

CHAPTER VI

THE FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR

[1870-1871 A.D.]

The catastrophe of 1870 seemed to those who witnessed it to tell of more than the vileness of an administration; in England, not less than in Germany, voices of influence spoke of the doom that had overtaken the depravity of a sunken nation; of the triumph of simple manliness, of God-fearing virtue itself, in the victories of the German army. There may have been truth in this; yet it would require a nice moral discernment to appraise the exact degeneracy of the French of 1870 from the French of 1854 who humbled Russia, or from the French of 1859 who triumphed at Solferino; and it would need a very comprehensive acquaintance with the lower forms of human pleasure to judge in what degree the sinfulness of Paris exceeds the sinfulness of Berlin. Had the French been as strict a race as the Spartans who fell at Thermopylæ, as devout as the Tyrolese who perished at Sadowa, it is quite certain that, with the numbers which took the field against Germany in 1870, with Napoleon III at the head of affairs and the actual generals of 1870 in command, the armies of France could not have escaped destruction.

The main cause of the disparity of France and Germany in 1870 was in truth that Prussia had had from 1862 to 1866 a government so strong as to be able to force upon its subjects its own gigantic scheme of military organisation in defiance of the votes of parliament and of the national will. — FFFFF.^b

It might be asked if any nation has the right to say to another nation: "You shall not place such and such a person at your head because it is contrary to my interests." Doubtless not, if the principles of international right are strictly observed. But in practice this veto has been frequently exercised under the old régime and since the Revolution. It was used in 1815 against Napoleon and all the members of his family; in 1830 against the duke de Nemours, elected king of the Belgians by the congress. The imperial government was in fact justified in opposing an election that it considered dangerous to itself. But was this danger worth avoiding at the risk of war with Ger-

many? A serious question this, that could only be answered by casting a glance at the respective positions of the different European states.

The time had gone by when France was cited as the most considerable of the European powers, when the vast German Confederation represented only inert strength and when neither Italy nor Germany existed. The past sixteen years had seen many changes. United Italy and United Germany now formed two states of the first rank to the east and southeast of France, and Austria was no longer a counterbalance to the aggrandisement of Prussia. These changes were enough to engage the serious attention of the imperial government. France—with England in the north, Prussia in the east, and Italy in the southeast, three not very reliable friends—had had till now nothing to fear on her southwestern frontier; for it was not probable that in case of war Spain would go against her. Would matters be the same after the realisation of Prim's plan? With a Hohenzollern on the Spanish throne would not France be obliged in case of war to keep a standing army of one hundred thousand men at the foot of the Pyrenees? This contingency threatened the interests of France too much for her government to neglect making great efforts to obtain the abandonment of the candidature of Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern. Doubtless Napoleon III could have attained his end had he simply submitted the question to the great powers in diplomatic form, but it was evident from the beginning of this question that the emperor had two ends in view: that of suppressing the candidature, and that of obtaining a moral advantage over his adversary—in fact, of humiliating him.

THE PREPAREDNESS OF FRANCE

Was France as ready as the minister of war had said? The *Situation de l'Empire*, distributed among the deputies the 1st of November, 1869, is the best answer to this question.

This document gives the effective of the army on the 1st of October as follows: Home troops, 350,000 men; Algiers, 64,000 men; Papal States, 5,000 men; total, 434,000 men, from which must be deducted men absent for leave for various causes, about one hundred thousand of whom would reduce the available number to 325,000. The effective of the reserve was 212,000 in all, for the standing army, and the reserve 617,000 men. The mobile national guard, whose duty it was to defend the fortresses and the interior, included five classes, of which the effective amounted to 560,000 men. These added to the regulars and the reserves gave, on paper, a grand total of 1,200,000 fighting men, but on the lists were a large number of non-capables. The mobile national guards did not know how to use a gun, and the organisation of the staffs was in a very primitive stage. At the beginning of the campaign, the emperor could only rely on the standing army and the reserve, forming an effective of 547,000 men, according to the *Situation de l'Empire*; but according to the war office, 642,000, from which must be deducted the 75,000 young soldiers of the 1869 contingent who were not incorporated until the 1st of August.

The number of men at the immediate disposition of the government was 567,000: 393,500 with the flags; 61,000 ex-soldiers in the reserve having on an average four months' drill in the barracks, but who, for the greater part, had not had sufficient time to familiarise themselves with the handling of the *chassepot*.¹ The total of 393,500 men with the flag furnished by the war

[¹ The *chassepot* was a breechloading rifle which had been recently introduced.²]

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office had been formally contested by *Le Constitutionnel* on the morning of the plebiscite. It was in vain that the government organ, *Le Peuple Français*, invoked against the assertions of its fellow journal "our admirable rules of accounts which do not admit of fictitious expenses figuring on 'the budget.'" Very little trust was placed in these imaginary rules when it was seen that immense sums, such as those expended for experiments in the workshops of Meudon, and for the construction of official residences for marshals at the centres of the great military commands, had been spent without leaving any trace in the budget. The government cut short the polemic between *Le Constitutionnel* and *Le Peuple Français* on this delicate question. But it was none the less proved, even in admitting the exactitude of the ministerial statement as to the number of men with the flag, that the total number of forces that France could bring into the field in the first months of the war would not exceed 567,000, from which it was necessary to deduct 36,000 absent from the ranks, including those undergoing punishment, those in the remount department, with the ambulance corps, 13,000 of the armed police, 28,000 in military depots, 78,000 in garrison in the fortresses, 50,000 in Algiers—that is, 231,000 for the interior and Algiers. There remained 336,000 men to oppose the 500,000 whom Prussia could bring into the field at the beginning of hostilities. Nevertheless, Marshal Lebœuf continually repeated that the army was quite ready. This inexplicable and fatal assurance caused despair to those who knew the truth and who vainly did all they could to make it known.^c

The eminent field-marshal Von Moltke^d estimates the French army as not more than about three hundred thousand men, who intended to make surprise attacks on various portions of Prussia, but who were prevented by impossibilities of transportation, and compelled to fight on their own soil and in great disorganisation and unfitness for the field. He sets the German force at a total of 484,000, of which 100,000 were not for the first three weeks available owing to the lack of transportation facilities. Von Moltke describes his guiding principles as a determination to keep his forces compact and numerically superior wherever engaged, and to strike for the heart of France—Paris.

Fuller details of the Prussian side of the war will be found in a later volume on German history. The swift movement of the unprepared French troops was not permitted to upset Von Moltke's plans, nor the first minor French success to cause any discouragement in the great victory planned so long and with a scientific completeness that has since remained as the model for modern warfare.^a

OPENING OF THE WAR (JULY, 1870)

On the 20th of July, Ollivier read before the legislature the declaration of war. The enthusiasm had already begun to abate. The majority remained silent. In the evening a large crowd of men descended to the place de la Bastille, crying: "*Vive la paix!*" A struggle occurred on the boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle between this party and the crowd who were crying "*À Berlin!*" The police intervened and made several arrests.

The emperor conferred the regency on the empress as in 1859 at the commencement of the war with Italy. But under what different circumstances! In 1859 Napoleon III had left the Tuileries in an open carriage in the midst of an enthusiastic, ardent crowd who greeted him with acclamations for the first and last time since the re-establishment of the empire. In 1870, on July 28th, he left St. Cloud, going round Paris without entering it, and taking

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the route to Metz. He dared not at this solemn moment face the people, who, he pretended, had forced him into the war. He was even then out of the fight, in spirit as well as in body, and seemed to have a presentiment that he would never return.^e

Engagements between outposts and scouting parties had already begun on July 19th. They were particularly severe at Saarbrücken on August 2nd, where 1,000 men (1 battalion of fusiliers and 3 squadrons of ulans) were stationed under Lieutenant-Colonel von Pestel. In order to reconnoitre the strength of the enemy and to be able to send a telegram of victory to the impatient Parisians, Napoleon commanded the advance of General Frossard's corps and began on the 2nd of August the so-called battle of Saarbrücken with 30,000 men against 1,000. The latter were commanded on that day by General Count Gneisenau. Napoleon himself and his son were present during this engagement, Napoleon desiring to judge for himself the superiority of the chassépots and the effectiveness of the mitrailleuses. The French, being massed on the heights of Spicheren which surround the left side of the valley of the Saar, opened fire with 23 guns on the unfortified town and the troops began to advance. General Gneisenau withdrew in order, after three hours' resistance, to the right bank of the Saar, and went into bivouac several miles northwest of Saarbrücken, having placed a small force at the town of Sankt Johann, and at the railway station. Towards evening General Frossard entered Saarbrücken,¹ but soon returned to the heights, not daring to venture pursuit. The Prussians lost in this battle, in which mainly the artillery took part, 4 officers and 79 men; the French, 6 officers and 80 men. A telegram announcing victory was immediately sent off to Paris, telling of the "baptism of fire" of the prince imperial and his wonderful calmness and presence of mind. Paris was insane with joy, the press adding to the general exultation by fantastic perorations, describing the army of the Rhine as already before Mainz, and greeting this "glorious military achievement as a sign of the beginning of a new period in history."

The dream was soon at an end; on the 4th of August the crown prince of Prussia crossed the French borders and attacked Weissenburg on the little river Lauter. Here stood the advance-guard of MacMahon, General Abel Douay's division defending the town and the well-fortified Gaisberg with 11 battalions and 4 batteries. The town was carried by combined Prussian and Bavarian batteries, and the Gaisberg by 16 batteries composed of Prussians alone. General Douay was killed. The loss on the French side was about 1,200 dead and wounded, and 1,000 not wounded taken prisoners, among whom were 30 officers. What was left of the French contingent retreated to Wörth. The Germans lost 91 officers and 1,460 men. The regiment of royal grenadiers alone lost 23 officers and 329 men. The greatest prize captured was one French cannon.²

THE BATTLES OF WÖRTH AND SPICHEREN

On the 5th of August MacMahon occupied Wörth and began to fortify the heights to the west of Saarbrücken as well as the villages of Fröschweiler

¹ The town was left in ruins; the Germans remembered this later on to justify their incendiarism.—DELORE.^e

² Aside from the moral effect of this real German victory, the Lauter line was thenceforward in their hands and the door of Alsace wide open. The death of the intrepid Abel Douay also produced a most profound impression over the whole country.—PONDOIS.^f

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and Elsasshausen. Here he intended to repulse the advance of the crown prince, which he expected about the 7th of August. In order to be able to do this he tried to add to his force that of General Felix Douay stationed at Belfort and Mulhausen, and that of General Faily stationed at Bitsch. But only one division of the former arrived in time; and of the other, the division sent to his aid arrived on the battle-field on the evening of August 6th, after MacMahon had been defeated, and it could only be used in partially covering his retreat. This left MacMahon with only 45,000 men to oppose to the entire army of the crown prince.¹

It had been the intention of the crown prince not to force the decisive battle before the 7th of August, because he could not make a concerted attack with his combined five corps before that time. But when on the forenoon of the 6th of August the advance-guard of the fifth corps became entangled in a most violent engagement with the enemy, while a Bavarian corps on the right and the 11th corps rushed to the rescue, there seemed no alternative but to continue the battle and throw as many troops as possible into the menaced positions. In this manner the decisive battle of Wörth resulted from a skirmish of scouts of the advance-guard, in which gradually every other corps or division except the Baden division took part. The battle raged most fiercely round the well-fortified village of Fröschweiler after Wörth and Elsasshausen had been taken. After this also had fallen and the attack of the French cuirassiers had been repulsed, MacMahon's army, panic-stricken, fled—part to the passes of the Vosges, part towards Strasburg and Bitsch. The fugitives were closely pursued on this and the following day. Many were the trophies of the day: 200 officers and 9,000 men taken prisoners, 1 eagle, 4 Turco banners, 28 cannon, 5 mitrailleuses, 23 wagons of guns and other arms, 125 other wagons, 1,193 horses, and the military chest containing 222,000 francs in gold. About 6,000 men were killed on the French side. The Germans lost 489 officers and 10,153 men. Among the severely wounded was Lieutenant-General von Bose, commander of the 11th corps; while Lieutenant-General von Kirchbach, commander of the 5th corps, had a less serious wound. On the battle-field where the victorious army bivouacked arose during the night the melody of the hymn, "*Nun danket Alle Gott*," sung by thousands of voices and played on hundreds of instruments.

