulles in front and from this

big fort behind us made by no means an arch of hope above my head, and very few have trod that valley since. Turning down to the left, we come to the little village of Moulins, and here we part—I to ascend the sharp, crested colline on which stands our utmost post, and my companion to take the road. He thinks my task too venturesome, whilst I think my road by far the safer. He takes a long, white road enfiladed by the enemy, whilst I climb a crest in face of, but somewhat nearer, them. I cannot persuade him that cutting out clear against the sky, as I shall, and therefore looking twice the size that nature made me, I shall be twice as hard to hit, whilst he will pass objects of which the enemy know exactly the size and distance. Poor fellow! we part, and I never see him again. He had hardly left me, when a bullet comes whizzing at him, and there he lies, hit in the stomach, never more to rise again. A brave brigadier of the gendarmerie goes out and risks his life to bring back what yet remains of poor Captain Duparc, as brave and noble a young fellow as ever lived.

Well born and well educated, he had, just as the war broke out, received an appointment in the island of Martinique, but thinking he could better serve his country here than there, he sought his duty, and he found his death. Meanwhile I, not knowing how near death and I were to each other, climb up the hill. Shot after shot marks my course, but they whiz wide enough to let me pass in safety and herald my advance to the little pigeon-house which forms our out-post

and which guards the plain beyond. I am not sorry to find myself there, and seeking a safe and sheltered spot, sit down and have a friendly pipe and chat to learn all I can about the affair of yesterday.

From here the firing seemed still in the same westerly direction, and so close that our avant post was all on the alert, expecting hourly a sortie from Metz, and wondering why none came. I now was the questioned, not the questioner. "What was the Marshal doing?" "What is the new excuse they make at the Quartier-Général?" and a host of similar questions, were plied by half-a-dozen speakers all at once, but to none of which could I give an answer; so we vented our mutual ignorance in round abuse at the Commander-in-Chief in terms much more strong than diplomatic.

Our anathemas are interrupted by a private, who crawls up, or rather down, to us. This primitive fashion of locomotion is much in vogue out here. Man finds himself safer on all fours at this point. There is a parlementaire coming in, and he sadly wants to have a pot at him. So much familiarity with these messengers has of late bred a contempt, and the soldier's instinct tells him their frequent coming bodes no good. "By no means, and go down to the rear," says the officer. "He may be bringing letters for some of us," says a young lieutenant. "If you'll give me leave, Captain, I'll go down to the village and see." The leave is given, and we get up to go. I step out on to the hill beside the pigeon-house, take out my glass to have a good long look

•

over the plain, to see if I can there discover any solution to the mystery which so puzzles us. I am interested in my view, and thoughtlessly move a pace or two beyond my shelter just to peep round the corner there. Crash goes an oak vine stake at my feet. They evidently can see as well, or rather better down there than I can ; two or three chassapots right and left bang at the place the puff of smoke came from, and I do not stop to see any more.

We turn our backs on the enemy and go chatting down the hill. At the bottom we meet a very much be-braided man ; he is mounted on a fine English horse, and wears a bright blue jacket with very wide and much decorated sleeves. Four rows of gold lace chase each other all over them ; there is a good deal of foppery and frippery about him ; but that is the brave, cool Baron Anous de Riviere, the Prince of Eclaireurs. There is hardly a pathway in those woods over there, not a Prussian outpost all along that range of hills, which he and his men have not explored. Unattached to the regular army, his love of danger and adventure led him, both here and in the Crimea, to volunteer for this particular service. A keen sportsman, he likes to hunt just now the Prussian black game. Wary as an Indian, keen of eye, and cool in temper, his spare, lithe figure is a model of wiry energy, and if advantage had been taken of all the knowledge he has acquired of the Prussian position, the Army of the Rhine need not be thinking so lugubriously about going there as they just now are. Our chat with him over, we are turning away, when up rides a trooper of

the Guides. He looks hard at the uniform of my friend on foot, and asks him if he can tell him where he shall find Lieutenant So-and-so of his regiment. "Here ;—I am he," says my friend. "I am very sorry," says the Guide, "to bring a letter for you, Lieutenant," pulling out at the same time a large black-edged envelope. Heigho ! what sad work war makes with us ! It is to tell him that his brother was shot at Sédan. He turns his face to the wall, holds out a hand to me, and without a word we part. Poor fellow ! I dare not look back at him ; and ten yards further on, I hear of the accident to poor Duparc. Certainly war is very glorious ! Sadly pondering these things over, I ramble up the slope of St. Quentin, and come to the little village of Chazelles. It is magnificently situated on a spur of the hill, right opposite the valley, down which runs the Moselle. I have rambled a good deal about the world, but I do not think I know a more charming view than there is in front of the quarters of the officers on guard here. The foreground is a bright green lawn, which terminates abruptly at the edge of the slope, and the next object you see is some two miles away : it is the bright Moselle winding its way between two ranges of hills, which approach each other as they merge off into the distance. The little villages which fringe the river look wonderfully picturesque to-day. Here is Ars, and there are Jouy and Corney. Upon the hill to the right is the ruined castle of St. Blaize, and far away is the old deserted town of Mousson cresting the hill, whilst over head arch a few fine trees, forming a framework to

a glorious picture. Just to the right is a quaint old building, half church, half castle, a remarkably interesting little structure. The lower half 'is of 12th century date, a good specimen of a Norman church, with a low nave, and lofty apsidal chancel, but above the nave is a 13th century fortified châtelet, with echaguettes, loopholes, and all the military appliances of those days. Our examination is, however, cut short, the Prussians begin shelling us in a manner exceedingly unpleasant.

Crash through a neighbouring house goes one shell—another, close by, has four in it in no time—whilst, higher up in the village, another gets two, and many fall in the gardens round about us. St. Quentin bellows out a hoarse reply, and for about half-an-hour I am in rather an unpleasant situation. Was there really somebody coming to help us? Was this a determination to do as much mischief to us whilst they could? It looked really like it; and, in spite of the shells and the danger, our hopes rose joyfully. As suddenly as it began, so suddenly it ceased, and we at once are anxious to see what damage this outburst of fury has done us. Here, in the house with four holes in it, we find the rooms smashed up, all the furniture broken; one shell has gone right through a wardrobe and shivered it to splinters, another has buried the bed with fragments of the broken wall, and the floor is a heap of *débris*. We can find no one; yet the fire in the kitchen is lit, there is a knife and some crockery on the table, but not a person to be seen. Presently we hear sobs; we listen, they apparently come



from the cellar, and seeking there we find a woman with a wee mite of a baby in her arms, and a curly-headed little boy, burying his head in his frightened mother's lap. Hearing us call to her in French restores her ; poor woman ! she was half-dead with fright ; no wonder, baby was but a fortnight old, and she was lying on that bed under the heap of wall-stone upstairs when the bombardment began. Fortunately the first shell struck some of the outbuildings—a new salon they had just had built ; for the beauty of the spot brings many out of Metz here, and they intended making this a sort of pic-nic rendez-vous, turning their own wine and their own fruit to a better market here than there in Metz. We assisted her up out of the cellar, reassured her fears a little, whilst she told us this. With many tears she bewailed the damage. “All our economy for ten years thus gone,” she said ; and then came out a true womanly wail ; “only to think,” said she, “I only had the best bedroom ceiling whitewashed last Sunday.” None but a woman could have thought of that at such a time. Her husband now comes running in ; he was on his way to town, when he heard the shells come after him, and turned back to see what had become of his wife and children ; so we leave them to the mingled joy and sorrow of their meeting. Up in the village there has been more damage done. One shell has gone through a house where some soldiers were quartered, and it, in its course, took off the head of one man entirely ; there was nothing but a bit of the base of the skull to be found, all the rest had been

as nearly annihilated as anything could be. The fragments have wounded two other soldiers so badly, that I fear their case is hopeless; and some others are slightly hurt. One of the men brought me the head of this shell, which I have taken care of as a curiosity. It passed through the two walls of the house, and a wooden partition, which divided the two rooms it contained from each other. In its passage through this partition, it struck one of the main timbers, and neatly inserted a plug in the fuse-hole. The wood is tightly compressed, and the head of the fuse-hole corked up with fragments of plaster and stone from the wall through which it made its exit. This house was very nearly destroyed by the shell, almost every floor and ceiling being rent to pieces by it: and yet it was only equivalent to a French twelve. What the heavy siege pieces would do if they ever brought them against Metz was a problem I hardly liked to work out the solution of. It served me with food for reflection as I went homeward, and I began to ponder if, after all, surrendering was not better than being smashed. Materially, for ourselves it undoubtedly was; but, morally, for others, that I had some doubts about. Thinking these things over, I returned, no wiser on the subject I went in search of than when I started, and we all in the evening came to the conclusion that an attempt had been made to relieve us, and that Bazaine was not only a traitor to us here, but the murderer of those men who died in trying to help us there; and we abused him accordingly. Never in Metz did we find out what that firing meant, and it

is only since my return to England that I discovered it was simply a *feu de joie* for the anniversary of the battle of Leipsig, and to celebrate the birthday of the Crown Prince; so for once Bazaine was accused and abused wrongfully.

