

at the beginning of the campaign, and are receiving without fatigue or danger, troops, provisions, munitions of war, whatever they want; then if good plans don't turn out successful, it is not the last but the first comers who are to be blamed.

But for the heavy snows which blocked up the roads, Bourbaki would have surprised Werder. The Germans were expecting this, for all at once the requisitions began again. The Landwehr, this time from Metz, and commanded by officers in spectacles, began to pass through our villages; they were the last that we saw; they came from the farthest extremity of Prussia. I heard them say that they had been three days and three nights on the railway; and now they were continuing their road to Belfort by forced marches, because other troops from Paris were crowding the Lyons railway.

George could not understand how men should come from Paris, and said: "Those people are lying! If the troops engaged in the siege were coming away, the Parisians would come out and follow them up."

At the same time we learned that the Germans were evacuating Dijon, Gray, Vesoul, places which the francs-tireurs of Garibaldi immediately occupied; that Werder was throwing up great earthworks against Belfort; things were looking serious; the last forces of Germany were coming into action.

Then, too, the *Indépendance* talked of nothing but peace, and the convocation of a National Assem-

bly at Bordeaux; the English newspapers began again to commiserate our loss, as they had done at the beginning of the war, saying that after the first battle her Majesty the Queen would interpose between us. I believe that if the French had conquered, the English Government would have cried, "Halt—enough! too much blood has flown already."

But as we were conquered, her Majesty did not come and separate us; no doubt she was of opinion that everything was going on very favorably for her son-in-law, the good Fritz!

So all this acting on the part of the newspapers was beginning again; and if Bourbaki's attempt had prospered, the outcries, the fine phrases, the tender feelings for our poor human race, civilization and international rights would have redoubled, to prevent us from pushing our advantages too far.

Unhappily, fortune was once more against us. When I say fortune, let me be understood: the Germans, who had no more forces to draw from their own country, still had some to spare around Paris, which they could dispose of without fear: they felt no uneasiness in that quarter, as we have learned since.

If General Trochu had listened to the Parisians, who were unanimous in their desire to fight, Manteuffel could not have withdrawn from the besieging force 80,000 men to crush Bourbaki, 120 leagues away; nor General Van Goeben 40,000 to fall upon

Faidherbe in the north; nor could others again have joined Frederick Charles to overwhelm Chanzy. This is clear enough! The fortune of the Germans at this time was not due to the genius of their chiefs, or the courage and the number of their men; but to the inaction of General Trochu! Yes, this is the fact! But it must also be owned that Gambetta, Bourbaki, Faidherbe, and Chanzy ought to have allowed for this.

However, France has not perished yet; but she has been most unfortunate!

The cold was intense. Bourbaki was approaching Belfort; he took Esprels and Villersexel at the point of the bayonet; then all Alsace rejoiced to hear that he was at Montbéliard, Sar-le-Château, Vyans, Comte-Hénaut and Chusey; retaking all this land of good people, more ill-fated still than we, since they knew not a word of German, and that bad race bore them ill-will in consequence.

Our confidence was returning. Every evening George and I, by the fireside, talked of these affairs; reading the paper three or four times over, to get at something new.

My wife had returned from Rastadt full of indignation against the Badeniers, for not having allowed her to see Jacob, or even to send him the provisions she had brought. She had only seen, at a distance, the wooden huts, with their four lines of sentinels, the palisades, and the ditches that surrounded them. Grédel, Marie Anne, and she,

talked only of these poor prisoners; vowing to make a pilgrimage to Marienthal if Jacob came back safe and sound.