The fugitive Marshal MacMahon arrived with part of his army in Zabern on the morning of August 7th and marched thence to Châlons, whither also the corps of Generals Douay and Faily were drawn. A new army was to be formed here. Northern Alsace lay defenceless before the victorious army of the crown prince. The Baden division was ordered to proceed to Strasburg. The cavalry of that division had already taken Hagenau on the 7th of August; on the 8th and 9th of August the whole division was massed before the citadel of Strasburg and the commander, General Uhrich of Pfalzburg, asked to surrender. Upon his refusal a special beleaguering corps were formed, comprising the Baden division, one Prussian reserve division, and the *Garde-Landwehr* division. They were placed under the command of General Werder and closely surrounded the city from the 14th of August. On the 8th of August the crown prince withdrew with the remainder of the third army, and marched through the undefended passes of the Vosges. He also had the small neighbouring fortifications of Lichtenberg and Lützelstein taken by the Württemberg troops, and that of Marsal by the Bavarians; Bitsch and Pfalz-

¹ According to Canonge he had less than 88,000 against the crown prince's 115,000.

burg were blockaded. He entered Nancy on August 16th where he remained several days awaiting definite news of events on the Saar and Moselle.

A second victory was achieved on August 6th, at Spicheren. This battle was also not the result of strategic manœuvres, but of a misunderstanding. According to Moltke's plan, Frossard's corps, stationed on the heights of Spicheren, was to be forced to retreat by a simultaneous attack in the rear by the 1st and 2nd armies at Forbach and Saargemünd. Should it resist, it was to be crushed by the overwhelming forces. When, in the forenoon of August 6th, generals Kameke and Rheinbaben of the 1st and 2nd armies



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arrived with their troops, relying on the reports of the scouting troops that Frossard's corps was retreating, they, wishing to harm the defeated army as much as possible, made an attack, drove the enemy back to the steep, wooded heights of Spicheren, and saw only then that they had the whole of the hostile corps before them. As they did not hold it compatible with honour to surrender the territory once taken and to retreat to the other bank of the Saar, Kameke's division had to contend for three hours against three divisions of the French, which had a strong artillery and were favoured by a remarkably good position. Not until three o'clock did reinforcements of the two armies gradually arrive on the battle-field, after which twenty-seven thousand Germans fought against forty thousand French. Finally several battalions were successful in climbing the heights and even bringing twelve cannon with them. The determination and endurance of the soldiers was wonderful. The Brandenburg regiment of grenadiers alone lost thirty-five officers and 771 men. The battle seemed to centre at the summit of the heights. Suddenly Glümer's division advanced on the left wing and completely routed it, menacing the line of retreat of the enemy which now took place, culminating in panic in some instances. The corps withdrew by way of Forbach and Sankt Avold or by Saargemünd towards Metz.

Bazaine's corps, which was stationed only seven or eight miles from the scene of action, did the same, without coming to Frossard's assistance. In consequence of their unfavourable position the victors had greater losses than the vanquished. The Germans lost 223 officers and 4,648 men, while the French according to their own account lost 249 officers and 3,829 men, of whom about two thousand were captured.

The victors advanced on the 7th of August, seizing great quantities of provisions in Forbach, besieged Sankt Avold, making incursions almost as far as Metz. The army of Prince Charles also marched, traversing the Rhine Palatinate partly by way of Saarbrücken, partly *via* Saargemünd, in the direction of Metz. Receiving the news of this victory, the king of Prussia left Mainz on August 7th, arriving in Saarbrücken on the 9th, and in Sankt Avold on the 11th, and issued a proclamation to the French nation in which he

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declared that he was carrying on war with the army of France, not with her citizens, whose persons and belongings should be secure as long as they themselves refrained from practising hostilities against the German troops.¹

BAZAINÉ AT METZ

The general opinion in the circle of Marshal Bazaine and the emperor was that the idea of giving battle in Lorraine must be abandoned, the Moselle repassed as quickly as possible, MacMahon's army rallied, and Metz, reduced to its own forces, must stop a part of the German troops, while a mass of 250,000 men must oppose the invasion either at Verdun, Châlons, or even nearer to Paris. Would this plan, certainly a most prudent one, have saved France? Well-known German authorities are agreed in thinking it would have been very dangerous for Germany; that Moltke was much occupied in preventing it; that Marshal MacMahon and the general officers who commanded in Paris thought the plan good, and that in any case the danger of allowing the only French organised army to stay near Metz was obvious.

In the campaign we are entering on, the chief problem for the French was to recross the Moselle immediately and rapidly overtake the Prussians on the Verdun and Châlons route; for the Germans, to hinder the enemy's march, to cross the Moselle to the south of Metz, and to occupy the approach by which Marshal Bazaine must unite his troops with those of Marshal MacMahon.

Time was lost between the 11th and 13th discussing the possibilities of a battle or retreat. On the latter

date Bazaine took definite command and decided to retreat. But, whether owing to physical fatigue, incapacity, or criminal indifference, he did not devote all his energies to hastening the passage of the Moselle and the occupation of the Verdun route. The curious incertitude of his projects, his mysterious attitude, give support to the belief that he had determined from the beginning to allow himself to be blockaded near Metz. But with what object? Had he even an object?¹

It is difficult to understand the extreme prudence of the armies of Steinmetz and Frederick Charles (nephew of the king of Prussia) after the battle of Spicheren. It must be supposed that this easy victory surprised the Germans, and that at the beginning of the campaign the system of spies was



MARSHAL BAZAINE

[¹ The French view of his conduct is that he meant to keep this army intact in order that afterwards, in conjunction with the Germans as his accomplices, he might secure, with a fresh military *coup d'état*, the imperial rule over France. Whatever he may have meant, the Germans had no intention of intrusting the fortress of France to him.—KITCHIN.]

less well organised than at the end. It was only on the 13th of August that the grand army, with the king and Von Moltke, arrived at Herry, on the route from Falkenberg to Metz, and Prince Frederick Charles had scarcely left Saargemünd. The advance-guard of the first army bore, on the morning of the 14th, towards Pänge, and saw that the French army, in part at least, was still on the right bank of the Moselle. Then Von Moltke stopped the manoeuvres, which might have destroyed or at least annulled "the French army of the Rhine," as Bazaine's army was henceforth called.

On the 14th the passage of the French army began at last; generals Goltz and Manteuffel attacked Castagny's division of the 3rd corps, which was still at Colombey. But to all appearances the combat was favourable to the French, who attributed to themselves a victory which they called the battle of Borny or Pänge. The Germans, however, equally considered the victory theirs, an assumption founded on the fact that the French army had been delayed crossing the river. The battle on the 14th had allowed Frederick Charles to hasten his march, and in the evening his advance-guard reached Pont-à-Mousson—that is, the point where the second German army crossed the Moselle, a crossing made practicable by the incredible carelessness of the commander-in-chief, who had left the bridges standing. The Prussians had lost nearly 5,000 men; the French 3,600.

However, the French could now continue their march without interruption; it was not concluded till the morning of the 15th on the trunk road of the two Verdun routes. The staff did not know that two other roads forked off between Conflans and Rezonville. So the highroad from Metz to Gravelotte, between two rows of houses, was the scene of inextricable confusion; innumerable wagons encumbered the route and the emperor's household constantly interrupted the march. The uncertainty in commands had a very clear influence in these disastrous delays.

BATTLE OF MARS-LA-TOUR

Marshal Bazaine did not seem very anxious to leave Metz. All his movements were directed, greatly to the astonishment of those around him, so as to keep open communications with that city, and he did not seem to consider it possible that the Prussians would intercept his route to Verdun. The retreat was not really begun again until the morning of the 16th of August.

Marshal Bazaine had been warned of hostile parties towards Gorze, but he did not verify this, finding himself confirmed in his suspicion that the Prussians wanted to slip in between the French army and Metz. He therefore kept the imperial guard at Gravelotte, with General Bourbaki, so as to fortify his left, which still lay at Metz at Fort St. Quentin. The halt having been called, the generals De Forton and Murat of the advance-guard at Mars-la-Tour had prepared for breakfast, when suddenly shells fell in the midst of their men. The disorder caused by this surprise had a deplorable result; it allowed the Prussians, in spite of inferior numbers, to occupy both sides of the Verdun route. Then the Prussian corps, directed by Frederick Charles, turned back on Vionville, where Canrobert, by his energetic resistance, supported by Frossard, stayed the onslaught which gave to the Prussians possession of Mars-la-Tour and Tronville. But Marshal Canrobert, left to his own resources, was obliged to give up Vionville to the enemy. Nevertheless he remained unshaken at Rezonville.

The centre of the French army now found itself in a very favourable position, and towards three o'clock General Ladmirault succeeded in sweeping

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the Verdun route between Rezonville and Vionville. But at this moment several of Steinmetz's fresh divisions bore down on Gravelotte—that is, on Bazaine's left. The attack was so sudden and unforeseen that Marshal Bazaine ran personal risks and was only saved by a charge of his staff. Fearing to have to support the assault of an entire army; on this side, he entirely stopped the offensive movement on his right.

At half past four, two fresh corps, commanded by Frederick Charles in person, came out from Gorze in front of Rezonville, forming an assaulting line of eighty thousand men. The capture of Rezonville would have ended the battle and would have led to the dispersion of Bazaine's army—perhaps its capitulation; but, after three hours of repeated attacks, the Prussians renounced the idea of overthrowing Canrobert and Ladmirault, and at nine o'clock in the evening Prince Frederick Charles ordered the firing to cease.

The magnificent moonlight which succeeded this terrible twelve hours' battle shone on twenty thousand dead in a line of ten kilometres. The Prussians lost about ten thousand men; the French nearly as many. At Mars-la-Tour and at Tronville, the Germans held the road from Verdun to Fresnes-en-Woëvre; but, in spite of the mistakes of the head of the French army, they had not been able to concentrate a sufficient force to render their advantage decisive.

BATTLE OF ST. PRIVAT

But to carry out the necessary operations, which had become so difficult, General Bazaine required abnegation, audacity, and energy to inspire his soldiers, who were fatigued by a terrible battle but ready for any sacrifice when supported by the moral superiority of their chief.

The whole army was prepared to make a new move forward early on the 17th. The fatigues of the day sufficiently explain the inactivity of the night, although the Prussians were taking advantage of the respite to accumulate forces beyond Mars-la-Tour. It was, then, a cruel disappointment for the soldiers to be ordered to go back to Metz.

These positions, defended by 120,000 men of tried valour, by forts, and 500 cannon, were excellent with regard to Metz, but of little value if it was intended to take the first opportunity of leaving the town in order to escape the blockade—which was the enemy's evident intention. The 17th was occupied entirely in taking up their position, and the Prussians profited by it. The two German armies had thrown eight corps to the north of Mars-la-Tour, 180,000 infantry, 25,000 horses, and 700 cannon. Instead of rushing in pursuit of the French after the battle of the 16th, they had continued systematically and without disorder their flanking movement.

The inaction of Marshal Bazaine allowed them to continue their march until mid-day on the 18th, and when they attacked the French positions from Gravelotte to Roncourt, the army of the Rhine no longer had simply to keep open its last issuing point, but to reopen it in the midst of an innumerable mass of men. Marshal Bazaine did not believe in a serious attack. All that day he remained at headquarters without rejoining in the battle. He would not admit that the Prussians could so rapidly throw on his extreme right sufficient forces to obstruct the Montmédy road on the north.