Why did he keep so silent? Surely that parlementaire must have told him what the firing was all about; but he never said a word; he certainly possesses a grand talent for silence. Did we always abuse him wrongfully? I fear not. I tried very hard to think it, and harder still to convince others that it was so; but neither with myself or them did I succeed. There were too many evidences of wilful ignorance and wilful waste of time and opportunity to enable me to persuade either myself or others that we had wrongfully accused him; and the positive knowledge of the fact that he was now treating for the surrender of the army when so many soldiers and civilians begged for the chance to cut their way out, assured us that the die was cast, that Metz was sold. We were only waiting until we had reached the last mouthful, and that he determined should be reached soon. After that military "honour" would be satisfied; and for this purpose a passive resistance was as good as an active one. He would not suffer by the one, he might by the other. It was evident he had nothing more he cared for to gain by fighting, and he would lose nothing he cared for by surrendering. True honour, of course, did not enter into the question. France—well, yes, France—was simply a territorial symbol, and if he

couldn't be the first man in it, it was not worthy of him. He could get as good a dinner anywhere else, and if the Emperor and *pâtés de foie gras* were to be Prussia why shouldn't he?

Bazaine was a philosopher: he would enjoy the Bois de St. Martin as long as he could, and then taking his post both as a Marshal of France and as a Senator, he would go to wherever else his friends over there would make him comfortable. Why shouldn't he? Honour's but an empty bubble, and Bazaine evidently doesn't believe in bubbles. Alas! our hopes were bubbles, too; and the last one of relief had burst. We never blew another good one.

## CHAPTER XX.

### IN EXTREMIS.

THE cannon-shots mentioned in the last chapter were almost the last we heard in Metz, the *rigor mortis* was setting in, physical activity was ceasing, but there was great mental excitement. We were delirious. The wildest schemes were listened to patiently, and discussed as though they were reasonable; but, unfortunately, there was no method in our madness; like other lunatics, we had lost the faculty for combination. Each one had some wild scheme to propose, and was too busy expounding it to listen to the explanation of anyone else's. It is impossible to convey to sober-minded people, undisturbed by such agitating feelings, anything like an adequate impression of the wild excitement which seized upon us; a contested election is civilised dulness when compared to the rabid condition we were all in in Metz. A portion of the National Guard hurried off to the Ban St. Martin, intending to "have it out" with "M'sieu Bazaine." They did see him, and, according to their own report, gave him a forcible if not flattering

exposition of their opinion of his conduct. A portic the stabler citizens went also to him ; they offered, i would allow them a sufficient escort, to go with me in their hands and obtain necessary supplies to enabl to hold out still longer. They would risk the mo they would risk their lives, if he would only let them But no, the Marshal had already sent his offer to J marck, and we must wait the return of Boyer. "W you propose," said the Marshal, "is an affair for General of Division, and not for you tradesmen." "J Marshal," say they, "it is true we are but tradesm and therefore we know where to buy corn." "So do said the Marshal, "there is yet corn in Egypt ;" and turned on his heel and went off to his billiards aga Corn in Egypt! well, it was the house of bondage, a it was evident that he and his army would go down in Egypt. Still the Messins did not want the Egyptians occupy their Goschen—they wished yet to be French.

At any rate he might have received this well-inte tioned offer more courteously, but it was evident that intended to snub all who wished to interfere with l plans. Those plans were not to retain Metz. He st hoped for the goodwill of Bismarck, and as France ha not come to him on bended knee, he would not aid h or her's. It was evident now that nothing could l hoped from him. We were imprisoned, not by Prussia enemies, but by French "friends." Coffinières was tric again, but it was evident he was too much afraid of th Marshal, and nothing could be hoped for from the

quarter. Ladmiraault was next sought. He had won the esteem of the army, and if the town could only win him, something yet might be achieved ; but he was too much imbued with military traditions to be able to seize the right time. It would look like treachery to the flag, and though his scruples were so far overcome as to win from him a promise that if anyone else could be induced to take the lead he would serve under him, yet he declined to assume the responsibility himself. Deligny was sounded with some slight hopefulness. Clinchant was then looked after, and there seemed more chance of success in this quarter, and that chance was becoming certainty, when the news came that General Boyer had returned. His advent was much more feared than welcomed, and it was with some surprise that we found he had returned without any formal capitulation having been effected. What he really did bring back we never knew. What the Marshal told others, at the meeting of the Council of War, on the morning of the 18th, he brought back, was the news that France was in a state of anarchy—that Rouen had demanded a Prussian garrison to maintain order—that the army of Lyons, whose aid we had been hoping for, was annihilated at Orleans—that Prussia, or rather Bismarck, had said, “I occupy France by 1,300,000 men, and I will make no peace excepting with a regent. Make Bazaine regent if you will, but with a regent, and a regent only, peace can be made.” Of course there were the usual number ready to cry, “Long Live Bazaine! we will have none other

regent than he ;” they only had seats at the council for this purpose ; it was for this their promotion was given them, and from this they hoped for more, so they cried again, with a loud voice, “ Long Live Bazaine !” But there were many there who didn’t care about Bazaine living long, and were perfectly certain that it would be a bad day for them if Bazaine were regent, and there were some few there who knew that it would be a worse day for France. These inquired, if these things must be so, at what other price was the peace to be bought ? On this head there did not seem much information attainable. The price could only be learned after the regent had been appointed. Under these circumstances, they very wisely refused to give their adhesion to the nomination of Marshal Bazaine. Questions were then put as to what vouchers, or what authentic documentary evidence General Boyer had brought to substantiate these reports, but there was nothing but the word of M. de Bismarck for it ; but then surely M. de Bismarck is an honourable man ; he certainly has assisted at the slaughter of Cæsar, so perhaps he is. Yet something more than the word of an honourable man translated through the mouth of General Boyer was needed, and this portion of the Council of War refused to accept the news as true.

“ Why,” said one General, “ has not General Boyer brought some newspapers ? If the good people of Rouen, Havre, and other towns have called in the Prussians, why have not some of these good people (*honnêtes gens*)



been sent here with them to tell us why?" Bazaine's last card was played—he didn't hold trumps.

"You say that a *trouée* is impossible," says another. "It was said that to storm the green Mamelon and to take the Malakoff were impossibilities; we tried, we succeeded; let us now try to make a *trouée*; for my part I believe, even now, that it is perfectly possible, and that it was certain to have succeeded if made a short time since I am sure; but this I know, that I will never consent to march a man against my own countrymen, and that seems to be the intention."

Of course there was a great hubbub. This was an exposition of Marshal Bazaine's policy from an unexpected quarter. It showed him that his intention of re-entering France by way of Prussia was divined. General Coffinières, who still urged the retention of Metz, was openly called the "President of the Metz Republic." The sarcasm did its work, and ever after that he became simply the lieutenant of Bazaine. The Council was broken up in confusion, and Boyer left for London to endeavour to persuade the Empress to take nominally that place Bazaine even yet hoped he might thus virtually attain to. Bourbaki, it is true, had failed; but then Boyer might succeed, and meanwhile Bazaine would report to Bismarck, his master, and see what else could be obtained for him. No written order of the day was made, but those superior officers who could be entrusted with the task, especially Marshal Canrobert, were requested to manipulate the regimental officers. Canro-

bert's experience of the same work in 1852 had fitted him especially for the execution of the plot, so he naturally took the lead, and a verbal communication was made to the officers of those regiments most to be relied upon. He set forth Boyer's mission and its objects ; with much the same matter, and in much the same manner, that had been already explained at the Council meeting ; he hinted that the surrender of the army would be independent of the town, and that, after all, it was but a temporary journey into Prussia, and that they would soon return again to France with either the Emperor or his son at their head. The Guard, of course, took the communication kindly ; they were tired of the war, and above all, tired of such a miserable place as Metz ; they weren't even a glass of absinthe to be got. Why, then, should they stay ? But many of the other regiments were not so manageable, and, of course, the news soon spread in the town. Some members of the National Guard went immediately to General Coffinières, who referred them to the Marshal, and of course he, as usual, said not a word—not a word.

Desperate men, both in the army and the town, now began to band themselves together ; the Marshal seeing this to be the case, and fearing some rash act might take place, pretended that even yet some sortie might be made. Officers received a non-official notice that it would be wise to provide themselves with small satchels, and such light portable means of conveying with them whatever few things they could easily carry themselves, for

more baggage than each man could carry with him would be permitted to be taken.

Even so late as Sunday the 23rd of October I waited on General Saint Sauveur, the Grand-prévôt of the army, to obtain a passport wherewith to accompany this force should such a sortie be attempted. The General stated that he had no official knowledge of such an affair, but that it was by no means improbable, and would let me have the requisite *laisser passer* and also timely information. Four days' provisions had been served out to all the men. Orders were given to be in readiness to go at a moment's notice. A few of us who were determined to be where anything was doing were ready night and day. Our hopes were raised to the highest pitch. We knew it would be hard work, but it was better to die fighting than from what we all believed was wilfully-imposed famine. It was better to die free than yield without a blow. All were in the utmost expectation. Wills were made, what might be last letters were written, and deposited with friends in Metz. But nothing came of it. Even up to the 25th it was fully expected that some desperate measure would be taken. "The Marshal is 'a deep one,'" said his friends; "he has some hidden movement yet to make which will cover his name with glory, and you know he loves a *coup de théâtre*." In spite of all the warning we had had, in spite of all the knowledge we possessed, we yet believed that some sacrifice would be made to save the well-nigh lost honour of France, and that the army of the Rhine would yet do

something worthy of record in military history. One man, a captain of the *État-major-général*, and attached to the Marshal's staff, refused all along to believe in the supposed movement; but as he had always been a greater croaker than myself, I thought he was wrong, and in spite of all my former forebodings and evil convictions, I fell into the enthusiasm myself, and was ready.

I was half afraid to move away from my hotel for fear the summons might come and I be away. I dare not undress at night for fear the start might be made in a moment. In short, I was as foolish as everybody else in Metz, and as agitated. To keep up the delusion a dormant scheme which had been proposed for blowing up the bridges at Malroy and Argancy was now revived; it had been promulgated so early as the end of August.

