new servant. I should prefer that, for one cannot trust strange servants in a house."

"Yes; but how can we declare to Mathias Heitz that Grédel refuses his son?"

"Oh, don't trouble yourself, Christian," said she; "leave me alone, and don't let us quarrel with Cousin George: that's the principal thing. I will say that Grédel is too young to be married; that is the proper thing to say, and nobody can answer that."

Catherine quieted me in this way. But this business was still racking my brain, when extraordinary things came to pass, which we were far from expecting, and which were to turn our hair gray, and that of many others with us.

CHAPTER III

One morning the secretary of the sous-préfet wrote to me to come to Sarrebourg. From time to time we used to receive orders, as magistrates, to go and give an account at the sous-préfecture of what was going on in our district.

I said to myself, immediately on receiving this letter from Secretary Gérard, that it was something about our Agricultural Society, which had not yet delivered the prizes gained by the ducks and the geese a few weeks before.

It was true that the Paris newspapers had for three days past been discussing a Prince of Hohenzollern, who had just been named King of Spain; but what could that signify to us at Rothalp, Illingen, Droulingen, and Henridorf, whether the King of Spain was called Hohenzollern or by any other name?

In my opinion, it could not be about that affair that Monsieur le Sous-préfet wanted to talk to us, but about the old or a new Agricultural Society, or something at least which concerned us in particular. The idea of the parish road and the bells came also into my mind; perhaps that was the object we were sent for.

At last I took up my staff and started for Sarrebourg.

Arriving there, I found the whole length of the principal street crowded with mayors, police-inspectors, and *juges-de-paix*.* Mother Adler's inn and all the little public-houses were so full that they could not have held another customer.

Then I said to myself, no doubt something quite new is in the wind: as, for instance; a fête like that when her Majesty the Empress and the Prince Imperial, three years before, passed through Nancy to celebrate the union of Lorraine with France. Thereupon I went to the sous-préfecture, where I found already several mayors of the neighborhood talking at the door. They were discussing the price of corn, the high price of cattle food; they were called in one after another.

In half an hour my turn came; Monsieur Christian Weber's name was called, and I entered with my hat in my hand.

Monsieur le Sous-préfet with his secretary Gérard, with his pen stuck behind his ear, were seated there: the secretary began to mend his pen; and Monsieur le Sous-préfet asked me what was going on in my part of the country?

"In our country, Monsieur le Sous-préfet? why, nothing at all. There is a great drought; no rain has fallen for six weeks; the potatoes are very small, and . . ."

* Magistrates.

"I don't mean that, Monsieur le Maire: what do they think of the Prince Hohenzollern and the Crown of Spain?"

On hearing this I scratched my head, saying to myself, "What will you answer to that now? What must you say?"

Then Monsieur le Sous-préfet asked: "What is the spirit of your population?"

The spirit of our population? How could I get out of that?

"You see, Monsieur le Sous-préfet, in our villages the people are no scholars; they don't read the papers."

"But tell me, what do they think of the war?"

"What war?"

"If, now, we should have war with Germany, would those people be satisfied?"

Then I began to catch a glimpse of his meaning, and I said: "You know, Monsieur le Sous-préfet, that we have voted in the Plébiscite to have peace, because everybody likes trade and business and quietness at home; we only want to have work and . . ."

"Of course, of course, that is plain enough; we all want peace: his Majesty the Emperor, and her Majesty the Empress, and everybody love peace! But if we are attacked: if Count Bismarck and the King of Prussia attack us?"

"Then, Monsieur le Sous-préfet, we shall be obliged to defend ourselves in the best way we can;

by all sorts of means, with pitchforks, with sticks . . ."

"Put that down, Monsieur Gérard, write down those words. You are right, Monsieur le Maire: I felt sure of you beforehand," said Monsieur le Sous-préfet, shaking hands with me: "You are a worthy man."

Tears came into my eyes. He came with me to the door, saying: "The determination of your people is admirable; tell them so: tell them that we wish for peace; that our only thought is for peace; that his Majesty and their excellencies the Ministers want nothing but peace; but that France cannot endure the insults of an ambitious power. Communicate your own ardor to the village of Rothalp. Good, very good. *Au revoir*, Monsieur le Maire, farewell."