But Marshal Moltke joined the king at Ste. Marie-aux-Chênes and concentrated all his energy on the position of St. Privat-la-Montagne, defended by Marshal Canrobert. There for two hours, from five to seven in the evening, the marshal repulsed most furious attacks from the Germans; thrusting them headlong from the heights and decimating, under William's very eyes, one of

the regiments of the Prussian guard—that of the queen—commanding on foot in the foremost ranks, and forcing Moltke himself to take command of the Pomeranian fusiliers to prevent a panic caused by the rout of a part of his cavalry. But, at seven o'clock, Marshal Moltke, anxious for the consequences which the prolonged resistance of Canrobert might bring about, united 90,000 men at St. Privat, and by a long and winding march led the 12th corps (Saxons) to Roncourt, northeast of the position occupied by the 6th corps of the French; 240 cannon immediately opened a terrible fire on these 25,000 heroic soldiers, who, since two o'clock, had supported the principal fire of the enemy. As so often happened in this unhappy war, ammunition was lacking to the 6th corps; Marshal Canrobert, however, remained at his post, and when the Saxons appeared on the northeast to combine their attack with that of the Prussians, they were obliged to support a terrible fight before seizing St. Privat.

Then the marshal was obliged to beat a retreat; Bazaine, informed of this, could not contain his astonishment. Instead of a battle of the advance-guard, he had sustained a complete defeat. He could hardly believe the reports, and gave orders to the Picard brigade of the imperial guard to go to the front. But it was too late. The necessary movement at last ordered could not prevent the Prussians from passing Amanvillers; they had, moreover, lost 20,000 men; the French 18,000, of whom 2,000 were made prisoners. Nothing now could hinder Marshal Moltke from interposing a circle of 250,000 men between the only organised army of France and the rest of the country.

This conclusion of the battles under the walls of Metz had another disastrous result—that of leaving MacMahon exposed to the crown prince's army, which was now free from all anxiety with regard to Bazaine.^f

CONFUSION AT PARIS

The news of the battles before Metz produced great confusion in Paris. On the 17th of August, following the advice of General Schmitz, the emperor appointed as governor of Paris General Trochu, who alone could prevent a revolt which threatened. A new army had been forming at Châlons, of which MacMahon took command. Count Palikao¹ wished MacMahon to join Bazaine, but MacMahon telegraphed the minister that he did not know where to find Bazaine and that he wished to remain at Châlons. The following day, on account of a false rumour, he suddenly left Châlons and took the route to Rheims.

A council of war took place at Rheims in which Rouher took part and insisted on the relief of the army at Metz. The empress and Palikao wished this; and in accordance with their desires MacMahon marched towards the Maas, where he would join Bazaine at Stenay if the latter could break through the enemy's chain. MacMahon, through delays and the failure to receive despatches, did not reach Stenay in time. The Germans had occupied it, and on the 27th and 29th engagements took place at Buzancy, Novart, and Voncq. The surprise of Faily at Beaumont on the 30th, and the retirement of Douay before the Bavarians on August 6th (causing him to be replaced by General Wimpffen), forced MacMahon to retreat to Sedan. On the hills about

[¹ This was General Cousin-Montauban who was born in 1796 and won his title from his victory over the Chinese at Palikao in 1860; he had become prime minister as well as minister of war on the fall of Ollivier, August 9th, 1870, due to the failure of the army. He kept his portfolio only until September 4th, when the disaster of Sedan overthrew the Second Empire.]

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Sedan, MacMahon drew up his forces, with Lebrun commanding the right at Bazeilles; Douay the left at Illy and Floing; Ducrot the centre at Moncelle and Daigny; and Wimpffen the reserve in the Garenne forest. Against these the Prussians and Bavarians advanced with full confidence.^a

THE BATTLE OF SEDAN (SEPTEMBER 1ST, 1870)

Facing all ways, that is, no way, the French army was apparently protected on the west by the opening on to the Maas which was soon to enclose its ruins. Towards Mézières and south of this road, the road to safety, there was nothing, not even a handful of cavalry, to watch the way so clearly indicated towards Donchery.

At half past six in the morning of September 1st, Marshal MacMahon, who had gone in the direction of Ja Moncelle, was severely wounded and had to relinquish the command. As he knew nothing of the orders given to General Wimpffen, he appointed Ducrot to replace him; the latter did not hear of his appointment until nearly half past seven.

The new commander-in-chief Ducrot declares that he "had received no instructions whatever from the marshal." He was in entire ignorance of his intentions—even of whether he intended to engage in a defensive or offensive battle. Having to decide at the soonest possible moment, he gave immediate orders for the army to concentrate on the plateau, whence it would march on Mézières. The retreat was to be carried out in echelon beginning from the right.

Between half past eight and nine in the morning, when in fact the movement was in course of execution, General Wimpffen claimed the chief command. Misled by the success of the 12th corps, which, nevertheless, was reduced to the defensive; not believing, from want of knowledge of the preceding days, in the serious danger that the flanking movements threatened, he stopped the retreat on Mézières. General Ducrot vainly emphasised the importance of retaining the plateau of Illy, when a question of life and death was at issue. He was unable to convince his interlocutor: "It is not a retreat we want, but a victory!"

The new commander-in-chief recalled the 12th and 1st corps back to their respective positions and ordered "a vigorous forward offensive movement on our right." He hoped, as he afterwards said, to crush the enemy's left, formed of the two Bavarian corps; and then, having beaten him and driven him back on the Maas, to return with the 12th and 1st corps, and, with the whole army combined, fight the German right wing. What about the enemy's left wing? As a general rule, such a scheme is as a last resource possible when on both sides the forces are equal; it ought not so much as to be dreamed of in face of an army flushed with victory, well led, and with a numerical superiority of over one hundred thousand men.

In addition, in this particular instance, the real danger threatened from the north (the enemy's left), and the 7th corps in spite of a vigorous resistance was powerless to overcome it, more especially as the ruins of the 5th corps scarcely counted as a support. The clearest result of the course of action taken by General Wimpffen, at a moment when minutes were as precious as hours, was a loss of time which assured the ruin of the army by robbing it of all chances of escape. Anything was better than Sedan.

The important village of Bazeilles, situated at the crossing of the Douzy and Sedan roads, by Belan, was destined to play an important part in the defence of the valley of the Givonne. Repulsed at first, the Bavarians, reinforced,

returned to the attack; from seven o'clock in the morning the battle concentrated around the villa Beurmann and in the western end of the village. The defenders were compelled to give way little by little before superior numbers, and before the conflagrations started by the Bavarians. They withdrew to Balan; but not all retired. To the north of Bazeilles, in an isolated house scarcely fifty metres from the villa Beurmann, a handful of men, belonging mostly to the marine infantry, prolonged a hopeless resistance, and for a long while braved the furious assaults of the enemy, who ended by bringing up artillery. This glorious defence was organised by Commandant Lambert, supported by captains Ortus and Aubert. Ammunition being exhausted,¹ Lambert had the doors thrown open, and with a view of saving the survivors offered himself to the Bavarians. Incensed at their losses, they were about to fall upon him, and he owed his life only to a captain who made a rampart of his own body.

The defence of Bazeilles, in which the troops of the Grand-Champ division co-operated, cost the marine infantry alone thirty-two officers killed, of whom one was lieutenant-colonel and four were battalion leaders. Three officers were shot by the Bavarians after defending a house to the very last. "Towards mid-day," the German account says, "Bazeilles was almost entirely in flames." Not content with using the torch, the Bavarians dishonoured their tardy victory by cruelties which they have vainly attempted to excuse.²

From Bazeilles the struggle extended to Balan. The 4th Bavarian division (2nd corps) occupied that village only after repelling a particularly stubborn resistance from the Carteret-Trécourt brigade, the struggle taking place chiefly in the park.

From ten in the morning, Moncelle, which the French had neglected to defend seriously, was in the hands of the Saxons. Supported by a battery, which at nine o'clock included no less than ninety-six guns, they endeavoured to debouch from La Moncelle. The whole morning was taken up with these attempts, which were vigorously opposed by the Lacretelle division. The Saxons succeeded in taking it, and by eleven o'clock, at the moment when Bazeilles was falling, they had gained a permanent footing on the right bank of the Givonne, whose crest was quickly occupied by their artillery. An hour earlier Daigny had also fallen into their power. While the German artillery was crushing the French batteries and the defenders of the heights, their infantry waited under cover; when the moment came for action it scaled the heights and took possession of them with insignificant loss.

All these subordinate engagements are dominated in importance by the general movement of that part of the 3rd army entrusted with the envelopment of the French army. Towards seven o'clock in the morning, the fog having lifted, the crown prince had ascertained with certainty, from the point of observation he had occupied for the past hour, that the French appeared to project the retention of Sedan, on the east of the curve formed by the Maas. He issued his orders.

The German artillery, in keeping with its principle, boldly outstripped the infantry. It established itself on the knoll south of St. Menges between it

[¹ This is the scene of De Neuville's famous picture, "The Last Cartridge."]

[² It is impossible to describe or even to sketch with any precision the series of confused engagements in the woods of Garenne. Cannon without wheels, caissons abandoned, a flag whose bearer perished gloriously, hundreds of men and horses fell into the power of the enemy; the forest was attacked at the same time on the north, the east, and the west. Only one French cannon still fired. It was taken when all its men were lost. A cloud of enemies, surging in from all sides, enwrapped this little wood, and all it contained were slain or taken. It was no more a battle; it was a man-hunt. — ROUSSET.]

[1870 A.D.]

and Floing, opened fire, and nearer and nearer, by additional arrivals, the battery advanced in echelon in the direction of Fleigneux. The French were subsequently driven from Floing.

Towards eleven o'clock General Galliffet received orders from General Margueritte to charge, with the squadrons of chasseurs d'Afrique, the companies which, coming down from Fleigneux, had just crossed the stream Illy. These were momentarily checked in their advance. Towards mid-day the envelopment was in full progress. Towards eleven o'clock in the evening the 11th corps took Cazal; seventy-one German batteries (426 guns), massed in four different places, swept in every direction the plateau of Illy and subjected the defenders to a cruel experience.

Not a moment was to be lost. General Ducrot had to act as commander-in-chief. He collected all the available artillery on the plateau, and turned it in the direction of Fleigneux; he replaced the Pellé and the Héroller divisions on the heights; and lastly ordered the commandant of the division of cavalry reserve to charge.

It was a question of charging in echelon towards the left, and then, after having overturned all that were met, to turn to the right in such a way as to take all the enemy's line in flank. This was at about two o'clock. At the moment when General Margueritte moved forward to reconnoitre the ground and the enemy's position, he was severely wounded. His tongue was injured, and when he arrived at the head of his division, he could only point with his arm to indicate the direction of the movement. Led by the gesture, the cavalry hurled themselves on Floing.

Thereupon, under the shelter of the artillery, heroic charges succeeded one another. These movements were carried out under the most deplorable disadvantages of ground but "with remarkable vigour and entire devotion," according to the Prussian account. The first charge came to grief—another was immediately made: "The honour of the army demands it," said General Ducrot, and new squadrons dashed forward. But in vain. Sabred, for the moment dispersed, the enemy's skirmishers fell back on the second line. Against this, complete and supported on its wings by squares, the reiterated desperate efforts of the squadrons were utterly broken, and their ruins dispersed in all directions.

We may easily understand and repeat the exclamation, "What brave men!" which King William made at this splendid sight. The Prussian account itself has said: "Although success did not result from the efforts of these brave squadrons, although their heroic attempts were powerless to thwart the catastrophe in which the French army was already irretrievably involved, that army is none the less entitled to look back with legitimate pride on the fields of Floing and Cazal, on which, during that memorable day of Sedan, its cavalry succumbed gloriously beneath the blows of a victorious adversary."