Then, when our plans and drawings were made, they were submitted to the Marshal, examined and approved, an inspection of the river was made, the rate of its current and the depth of the stream measured, and we were hopeful of finding a way of escape, but the reply we received was—"The Marshal says if we destroy these bridges they will build others." "True," was our reply, "but it will embarrass them; especially if an attack is made at the same time." "But suppose we do not want to embarrass them? what then?" was the answer, which came in such a questionable form to us. Of course after that there was nothing to be done but abandon this idea, and sadly receive those other ideas we wished to exorcise. Now we were requested to set

to work again. New models were made, new plans tried : a small travelling torpedo was constructed. Plans were made for a small river "moniteur" to carry a mitrailleuse, and every particle of dust that could be thrown in our eyes was used for that purpose. Under its influence we were blinded, and began almost to hope again. Meanwhile the Prussians didn't think we were starving fast enough, so they drove out all the inhabitants from the neighbouring villages, and attempted to drive them into Metz. What could we do? We advised them to go back again ; they tried to, but when they came to the Prussian lines, the Prussians fired, over them, they say, but if so there were a good many bad marksmen amongst them, and several poor creatures were hit. I do not want to write up the horrors of war, to grow savage over apocryphal atrocities committed by the Prussians, nor even unduly so on real ones ; in fact I have refrained from every species of sensational tale. Numbers of these floated in and out of Metz ; some of course were false, but undoubtedly many were too true. I am, however, a holder of that catholic faith which induces me to believe that human nature is very much alike everywhere ; nor do I think being born on the right or the left bank of the Rhine makes very much difference in a man's actions, and I am quite sure that whatever atrocity might be committed by one party in this struggle would be equalled by the other under similar circumstances. War is a game you cannot play in white kid gloves, but I do think it a very unnecessary

piece of barbarity to turn these poor non-combatant men, women, and children, out of the little semblance of home they yet had left them, into a town where nothing but starvation threatened them, and then to menace them with certain sudden death if they attempted to avoid the equally certain lingering one. It used to be considered a fair and an honourable proceeding, even in those barbarous middle ages we of the nineteenth century so much look down upon, to allow women and children to escape the horrors of a siege;—now we are much more civilised—we drive them into it. But the war was, indeed, now becoming glorious, and such acts are truly heroic. It was a noble victory this—very—but I am not aware that King William ever thanked Divine Providence for it.

On the 25th the Marshal communicated to the Council of War that he had received a despatch from General Boyer that the Empress would not accept the Regency, and that as Bismarck had now refused to separate the fate of the town from that of the army, nothing remained to be done but to endeavour to get the best terms available, and to accustom both the soldiers and the citizens to the idea of a capitulation as much as possible. In order to put both into the best spirits, so many as chose now to apply for it, obtained the cross of the legion of honour. These were given away lavishly towards the end of the siege, but the worst of it was, that they were bestowed on the worthy and the unworthy alike. Many a deserving man who ought to have been rewarded long

ago, now felt almost disgraced by finding himself decorated at the same time with some despicable trickster who would do any dirty work for the much-loved bit of red ribbon. Even this could not now win the good-will of the honest, and a stormy meeting of the Municipal Council took place, some of the members openly saying that as Marshal Bazaine was looking after his own interests, it behoved the Municipal Council, as the elected guardians of Metz, to take decisive measures for the protection of their own liberties. A serious discussion took place, but the canny Scot-like spirit of the Messins came to the top, and the Council declared that they would take no responsibility upon their own shoulders, so no organised resistance was formed. The power was wasted in individual efforts. Even if we had had an organisation, it became patent now that the end must come—we had not much more food ;—that is, not much more the existence of which was publicly known. It was supposed, indeed openly acknowledged, that many private individuals had as yet large hoards, and it was openly alleged that very large quantities of grain and bacon were stored away in the casemates of the citadel and Fort Bellecroix. Private individuals, therefore, thought themselves at liberty to withhold their own stores, whilst these were yet hidden. A nominal perquisition was made, but it was merely one in name, no active official search took place. Some few amateurs searching, with the zeal which always distinguishes the amateur, found great stores in many places. Whole pigs were found hidden

away and great quantities of flour; but of course the fine were comparatively few, and as everybody believed in the existence of great stores purposely withheld for political purposes, there was not much anxiety to hold up private prudence as a crime. "If the state produces its stores, we will add ours loyally to them; but we will reserve ours for a last chance, as we have no faith in the loyalty of our governors, and until they give up what they have, we will hold all we can," said the civil population. It didn't matter, it suited the political purpose of the time just as well, and so no vigorous search was ever made. Had it been, I verily believe Metz could have held out another month at least.

Meanwhile there was constructed and spread abroad a wonderful narration, coming it was said, from Bazain himself. At any rate it is certain that it came from the head-quarters, and was published in the *Moniteur de la Moselle*, a journal once suppressed, but afterwards re-established by the authorities for the purpose of publishing those discouraging news the other journals refused to insert. It stated that this was the result of reconnaissances made in the Prussian lines by our *éclaireurs*. It stated that batteries were established on the Gravelott side, and that very formidable and "veritable" fortifications were constructed in front of the cemetery at Vernéville, rendering exit by the Verdun route completely impossible. It alleged that the road to Nancy was blocked by batteries at Orly and Jassy, and also on the grand site of the fine old castle of St. Blaize—a site abandoned



even in mediæval times, when garrisons were small, because there was no water there. It asserted that the earthworks at Peltre and Marly were bristling with cannon, so that no exit that way existed. It affirmed that the Strasbourg road was impassable, because the hill of Mecleuves was held by a great force of the enemy ; that the heights of Ste. Barbe—where we had so stiff a tussle on the 31st of August and the 1st of September—were surrounded by trenches and redoubts, whose out-works extended to Noisseville, Nouilly, Sevigny, Faily, Charly, and Vany, and commanded the routes to Boulay and Bouzonville. It further stated that, as we knew to our cost, both sides of the valley of the Moselle were lined with batteries, and, in fact, that there was a triple line of intrenchments, each more formidable than the first, surrounding us, so that none of our would-be deliverers could come to us, and we could not go to them. Much of this was undoubtedly true ; but at the same time it was manifest that it was grossly exaggerated.

Supposing this to have been true, the nearest line of intrenchments must have had at least a distance of five-and-twenty miles to guard and the other two thirty-five and fifty miles respectively—giving a total line of over one hundred miles of earthworks to make and keep. Such a statement was an absurdity requiring no confutation, and which could only be advanced on the supposition that our ignorance or wilful credulity was equal to that of the French generals.

Into the first line of Prussian earthworks too many of

us in Metz had been to place much faith in what was beyond; we knew, with much bitter disappointment that though the cordon was too well maintained to allow of the escape of a single person, there were at least half dozen points of this imaginary line at which a sortie might have been made even up to the last day of the siege. It was the will, and not the means, which was wanting. The army would willingly have furnished the latter had the Marshal sanctioned the employment of the former. It was the knowledge of all this—for the falsehood made but slight impression excepting on those who longed for peace at any price—which caused the little world of Metz, both military and civic, to cry with an almost unanimous voice that we had been betrayed, and that the traitor was Bazaine; but we were powerless to help ourselves.

The National Guard urged the Council to take further measures, and addressed a collective communication to that body; but it was of no avail. Our struggles were becoming weaker, and then, all at once, came the news that the deed was done. General Cussy went and paved the way. A meeting was arranged between the two headquarters of the opposing—not combating forces, and the sole question discussed was, whether the army should march out with bands playing, colours flying, and “with the honours of war,” that was all. Prince Frederick Charles is stated to have said that they might do as they liked about the bands, but that he could not, as a soldier, accord the honours of war to men who had gained

none. Poor old Changarnier went to see if he could not obtain for the soldiers some relaxation, if they would not be allowed to return to their homes and families ; but, of course, this could not be granted. It was said that he did obtain some concession of the *amour propre* of the army. That a battalion of infantry, a squadron of cavalry, and a battery of artillery, as the representative of an army, should leave Metz with bands playing and flags flying, and go into voluntary exile in Algeria ; but the Marshal, perhaps fearing the invidium of selection, did not accept this, and the blow fell. On the 26th all was settled, the sentence on Metz was passed ; and, at a meeting of the Municipal Council, General Cof-finières had the disgrace of announcing that Metz must surrender, not only the army but the town. Of course, the Prussians would not be so unwise or so unwary as to allow the fate of the two to be separated. The town would only be the stronger when rid of the incubus of Bazaine and the army ; and if the Prussians were strong enough to take them both, why should they be contented with the one only ? So town and army must go together, and all that could be done now was to accept such terms as could be extorted from the enemy. The General assured them that he would do all he could to insure a respect for their persons and their property, and begged them to do all they could to keep the place tranquil until the terms of capitulation were signed. The Council refused to accept this verbal explanation of the General as sufficient, and demanded that he should