Fatigue, anxiety, the high price of provisions, the fear of coming short altogether if the war went on, all this gave us matter for serious reflection; and yet we went on hoping, when the *Indépendance* brought us the report of General Chanzy upon the combats at Montfort, Champagne, Parigné, l'Évêque, and other places where our columns, overpowered by the 120,000 men of Frederick Charles and the Duke of Mecklenburg, had been obliged to retire to their last lines around Le Mans. That evening, as we were going home upon the stroke of ten, George said: "I don't believe much in pilgrimages, although several of my old shipmates in the *Boussole* had full confidence in our Lady of Good Deliverance: I have never made any vows; these are no part of my principles; but I promise to drink two bottles of good wine with Christian in honor of the Republic, and to distribute one for every poor man in the village if we gain the great battle of to-morrow. According to Chanzy our army is driven to bay; it has fallen back upon its last position, and the great blow will be struck. Good-night."

"Good-night, George and Marie Anne."

We went out by moonlight, the hoar-frost was glittering on the ground; it was the 15th of January, 1871.

The next day no *Indépendance* arrived, nor the next day; it often had missed, and would come three or four numbers together. Fresh rumors had spread; there was a report of a lost battle; the Landwehr at Phalsbourg were rejoicing and drinking champagne.

On the 18th, about two in the afternoon, the footpostman Michel arrived. I was waiting at my cousin's. We were walking up and down, smoking and looking out of the windows; Michel was still in the passage, when George opened the door and cried: "Well?" "Here they are, Monsieur Weber."

My cousin sat at his desk. "Now we will see," said he, changing color.

But instead of beginning with the first, he opened the second, and read aloud that report of Chanzy's in which he said that all was going on well the evening before; but that a panic which seized upon the Breton Mobiles had disordered the army, without the possibility of either he or the Vice-Admiral Jaurréguiberry being able to check or stop it; so that the Prussians had rushed pell-mell into the unhappy city of Le Mans, mingled with our own troops, and taken a large body of prisoners.

I saw the countenance of my cousin change every moment; at last, he flung the journal upon the table, crying: "All is lost!"

It was as if he had pierced my heart with a knife. Yet I took up the paper and read to the end.

Chanzy had not lost all hope of rallying his army at Laval, and Gambetta was hastening to join him, to support him with his courageous spirit.

"There now," said George, "look at that!"

Placiard was passing the house arm-in-arm with a Landwehr officer, followed by a few men; they were making requisitions, and entered the house opposite. "There is the Plébiscite in flesh and blood. Now that scoundrel is working for his Imperial Majesty William I., for the Germans have their emperor, as we have had ours; they will soon learn the cost of glory; each has his turn! By and by, when the reins are tightened, these poor Germans will be looking in every direction to see if the French are not revolting; but France will be tranquil: they themselves will have riveted their own chains, and their masters will draw the reins tighter and tighter, saying: 'Now, then, Mechle!\* Attention! eyes right; eyes left. Ah! you lout, do you make a wry face? I will show you that might is right in Germany, as everywhere else, if you don't know it already. Whack! how do you like that, Mechle? Aha! did you think you were getting victories for German Fatherland and German liberty, idiot? You find out now that it was to put yourself again under the yoke, as after 1815; just to show you the difference between the noble German lord and a brute of your own sort. Get on, Mechle!'"

\* Nickname for the Germans, answering to the English "John Bull," and the French "Jaques Bonhomme."

George exclaimed: "How miserable to be surprised and deluged as we have been daily by six hundred thousand Germans, and to have our hands bound like culprits, without arms, munitions, orders, chiefs, or anything! Ah! the deputies of the majority who voted for war would not demand compulsory service; they feared to arm the nation. They would not risk the bodies of their own sons; the people alone should fight to defend their places, their salaries, their châteaux, their property of every sort! Miserable self-seekers! they are the cause of our ruin! their names should be exposed in every commune, to teach our children to execrate them."