These glorious charges have as an epilogue the heroic attempt with which the name of Commandant d'Alincourt is associated. Towards three o'clock in the afternoon he attempted to cut a way through the enemy's lines, with a squadron of the 1st regiment of cuirassiers. The valiant troop set out from the Mézières gate and charged into the suburb of Cazal, overturning the German soldiers stationed there. But, the alarm once given, the Germans barred the road with the help of carriages and shot down the cuirassiers, whose noble attempt proved abortive; nearly three-quarters of them fell here. This is, with the exception of the vigorous attempt on Balan, the only real attempt which was made to pierce the circle of iron from the moment when it first became complete.

All that still remained flowed back under the concentric movement towards Sedan, which had already engulfed part of the army. The fire of the Prussian batteries was concentrated on the town, torn in all directions by the shells.

At three o'clock, the emperor Napoleon III, who had remained on the battle-field until half past eleven, hoisted the white flag. Two hours before, General Wimpffen had written to him requesting him to put himself at the head of his troops, who would make it a point of honour to cut the way out for him. Still following his idea of opening a road in the direction of Carignan, the general, who with great trouble had gathered together five or six thousand men, led them forward and with splendid dash threw himself for the first time upon the Bavarians, driving them out of the village of Balan. Towards four o'clock he received a suggestion from the emperor to treat with the enemy. He declined, and at the head of two or three thousand men, this time accompanied by General Lebrun, he made a fresh attempt. He could not deploy beyond Balan and finally fell back on Sedan. The unfortunate army was done for.

In deciding to hoist a flag of truce, Napoleon III understood all the gravity of the responsibility he was incurring, and foresaw the accusations of which he would be the object. The situation appeared before his eyes in all its gravity, and the recollection of a glorious past arose, to augment the bitterness by its contrast with the present. How would it be believed that the army of Sebastopol and of Solferino had been obliged to lower its arms? How could it be understood that, enclosed within a narrow space, the more numerous the troops the greater the confusion, and the less possible was it to re-establish that order which is indispensable in battle? The prestige to which the French army was rightly entitled was about to vanish all at once, in the presence of a calamity that has no equal; the emperor remained alone responsible in the eyes of the world for the misfortunes that war brought in its train!

THE SURRENDER OF NAPOLEON III AND THE ARMY

At five o'clock all was ended. The emperor sent the following letter to the king of Prussia by one of his aides-de-camp:

MONSIEUR MON FRÈRE :

Not having succeeded in dying in the midst of my troops, nothing remains for me but to deliver my sword into your majesty's hands.

The king replied:

While I regret the circumstances in which we meet, I accept your majesty's sword and beg you to be so good as to name one of your officers furnished with full powers to make terms for the capitulation of the army which has fought so bravely under your command. On my side, I have named General von Moltke for this purpose.

Napoleon III could surrender his person—he was no longer a general; it was not his work to surrender the army. Another was to be entrusted with this mission. Wimpffen, with despair at his heart, was obliged to submit to it. He went over to the enemy's headquarters, to the castle of Bellevue, near Donchery. For three long hours Wimpffen struggled in vain to obtain some modification of the conditions which Moltke had fixed. This cold and inflexible calculator, who had reduced war to mathematical formulas, was as incapable of generosity as of anger. He had decided that the entire army, with arms and baggage, should be prisoners.

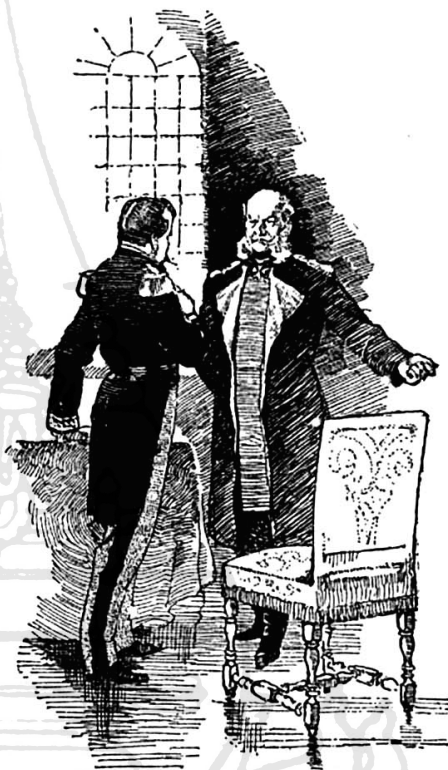
[1870 A.D.]

Bismarck took part in the conference. He made one remark which has an historical importance—General Wimpffen^k has noted it in his book on Sedan: "Prussia will exact as terms of peace, not only an indemnity of four billion francs, but Alsace and German Lorraine. We must have a good, advanced strategical line." "Demand only money," replied Wimpffen, "you will be sure of peace with us for an indefinite period. If you take from us Alsace and Lorraine, you will only have truce for a time; in France, from old men down to children, all will learn the use of arms, and millions of soldiers will one day demand of you what you take from us." The speech which Wimpffen relates shows the mistake of those who have believed that Bismarck did not agree with the military party on the question of Metz and Strasburg. If his political genius had once hesitated, it hesitated no longer. One of General Ducrot's aides-de-camp, who was present, has quoted Bismarck's remark somewhat differently; but, if the words differ, the sense is the same.

On September 2nd, at seven o'clock in the morning, Wimpffen called together in a council of war the commanders of the army corps and the generals of division. The council recognised that, "face to face with the physical impossibility of continuing the struggle, we were forced to accept the conditions which were imposed on us." Not only were they totally enveloped by forces which were now treble their own (220,000 men against 80,000), but they had food only for one day. Wimpffen carried his signature to the Prussian headquarters.

Napoleon III had left Sedan before the sitting of the council of war; he hoped to see the king of Prussia before the capitulation was signed and persuade William to grant some concessions; but the king avoided this interview; the emperor only encountered Bismarck, with whom he had a conversation in a workman's small house, near Donchery. This was the conclusion of the Biarritz interviews! Napoleon was then sent, with an escort of cuirassiers or the Prussian guard, to await his conqueror in a château on the banks of the Maas. There he repeated to William what he had just said to Bismarck: that he had not desired war; that public opinion in France had forced it upon him.

The shame which the defeated emperor brought on himself by excusing himself at the expense of France in the presence of her victorious enemy was the true expiation of December 2nd. No head of a state had ever shown such absence of dignity. The solemn contradiction which Thiers made to this shameful speech some months later at Bordeaux is well known. The imperial captive was sent into Germany to the castle of Wilhelmshöhe, near



NAPOLÉON III AND WILLIAM I

Cassel; it was the former residence of his uncle Jerome during the existence of the short-lived kingdom of Westphalia.¹ Napoleon III at Wilhelmshöhe inevitably recalls Napoleon I at Malmaison after Waterloo. There was one common feature between these two men, otherwise so dissimilar: they seemed far less two human souls mortally wounded in the reality of their moral life than two actors who had played their parts and resigned themselves to quit the stage.^e

The army with all its material was made prisoner of war. Nearly five hundred officers consented to give their parole. The others, marshals and generals at their head, were left to share in captivity the fate of their soldiers. The army awaited, in unspeakable privation, on the peninsula of Iges, so well named the Camp of Misery, the moment of departure.

In round figures the French losses total thus: killed, 3,000; wounded, 14,000; prisoners taken in battle, 21,000; prisoners by capitulation, 83,000; disarmed in Belgium, 3,000; total, 124,000 men. The Germans captured besides, one flag, two ensigns, 419 guns and mitrailleuses, 159 garrison guns, 1,072 wagons of all descriptions, 66,000 rifles, and 6,000 horses fit for service. The German army lost 465 officers, of whom 189 were killed, including General von Gersdorff, and 8,459 men, of whom 2,832 were killed.^g

THE THIRD REPUBLIC PROCLAIMED (SEPTEMBER 4TH, 1870)

Sedan gave the final blow to the empire. Not even a push was required to complete its overthrow. How did the news reach Paris? Nobody knows. A vague rumour was spread on the afternoon of September 3rd. In the evening one hundred thousand Parisians paraded the streets and went to the house of the governor of the city, General Trochu. The chamber held a sitting during the night. There could be nothing more tragic than this sitting. A deathly silence prevailed among those official representatives of the empire. Jules Favre in his voice of brass read out in the midst of this silence a proposition of forfeiture. Not a sound, not a murmur was heard. A few hours still remained to the empire in which some extreme measure might be tried, but nobody thought of such a thing.

A compact mass of people thronged the place de la Concorde. The bridge was guarded and the police of the empire were using their weapons for the last time. The crowd, partly by its own force, partly owing to the complicity of the soldiers, managed to clear a passage. A few moments after, the chamber was invaded; for the fourth time the people entered the Tuileries.

The republic was proclaimed at the Hôtel-de-Ville, and also a provisional government under the name of "government of national defence." The government consisted of deputies elected in Paris: Jules Simon, Picard, Gambetta, Pelletan, Garnier-Pagès, Crémieux, Arago, Glais-Bizoin, and Rochefort, with General Trochu as president, Thiers having refused this office. The senate had been forgotten, just as in 1848 the chamber of peers had been. It was not remembered till the next day. In the evening, in spite of the threatened invasion, a profound relief was felt. The boulevards were crowded. Improvised chariots bearing inscriptions, and groups of soldiers mingling with the citizens were cheered as they passed. The police had disappeared. One of the most festive occasions during the days that

[¹ September 4th the empress Eugénie fled from Paris and in five days landed on the coast of England, where she was joined by her son. They took up their residence at Chiselmhurst near London, where Napoleon III joined them March 20th, 1871, and where he died January 9th, 1873.]

[1870 A.D.]

followed was the return of the exiles. All the great men who were welcomed back by their country, Victor Hugo, Louis Blanc, Edgar Quinet, and Ledru-Rollin, came to Paris. The return of Victor Hugo was a regular triumph.

When the empire fell, France was left unprotected. Of the two armies one had been captured at Sedan, and the other was shut up in Metz, whence it was to be delivered by treachery. The Germans thought they had nothing to do but to make a military excursion into France.

They were arriving at Paris from two directions—from Soissons and from Châlons. They looked upon Paris as their last remaining obstacle, and did not believe any resistance would be offered. In 1814 and 1815 Paris had been given up after a few days' struggle. They could not believe that the capital would endure the horrors of a siege. It was said to be provisioned for one month only, and in 1814 and 1815 the possession of Paris had meant the possession of France. Thus the war seemed finished; but it was really only begun.

THE SIEGE OF PARIS

The government took up its quarters in the capital, resolved to sustain the siege. It had sent away only its two oldest members, Crémieux and Glais-Bizoin, who had gone to Tours. In Paris they were hastily preparing the defence of the ramparts and the forts, which had been left by the empire in a very inefficient state. The national guard was consolidated and provided with guns. An attempt was made to reorganise the troops which were returning; General Vinoy's corps, which had reached Sedan too late and had made a rapid retreat, some sailors, some of the *mobiles*, and soldiers from here, there, and everywhere were to form the Parisian army. Trochu was commander-in-chief and had under him General Ducrot, who had escaped after Sedan, Vinoy, and at the head of the artillery General Frébault, who had presented to the navy some fine cannon which were now to be of great service in the defence of Paris.

Preparations were hardly completed when the enemy arrived. On the heights of Châtillon, which was a valuable position for Paris, the Germans found no opposition except from some troops who were already demoralised, being, so to speak, composed of the tail-end of defeated regiments. A panic ensued and the Germans gained possession of the heights, which enabled them to bombard Paris.