issue some explanation direct to the people; they objected, as they always had, to accept any responsibility for those acts they were not consulted in nor advised of and this was promised for the morrow. The night of the 26th was one of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. There was no more questioning now as to whether it should be a republic or a regency, all that had passed away, and it was only now a consideration as to how little we might become Prussian, or how few of us remain. At the "Cercle du Nord" there was a meeting of the officers of the National Guard and some of the officers of the army, but it was understood that there would not be anything officially attempted. Now that the Prussians were certain to come in, the Scotch element of the townsfolk began to crop up; no one would take the lead. When the meeting began to get very noisy, I noticed that many of the prudent ones withdrew. A huge carabineer threw down his decoration of the Legion d'Honneur, and swore unutterable things; he called for his horse—he called for his sword—he called for his revolver! and he called for another *petit verre*, and went on his way exalted. But there were one or two going round giving a little card here, and a little card there. That little card was a passport to another meeting. Here is a copy of mine:—"I particularly recommend Mr. George Robinson, whom I know to be safe and very likely to be very useful to the army. 8 p.m." I won't give the name of the officer who signed it. I am glad to say he escaped from Metz and is doing good

service to his country elsewhere ; but the fortune of war is so changeable, and the courtesies of war so scant now-a-days, that it is wiser to refrain from mentioning any more names than necessary. To this meeting I went ; there was a large assemblage of officers, of all grades, and of each branch of the service. More than one General was there ; and it was determined that each officer should attend on the morrow at a place appointed with a list of the names of the other officers and the number of men who could be relied upon. There was very little invective here, no bravado, and not a *petit verre* amongst the lot ; so I was much more inclined to think that there even yet might be something done. There was much going and coming all that dark night. The sky was overcast, and we had no gas in our streets, and when the meeting broke up it was long past midnight. We walked round the ramparts, spoke to some of the National Guards we knew, and then, followed by a couple of my friends the gend'armes, I bade adieu to my companions and sought my hotel, very sadly depressed by all I had seen and heard. There was a great deal of folly and some little wisdom talked that day ; but the essence of it was very bitter, and this was the refrain of it all : *Pas rendu, mais vendu*.

This was henceforth to be the motto of Metz—no more, alas ! to be the maiden city. Argent and sable were the tincture of the city's arms at present, and the Prussian colours seemed to be prophetic. The price of her virginity was settled upon, and the boast

and pride of her people was for ever to be destroyed and by whom? Bazaine; almost a citizen, a son of France. No wonder that the people turned to the "Art of War," and read with much emphasis this extract:

"The commander of a fortified place ought never lose sight of the fact that he defends one of the bastions of the empire; one of the supports of its army and that on the surrender of a fortress, advanced or retarded one single day, depends the welfare of the country.

"He ought to be deaf to the tales spread abroad of the malevolent and to the news sent him by the enemy to resist all their insinuations, and suffer neither his own courage nor that of the garrison entrusted to him to be shaken by any untoward events.

"He ought never to forget that military law condemns to death, with military degradation, the commander of a fortress which capitulates without having forced the enemy to adopt all the slow and successive stages of a regular siege, and without having, at least, repulsed an assault made by the enemy upon a practicable breach."

All seem to have been prevised—Undue surrender, credence of false news, and the rendering up of a city without a breach, without an assault. The crime was consummated. The penalty death. The criminal the commander of the place. Who should inflict the penalty? and whom should it fall? These points were seriously taken into consideration, and it was determined that Bazai

must die. He had taken advantage of one clause in the Articles of War to usurp the functions of the Commandant; to him then the penalty was accorded, and had he ever shown himself in Metz, had he ever moved from his guarded house without taking an escort with him, he would have paid the penalty of his crime. He would undoubtedly have been murdered, not judicially executed. The next day people who got up early saw posted up at the corners of the streets this extract from the Article of War, with Death to the Traitor ! Death to Bazaine ! at the top and bottom of it, and some added Death to Coffinières too. Of course the police soon tore down the bills ; but unmolested, the populace hung garlands of immortelles on the statue of Marshal Ney in the Place Royale, and enveloped that of Fabert in crape, and every one in Metz knew why.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE END.

ON the twenty-seventh Metz quivered in agony. People wandered aimlessly about the streets like people whilst a friend lies dying. There had been an awful storm; it seemed as though the very heavens were in tribulation at the fate of La Pucelle. Camps were overturned, and long lines of mules came in with sick and dying men. Long exposure and little food, cold bitterly cold nights and wet days had done their worst. The reckless want of sanitary provision was avenging itself, and poor consumptive and fever-stricken men were brought in by hundreds. All was melancholy and miserable. Friends shunned each other, or shook each others' hands in silence as they passed. Their hearts were too full to speak. Here and there we would meet some one whose face we knew well, but whose habit was now strange to us—men whom we had always seen in neat well-kept uniforms, but whom we hardly recognised in peasants' blouses or in civil clothes, and who passed and made no sign. In our own rooms strange



unknown men appeared, proving themselves, when their speech betrayed them, to be familiar and well-known friends. It was sorrowful masquerading, for all these had made up their minds that, come what may, that they would never be led away into captivity, and that should they succeed by any way in making their escape, they would then draw for France that sword they had been so long compelled to leave rusting in its scabbard. Should they not escape they would find in death a better fate than would otherwise await them. The grave was less dreaded than captivity. I and one of these friends wandered, whilst the day was young, out of the sorrow-stricken town; he, too, was making up his mind to escape, and wanted to see how the land lay, so we went to the Fort Queleu, where many another friend was, and where one lay imprisoned by the Marshal's order, in the damp hardly-finished casemates there. His crime was that he loved his country, and that was crime enough just now. He had striven all he could by his example and his pen to raise up the spirits and the bodies of his countrymen against the curse their own rulers had laid upon them. Never was he tried, no court-martial was held upon him; the Marshal's will, not martial law, ordered it, and he disappeared. We sought him, but in vain; our endeavours to once more shake his hand were fruitless, and what became of him I do not know. His friend, who then accompanied me, is giving the Prussians much trouble in the other parts of France, and with many another friend of mine is revenging his forced idleness in

Metz by intense and voluntary activity elsewhere. At Queleu we found the men in good condition, with such huge hunks of bacon in their hands, that I almost craved to beg a bit and bring it back to Metz with me, it would have become welcome curiosity there. Brandy and wine were plentiful, and in very truth there seemed more waste than want there then. Knowing by sad experience, how neglected outposts were at this time, how very irregularly their rations were served them, we carried out with us some five or six pounds' weight of bread and a good supply of horse-flesh—an officer's rations for two days in fact, and which, now that that officer had made himself a civilian, he did not need, as he could dine in town unnoticed. Such was the abundance we found there that we brought all our food back again. Up half-way to our knees we floundered in mud and water. The yet unfinished fort was a huge puddle; even then many of the guns were only mounted on the earth-work of the ramparts and propped up with stones to an angle of forty-five degrees. Such guns of course could only fire in one line, and could do but little harm; to alter the direction of the angle would be a work of hours. The observatory was deserted, discipline was relaxed. The officers were signing a paper to Marshal Lebœuf expostulating at thus being obliged to surrender against their will and without, in their opinion, a valid cause, and all was as depressing and as miserable here as in Metz, so we took what we knew would be our last look at Queleu. We said good-bye to many friends who could

not come into Metz, and depressed and dejected we floundered back through mud and water and in a soaking rain to town. Here I sought the rendezvous given me the previous evening, and found already many officers, especially of artillery and engineers, discussing a plan for blowing up the forts, spiking all the guns and damaging all the chassepots in the arsenal. This looked something like business, especially as it was being discussed in a business-like manner, and without rhodomontade. All the requisite arrangements were being made with as much coolness as though our meeting were an authorised one, and we intended that the Prussians should have but a barren victory. Metz at any rate should not be of much use to them. The guns of France should never be levelled against Frenchmen, and her artillery and engineers would, if no other corps did, do something memorable at this sad siege of Metz.

Being of no further use here, and as everything seemed to be going on well, I went out into the streets again. To keep still or to remain indoors was impossible; a feverish and irritable restlessness seemed to seize hold of and master me. To settle to any one pursuit, to read a book, even to spell through the newspaper, was a superhuman difficulty; so I, too, like everybody else, wandered moodily in the streets. The Municipal Council were holding their daily sitting, and this day they were to receive the official report of General Coffinières, the last will and testament of French authority in the city of Metz. We all knew its purport, but we felt a nervous

anxiety to see what form of words it would take, what palliative it would offer, what comfort we might gather from it, for we ourselves could not find one crumb of consolation in our sad thoughts. At last it came; it said:—

“INHABITANTS OF METZ,—It is my duty to faithfully state to you our situation, well persuaded that your manly and courageous souls will rise to the height of this grave occasion.

“Round us is an army which has never been conquered, and which has stood firm before the fire of the foe, and withstood the rudest shocks. This army, interposed between our city and her besiegers, has given us time to put our forts in a complete state of defence, to mount upon our walls more than 600 pieces of cannon, and has held in check an army of more than 200,000 men.

“Within our walls we have a population full of energy and patriotism, firmly determined to defend itself to the last extremity.

“I have already informed the Municipal Council that, notwithstanding the reduction of rations, notwithstanding the perquisitions made by the civil and military authorities, we have no more food than will serve till tomorrow.

“More than this, our brave army, tried already by the fire of the enemy, has lost 42,000 men, after horrible sufferings from the inclemency of the season and priva-

tions of every kind. The Council of war has proof of these facts, and the Marshal Commanding in Chief has given formal orders, as he had the right, to direct a portion of our provisions for the purposes of the army.

“With all this, thanks to our economy, we can still resist up to the 30th inst., but then our situation will not be sensibly modified.

“Never in the annals of military history has a place resisted until its resources have been so completely exhausted as this has, and none has ever been so encumbered with sick and wounded.

“We are, then, condemned to succumb ; but it will be with honour, and when we find ourselves conquered by famine.