He was becoming embittered, and it is not surprising, for every day we heard of fresh reverses: first the surrender of Veronne, just when Faidherbe was coming to deliver it, and the retreat of our army of the North upon Lille and Cambrai, before the overwhelming forces of Van Goeben, fresh from Paris; then the grand attack of Bourbaki from Montbéliard to Mont Vaudois, which he had pursued three successive days, the 15th, 16th, and 17th January without success, on account of the reinforcements which Werder had received, and the horrible state of the roads, broken up by the rain and the snow; lastly, the arrival of Manteuffel, with his 80,000 men, also from Paris—to cut off his retreat.

Then we understood that the Landwehr had been right in telling us that they were getting reinforcements from Paris; and George, who understood such

things better than I, suddenly conceived a horror for those who were commanding there.

"Either," he said, "the Parisians are afraid to fight—which I cannot believe, for I know them—or the men in command are incapable—or traitors. Hitherto relieving armies have been sent in support of a besieged city; now we see the besiegers of a city twice as strong as themselves in men, arms, and munitions of every kind, detaching whole armies to crush our troops fighting in the provinces: the thing is incredible! I am certain that the Parisians are demanding to be led out, especially as they are suffering from famine. Well, if sorties were taking place, the Germans would want all their men down there, and would be unable to come and overwhelm our already overtaken armies."

Let them explain these things as they will, George was right. Since the Germans were able to send away from Paris 40,000 men in one direction, and 80,000 in another, evidently they were free to undertake what they pleased; instead of surrounding the city with troops, they might have set helmets and cloaks upon sticks all round, for scarecrows, as they do to keep sparrows out of a corn-field.

Here, then, is how we have lost: it was the incapacity of the man who was commanding at Paris, and the weakness of the Government of Defence—and especially of Monsieur Jules Favre!—who, when they ought to have replaced this orator by a man of action, as Gambetta demanded, had not the

courage to fulfil their duty. Everybody knows this; why not say it openly?

The only thing which cheered us a little about the end of this terrible month of January, was to learn that the francs-tireurs had blown up the bridge of Fontenoy, on the railroad between Nancy and Toul. But our joy was not of long duration; for three or four days after, proclamations posted at the door of the mayoralty-house gave notice that the Germans had utterly consumed the village of Fontenoy, to punish the inhabitants for not having denounced the francs-tireurs; and that all we Lorrainers were condemned, for the same offence, to pay an extraordinary contribution of ten millions to his Majesty, the Emperor of Germany. At the same time, as the French workmen were refusing to repair this bridge, the Prussian prefect of La Menotte wrote to the Mayor of Nancy:

“If to-morrow, Tuesday, January 24, at twelve o'clock, five hundred men from the dockyards of the city are not at the station, first the foremen, then a certain number of the workmen, will be arrested and shot immediately.”

This prefect's name was Renard—“Count Renard.”

I mention this that his name may not be forgotten.

But all this was nothing, compared with what was to follow. One morning the Prussians had given me a few sacks of corn to grind; I dared not refuse

to work for them, as they would have crushed me with blows and requisitions: they might have carried me off nearly to Metz again, they might even have shot me. I had pleaded the snow, the ice, the failure of the water, which prevented me from grinding; unfortunately, rain had fallen in abundance, the snow was melting, the mill-dam was full, and on the 2d or 3d of February (I am not sure which, I am so confused) I was piling up the sacks of that wicked set in my mill; Father Offran and Catherine were helping; Grédel, upstairs, was dressing herself, after sweeping the house and lighting the kitchen fire. It was about eight o'clock in the morning, when looking out into the street by chance, where the water was rattling down the gutters, I saw George and Marie Anne coming.

My cousin was taking long strides, his wife coming after him; farther on a Landwehr was coming too: the people were sweeping before their doors, without caring how they bespattered the passers-by. George, near the mill, cried out, “Do you know what is going on?”

“No—what?”

“Well, an armistice has been concluded for twenty-one days; the Paris forts are given up: the Prussians may set fire to the city when they please. Now they may send all their troops and all their artillery against Bourbaki; for the armistice does not extend to the operations in the east.”

George was pale with excitement, his voice shook.