But a change was near. Paris was determined to make a defence. First Jules Favre went to Ferrières to find out what conditions Germany meant to propose. Bismarck wanted some of the French provinces, and Jules Favre replied: "Not an inch of our territory, nor a single stone of our fortresses!" Paris during the siege was a noble spectacle. The city of light laughter and sparkling merriment, the centre of elegance and fashion, had been transformed into a military stronghold. One thought occupied all minds, one passion possessed all hearts, the whole town had but one soul—and that was filled with the noble enthusiasm of patriotism.⁷

Indefatigable zeal was displayed by the various authorities—the ministry of commerce, the prefecture of the Seine, which was in the hands of a member of the government, Jules Ferry, the mayoralty of Paris, the mayoralties of the arrondissements; but these complicated wheels within wheels hindered each other, their functions not being clearly determined.

From September 26th a central victualling committee regulated and combined these various operations, and rendered valuable services. The gov-

ernment of national defence succeeded in adding to the resources already obtained more than four hundred thousand hundredweights of flour, which represented provisions for two months.

It was not sufficient to have corn; it must be ground. After surmounting enormous difficulties, the trade of miller was successfully organised in Paris. All trades connected with food were established in the great city as well as all those concerned with warfare.

Was this the case with the military organisation? It must first be admitted that there, more than in any other department, the difficulties were appalling. There were crowds of men, there were no real soldiers, or scarcely any; too few arms, and few good arms; the new chassepot rifles, already insufficient in number by half, had been stored in quantities at Metz and Strasburg, and there were not enough in Paris. As for the fortifications, since Palikao had become minister and the defence committee had been formed, to which Thiers had been elected, they had worked feverishly to repair, as far as possible, the negligence of the imperial government. Munitions had been stored; the *enceinte* of Paris and the forts had been put into good condition; from the various ports more than two hundred immense naval guns had been brought to supply the bastions of Paris, together with a picked set of seamen set at liberty by the disarmament of the fleet, which had been unable to make an effort in the Baltic for want of troops to land; there were nearly fourteen thousand brave sailors, commanded by half a dozen vice-admirals and rear-admirals. This was the strongest element of defence, and the general officers of the naval army were charged with the defence of the greater number of the divisions of the fortifications—the *secteurs*, as they were called.

On the 9th, the 13th corps entered Paris, led back from Mézières by General Vinoy. The 14th corps, which was being formed, was placed by Trochu under command of General Ducrot, who had escaped from the hands of the Prussians. On September 13th there were 60,000 soldiers of the line, the greater number of them raw recruits, 110,000 mobiles, 360,000 national guards. This last number was purely nominal, the greater number of these guards being neither in uniform nor armed, and many not even capable of bearing arms. They finally succeeded in arming 250,000. A large number of the mobiles also were neither equipped nor armed.^e

The appearance of the town was curious. Guns glittered under the trees on the boulevards, and the sound of trumpets was everywhere. Theatres were changed into hospitals and the railway factories were busy casting cannon. There were no carriages and no gas; at night all was in darkness. Instead of the boulevards, the ramparts became the centre of Parisian life; here everyone, workmen and citizens alike, assembled gun in hand to guard the town. The inhabitants were blockaded. A few hundred yards from the fortifications an invisible circle of trenches enclosed the town. Communication with the outer world was impossible, except by balloons which were sent out of Paris or by the carrier pigeons which returned there pursued by Prussian bullets.

Provisions might fail, so the Parisians were placed on rations.¹ Cab horses furnished them with meat during the siege. As for bread, towards the end they wore out their teeth against a strange compound of corn, maize, oats, and pulverized bones. They ate anything that could be found, even the animals from the Zoölogical Gardens. Everybody endured hunger cheer-

[¹ Meat was apportioned from the 1st of October at one hundred grammes to each person; after the 25th at sixty; and this on the 26th was to be reduced to fifty grammes.]

[1870 A.D.]

fully. Later on cold weather set in. Winter was early that year and unusually severe. People were terribly cold in the frozen trenches.

At last bombardment brought the siege to an end. The Prussians launched enormous shells, larger than any that had yet been known, into the town, on to the monuments which are the pride of civilisation, on to the hospitals, on to the schools where sometimes the dead bodies of five or six children would be found. They fell, not on the ramparts, but in Paris. All through the night these huge masses of metal, whose fall meant death and destruction, were heard whizzing through the air. But the whole town only became the more enthusiastic, everyone was eager to fight, and not an angry word was heard, unless anyone spoke of surrender.

The generals were not so eager as the people. Trochu did not think it was possible to break through the Prussian circle of trenches. The generals of the empire, discouraged by repeated disasters, had but little confidence that this improvised army composed of the remnants of different regiments would be able to conquer the Germans, who had beaten their organised army.

There were a few skirmishes during the early days in order to recover the neighbouring villages, then an attack was made with a few soldiers near Garches; these were the only military incidents of the first few months. The moment when Trochu would resolve to act was awaited with feverish impatience. He had said that he had a definite plan.ⁿ Among the many isolated instances of defence we cannot quote many. Let the following account be taken as a type of that unavailing resistance France made in many directions:^a

GIRARD'S ACCOUNT OF CHÂTEAUDUN (OCTOBER, 1870)

Paris, isolated, blockaded, suffering already, waited, listened, and asked, "Where is France?" When the name of Châteaudun resounded, when that brave resistance became known, when the echo of that gallant struggle struck the great, attentive, and already anxious city, then Paris in this time of public mourning gave vent to an almost joyful cry, and said to herself, "France is arising! France is hastening! France lives, for she knows how to die!" The little town of Châteaudun, which for weeks had attracted attention by its energy and its defensive dispositions, showed France and the world how a few thousand brave men could hold in check a whole army, provided they were willing to sacrifice their lives. The defence of Châteaudun is all the more admirable because it represents the heroism of the humble and unknown, heroism without ostentation where, from the highest to the lowest in the city, all did their duty. The defence of Châteaudun was entirely civilian, and the defenders, the national guards of Beauce, grain-sellers of peaceful mode of life, *francs-tireurs* of Paris, Nantes, and Cannes, all were simple valiant citizens.

The news of the occupation of Orleans by the Prussians had just arrived. Defence, it was thought, would be madness. But the news of this peaceful resolution was ill received by the people who were already determined on resistance; and ulans having appeared not far from the railway, some workmen had attacked them, armed only with their tools. The enemy was approaching. He had already reached Varize and Civey, which he had burned to punish the inhabitants for their resistance; while Châteaudun was erecting barricades made of sharp stones, supported by hewn logs and furnished with fascines and sacks of earth. On October 18th, a Tuesday, the sentries at St. Valérien noticed towards mid-day the enemy's approach!

Châteaudun had for its defence but 765 francs-tireurs, and 300 of the

Dunois national guards; not a gun nor a horse-soldier. At the most twelve hundred men all told; and against them the entire 22nd Prussian division was advancing. The German documents pretend, and the official despatch of Blumenthal dated from Versailles affirms, that the defenders of Châteaudun numbered 4,000.¹ Once again it may be declared, there were not 1,200 of them. The Prussian division was 12,000 strong, and had the use of 24 pieces of artillery.

Without taking into consideration the artillery, whose fire was so continued and so deadly, each Frenchman fought against ten. At nightfall, driven back on every side, the defenders of Châteaudun collected in the market-place, and, black with powder, excited by the battle, drunk with patriotism and passion, under a sky already red with conflagrations, they chanted the powerful verses of the Marseillaise.

The Germans attacked again and again. The fighting was hand to hand and in the dark. There was stabbing and throat-cutting, and the black stream of Prussians rushed through the streets. Torch in hand, they already invaded the captured houses—pillaged, stole, and burned. The last defenders of Châteaudun, while retiring, fired murderous volleys from all sides on the square where the Prussians swarmed; then they withdrew still fighting, whilst the Prussians, seeing enemies on all sides, shot each other by mistake in the darkness in the streets strewn with the dead.

Then the pillage began;² and horrified eyes beheld the atrocious and disgraceful spectacle of troopers breaking, shattering, daubing with petroleum doors and walls, burning, insulting, and yelling. History here records terrible things. A paralysed man was burned alive in his bed by drunken soldiers. An old soldier was killed for having said to some Bavarians, "That is barbarous." Generals had the hotel burned down in which they had dined gaily and toasted their bloody victory. They treated themselves to a spectacle of conflagration and devastation. These disciples of Hegel witnessed the sight of two hundred and twenty-five burning houses, and houses still inhabited! In one cellar alone ten human beings perished, suffocated. Châteaudun paid dearly for its devotion to its country, but German corpses strewed the streets, and the ruin of France was bought with German blood. Thirty officers and nearly two thousand men were killed. With the Germans everything must be paid for. Fire was not enough, the town was requisitioned. These executioners must be clothed, fed, and sheltered—and that after so unparalleled a pillage. The Dunois were decimated. They were ruined. Not one made the smallest complaint. All lived on in their ruined city, proud of their disasters, holding up their heads after having dearly bought the right to call themselves citizens of the little town, knowing well that one must pay for the right of making a living town into an eternal example.

The government of Tours decreed that Châteaudun had well deserved the country's thanks. The name of Châteaudun was soon famous even in besieged Paris. Poets have been inspired by its sacrifice. The mayor of Paris, Arago, gave the name rue de Châteaudun to the rue Cardinal Fesch. Victor Hugo had his *Châtiments* read for the benefit of the subscription for guns and asked in a superb letter that the first gun should be called Châteaudun. Lastly the enemy himself bowed before the heroism of the defenders of the little town, and a historian and one who took part in this drama relates

[¹ Von Moltke^d sets the number of defenders at 1,800.]

[² Von Moltke^d simply says that the French soldiers retired "leaving the inhabitants to their fate, and these, though having taken part in the struggle, were let off with a fine."]

[1870-1871 A.D.]

the words of Prince Charles at Varize: "General, have those *francs-tireurs* well treated; they are soldiers from Châteaudun."^o

CONTINUED GERMAN SUCCESSFS

Gambetta, who considered more the quantity of the troops than their quality, was very hopeful, particularly as a simultaneous sortie out of Paris was planned for November 30th and December 1st. He continually urged General Aurelle to begin offensive operations. But neither the attacks on the right wing of the German army at Ladon on the 24th, at Beaune-la-Rolande on the 28th of November, nor those on the right wing near Lagny and Poupry on December 2nd were of any avail. On December 3rd Prince Frederick Charles assumed the offensive, and repulsed the enemy in a sweeping assault, continuing the fight on the 4th, he stormed the railroad station as well as the suburbs of Orleans, and at ten o'clock in the evening the grand duke [of Mecklenburg] entered the city, which had been evacuated by the French. The Germans gained more than twelve thousand prisoners of war, sixty cannon, and four gun-boats. The enemy's line of retreat was along the Loire, partly up and partly down the stream. Gambetta, who was dissatisfied with the way General Aurelle had managed affairs, removed him from command and divided the army of the Loire into two parts, which were to operate separately or in conjunction, according to circumstances. The first army of the Loire, consisting of three corps, was stationed at Nevers, and was commanded by General Bourbaki; the second, of three and one-half corps, at Blois, commanded by General Chanzy.

Prince Frederick Charles sent a part of his army down the Loire to meet General Chanzy. Meung, Beaugency, Blois, and the château of Chambord were garrisoned, over seven thousand prisoners taken, and several guns captured. The government of delegates at Tours, not feeling secure any longer in that city, removed to Bordeaux on December 10th. General Chanzy retreated to Vendôme and from there further westward to Le Mans. Prince Frederick Charles placed one corps in Vendôme to watch any further movements on the part of General Chanzy. In the latter part of December he sent the remainder of his troops into quarters, for rest and re-equipment. On January 6th, 1871, upon orders from headquarters, he broke camp with 57,000 infantry, 15,000 cavalry, and 318 cannon, and marched out to meet Chanzy, who had meanwhile been quiet at Le Mans with 100,000 men.