“The enemy, who has closely invested us for more than seventy days, knows that he has almost attained the end of his efforts. He demands the town and the army, and will not permit the severance of the interests of the one from that of the other. Four or five days' desperate resistance would only place the inhabitants in a worse position. Rest assured that your private interests will be defended with the most lively solicitude. Seek to support stoically this great misfortune, and cherish the firm hope that Metz, this grand and patriotic city, will remain to France.

“F. COFFINIÈRES, Commandant in Chief

“of the Fortress of Metz, the

“General of Division.

“Metz, 27th October, 1870.”

Alas ! we found no consolation there ; it rather irritated us than otherwise. What consolation was it to us to know that we had finished our forts, and that we had mounted 600 pieces of cannon, if we were to hand them over to the foe ? Was this all that that army which had never been conquered had done for us ? was this why it remained round our walls doubly besieging us ? This was all it had done. No, not quite ; it had assisted the Prussians, as well as prepared this offering for them ; it had starved us out ; it had eaten us up. Why was not this army strictly rationed at the first, and why had not greater provision been made for them ? We denied that any perquisition had been made, and demanded a strict scrutiny of the magazines and stores, but it was too late. For what had those 42,000 men died ? Why were all the sick and wounded in our hospitals ? Why were our streets thronged with the halt, the maimed, and the blind ? The only reason we could find in all that proclamation was, that they had been massacred to make Metz more useful to the Prussians. Our manly and courageous souls rose in indignation ; and we were more than ever determined that those forts, whose stones were cemented with French blood, should never be handed over to the enemy, that those guns which the idleness of the Commander-in-Chief had purchased for the Prussians should never be given up in any condition but that of waste metal. We were in a boiling state of fury, and hissed and bubbled noisily. The *Independant* came out in the evening with its first column surrounded by a deep black border, and

enclosing a short, but rather strong, article, entitled, "Metz in Mourning." "It is not we who capitulate." it says. "Before the enemy should have entered within our walls,—before he should have sung his song of victory in our streets,—he should have had to wade, knee-deep, through a rampart of our dead bodies. Our wills have been fettered, our force broken, our courage checked, and when we were weakened and reduced by inaction, our country's funeral knell is tolled in our ears.

"History will one day say, here was a town, protected by forts, bristling with cannon, filled with a hardy and a vigorous population ; its ramparts were entire, not a scar from an enemy's shot disfigured them, never assaulted, never bombarded, no trench was dug before it, not a parallel opened against it, not the shadow of a siege. And yet this town saw the enemy enter as a conqueror within its walls. But history will also say that this town did its duty, and with its pen of iron it will engrave in ineffaceable terms the names of those upon whose heads this heavy responsibility rests. It is before that tribunal we wait." That seems pretty strong now, but we thought it bald and weak then, and waiting for the verdict of history seemed much too slow. We wanted to give history something more to say, to make a little episode in it. When, therefore, night came, and the streets were dark, we met again to see what force might be counted upon at the last moment. Alas! all was over. Our plan was known, as we might have suspected it would be had we been sane. The Marshal knew every-

thing about it, and had ordered all those regiments most suspected to be disarmed, and the cartridges to be taken away from all but the guard. There, too, we found a copy of the "Protocol," signed that day at Frescaty, and we were all occupied in breathing out useless vengeance on Bazaine, and studying our fate. The Protocol afforded us plenty of scope for bad adjectives, and finding there was not much else to be done, we took to swearing freely, and also to *petites verres*.

I give here in *extenso* the Protocol alone, leaving out our comments, which I fear would not be edifying.

#### " PROTOCOL,

" Made between the undersigned, the Chief of the *État-Major* General of the French army under Metz, and the Chief of the *État-Major* of the Prussian army before Metz, each furnished with full powers by His Excellency Marshal Bazaine, Commander in Chief, and by the General in Chief His Royal Highness Prince Frederick Charles of Prussia.

" The following convention has been concluded :

" Article 1. The French army, placed under the orders of Marshal Bazaine, is prisoner of war.

" Article 2. The fortress and the town of Metz, with all the forts, matériel of war, munitions of all kinds, and everything which is the property of the state, shall be given up to the Prussian army in the same state as they exist at the signing of this convention.

" On Saturday, the 29th of October, at noon, the



forts St. Quentin, Plappeville, St. Julien, Queleu and St. Privat, together with the Porte Mazelle (Strasbourg road) shall be given up to the Prussians. At ten o'clock in the morning of the same day, officers of the Artillery and Engineers, with certain non-commissioned officers, shall be admitted into the said forts to draw the mines and to guard the magazines.

“ Article 3. The arms, together with all the matériel of the army, consisting of flags, eagles, cannons, mitrailleuses, horses, fourgons, baggage-waggons, munitions, &c., shall be left at Metz, and in the forts under the care of Military Commissioners appointed by Marshal Bazaine to be handed over immediately to the Prussian Commissioners. The troops, without arms, shall be conducted according to their different regiments or corps, and in military order, to the several places appointed for each corps. The officers may then return to Metz, on condition of their engaging themselves on their honour not to quit the place without the orders of the Prussian commandant. The troops will then be conducted by their non-commissioned officers to the place of bivouac, the soldiers retaining their knapsacks, personal effects, and camp equipments (tents, rugs, cooking utensils, &c.)

“ Article 4. All generals and officers, as well as military employés having the rank of officers, who will engage on their written *parole d'honneur*, neither to bear arms against Germany, nor in any other manner to agitate against her interests until the end of the present war, will not be made prisoners of war. Officers and em-

ployés who accept this condition will be allowed to retain their arms and personal property. In recognition of the courage shown in this campaign by the army and the garrison, it is further permitted to those officers who elect to go into captivity, to wear their swords or sabres, and to retain their personal effects.

“ Article 5. Army surgeons, without exception, will remain behind to take care of the wounded, and will be treated according to the articles of the Geneva Convention ; the same rule applies to the other hospital officers or servants.

“ Article 6. Questions of detail, principally concerning the interests of the town, will be treated in an appendix to be annexed hereto, and which will have the same authority as this present protocol.

“ Article 7. All cases of doubt arising on the above articles shall be translated in favour of the French army.

“ Done at the Château de Frascaty, the 27th of October, 1870.

“ (Signed) L. JARRAS.—STIEHLE.”

That provided us with plenty of food for thought. It was very different to marching out with flags flying, bands playing, and the honours of war ; and the appendix to the third article relating to the occupation of the forts was so evidently an interpellation, and so purposely done to checkmate the scheme of blowing up the forts, that everybody thought everybody else had

divulged it, and we were very nearly evaporating from the heat of our own fury. Some were for blowing them up, garrison and all. Better die, &c., &c., &c., said these : but that was soon put down, and it was now evident that the only thing to be done was for each one to look after himself, and as many as possible to slip away in confusion—in fact, disbanding themselves before the surrender took place ; and with that we separated, a great many of us, I fear, never to meet again. Many who would have quietly retired from their regiments, and temporarily from the army, were so disgusted at the demand for a written *parole d'honneur*, and at the very comprehensive terms in which that demand was couched, that they determined to risk everything rather than submit to it. Go into captivity they would not, and now there was nothing else for them but getting away as best they could. I have no doubt but that one-third of those 1,200 or 1,300 officers who escaped from Metz were impelled to do so by the dishonourable terms they conceived the demand for their parole to be couched in. They would not have borne arms under Gambetta and Co., but they would have used their pens and their personal influence for the welfare of France, and consequently to the detriment of Prussia—now they use swords as well.

Next morning the town was placarded with this protocol, and those who were determined to be happy under adverse circumstances, drew much comfort from the reflection that only the Porte Mazelle was to be surrendered to the Prussians. The streets would not be pol-

luted by their presence—that was something ; and it was easy to avoid going out by the *Porte Mazelle*, so it might be worse after all. But these who thus spoke were very few, and as they had been some of the loudest clamourers to be led to the foe in former days, their opinions were not much valued. The National Guard did not quite know how they were to be treated, and the poor *Francs-tireurs* were in considerable tribulation ; were they now to be considered as belonging to the army, and go into Prussia ? or were they not to be considered military, and let go free ! or were they to be hanged because they wore a blouse ! Seeking information on these points, the *Place d'Armes* was filled with National Guards and *Francs-tireurs*, many coming to render up their arms at the guard-room of the *Hôtel de Ville*. The materials were already there, and a spark would soon set them alight. Who should turn up at this moment but our friend the big *carabineer*. The hour and the man for a scrimmage had come. Stretching his long burly figure to its full height, he stood in the middle of the square, and towering over their heads, addressed the crowd. That was enough, it did not matter much what he said, he was a good, honest-hearted, but not over-wise man. His strong feeling made him eloquent, and in ten minutes the *Place d'Armes* was thronged. Fabert no longer bore a flag—no longer was he crowned with *immortelles*, now his solemn crape-shrouded figure rose up most ominously above us all. As ill fortune would have it, a long line of soldiers were passing through, to place those arms they were no more

to bear, in the arsenal. They were appealed to to give up their chassepots ; they would not give them up, but a child might take them from them ; and I saw one young girl disarm half a dozen of them in fewer minutes. Pouches were searched for ammunition, but there was not much of that to be found. Those National Guards who had deposited their arms, rushed to the Hôtel de Ville, and brought them out again. Some few officers of different regiments were willing to place themselves at their head, but there was no united plan, and they ran about like ants in an invaded ant-hill, having no point of union. The door leading to the clock tower was broken in ; the butts of the muskets rang against it like a bombardment. The staircase was carried, and Mutte, the great alarm bell of Metz was rung in anger for the first time since 1815. The last time it was rung was to announce the Emperor, for on great fête days, as well as on great days of dolour, this bell rings out its deep sonorous voice. It is a great bell, and proportionately regarded by the Messins. This Mutte, like the constitution of Metz, has been recast many times. It was first founded in 1381, and last cast in 1604, and bears the quaint old inscription which was placed on it at its transition period in 1442.