Grédel, at the top of the stairs, was hastily twisting her hair into a knot.

"Look, Christian," said my cousin, pulling a paper out of his pocket; "the armies of Bourbaki and Garibaldi are surrendered by this armistice. Manteuffel has come down from Paris with 80,000 men to occupy the passes of the Jura in their rear: the unfortunate men are caught as in a vice, between him and Werder; and all who have escaped from the hands of the Prussians and taken service again, like our poor Mobiles of Phalsbourg, will be shot!"

While cousin was speaking, Grédel had come downstairs, without even putting on her slippers; she was leaning against him, as pale as death, trying to read over his shoulder; when suddenly she tore the paper from his hands. George wished he had said nothing; but it was too late!

Grédel, after having read with clinched teeth, ran off like a mad woman, uttering fearful screams: "Oh! the wretches! . . . Oh! my poor Jean Baptiste! . . . Oh! the thieves! . . . Oh! my poor Jean Baptiste!"

She seemed to be seeking something to fight with. And as we stood confounded at her outcries, I said: "Grédel, for Heaven's sake don't scandalize us in this way. The people will hear you from the other end of the village!" She answered in a fury: "Hold your tongue! You are the cause of it all!"

"I!" said I, indignantly.

"Yes, you!" she shrieked, with a terrible flashing in her eyes: "you, with your Plébiscite; deceiving everybody by promising them peace! You deserve to be along with Bazaine and the rest of them."

And my wife cried: "That girl will be the death of us."

She had sat down upon the stairs. Marie Anne, with her hands clasped, said: "Do forgive her; her mind is going."

Never had I felt so humbled; to be treated thus by my own daughter! But Grédel respected nothing now; and Cousin George, trying to get in a word, she exclaimed: "You! you! an old soldier! Are you not ashamed of staying here, instead of going to fight? The Landwehr are as old as you, with their gray hairs and their spectacles; they don't make speeches; they all march. And that's why we are beaten!"

At last I became furious; and I was looking for my cowhide behind the door, to bring her to her senses, when, unfortunately, a Landwehr came in to ask if the flour was ready. The moment Grédel caught sight of him, she uttered such a savage shriek that my ears still tingle with it, and in a second she had laid hold of her hatchet; George had scarcely time to seize her by her twisted back hair, when the hatchet had flown from her hand, whizzing through the air, and was quivering three inches deep in the door-post.

The Landwehr, an elderly man, with great eyes and a red nose, had seen the steel flash past close to his ear; he had heard it whiz, and as Grédel was struggling with George, crying: "Oh, the villain; I have missed him!" he turned, and ran off at the top of his speed. I ran to the mill-dam, supposing he was going to the mayor's, but no, he ran a great deal farther than that, and never stopped till he reached Wechem.

Then Grédel became aware that she had made a mistake; she went up into her room, put on her shoes, took her basket, went into the kitchen for a knife and a loaf, and then she left the house; running down the other side of the hill to gain the Krapenfelz, where our cow was with several others, under the charge of the old rag-dealer.

"This is a very bad business," said George, fixing his eyes upon me; "that Landwehr will denounce you: this evening the Prussian gendarmes will be here. I'm sure I don't know, my poor Christian, where you got that girl from; amongst those who have gone before us, there must have been some very different from your poor mother, and grandmother Katherine."

"What would you have," said Marie Anne; "she is fond of her Jean Baptiste." And I thought: "If he but had her now; it is not I would refuse them permission to marry now; no, not I. I only wish they were married already!"

I was thinking how I might settle this danger-

ous business. George said we must overtake the Landwehr, and slip three or four cent-sous pieces in his hand, to induce him to hold his tongue: the Prussians are softened with money. But where could he be found now? How was he to be overtaken? I had no longer my two beautiful nags. So I resolved to leave it all to Providence.