Nobody knew where Bourbaki's army was, nor what were its plans—whether it proposed to join Chanzy at Le Mans, or to advance toward Paris by way of Montargis and Fontainebleau; or whether it had already gone eastward to the relief of Belfort. In order to be prepared for any emergency, the Hessian division remained in Orleans after the departure of the prince; Gien and Blois remained garrisoned; the 2nd corps under Fransecky was



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stationed at Montargis, and the 7th under Zastrow at Auxerre to the eastward of this place. The march of the prince through the so-called "Perche" in frost, snow-storms, and thaw was most difficult. The troops advanced by three roads towards Le Mans, skirmishing daily, and were on the point of cutting off the enemy's retreat. Suddenly, on the morning of the 12th of January, Chanzy left Le Mans, retreated in haste towards Laval and Mayenne, and in the evening the Hanoverians marched into Le Mans. The prince took up his headquarters in the town, and sent troops in pursuit of Chanzy, some to Laval, some to Mayenne. The deserted camp of Conlie was occupied, and great quantities of supplies were seized. The grand duke of Mecklenburg marched with thirteen corps *via* Alençon to Rouen, to give the troops of the German army of the north an opportunity to strike a decisive blow. Nothing was to be apprehended from Chanzy in the near future; he had been forced back into Brittany, and was not in condition to undertake important operations. In the interval from the 6th to the 12th of January, 18,000 of his men had been taken prisoners and he had lost 20 guns and 2 standards. The number of killed and wounded could only be conjectured. Prince Frederick Charles lost 180 officers and 3,470 men, killed and wounded.

In the same manner in which the armies of relief were annihilated in the south and west of Paris, they were wiped out in the north. These latter were commanded successively by Generals Farre, Bourbaki, and Faidherbe; the last-named took command on December 3rd. The fortresses in the north, Arras, Cambrai, Douai, and Valenciennes, were favourable as bases of operation as well as places of refuge. For the moment, only one army corps was equipped, and with this General Farre was stationed to the south of Amiens. General Manteuffel with the first army was to operate against him. But he was obliged to leave one corps behind to maintain Metz and besiege Thionville and Montmédy; the two remaining corps, numbering 38,244 infantry and 4,433 cavalry, with 180 guns, had to be reduced by several detachments for the siege of the northern fortresses. Manteuffel left Metz on November 7th, arrived near Compiègne on the 20th, and met the enemy at Moreuil on the 27th. He defeated him, took Amiens, and forced the citadel of the place and the smaller fortress of La Fère to capitulate. Hereupon Manteuffel turned toward Normandy, taking Rouen on December 5th, Dieppe on the 9th, and destroyed several army detachments at different points of the Seine.

Faidherbe, however, had meanwhile equipped a second army corps and marched southward, seizing the little fortress of Ham. Manteuffel therefore turned back, attacked the enemy on December 23rd at the little river Hallue (or near Quernieux), and forced him to retreat to Douai. The fortress of Péronne was obliged to capitulate on January 9th. General Bentheim, who remained in Normandy, had in the meantime had several skirmishes with detachments of the French army, numbering from fifteen thousand to twenty thousand men, and had forced them to retreat towards Le Havre; he had also stormed the château "Robert le Diable," and blocked the way of the men-of-war going up the Seine from Havre, by sinking eleven large vessels near Duclair. Among the sunken vessels were six English coal barges, the owners of which received indemnity. On January 3rd, Faidherbe, who was beginning operations again, attacked a division of the 18th corps at Bapaume, but was repulsed. The commander of the 8th corps, General Göben, was given command of the first army, when Manteuffel was appointed to the command of the army of the south. For the third time Faidherbe advanced, being ordered by Gambetta to assist at the great attempt to break out of

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Paris, planned for the 19th of January, and stationed himself with between fifty and sixty thousand men near St. Quentin. General Göben attacked him on January 19th with about thirty thousand men, threw the French army out of all their positions after a battle of seven hours, and seized ten thousand prisoners and six guns. The enemy fled in wild confusion towards Cambray, and was for several weeks as incapable of action as the army of Chanzy.

A third army of relief appeared in the east. After the surrender of Strasburg, General Schmeling, with a division of reserve, had forced the fortresses of Schlettstadt and Neu Breisach to capitulate on October 24th and November 10th, while General Tresckow with another reserve division had surrounded Belfort, the southern key to Vosges, from November 3rd. These two divisions and a third reserve division formed later belonged to the 14th corps, commanded by General Werder. This latter general broke up from Strasburg in October with the Baden division and the division of troops of General von der Goltz, crossed the Vosges, reached Épinal and Vesoul, after daily skirmishes, defeated the troops of General Cambriels on October 22nd and forced them to retreat to Besançon, and sent General Beyer of Baden off to attack Dijon. After a fierce combat and a short bombardment this town was forced to capitulate. The whole of General Werder's corps took position at that place in November.

Garibaldi, affected by the republican chimera, arrived in Tours on October 9th, having been appointed commander-in-chief of the Volunteers of the Vosges by Gambetta. He advanced with an army of twenty thousand men from Autun and was beaten back on November 26th and 27th at Pasques. In the same manner a division under General Cremer, advancing toward Dijon, was obliged to take flight near Muits, by a part of the Baden division under General Glümer, on December 18th; while other divisions of the hostile army were thrown back into the fortress of Langres by General von der Goltz. Just then, General Werder heard that large masses of troops were assembling between Lyons and Besançon and that a tremendous coup against Belfort was contemplated. Upon this news he evacuated Dijon, and stationed himself at Vesoul from December 30th until January 9th. He had 33,278 infantry, 4,020 cavalry, and 120 field guns; this little army awaited the advance of General Bourbaki with about 150,000 men. Bourbaki had been commissioned by Gambetta to make a magnificent diversion in the rear of the German headquarters at Versailles, and had brought the 3rd army corps to Besançon in the middle of December, drawn a fourth to himself from Lyons, and also joined Cremer's division to his army. His plan was, having such an overwhelming force, to annihilate Werder's corps, relieve Belfort, penetrate into Alsace, interrupt the communication of the German armies with their bases of supply, and perhaps even undertake a campaign of revenge in South Germany. Belfort and the rear of the German beleaguering army were in no little danger. As soon as Moltke was apprised of the situation he at once, on the 6th of January, ordered the formation of the army of the south, composed of the 3rd, 7th, and 14th corps (of General Werder), made General Manteuffel commander-in-chief, and gave him personal instructions at Versailles on January 10th. The 2nd and 7th corps left Montargis and Auxerre, and met on January 12th at Châtillon-sur-Seine.

As soon as General Werder realised that Bourbaki's next aim was not Vesoul but Belfort, he left Vesoul, interrupted Bourbaki's advance on January 9th by an attack at Villersexel, and arrived in good time at the famous defensive position southwest of Belfort. To strengthen this position, ten thousand men and thirty-seven siege-guns were taken from the besieging

army at Belfort. The line of defence was drawn from Frahier, past Héricourt and Montbéliard, to Delle on the Swiss frontier, and was bounded in front by the river Lisaine and the swampy valley of the Allaine. Whoever should storm this position and seize the road to Belfort would first have to cut down the whole of Werder's corps; for the German troops, well recognising the danger menacing the fatherland, had raised the historical rallying-cry, "We dare not let them through, not for the world!"

Outside conditions, not considering the fourfold greater numbers of the enemy's troops, were most unfavourable. The supply of provisions was small, the cold was intense (17°), and the river Lisaine was frozen. But the sense of duty of the German soldiers overcame all difficulties. Bourbaki did not understand how to make the best use of his superior forces, and either to break through the centre or surround the feeble right wing of his opponent. All his attacks in the three days' battle of Belfort, or Héricourt, on January 15th, 16th, and 17th were repulsed. He was only able to take for a few hours the feebly garrisoned village of Chenebier; and he had to evacuate and begin his retreat on January 18th. He was influenced to this step by the news of the approach of General Manteuffel. The loss of the French in this battle and in the skirmishes on their retreat were 6,000—8,000 killed and wounded and 2,000 taken prisoners. General Werder lost 81 officers and 1,847 men. On the 19th he followed the enemy, who was retreating toward Belfort and intended to march from there to Lyons. But unless he were very expeditious he would reach neither Lyons nor Belfort.

General Manteuffel, who had taken command of the army of the south on January 12th, was approaching by forced marches. He marched through the mountain chains of the Côte d'Or, thence between the fortresses of Langres and Dijon without molestation from Garibaldi, who had occupied Dijon with 25,000 men after Werder's evacuation. On the news of Bourbaki's retreat he turned towards the southeast with his two corps, 44,950 infantry, 2,866 cavalry and 168 guns in all, in order to block the way of the enemy towards Lyons. He wished to force the enemy to choose between a battle by his demoralised troops, a surrender without battle, or a crossing of the Swiss frontier. On January 23rd the road to Lyons was occupied, the first skirmishes began; the 2nd and 7th corps crowded in from the south and west, that of General Werder from the north. No way remained open but to the east. Bourbaki tried to commit suicide on the 26th of January.

At the same time a telegram from Gambetta arrived, superseding Bourbaki and putting General Clinchant in his place as commander-in-chief of the army of the east. But he was no less unable to realise Gambetta's project of marching the army southward, and was obliged to retreat to Pontarlier. He hoped to make use of the news of the truce of Versailles as a sheet anchor; but it was soon evident that it did not apply to the seat of war in the east. Thus the catastrophe could not be averted. On February 1st the last mountain pass toward the south was blocked, Pontarlier stormed, and the retreating foe was pursued as far as the two border fortresses of La Cluse; 90,000 men and 11,787 horses crossed the Swiss frontier at La Verrières, were disarmed there and scattered through the different cantons. During these days the Germans took more than 15,000 prisoners and seized 2 standards, 28 cannon and mitrailleuses, and great numbers of wagons and weapons.

Garibaldi meanwhile had been held in check by 6,000 men under General Kettler, during which battle the enemy found a German flag under a heap of corpses. He evacuated Dijon on the night of February 1st on the report that stronger forces were approaching, withdrew southwards, and soon after-

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wards returned to the island of Caprera. The fortress of Belfort, defended by Colonel Denfert-Rochereau, had so far held out, as the conditions of the surrounding territory were so favourable. The assault on the two forts of Upper and Lower Perche was a failure; it was renewed on February 8th and then with success. After this Belfort could not hold out much longer. In order, however, to obtain control of the fortress before the conclusion of the truce, King William consented to an extension, only on condition of the surrender of Belfort. On February 18th the garrison, still 12,000 men strong, marched out with military honours, and Belfort was taken possession of by Treseckow's division. Other fortresses, such as Soissons, Verdun, Thionville, Pfalzburg, and Montmédy, had already in 1870 been forced to surrender; only Bitsch remained in possession of the French until March 26th.

After the annihilation of all the armies of relief, Paris had nothing more to hope for, unless the grounds for hope were in the city itself. A grand sortie had been planned with Gambetta for the 30th of November. General Ducrot, with about fifty thousand men, was to break through the eastern line of the beleaguering army, march to Fontainebleau, join the army of the Loire, and with it return to the relief of Paris. While demonstrations were being made at other points, Ducrot advanced towards Champigny and Brie on the Marne, drove back the Würtemberg division, of which a part repulsed an attack near Bonneuil and Mesly, and also an incomplete Saxon division out of the villages of Champigny and Brie; but he could advance no further on account of the stubborn resistance of the German troops.

On December 2nd the two divisions, assisted by the 2nd army corps and a brigade of the 6th corps under General Fransecky, advanced and after a hot fight retook half of Champigny; whereupon the French evacuated the other half of the place and Brie, and returned with all their troops to the right bank of the Marne. The Würtembergers lost, in these two days of battle, 63 officers and 1,557 men; the Saxons, 82 officers and 1,864 men; the Pomeranians, 87 officers and 1,447 men; the loss of the French was about 10,000 men, among which were about 1,600 prisoners. The sorties against Stains and Le Bourget on December 21st and 22nd were also repulsed. Mont Avron, which had very heavy guns, was abandoned by the French after a bombardment of two days, and the bombardment of the eastern forts was begun. On January 5th after the arrival of the siege-park the bombardment of the southern forts was begun; their fire was soon silenced; and on January 9th began the bombardment of Paris, in which the left bank of the Seine principally suffered, although not to any great extent.