“ Dame Mutte suis baptisée  
De par la cité ci-posée,  
Pour servir à la cité  
Aux jours des grandes solemnités.  
Et aussi pour créer justice  
Prendre ban de bonne police,

Les contredire quand bon me semble,  
Et pour convoquer gens ensemble."

They thought this a grand solemnity ; believed it to be for justice's sake—good police—and therefore they rang it to gather the people together. The population streamed into the square from all quarters, and the streets were packed with angry citizens ; at the same time, in the caserne of the Engineers, on the esplanade, a huge building, a band of officers of Artillery and Engineers, together with many officers of various other branches of the service, were gathered together ; in short, it was a general meeting of many coteries of those discontented with their fate and forced inactivity. Eight thousand officers and men were ready, divided into bodies, hidden in different parts of the town ; all was ready, but General Clinchant, who had given some sort of a promise to head the movement, came not. He had been had up before the Marshal that morning ; what arguments were used I cannot say, but common sense told me it was now too late for any organised action, and a disorganised one would only be running into certain danger, so therefore, perhaps, it did not need much official pressure to put down his enthusiasm. A tricolour was procured, with "*Vive la République*" printed on the white portion of it, and that thinned off a good many ; had it been simply, "*Vive la France*," it would have caused many to rally round it who fled from it now. *La France* means nothing in particular ; *Republic* in a row means rabble, and an armed rabble generally means

plunder, and the Messins who had anything to be plundered didn't like the prospect, so they left ; Orleanists, Legitimists, and other 'ists left too ; at any rate, it was a graceful excuse to leave, and most people took it.

Now began a ridiculous feature of the outbreak. Foolish men crept in, and wise men crept out. An editor of one of the Metz newspapers, who had achieved unto himself glory before by entering the ante-chamber of General Coffinières and breaking down the harmless bust of the ex-Emperor, and who preserves to this day the whip he did it with as a trophy of his prowess, mounted his horse and rode into the square armed with a revolver, which he fired repeatedly in the air. He was attended by a young lady, the daughter of a gunsmith, who, seated *en cavalier* on one of her father's horses, with one of her father's pistols in her hand and one of her own pocket-handkerchiefs tied to it, bore aloft her standard like a second Joan of Arc through the streets of Metz, singing the "Marseillaise." Ridicule killed the movement. Men were willing to brave death, but they feared being laughed at. The voltigeurs of the Imperial Guard, the only troops who could be relied upon, were marched in ; and accompanied by the half of a regiment of the Line, they suppressed for ever the liberty of the people of Metz. Such was the last act of the Imperial Guard, the last act of the army of the Rhine. The arms of the National Guard were taken from them, by force when necessary, the streets were patrolled, and we sought our "cercles," cafés, and réunions to

discuss Bazaine's proclamation, which had just been published. I had received a copy of it in manuscript early in the morning, and had shown it to many of my friends, but it was not as yet generally known in the army or the town. Its very heading is a commentary; certainly Bazaine has not the *cacoëthes scribendi* which seems to be so virulent just now in his late master, the ex-Emperor. It is only the twelfth bulletin issued:—

“ARMY OF THE RHINE—BULLETIN No. 12.

“GENERAL ORDER.

“*To the Army of the Rhine.*

“Vanquished by famine, we are constrained to submit to the laws of war, and constitute ourselves prisoners. At various epochs in our military history, the brave troops led by Masséna, Kléber, Gouvoin-St.-Cyr, &c., have suffered the same fate, and lost no honour when, as we have done, they did their duty to the extremest limit of human possibility.

“All that was loyally possible to do to avoid this fate has been done. If we had tried over and over again to break the fortified lines of the enemy, notwithstanding your valour, we should but have sacrificed thousands of lives which may yet be useful to our country; it would have been useless by reason of the armaments and crushing forces which guarded and supported their lines; a disaster would have been the consequence. Let us be



dignified in our adversity. Let us respect honourably the treaties we have stipulated for ; if we would ensure respect, let us merit it. Let us avoid, above all things, for the reputation of this army, such undisciplined acts as the destruction of arms and material, since, according to military custom, forts and armaments ought again to be returned to France when peace is signed. In taking leave of my command, I desire to express to Generals, Officers, and Soldiers my acknowledgments of their loyal aid, their brilliant valour on the field, their resignation under privations, and it is with a broken heart that I separate myself from you.

“ At the Quarters-General of the

Ban St. Martin, the 28th October, 1870.

(Signed) BAZAINE.

“ The General of Division,

Chef d'état Major-General,

L. JARRAS.”

As may be well imagined, such a document was not favourably reviewed. Firstly, the vanity of the Marshal in classing himself with Masséna, Kléber, and St. Cyr was very freely commented upon. Possibly General Etc. and himself might be on a par, but to rank himself with these brilliant generals was more than could be silently borne, and the parallels drawn were not quite so flattering as the Marshal would have liked to have had them. Then the old three-lines-of-fortification bugbear was very generally laughed at. We had discussed that question

so frequently before, and it had been so long since (for three or four days is a very long time in a state of siege) consigned to *Bogdomy*, that its revivification was almost humorous, excepting that for a Marshal of France to tell so direct and needless a lie was rather startling. Of course, upon the question of the destruction of arms, there was a difference of opinion. If we had been conquered by fair fighting, then we all agreed that it would perhaps—yet even then many said “perhaps”—be wrong to destroy the victor’s spoils; but to place their preservation on the supposition that the Prussians would render either them or Metz up again to France was transcendental. We never thought the Marshal had so low an opinion of the reasoning faculty of his officers as that.

As for his broken heart we were on the whole glad to hear of it—it favoured the supposition of his having one; but no one cared very much if he had or if he hadn’t. It was the general supposition that Marshal Bazaine was a judicious combination of stomach and pocket, and so long as both were filled, the other functionaries of the human frame didn’t matter much. Brains he had not shown the slightest indications of in this campaign, but why should he? he could not get much higher; and as for his heart, that heart which never prompted him once to visit an ambulance, to make one personal sacrifice, to listen to one appeal from those who asked for the returns of our dead, missing, or wounded, to aid one charity, or to undergo any one of those privations he so much thanked other people for resigning themselves to—why, it didn’t

really matter whether it were broken or whole ; in either case it would not spoil his appetite, so the Marshal's Bulletin No. 12 was dismissed with scorn and very bitter sorrow.

This was our "Dies Iræ." To-morrow was to be our day of mourning, and to-night some of us wished to leave before the last act of the tragedy was played out. To-morrow might be too late. The clocks were striking midnight. We went by devious ways to a point already determined upon by those who had made up their minds for one last chance. It might, indeed, be a last chance, but at any rate it would not be captivity in Prussia. Whatever the next world might be they felt assured if it were as good as they hoped to find it, there would be no Prussians there, but then you see they were Catholics, and didn't believe very much as to the future comforts of heretics, and by a popular fiction all Prussians were supposed to be Protestants.

There were about a hundred of us met. Many they said had gone out before, some by daylight, to the places appointed outside the city. It did not do for too many to go together, and of those assembled here a few would stay, as they were by no means sure of the others. Alas ! that was truly French, and that same feeling has ruined everything. The others, and I with them, passed through the gates of the town, although they were closed ; at such a time to such as us sympathy was an "Open Sesame." No other *consigne* was needed. We tramped along the muddy road to

Grigy. Here and there a few stragglers joined us. Where there were to have been hundreds we found tens, and of those tens but few bore arms. We crept down to the dark wood, and there all hope was lost. At four metres apart stood the Prussian outposts; to proceed was suicide, to come back was shame. We chose the shame, and the last night I entered Metz was one of weeping and tears, and we clasped each other's hands in silence, knowing that for many of us it would be for the last time we should share each other's hopes or divide each other's sorrows. Many a friend did I leave there whom I had marched with where many another friend was left, and with a few hurried words we parted at that Porte des Allemands whose very name seemed an augury of ill.

It was now the morning of Metz's last day as a town of France. Already we heard the long lines of disarmed French troops assembling for their sad march into the land of captivity. The last bugle-calls of the outposts sounded in the still dawn as the men returned to lay down those arms that to-morrow would serve their foe, and nothing now was left us but to await in gloomy silence the entrance of those men who by their superior numbers and their superior organisation had crushed the weakly-led army of the Rhine.