Then I went out, much astonished; another mayor took my place, and I thought, "What! does that Bismarck mean to attack us! Oh, the villain!"

But as yet I could tell neither why nor how.

I repaired to Mother Adler's, where I ordered bread and cheese and a bottle of white wine, according to custom, before returning home; and there I heard all those gentlemen, the Government officials, the controllers, the tax-collectors, the judges, the receivers, etc., assembled in the public room, telling one another that the Prussians were going to invade us; that they had already taken

half of Germany, and that they were wanting now to lay the Spaniards upon our back in order to take the rest: just as they had put Italy upon the back of the Austrians, before Sadowa.

All the mayors present were of the same opinion; they all answered that they would defend themselves, if we were attacked; for the Lorrainers and the Alsacians have never been behindhand in defending themselves: all the world knows that.

I went on listening; at last, having paid my bill, I started to return home.

I went out of Sarrebourg, and had walked for half an hour in the dust, reflecting upon what had just taken place, when I heard a conveyance coming at a rapid rate behind me. I turned round. It was Cousin George upon his char-à-banc, at which I was much pleased.

"Is that you, cousin?" said he, pulling up.

"Yes; I am just come from Sarrebourg, and I am not sorry to meet with you, for it is terribly warm."

"Well, up with you," said he. "You have had a great gathering to-day; I saw all the public-houses full."

I was up, I took my seat, and the conveyance went off again at a trot.

"Yes," said I; "it is a strange business; you would never guess why we have been sent for to the sous-préfecture."

"What for?"

Then I told him all about it; being much excited against the villain Bismarck, who wanted to invade us, and had just invented this Hohenzollern pretext to drive us to extremities.

George listened. At last he said: "My poor Christian! the sous-préfet was quite right in calling you a worthy fellow; and all those other mayors that I saw down there, with their red noses, are worthy men; but do you know my opinion upon all those matters?"

"What do you think, George?"

"Well, my belief is, that they are leading you like a string of asses by the bridle. That sous-préfet will present his report to the préfet, the préfet to the Minister of the Interior, Monsieur Chevandier de Valdrôme,—the organizer of the Plébiscite—he who told you to vote 'Yes' to have peace—and that Minister will present his report to the Emperor. They all know that the Emperor desires war, because he needs it for his dynasty."

"What! he wants war?"

"No doubt he does. In spite of all, forty-five thousand soldiers have voted against the Plébiscite. The army is turning round against the dynasty. There is no more promotion: medals, crosses, promotions were distributed in profusion at first, now all that has stopped; the inferior officers have no more hope of passing into the higher ranks, because the army is filled with nobles, with Jesuits from the schools of the Sacred College: in

the Court calendars nothing is seen but *de*'s. The soldiers, who spring from the people, begin to discern that they are being gradually extinguished: they are not in a pleasant temper. But war may put everything straight again: a few battles are wanted to throw light upon the malcontents; there must be a victory to crush the Republicans, for the Republicans are gaining confidence: they are lifting up their heads. After a victory, a few thousand of them can be sent to Lambessa and to Cayenne, just as after the Second of December. At the same time, the Jesuits will be placed at the head of the schools, as they were under Charles X., the Pope will be restored, Italy and Germany will be dismembered, and the dynasty will be placed on a strong foundation for twenty years. Every twenty years they will begin again, and the dynasty will strike deep root. But war there must be."

"But what do you mean? It is Bismarck who is beginning it," said I: "it is he who is picking a German quarrel."

"Bismarck," replied my cousin, "is well acquainted with everything that is going on, and so are the very lowest workmen in Paris; but you, you know nothing at all. Your only talk is about potatoes and cabbages: your thoughts never go beyond this. You are kept in ignorance. You are, as it were, the dung of the Empire—the manure to fatten the dynasty. Bismarck is aware that our *honest man* wants war, to temper his army afresh,

and shut the mouths of those whose talk is of economy, liberty, honor, and justice; he knows that never will Prussia be so strong again as she is now —she already covers three-fourths of Germany; all the Germans will march at her side to fight against France: they can put more than a million of men in the field in fifteen days, and they will be three or four against one; with such odds there is no need of genius, the war will go forward of itself—they are sure of crushing the enemy."

"But the Emperor must know that as well as you, George," said I; "therefore he will be for peace."