Two facts soon became apparent: sorties of the Parisians, seeking to repulse the besiegers, broke through their lines and operated in their rear; and the formation of armies in the provinces, which were intended to go to the relief of the capital, and in conjunction with the Parisian troops, forced the German headquarters to raise the siege. This latter measure was particularly urged by Gambetta, who had left Paris in a balloon on October 6th for Tours, where an external government had been established. Here he took charge of the ministry of war as well as that of the interior, and finally usurped the dictatorship of France. He aimed to stir up the national hatred of the French for the Germans, and to call to the defence of their flag all the able-bodied men of the harassed country; he gathered large forces on the Loire, others to the north and west of Paris, and finally succeeded in causing alarm to the besiegers for the safety of their line of retreat. Thus he had indeed the credit of prolonging the war, but he incurred also the responsibility of its taking on a more sanguinary character and of the country's

receiving still deeper wounds. The generals of Gambetta were not equal in strategy to those of Moltke, and the discipline of their soldiers was not much better than that of the garde mobile in Paris.

After the capitulation of Sedan the headquarters of King William was fixed in Rheims on the 5th of September; in Meaux on the 15th; in the Villa Ferrières of Rothschild near Lagny on the 18th. From here he went to Versailles on October 15th. Many important diplomatic documents and oral transactions date from this period. In a circular letter of September 6th, Favre declared that since the fall of the empire the king of Prussia could have no pretext for continuing the war; that the present government never desired the war with Germany, but if the king insisted, would indeed accept it, but would make him responsible for it; and in any case, no matter how the war might result, not a foot of land, not a stone of a fortress would be ceded.

Bismarck's answer to this, in a circular letter of September 13th, was that since the representatives, the senate, and the press in France had in July, 1870, almost unanimously demanded the war of conquest in Germany, it could not be said that France had not desired it, and that the imperial government alone was responsible for it. Germany would have to expect a war of revenge on the part of France, even though she should demand no surrender of territory and no indemnity, and should be content with glory alone. For this reason Germany was forced to take measures for her own safety, by setting back somewhat her boundaries, thus making the next attack by the French on the heretofore defenceless south-German border more difficult. The neutral powers, with the exception of Russia, were in favour of France, and seemed to be inclined to interfere in any possible negotiations for peace, and to hinder any oppressive measures against France. As Thiers was at that time making his tour through Europe for this very purpose, Bismarck issued a second circular letter on September 16th, in which he advised the powers not to prolong the war by fostering in the heart of the French nation the hope of their intervention; for since the German nation had fought this war alone, it would also conclude it without assistance, and would submit to no interference from any side whatever. The German governments and the German nation were determined that Germany should be protected against France by strengthened frontiers. The fortresses of Strasburg and Metz, until now always open to sorties against Germany, must be surrendered to Germany, and be for her defence henceforth.

The Parisian government, which since the annihilation of the French armies had been so much in favour of peace, now wished to know under what conditions King William would consent to a truce. Favre demanded a meeting with Bismarck, and had several interviews with him on this subject in the Villa Ferrières, on September 19th and 20th. He declared that the most France could consent to was to agree to pay an indemnity, but any cession of territory was out of the question. In order to decide this, a national assembly must be convened, which would then appoint a regular government, and to facilitate these measures a truce of from fourteen to twenty-one days was necessary; and he now asked for this favour. Bismarck replied that such a truce would be not at all to the military interest of Germany, and could only be conceded on condition of the surrender of Metz, Toul, and Bitsch. As the Parisian government would not consent to these conditions, negotiations were stopped, and Favre and other French diplomats issued new circular letters in which they deplored the intention of Prussia to reduce France to a power of the second degree. The absurdity of such an assertion—that a state of thirty-eight million inhabitants, or including Algeria forty-two million, could

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by the loss of a territory containing about one and one-half millions be reduced to the condition of a second-rate power—was exposed in its entire falsity by Bismarck in his despatch of October 1st.

Nevertheless, a few weeks later, negotiations were once more resumed; Thiers, who had returned from his tour, appeared at Versailles on November 1st as the new negotiator. Here also the first question to be discussed was the cessation of hostilities; and when Bismarck asked in surprise what France had to offer as a return for all these concessions, Thiers absurdly enough imagined he was very ingenious when he answered that she had nothing: and upon this, these negotiations also fell through. The republican government was, as was plainly to be seen, animated by a childish stubbornness—consumed by the idea of its own importance. In every war in which France was victorious, the hardest possible conditions were imposed upon the vanquished enemy, who was never permitted to escape territorial concessions. Even quite recently, in the Italian war of 1859, after the two victories of Magenta and Solferino, the surrender of Lombardy was demanded. That in case of French victory the whole left bank of the Rhine would be lost to Germany was disputed by no intelligent person in Europe. And yet France had the effrontery to demand from the same opponent from whom she had taken so many territories in former decades, and from whom she as victor had just taken her fairest provinces, that the entirety of the French frontiers should be respected as sacred, and that no attempt should be made to recover the lost provinces. Such arrogant pretensions could be answered only by new defeats. Humiliations must be much deeper, distress especially in Paris much more bitter, before France could realise that every nation, consequently even the French, must suffer for its sins.

So the cannon had to speak again, and times were very lively before Paris, as well as at other points. Immediately, on the first day of investment, the 19th of September, the Parisians made a sortie with forty thousand men against Châtillon. But they were defeated by the Prussian and Bavarian troops, and fled in shameful disorder. The Parisians fared no better in their sorties of September 30th and October 13th and 21st. Although they succeeded in taking the thinly garrisoned village of Le Bourget north of Paris on October 28th, they were driven out of it again by a division of the guards on the 30th. Much dissatisfaction was felt in Paris on account of these constant defeats. The social democrats took advantage of this to overthrow the government and substitute the commune. They created an uprising on October 31st and on November 1st took possession of the Hôtel-de-Ville for a few hours, but were soon ejected. Rochefort, who was greatly compromised, was obliged to retire from the government.

The Parisians now placed all their hopes on the arrival of the armies of relief, and allowed themselves a few weeks of quiet. The earliest relief was to come from the Loire. General de la Motterouge was stationed there with an army corps and was advancing from Orleans towards Paris. The first Bavarian corps under General von der Tann, the Wittich division of infantry, and two divisions of cavalry, were sent to meet him. The French were defeated at Artenay and other points, on October 10th and 11th, and on the evening of October 11th General von der Tann entered Orleans. The Bavarians held the city, the other divisions of the army took Châteaudun, Chartres, and Dreux, northwest of Orleans, and dispersed the gardes mobiles and francs-tireurs who were stationed there. Gambetta, in council on military subjects with an ex-mining engineer, Freycinet, called to arms all men between the ages of twenty and forty, ordered the formation of five new army corps and

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had them drilled in special instruction camps. He deposed General de la Motterouge, and made General Aurelle de Paladines commander-in-chief of the army of the Loire. The latter crossed the Loire with two corps and advanced toward the road of Paris, in order to cut off the line of retreat of the Bavarian general. Von der Tann, however, left Orleans at once, on the report of the advance of large masses of troops, and on the 9th of November had a stubborn fight while retreating and established himself at Tours, in order to block the way of the enemy. A division of infantry was sent to his assistance from Versailles under command of the grand duke of Mecklenburg. Against these forces, strengthened by three corps under Prince Frederick Charles, General Aurelle with his poorly equipped troops, now reduced to four corps, did not dare to venture an attack, much as Gambetta urged him to do so. He intrenched himself before Orleans, and awaited the attack. Thus he was lost, and the headquarters at Versailles and the besieging army at Paris were freed from all danger.

In the eastern part of France, meanwhile, great successes had been attained [by the Prussians], important partly in themselves, partly on account of the possibilities of new and magnificent operations. The fortress of Toul surrendered on September 23rd, by which means the railroad between Strasburg and Paris was opened again. Strasburg, the ancient imperial German city, capitulated on September 28th. Since the bombardment of August 24th to 27th did not bring the commander General Uhrich to terms, a regular siege was begun. Everything was ready for assault and success was certain. The commander did not wait for this, but surrendered, and he and 451 officers and 17,111 men became prisoners of war. Joy in Germany was very great on the news that Strasburg, lost through treachery on September 30th, 1681, was once again German.

The capitulation of Metz on October 29th left the beleaguering army free for most urgent purposes. The 2nd corps under General Fransecky marched off toward Paris, to strengthen the army of the crown prince of Prussia. From the remaining 6 corps, a first army under General Manteuffel and a second under Prince Frederick Charles were formed, each consisting of three corps and one cavalry division. Prince Frederick Charles, with 49,607 infantry, 5,000 cavalry, and 276 guns, set out on November 2nd from Metz and on the 14th was able to join in operations on the Loire. The troops of the grand duke of Mecklenburg, some divisions of which had repulsed the army of the west under General Keratry and occupied Dreux and Châteauneuf, joined the troops of the prince, and formed their right wing. There were about 105,275 men and 556 guns in all, to whom the task had been appointed to force General Aurelle de Paladines's well-equipped army of 200,000 men out of its strong position, drive it over the Loire, and retake Orleans.^h

MARTIN ON THE SURRENDER OF METZ (OCTOBER 27TH, 1870)

Before descending the sorrowful road that leads to the supreme catastrophes, it is necessary to recount the fall of Metz. Metz presents a most extraordinary and revolting spectacle, a picture never before seen in history—that of a military chief voluntarily sterilising the powerful means of action which he held in his hands, embarrassing himself by tortuous combinations, falling into traps of his own making, and in the end delivering to the enemy without a struggle a large army and a large unconquered place; accomplishing his own ruin and the ruin of his country. It is not easy to understand this man and his actions, to discover any plan, any intention in this series of contra-

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dictions, lies, and inexplicable mistakes, viewed not only from the standpoint of his duty but of his own interest. It would seem as though Bazaine, like Napoleon III, was born to ruin that which it should have been his duty to save.

Wishing to stay at Metz, why did not Bazaine provision the place for a long sojourn? If Bazaine had strategic motives for not leaving Metz, he should, with the large force at his disposal, have harassed the enemy. During the fifteen days which followed the battle of Noisseville, August 31st and September 1st,¹ he took no action, either against the enemy or to provision the place. The criminal negligence of Bazaine produced its results. After neglecting all chances of breaking through the enemy's ranks, allowing Metz to be reduced to famine and the army to become demoralised, Bazaine surrendered. The capitulation was signed on the 27th of October.^e

The capitulation of Metz is one of the greatest blots on French history. It has led many almost to forget how completely uncharacteristic it was of French warrior type of that or any other time. It is in reality only a proof of how largely warfare is a matter of good or bad commanders. At Metz 197,326 Prussians received the surrender of 6,000 French officers, 187,000 men (including 20,000 sick), 56 imperial eagles, 622 field and 2,876 fixed guns, 72 mitrailleuses, and 260,000 small arms. It is small wonder that even Moltke^d credits Bazaine with some ulterior design in trying to keep from battle so large a force, and hints the same motive previously alluded to—the hope of being chosen by the Germans as king of the French. The fact that Bazaine was not overthrown by his own men was perhaps due to the utter disgust with which Napoleon III was now regarded. His was a poor cause to die for, and there was no other immediate object in view.^a

THE UPRISING OF PARIS

Paris had been thrilled with excitement at the news that her troops had by a sortie taken Bourget from the Germans, October 21st. But a few days afterwards three pieces of news arrived simultaneously: Metz had surrendered; Bourget was retaken, October 30th; and Thiers was going to negotiate.