To my great surprise, the Landwehr never returned. That same day two other Germans, with Lieutenant Hartig, came to take an invoice of the flour, without mentioning that affair: one would have thought that nothing had occurred. The next day, and the day after that, we were still in painful expectation; but that man gave no sign of appearing. No doubt he must have been a marauder; one of those base fellows who enter houses without orders, to receive requisitions of every kind, to sell again in the neighboring villages; such things had been done more than once since the arrival of the Germans. This is the conclusion I came to by and by; but at that time the fear of seeing that fellow returning with the gendarmes, left me no peace; every minute my wife, standing at the door, would say: "Christian, run! Here are the Prussian gendarmes coming!"

For a cow, or a Jew astride upon a donkey at the end of the road, she would throw one into fits.

Grédel remained a week in the woods in the Krapenfelz. Every day the woodman brought her news of what was going on in the village. At last

she came back, laughing; she went up into her room to change her clothes, and resumed her work without any allusion to the past. We did not want to start the subject of Jean Baptiste again; but she herself, seeing us dispirited, at last said to us: "Pooh! it's all right now. There; look at that!"

It was a letter from Jean Baptiste Werner, which she had received among the rocks on the Krapenfelz. In that letter, which I read with much astonishment, Werner related that he had at first wished to join Garibaldi at Dijon; but that for want of money he had been obliged to stop at Besançon, where the volunteers of the Vosges and of Alsace were being organized; that upon the arrival of Bourbaki, he had enlisted as a gunner in the 20th corps. Two days after there were engagements at Esprels and Villersexel, where more than four thousand Prussians had remained on the field. The cold was extraordinary. The Prussians, repulsed by our columns, had retired from village to village, on the other side of the Lisaine, between Montbéliard and Mont Vaudois. There Werner, behind a deep ravine, had mounted batteries of twenty-four-pounders, well protected, on three stages, one over another; his army and his reinforcements were concentrated and securely intrenched. In spite of this, Bourbaki, wanting to relieve Belfort and descend into Alsace, had given orders for a general assault, and all that country, for three days, resembled a sea of smoke and flame

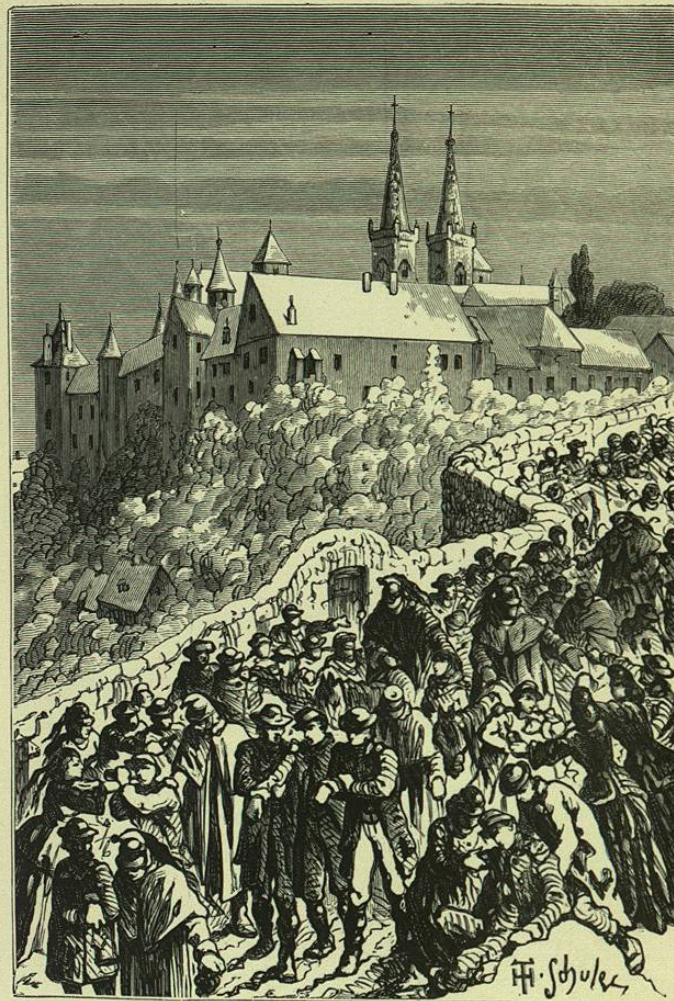
under the tremendous fire of the hostile armies. Unhappily, the passage could not be forced; and the exhaustion of munitions, the fatigue, the sharp sufferings of cold and hunger—for there were no stores of clothing and provisions in our rear—all these causes had compelled us to retire, but in the hope of renewing the assault; when all at once the news spread that another German army was standing in our line of retreat, near Dôle: a considerable army, from Paris. They had hurried to get clear as far as possible by gaining Pontarlier; but these fresh troops had a great advantage over us. Werder, also, was following us up; and we were going to be surrounded on all sides around Besançon. Jean Baptiste went on to say that then Bourbaki had attempted his own life, and was seriously wounded; that General Clinchamp had then assumed the command-in-chief; but that all these disasters would not have hindered us from arriving at Lyons, across the Jura, if the Maires of the villages had not published the armistice, causing the army to neglect to secure a line of retreat; that a great number had even lain down their arms and withdrawn into the villages; that the Prussians had kept advancing, and that only in the evening, when they had occupied all the passes, General Manteuffel declared that the armistice did not extend to operations in the east, and that our army must lay down their arms, as those of Sedan and Metz had done! But the soldiers of the Republic refused