"No, he is relying upon his mitrailleuses: and then he wants to strengthen his dynasty—what does the rest matter to him? To establish his dynasty he took an oath before God and man to the Republic, and then he trampled upon his oath and the Republic; he brought destruction upon thousands of good men, who were defending the laws against him; he has enriched thousands of thieves who uphold him; he has corrupted our youth by the evil example of the prosperity of brigands, and the misfortunes of the well-disposed; he has brought low everything that was worthy of respect, he has exalted everything which excites disgust and contempt. All the men who have approached this pestilence have been contaminated, to the very marrow of their bones. You, Christian, evidently cannot comprehend these abominable things; but

the worst rogues in this country, the wildest vagabonds among your peasants, could never form an opinion of the villany of this *honest man:* they are saints compared with him; at the very sight of him the heart of every true Frenchman rises up against him: for the sake of his dynasty he would sell and sacrifice us all to the last man."

George, in uttering these words, was trembling with excitement: I saw that he was convinced to the bottom of his heart of what he said. Fortunately we were alone on the road, far from any village; no one could hear us.

"But that Hohenzollern," I said, after a few minutes' silence, "that Leopold Hohenzollern—is not he the cause of all that is going on?"

"No," said George; "if misfortunes come upon us, the *honest man* alone will be the cause of it. If you did but read a newspaper, you would see that the Spaniards wanted for their king, Montpensier, a son of Louis Philippe; that could only have turned out to our good: Montpensier would naturally have become the ally of France. But that was against the interests of the Napoleon dynasty; so the *honest man* threatened Spain; then the Spaniards nominated this Prussian prince in the place of Montpensier; a prince who could not stand alone, but whom a million of Germans would support if necessary. They fixed upon him to annoy our gentleman; of course they had no need to ask for his advice. Did France consult any one? did

she trouble herself about England, Spain, or Germany, when she proclaimed the Republic, or when she proclaimed Louis Bonaparte Emperor? Has he then a right to thrust his nose into their affairs? No; it is unpleasant for us; but the Spaniards were right; there was no need for them to put themselves out to please our *worthy man* and his fine family. And now—happen what may—I look no longer for peace; the Germans are withdrawing from our country in all directions—they are joining their regiments; the order has been given, and they obey; it is a bad sign. In all the villages that I have been passing through, and upon every road, I have seen these fine fellows, their bundles over their shoulders—they are off home!"

Thus spoke Cousin George to me. I thought this was a little too bad; but, on arriving home, the first thing my wife said to me was, "Do you know that Frantz is going?"

"Our young man?"

"Yes, he wants his wages."

"Ah, indeed. Let him come here at the back, and we will have a talk."

I was much surprised, and I made him come into my room at the bottom of the mill, where I keep my papers and my books. His cow-skin pack was already fastened upon his shoulder.

"Are you going away, Frantz? Have you anything to complain of?"

"No, nothing at all, Monsieur Weber. But I

am obliged to go; for I have received orders to join my regiment."

"Are you a soldier, then?"

"Yes, in the Landwehr. We are all soldiers in Germany."

"But if you liked to stay here, who would come and fetch you?"

"That is an impossibility, M. Weber. I should be declared a deserter. I could never return home again. They would take away all my property, present and to come; my brothers and sisters would come in for it."

"Ah, that is a different thing! Now I understand. There—there's your certificate of character."

I had written a good certificate for him, for he was a good workman. I paid him what I owed him to the last farthing, and wished him a prosperous journey.

Cousin George was right; those Germans were all moving homeward. You would never have thought there were so many in the country; some had passed themselves off for Swiss, some for Luxemburgers; others had quite settled down, and no one would ever have suspected that they owed two or three more years' service to their country. This gave rise to disputes. Those whose situations they had taken, and who bore ill-will against them, fell upon them; the *gendarmerie* beat up the mountains; things were taking an ugly turn.

It was in vain that I affirmed at the mayoralty-house that the Emperor breathed only peace; for the Gazettes of the préfecture talked of nothing but the insults we had had to endure, the ambition of Prussia, revenge for Sadowa, the Catholic nations who were going to declare *en masse* in our favor, and all the powers which affirmed the justice of our cause: the enthusiasm for war grew higher and higher day by day; especially that of the pedlers, the tinkers, the small dealers, and all those good fellows who come out of the prisons, and who are continually seeking for work without finding any; though they do find walls to get over, doors to break in, cupboards to plunder. All these excellent people declared that it was for the honor of France to make war upon Germany.