The 29th of October was as black in weather as it was in history. Thick masses of dark clouds rolled over us, and the rain came down in torrents; but I summoned courage, physical and moral, to go out to that

Porte Mazelle by which the Germans were to enter, and which alone, by the terms of capitulation, was to be occupied by them. At twelve they were to enter, but it was one before they came. Meanwhile in one continued stream kept passing on those soldiers of France whom their generals had condemned to leave the city they were supposed to defend. Clean, smart, healthy-looking, with six days' provisions in their haversacks, followed by fourgons laden to overflowing with bread, with bacon, and with wine. This so-called famished army presented a strong and favourable contrast to the mud-stained, camp-soiled, hungry-looking men who now marched on Metz. Out through the gates now go long files of carts laden with those peasant women and children who more than two months ago I saw entering Metz, nor do their carts bear them alone; sacks full of bacon, of flour, of other provisions, are there, forming a commentary on our foodless condition as set forth by the Marshal. The women are healthy and fat-looking, and attract gazes of wonder and admiration from the Prussian troops. Just as these approach us issues a procession of four funerals, three of them children, for the little ones died fast, and there is hardly a baby born in Metz during these sad seventy days yet living. The third is the funeral of an officer who died just in time to avoid this sorrow. The Prussians salute the hearse as it passes. Their dark uniform seemed most mournfully appropriate, and the black and white standard they bore was so furled that its black half was only visible, and resembled the banner

of a mute. As they approached the gate their wonderful discipline explained the secret of their victory. Steady, resolute, unimpassioned, not a sign of exultation was visible on their faces. At a word they scaled the slippery glacis, and ranged themselves with mathematical precision along the rampart's crest. Their officers marched in front, and keenly scanned the fosse; no risk of any surprise would they run, and possession of an unarmed town was taken with as much caution as though its occupiers had formed the grand' guard of an impending battle-field. First the *tête du pont* was passed, the barbican was reached, and the same minute surveillance was used. Lastly the town's gate was entered with even greater precaution, and at twenty minutes past one o'clock the first Prussian foot fell within the city of Metz-la-Pucelle —Pucelle, alas! no more. Who amongst us, I wondered, would live to see the day the last Prussian left it! Possession was quietly taken of the Place Mazelle; it was rapidly disencumbered of partly-eaten baggage waggons that the few last horses of the military train had half devoured. Thus was performed the last act of this sad tragedy.

Even after this did the inhabitants still hope that the Germans would observe scrupulously the terms of the capitulation, and occupy but the forts and the Porte Mazelle. This, like so many other of our hopes in Metz, was but shortlived. This was the fashion in which all doubtful questions were to be translated in favour of the French. At four o'clock in the afternoon they marched

through the closely-closed-shuttered streets, playing in the sad and silent city joyous and victorious German tunes. They entered the Place d'Armes, and there the first object that they saw was the black-draped statue of that grand old Fabert who, as the inscription on the pedestal recalls, would, "rather than yield up a place entrusted to him by his sovereign, place in the breach himself, his family, his goods, and all he had, and never hesitate a moment." Four solid, black bodies of infantry, whose burnished helmets glistened in the fading light, marched and countermarched with wondrous precision in the square, clearing it of the few idle gazers of the lower classes who had gathered there. Hardly any but a few blouse wearers were there, excepting such as I, whose duty brought them to the spot. They waited long, and played again those tunes the very sound of which cut deep wounds into the heart of every loyal Frenchman. At last there came the new Commandant who holds a Teuton rule over this French city. There was more music, there were more evolutions, and the Germans took possession of the chief public offices. By this time it was dark ; the square was emptied ; the deed was done.

Metz was Prussian.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### HOMEWARDS.

*October 30th.*

THE deed was done, and I felt very sad and sorrowful as I turned out of the now empty Place d'Armes. The strains from the bands of the retiring Prussians came echoing through the otherwise silent streets. The cathedral towered up black and sulkily into the damp dark air, and the draped statue of old Fabert looked down funereally from its pedestal upon me. I had lived long—it seemed to me very long—in Metz; I had shared the hopes and the fears, and had suffered from all the deliria which had fallen on her citizens, and consequently I shared in their grief and depression, and this day's doings had made me very sad at heart. Weary and depressed I sought a friend, till yesterday an officer in that dishonoured army which was now on its "via dolorosa" to the Rhine. He longed to know how this last deed was done, but prudence, his personal grief, and his personal safety necessitated his remaining in seclusion, so, as a civilian, he was now living in an hotel, and there I sought him. The entrance hall was crowded, strange German voices



growled out bad French everywhere, the unwilling host did all he could to persuade them that there was no room for them—room they would have; at last I heard a voice a little less guttural: “Confound it!” was the expression that voice took. An Englishman, I thought. I looked, and I was sure; immediately, I volunteered my assistance, and then came the question, “Why, who are you? Are you Robinson of the *Manchester Guardian*?—the long lost Robinson?” I confessed to being that descendant of the immortal Crusoe. Pulling out a pocket-book, my welcome countryman and *confrère* exclaimed, “I’m Maclaine — Captain Maclaine of the *Times*, and have been carrying a letter for you about for a month; here it is.” Need I say how I welcomed him after that! I carried him off to my hotel, gave him half the present possession of, and the whole prospective interest in, my room, and introduced him to horseflesh. What more could I do?—what less, rather? Had he not brought me a letter, the first since I had left England? and although he had come in with the Prussians, my heart relented towards him, and soon we had a little coterie of “our own correspondents” and red-cross knights from England. They were as anxious to hear all about the inside of Metz as I was to hear all about the outside of it—of all the strange doings that had occurred all the world over since the middle of August. In this exchange of news most of the night passed away, and then came the question how I must pass away, too, for get away at once I must.

Before, however, describing my personal troubles, let us take one last look at the Marshal. He, these last two days, has still been rolling cigarettes and playing billiards at the Ban St. Martin, dictating from time to time the names of those whom he would reward by the legion of honour, and those whom he would punish by introducing to the consideration of the *Prevôt-Général* of the Prussian army. Amongst the first were those who were to form his last escort; it was the price to be paid for such a service, but in this list were also the names of many others whose services were now, too tardily, acknowledged. Of these, none more deserved what should have been an honour, than M. Buchotte, a citizen of Metz, a member of its town council, a man who had served the town in all the ways a good wise citizen could in such a time of trouble, and who had long won the right to wear that ribbon and that cross the which, if worn by only such as he, would truly be a Legion of Honour; his virtual and virtuous right to it was acknowledged long ago, but the idleness of the Marshal put off and put off his legal title to it until the very day on which was signed the fatal deed of capitulation. That date dishonoured it. "I never will," said he, "receive a decoration whose *brévet* is signed with the same ink that served for the capitulation of the army and my native city." Such was the horror that the fatal date brought with it. M. Buchotte's refusal does him much more honour than the red rosette would have done, for that date will cause each *brévet* which bears it to be

regarded with a strong suspicion. Amongst that other list of names—that list of recommendations to the good offices of the Prussian Prevôt—I am told, appeared my own; why, I cannot tell. I had done all I could to ameliorate the condition of things and people in Metz. I can only suppose that it was feared I knew too much. It is true I was associated with the hated press; but no end could be served by detaining me a few days in Prussian durance, beyond the paltry gratification of a small ill feeling, and surely that was not worth gratifying.

Information of this was brought me on the evening of that same night,—that black Friday, the 29th, so sad a night in Metz. The Marshal sent the list away as he entered his carriage to escape to Corny, the Prussian head-quarters. Escorted by those whose services he had bought, he went his way through the village of Longeville, through Moulins, through the once flourishing little town of Ars to Corny, receiving on his route a running fire of execration. The women used their lethal weapon nimbly, and cursed him for a coward, as like a coward he fled. Deeming him vile, they pelted his escort, failing him, with everything that was vile and missive. “Where are our husbands? where are our sons? Is it for such as this and such as you that they have died?” They shrieked at him, and cursed him as only women bereft of sons and husbands can curse. Yet there is very little doubt but that he dined comfortably that night at Corny and, may be, rolled his cigarettes and played billiards

afterwards as though nothing had happened. Poor head of a broken man!

His escort had hardly splashed themselves out of sight before the news was brought me by the secretary of one of the Generals who had seen the list, that I had better get away from Metz at once. At first I thought it was "blague," that he was endeavouring to play a practical joke upon me, but he so earnestly assured me of the truth of the fact he had stated, that I was compelled in spite of my astonishment, to believe him, and as he mentioned two other names on the list, I thought quite advisable to take his counsel. It was fortunate for me that I did so, for since I left, the owners of those two names have both been, and I fear that one yet is, in prison.

Early, therefore, on the morning of the 30th I was astir making those arrangements my departure necessitated. I found a few depressed citizens gathered together at the corners of the streets reading the last act of the municipal council. Where and when this act was done I cannot say. No place is mentioned; the Hôtel de Ville was in the hands of the Prussians; it bears no date but it must have been done on that day no true Marseillais needs any adventitious record of; it is a date branded with a burning shame in his city's annals, but it was signed by the Mayor and each member of that dolorous Municipal Council.

This was the last wail of sorrow of

*“ The Mayor and the Members of the Municipal  
Council to their Fellow-citizens.*

“ Dear Fellow-citizens, — True courage consists in supporting an evil without those agitations which but serve to aggravate it. Afflicted as we all are by that which has fallen upon us to-day, not one of us can reproach himself with having failed even for a single day to do his duty. Let us not present the wretched spectacle of intestine strife, nor furnish any pretext for future violence or for new and worse misfortunes. The thought that this trial will only be a transient one, and that we have assumed none of the responsibility to the country or to history attached to it, should be in such a moment our consolation. We confide the common security to the wisdom of the population.”

It is filled with the spirit of the municipal mind everywhere—a hatred of responsibility; the Municipality of Metz would have none of it; and this they accepted as a consolation! Had they taken a firmer stand whilst there yet was time, they might have fanned the flame of Patriotism to a higher pitch, and Metz might have had a more glorious page in history; but then they were only common councilmen, and we must not be too hard upon them; moreover, as I have before remarked, they were rather Scotch, and the spirit of Prudence is breathed out in harmonious admixture with that of true councildom. Certainly human nature is very much alike. We turned from our dear fellow-citizens' address to see what our

victorious enemies had to say, for the Appendix to the Protocol referred to in Article 6 of that fatal document was just being affixed to the walls, and everyone felt anxious about his fate. This was what we read there:-

“ PLACE DE METZ.

“ *Appendix to the Military Convention relative to the Town and its Inhabitants.*

“ Article 1. All civil employés and functionaries attached to the army or the fortress, and at present in Metz, are permitted to leave it if they desire to do so and to take with them their personal property.