to surrender, and they had made a passage through the ice, the snow, and thousands of Prussian corpses, to Switzerland.

Jean Baptiste Werner related, in this long letter, full particulars of all that he had suffered; the attacks delivered by the corps of General Bilot, who was charged to protect the retreat, upon the rocks, at the foot of precipices, in all the deep passes where the enemy lay in wait to cut off our retreat; how many of our poor fellows had perished of cold and hunger! And then the admirable reception given to our unhappy soldiers by the noble Swiss, who had received them not as strangers, but as brothers: every town, village, and house, was opened to them with kindness. It is manifest that the Swiss are a great people; for greatness is not to be measured by the extent of a country, and the number of the inhabitants, as the Germans suppose; but by the humanity of the people, the elevation of their character, their respect for unsuccessful courage, their love of justice and of liberty.

How much help have the Swiss sent us in succor, in money, in clothing, in food, in seed corn, for our poor fellow-countrymen ruined by the war! It came to Saverne, to Phalsbourg, to Petite Pierre—everywhere. Ah, we perceived then that heaven and earth had not altogether deserted us; we saw that there were yet brave hearts, true republicans; that all men were not born for fire, pillage, and slaughter; that there are men in the world besides



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hypocrites—true Christians, inspired by Him who said to men: “love one another; ye are brethren.” He would not have invented petroleum bombshells, or declared that brute-force dominated over right, like those barbarians from the other side of the Rhine.

That letter of Jean Baptiste Werner’s pleased me; it was clear that he was a brave man and a good patriot. But in the meanwhile, the policy of Bismarck and Jules Favre went on its way. The order of the day was, “elect deputies to sit in the assembly at Bordeaux,” which was to decide for peace, or the continuance of the war: the twenty-one days’ armistice had no other object, it was said.

So those who did not care to become Prussians took up arms, George and I the first; myself with the greatest zeal, for every day I reproached myself with that abominable Plébiscite as a crime. And now began the old story again: no Legitimists, no Bonapartists, no Orleanists could be found; all cried: “We are Republicans. Vote for us!”

But in every part of the country through which the Prussians had gone, the Plébiscite was remembered; the people were beginning to understand that this unworthy farce was our ruin, and that men should be judged by their actions, not their words.

At Strasbourg, at Nancy, all who desired to remain French nominated two lists of old republicans,