Paris, already very uneasy at the slow progress of operations and resolved to hold out to the bitter end, was enraged. On the 31st of October crowds of people from all parts and whole battalions of soldiers assembled in front of the Hôtel-de-Ville, filling the square with a seething, swaying mass of humanity. Soon they invaded the Hôtel-de-Ville; the members of the government were collected in one room; they were guarded and even threatened.

The leaders of the extreme party, Blanqui, Flourens, and Delescluze, formed a new government. At six o'clock in the evening the government of the 4th of September seemed overthrown; some of its members who were prisoners refused to resign. The news spread. A reaction took place. In the morning the calmer among the people did not act. In the evening, however, they assembled before the Hôtel-de-Ville; but this time it was to protest against the new government. Trochu had called out the army.

[¹ The French had had about 100,000 men engaged out of the 120,000 who took part in the attempt at a sortie. The Germans opposed them, on the 31st of August, with 36,000 men, 4,800 cavalry, and 138 guns; on the 1st of September, with 69,000 men, 4,800 horses, and 290 guns. They had contrived with far inferior numbers to get the best in a defensive action, waged, it must be said, under the most advantageous conditions. If we put aside the conditions which the nature of the ground imposed, we see that in spite of the vigour of the attack everything failed, owing to the weakness and irresolution of the commander-in-chief: these were carried to such an extreme that one is justified in assuming that he had no intention of breaking through the investing lines, and that he did not care to engage in a big battle. — CANONGE.^g]

The palace, shut up and barricaded, was completely surrounded by soldiers, and bayonets were bristling as far as the eye could see. The new occupants began to be disheartened, but at last Ferry entered by a subterranean passage at the head of a company of gardes mobiles. No fighting took place; one side promised an amnesty, the other abandoned its resistance, and they all left the building together. The government of the 4th of September made an appeal to the people to confirm their power, and this was done by an enormous majority.^a

PARIS SUFFERS FROM COLD, HUNGER, AND BOMBARDMENT (DECEMBER-JANUARY)

The torture caused by cold and hunger was terrible. The daily ration had to suffice; this consisted of indescribable bread, made of residues and bad bran, and thirty grammes of horseflesh; for the government, having in its guilty improvidence allowed provisions of all kinds to be wasted at the beginning of the siege, was compelled, in spite of solemn promises, to resort to rationing. Those who possessed neither wealth, nor a gun of the national guard, nor a recognised state of poverty, could no longer warm nor feed themselves. The mortality every week reached the enormous total of three thousand six hundred; epidemics which had broken out in the city, almost from the beginning of the siege, raged more furiously every day; and small-pox especially, from September 18th, 1870, to February 24th, 1871, the date of the armistice, claimed 64,200 victims—42,000 more than during the corresponding period of 1869-1870. As for the mortality of infants, it was appalling, and attained in one single week, the last of the siege, the frightful total of two thousand five hundred!

The Parisian women, no matter to what class of society they belonged, proved themselves admirable. The wealthy, whose emblazoned carriages remained in the coach-houses for want of horses, went on foot each day to the sheds in the Champs-Élysées, or to the ambulance in the Grand Hotel, to take part in the clinics of Nélaton, Ricord, and Péan, of all the famous men of the school of medicine, and to make the most nauseating and occasionally the most dangerous dressings. Others went to the scene of action in company with the ambulances of the society for the succour of the wounded. Actresses lavished their care on the wounded soldiers, nursed them in their theatres now transformed into hospitals; and all, young, old, and celebrated alike, played the part of sister of mercy with the same ardour which they had lately displayed in winning their triumphs.

And if the devotion of fortune's favourites was praiseworthy, how much more admirable was the stoical courage of the women of the people, the bourgeoisie, the workwoman, forced to wait during the icy hours of early dawn, in the cold, adhesive mire, lashed by the wind and rain, for a meagre ration of siege bread and a piece of horseflesh! How they must have suffered, those poor creatures, drawn up in file, benumbed with cold, crushed by the burden of their poor housekeeping, and torn between the cares of material life and the mortal anxiety which consumed them at every cannon-shot.

Great astonishment was felt when, in the afternoon of January 5th, several shells were flung into the southern quarter of the city. As they seemed to be thrown here and there without any definite aim, it was thought that they were the result of ill-regulated firing, or the fault of some gunner, for the Parisians refused to believe that the German armies could, by an act worthy of Vandals, seriously intend to destroy with their shells the capital of the civilised world. But soon the persistence and progressive regularity

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of the discharges left no room for illusion, and one was forced to yield to evidence. It most certainly was upon Paris that the soldiers of King William were levelling their cannon.

The attempt at intimidation essayed by the foe as their last resource was merely useless cruelty. They even received that light ridicule which is always attached to great measures producing but slight results. As for the fall of Paris, it was not hastened by a single day. Nevertheless, from January 6th, all the monuments on the left bank were bound to suffer more or less. The districts of St. Victor, the Jardin des Plantes, the Staff College, the Panthéon, the Invalides, the Library of Ste. Geneviève, the Luxembourg Gardens, wherein were the ambulance quarters, the École Polytechnique, and the convent of the Sacred Heart were ploughed with shells, occasionally causing conflagrations which were hastily extinguished.

By an aggravation of barbarity, the hospitals seemed to be the centre of the circle attacked. The lunatic asylum of Montrouge received 127 projectiles between January 5th and 27th, the Val de Grâce hospital 75, the Salpêtrière 31. It will be seen that the bombardment was methodical; it cost the civil population 396 victims (of whom 107 were women, children, or old men), who were instantly killed. But, notwithstanding these most regrettable effects, the only immediate result was a certain emigration of the inhabitants of the left bank to the right bank. Others "flocked in crowds to the bombarded districts to contemplate with curiosity the curve described by the shells, fragments of which were picked up and sold by urchins for five centimes up to five francs, according to the size." As the Germans threw altogether ten thousand projectiles, it may be assumed that the receipts must certainly have been profitable.^m

THE LAST SORTIE

Still the bombardment had not attained its object. Its odious and useless barbarity had not brought the fall of Paris one day nearer. Steel and fire could effect nothing; famine was the only adversary capable of conquering the great city. Before succumbing to it the supreme effort had to be tried, the battle of despair to be fought which might still save everything. Did not Gambetta's despatches give grounds to hope for the march of Chanzy on Paris and a victory by Bourbaki in the east?

At all costs it was necessary to preserve the honour of four months of constancy and concord, and not to plunge into civil war in the presence of the enemy. The storm was rising in Paris and the blame of her misfortunes was laid on the military authorities. On the 5th of January one of the chiefs of the revolutionary party, Delescluze, mayor of the 20th arrondissement, had endeavoured to bring the mayors to vote a violent address demanding the dismissal of Trochu.

He had not been listened to, and had resigned; but two days later a great sortie which had been prepared, being countermanded because the enemy had learned or divined the plan of attack, the agitation was extreme. The violent cried treason, the masses cried out at the incapacity of the commanders. They began vehemently to demand the supersession of the governor of Paris. On the 15th of January the council of government decided on a last effort against the Prussian lines. The next day the council of war accepted this decision; the military chiefs yielded to the necessity, but without confidence. Ducrot had no longer any of the dash exhibited at Champigny. Clément Thomas, the commander of the national guard, declared that the regiments

of foot of the mobilised Parisians would furnish fifty thousand men. In this there was an ardour which the troops no longer possessed.

Troops of the line, gardes mobiles, and mobilised national guards were set in motion during the 18th. It had been decided to put into action sixty thousand men who would be supported by a reserve of forty thousand. The attack was made in the direction of Versailles. The enemy, who had been so greatly alarmed by a former sortie on the same side, three months before, had strongly fortified himself there.

The French army had been divided into three corps under generals Vinoy, Bellemare, and Ducrot. The routes were few in number and were moreover confined at various points by barricades which left only narrow passages. The three generals not having concerted together on the matter of time, the

various corps jostled one another and became mutually entangled in this painful night-march. But the day began well.

The cannon of the French, which they had at last managed to mount to the right of Montretout, swept the ranks of the assailants. They gave way; the summit was at last in the hands of the French. The fire of the enemy relaxed, then ceased.

The line of the German outposts remained in the hands of the French; might they hope that the next day they would be able to force that second and formidable line against which they had flung themselves? The leaders thought not. Trochu had hurried from Mont Valérien to that ridge of Montretout which had been victoriously retained. He judged it useless to renew the effort and ordered the retreat. The Germans made no attempt to harass the retiring forces.



JULES FAVRE

It was as at Champigny, a half victory terminated by a retreat; but this time it was impossible to begin again. Little confident in the morning, Trochu was wholly discouraged by the evening. On hearing of the retreat Jules Favre felt with Trochu that all was lost. At most the means of warding off starvation were only sufficient for twelve or thirteen days. It was calculated that it would take ten to collect new supplies. That same night the government received two despatches, one of which announced the unfortunate issue of the battle of Le Mans; in the other, written before Chanzy's reverse was known at Bordeaux, Gambetta called on his colleagues in Paris to give battle, threatening to inform France of his sentiments on their inaction if they still delayed. The painful irritation of this letter testified that the writer felt the supreme hour was approaching. The fight he demanded had just been ended; the cautious general at Paris had fought like the bold general of Le Mans: both had failed.

A minority of the members of the government at Paris once more stiffened themselves against the terrible necessity. They demanded another general if Trochu refused to make a new effort. The line and the garde mobile demanded peace; the national guard alone wished to fight again. Jules Favre

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despatched to Gambetta a melancholy message which was to be the last of the siege. "Though Paris surrender, France is not lost; thanks to you, she is animated by a patriotic spirit which will save her; in any case we will sign no preliminaries of peace."

Eventually the members of the government contrived that Trochu should resign the military command while binding him to remain president of the council. This was the greatest token of self-abnegation and devotion that he could give. In so doing he resigned himself to going back on his word by signing the capitulation.

Vinoy succeeded in the command. His succession was inaugurated by an insurrection. Several persons were killed in the crowd. This was the first act of civil war after four months of siege. After two conferences with Bismarck, Jules Favre agreed to the capitulation of Paris, concluded with the condition that the German army should not enter Paris during the duration of the armistice. The convention of Paris was concluded on January 28th.^e

THE END OF THE WAR

An armistice of three weeks was agreed to, although this did not include the three eastern departments in which the destruction of Bourbaki's army was just taking place. During this time a national assembly was to be chosen to decide on the question of war or peace; all the forts of Paris and the war supplies were handed over to the German troops; the garrisons of Paris and of the forts were taken prisoners and had to give up their arms, although they still remained in Paris and had to be supported by the town authorities. One division of twelve thousand men was to be kept to maintain order and the same exception was made in the case of the whole national guard, against Moltke's will and at the desire of Favre, who repented of it later. The city of Paris had to pay a war tax of two hundred million francs within fourteen days, and was allowed to provision itself. On the 29th of January the surrender of the twenty-five larger and smaller forts to the German troops took place and the black-white-and-red flag was raised on them.

This convention was very unwelcome to Gambetta. However, he thought he might use the respite of three weeks to equip new troops and hoped by controlling the impending elections to bring together a radical national assembly, resolved to continue the war *à l'outrance*. For this purpose he published a proscription list on the 31st of January, according to which everyone who had received a higher office or an official candidacy from the imperial government was declared ineligible. Bismarck and the Parisian government protested energetically against such an arbitrary act and insisted upon free elections. In the German headquarters it was decided to take the most extreme measures, and new plans of operations were already drawn up. Gambetta, being abandoned by the other members of the representative government, resigned on February 6th. On the 8th of February elections were held throughout France, and on the 12th the national assembly was opened at Bordeaux. Thiers was chosen chief of the executive on the 17th, formed his ministry on the 19th, and on the 21st, accompanied by the ministers Favre and Picard, he went to Versailles, commissioned by the national assembly, to begin the peace negotiations.^h