“ Article 2. No one, whether belonging to the National Guard of the town, or other National Guard seeking refuge in Metz, need inquiet himself either for his religious or political opinions, or for the part he has taken in the defence of the place, or the assistance he has furnished to the garrison.

“ Article 3. The sick and wounded left in the town will receive every attention.

“ Article 4. The families of members of the garrison will be allowed to leave Metz, taking all their personal baggage with them. The furniture and other effects of the members of the garrison obliged to be left at Metz will neither be pillaged nor confiscated, but will be restored to them six months after the declaration of peace, or after their owners are set at liberty.

“ Article 5. The Commandant of the Prussian army

will endeavour to prevent any injury accruing to the persons or the property of the inhabitants of Metz. Respect will also be paid to all departmental or communal property, as well as to that belonging to commercial societies, civil or religious corporate bodies, and hospitals or other charitable establishments. No change will be effected in the laws or rights of property, which will remain the same as on the day of capitulation.

“Article 6. To give effect to this last article, it is stipulated that all the local administrations, societies, or corporations above named, shall preserve their archives, books, papers, and documents which are now in their possession. Notaries, solicitors, and other agents may preserve their papers.

“Article 7. The archives, books, and papers belonging to the State will generally remain in the town, and on the re-establishment of peace all those documents relating to the territory then restored to France will be remitted to France. All current accounts or matters in litigation will remain in the hands of those appointed solicitors or agents who at present have charge of them, excepting such as are referred to in the preceding paragraph.

“Done at Frescaty the 27th October, 1870.

“(Signed)                      JARAS.                      STIEHLE.

“Pour copie conforme.

“Le Général de Division,

Commandant Supérieur de Metz,

“F. COFFINIÈRES.”

These terms were looked upon as generally reassuring. The National Guard was sensibly relieved, and the members of the garrison somewhat satisfied as to the state of their property; but six months after the declaration of peace seemed a long while ahead, and Prussian confiscations were promiscuous; still it was the evidence of possession which they feared they might have forfeited and so they were relieved. The prospect of certain territory being ceded to France, set forth in the first paragraph of the last article, was not consoling, and the *sacrés*, uttered as it was read, formed a long-continued hiss. Still Metz rather congratulated herself that the terms were no harder:—if they would be adhered to; but after the rude shock their faith in the literal observance of articles had suffered yesterday, they were doubtful. If all these articles were to be observed with the same exactitude as the one relating to the occupation of Port Mozelle, it really did not matter much what they said. There was, however, Prussian beef and mutton, and Prussian cheese in the market-place. Even more wonderful still, there were rumours of coming salt, and these things had a tranquillising effect upon the people. Thalers were already in circulation in the shops, and the thrifty Messins were receiving some sort of consolation. All these things obtruded themselves on my notice whilst seeking for horses to take me away. Few indeed, were the adieux I dare make; it would not do to let it be known that I was thus hurriedly taking my departure, and that departure I was nervously anxious to



take. The French authorities were to give way to Prussian ones at mid-day. I seized this moment of interregnum for my escape. The French authorities had been deposed; the Prussian ones were not yet appointed; and so, between the two, I slipped away. Under existing circumstances, I must throw some veil of mystery over this portion of my narrative. I did not come alone, and the interests of others preclude my describing too minutely our escape. We drove out of the town in open day, past the Prussian sentries, now mounted at the gates, through long lines of Prussian troops marching into Metz, and passing, I am sorry to say, many a drunken French soldier. In that short ride I saw more drunken soldiers than I had done all the time of the siege. Despair, small rations, and disgrace made them desperate, and they took to drinking. They had received four days' provisions and plenty of money as they were told off from their last muster. There was no need to leave more money than necessary in the Treasury, and as the Commander-in-Chief took his pay, both as Senator and Marshal, with him, all were paid liberally. The provisions they gave away, and as they feared the money would be taken from them, they took the first opportunity to fall out from yesterday's disgraceful march, seeking refuge and distraction at any village *cabaret* or German *marketender* they could find. Careless of consequences, they reeled about the road in dull, sullen, sodden drunkenness. What became of them they did not care, and I don't know. Past the Fort des

Bordes we went down through Borny, and out of which were our French lines at Grigy. It was a sad drive for all of us; each spot was marked by so many recollections of disappointed hopes, the memory of so many dear friends, that our way seemed haunted. Along the road we went right through the Prussian camp we go. "Hurrah! Paris is taken!" an officer shouts out as he rides up. I'm obliged to say "Hurrah!" too, and seem rejoiced to hear it; and to my companions the news was sad and still. We thought, in our great despair just then, that it might be true; but it seems there were as many canards flying about the Prussian camp as about ours in Metz. We look out everywhere for those three strong lines of fortifications we were told had been raised against us, but we look for that chain of formidable forts which we were said to encircle Metz, and we look in vain. Some slight earthworks, not a mounted gun,—and that was all,—nothing to have withheld us here. Afterwards when some thirty of us reassembled at Luxembourg, I asked from them what they had seen? what "veritable fortifications" they had passed? what difficult earthworks or formidable positions they had encountered, and with a tearful curse they one and all told me, various had been their routes, but one obstacle had they met with. The detaining force was where all along,—at least, as late as we had suspected it to be,—in the plotting brain of Marshal Bazaine.

There were two large camps of men in front of us, but they were the disarmed soldiers of the Army of the Rhine.

Standing disconsolate, ankle-deep in mud, wet and without shelter, spiritless and silent, they looked so different from that army when I first saw it, that the very sight formed a sad commentary on the war; a few, a very few Prussian soldiers sufficed to guard them, and the last view we took of those brave men was one which filled us all with gloom and sorrow, and as we floated, rather than drove, into the lake of mud which isolated the station at Courcelles, I fear very much that our muttered opinions of French generals would not have pleased either them or their Prussian officers who looked so askance and so inquisitively at us as we alighted. Impudence and audacity enabled us to get away, and we started for Saarbrück. The train was laden with French prisoners and sick Prussians, and we rejoiced greatly when we entered that town where this disastrous campaign began. Here we deemed it advisable to lie perdu until pursuit might pass us. We argued that they were sure not to look for us so near at hand, so for six and thirty hours we waited there—with some trepidation, it is true, but this did not prevent us from making the best of our situation. It was quite late when we reached the little town, but late as it was we must eat, and then we had a true enjoyment. If there ever was an unalloyed earthly bliss I do think it was those mutton chops we had at Guepratt's Hotel. After two months' horse, mutton assumes a beatified quality; we ate and praised it, and then we ate again. Mutton chops again? exclaims the astonished waiter, who runs over a list of

other, to him, more appetising viands. Mutton chops again? It was still mutton chops, that evening was sacred to mutton chops, and it was only when the reception of more food became a physical impossibility, that we ceased to call for mutton chops. Never before nor never since has it been my fate to encounter such exquisite mutton chops.

All my notes and papers at Metz having been frequently subjected to police inspection, I had to make them very brief and only intelligible to myself; I therefore seized the opportunity of my detention here to write them out a little more legibly, and on the 1st of November we started for Luxembourg. Up the beautiful valley of the Saar we went, through a lovely peaceful looking country. Here and there a red-crossed flag told of hospital and convalescent home, but beyond this no sign of war was visible. Cattle grazed contentedly in the fields, and the bleating of sheep in our ears was a pleasant and unwonted music. Peasants in festive attire were going to picturesque little village churches, and I thought of those at home who would at this time be listening to those beatitudes of Him who came to preach peace on earth which to-day would be read in England.

The contrast to all I had recently gone through was great, and the thankfulness with which I found myself safe over the border was even greater. As I am writing these pages there comes to us the complaint of M Bismarck, on behalf of Prussia, at the permission accorded to French officers to effect their escape from Metz through

that little duchy. Now, I never saw any one there who could be known as a French officer ; there were some thirty met me there, it is true, but they were all of them in civil costume, mostly disguised as peasants, some as merchants, some as servants to others ; their papers all bore out their supposititious character, and some of these papers were even signed by the Prussian authorities themselves. All these officers had to pass through the Prussian lines round Metz, and through the gates guarded by Prussian sentries, and it is a rather large stretch of injustice to attempt to punish Luxembourg for these sins committed by the Prussians themselves. When, however, the lust of conquest once enters into the heart of armed men, it matters little what may be the pretext for its gratification. There is a Prussian border to Luxembourg. I and my companions crossed it. Why, then, did not they stop them there ? The border of Lorraine is virtually Prussian ; why were not these brave men, who preferred to risk that death they were threatened with to the disgrace of such a captivity, arrested there ? Again, there were Prussian officers in the same train with us— ay, at times, in the same carriage with us, on our way to Bruxelles, there, possibly, to play the noble part of spies. Surely, if Prussian officers in plain clothes may travel through this little territory, Frenchmen may do the same. There was no outward sign that any of these travellers were officers and soldiers. Of course, people might think that they were disguised ; they were, in some cases, asked for their papers, but as they committed

no overt acts against the laws of the duchy, the duch had neither the right nor the power to arrest them. She was strictly neutral, and let both French and Prussian subjects pass freely without asking any impertinent questions. What more could she do? An evening pleasant wander about the quaint old town, the pleasure enhanced by an unwonted sense of security, brought the All Saints' day to a close. I need not describe the Grand Ducal town,—are not all its beauties expatiated on at length in Murray? but I enjoyed its quiet streets and its picturesque suburbs immensely. Next morning I started for Brussels—Ostend—London—Home!

THE END.

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