And then the Paris newspapers in the pay of the Government, as we have more recently learned, continued arriving and were circulated gratis, saying that our ambassador Benedetti had gone to see Frederick William at the waters of Ems, to entreat him not to precipitate us into the horrors of war; that the King had answered that all that was nothing to him, for his Cousin Leopold of Hohenzollern had only consulted him out of respect, as head of the family; that he was too good a relation to advise him not to accept so good a windfall, which was coming down to him out of the clouds.

Then, indeed, did the indignation of the Gazettes burst upon the Germans: they must, by all means,

be brought to their senses. Now, fancy the position of a mayor, who only two months before had made all his village vote in the Plébiscite, promising them peace, and who saw clearly at last how they had only made use of him as a tool to dupe his people! I dared no longer look my cousin in the face, for he had warned me of the thing; and now I knew what to think of the honorable members of the Government.

Affairs were going on so badly that war seemed imminent, when one fine morning we learned that Hohenzollern had waived his right to be King of Spain. Ah! now we were out of the mess: now we could breathe more freely. That day my cousin himself was smiling; he came to the mill and said to me: "The Emperor and his Ministers, his préfets and sous-préfets, have not such long noses after all! How well things were going on too! And now they will be obliged to wait for another opportunity to begin. How they must feel sold!"

We both laughed with delight.

More than twenty-five of the principal inhabitants came that day to shake hands with me at the mayoralty-house. It was concluded that his excellency, Monsieur Emile Ollivier, would never be able to tinker this war again, and that peace would be preserved in spite of him: in spite of the Emperor, in spite of Marshal Lebœuf, who had declared to the Senate that *we were ready—five times ready, and that during the whole campaign we*

should never be short of so much as a gaiter button.

Hohenzollern was praised up to the skies for having shown such good sense; and as the reserves had been called out, many young men were glad to be able to remain in the bosom of their families.

In a word, it was concluded that the whole affair was at an end; when our *good man* and his honorable Minister informed us that we had begun to rejoice too soon. All at once, the report ran that Frederick William had shown our ambassador the door, saying something so terribly strong against the honor of his Majesty Napoleon III., that nobody dared repeat it. It appeared that his Majesty the Emperor, seeing that the King of Prussia had withdrawn his authorization from the Prince of Hohenzollern to accept the Crown of Spain, had not been satisfied with that; and that he had given orders to his ambassador to demand, furthermore, his renunciation of any crown whatever that the Spaniards might offer him in all time to come—for himself or his family; and that this King, who does not enjoy at all times the best of tempers, had said something very strong touching *our honest man.*

That day I was at the mayoralty-house about eleven o'clock. I had just celebrated the marriage of André Fix with Kaan's daughter, and the wedding-party had started for church, when the postman Michel comes in and throws down the little *Moniteur* upon the table. Then I sat down to read

about the great battle in the Legislative Chambers, fought by Thiers, Gambetta, Jules Favre, Glais-Bizoin and others, against the Ministers, in defence of peace.

It was magnificent. But this had not prevented the majority, appointed to do everything, from declaring war against the Germans, on account of what the King of Prussia had said.

What could he then have said? His excellency Emile Ollivier has never dared to repeat it! My Cousin George declared that he had said something that was right, and naturally very unpleasant: but it is known now, by the reports of our ambassador, that the King of Prussia had said *nothing at all,* and that the indignation of M. Ollivier was nothing but a disgraceful sham to deceive the Chambers, and make them vote for war.

Well, this was the commencement of our calamities; and, for my part, I find that this did not present a cheerful prospect. No! After having endured such miseries, it is not pleasant to remember that we owe them all to M. Emile Ollivier, to Monsieur Lebœuf, to Monsieur Bonaparte, and to other men of that stamp, who are living at this moment comfortably in their country-houses in Italy, in Switzerland, in England; whilst so many unhappy creatures have had their lives sacrificed, or have been utterly ruined; have lost father, children, and friends: but we Alsacians and Lorrainers have lost more than all—our own mother-country.

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