

who immediately started for Bordeaux. Gambetta was elected by us and by La Meurthe; he was also elected in many other departments, with Thiers, Garibaldi, Faidherbe, Chanzy, etc.

These elections once more revived our hopes. We supposed that everything had taken place in the West and the South as with us.

Gambetta, who never lost his sound judgment in critical moments, had declared that all the old official deputies of Bonaparte, all the senators, councillors of State, and prefects of the Empire, were disqualified for election. George commended him. "When a spendthrift devours all his living in debauchery, he is put under restraint; much more, therefore," he urged, "ought men to be restrained who have devoured the wealth of the nation and put our two finest provinces in jeopardy. All these men ought forever to be held incapable of exercising political functions."

But Bismarck, who relied chiefly on the old Imperial functionaries, by way of testifying his gratitude to the *honest man* for all he had done for Prussia—for his noble behavior at Sedan, and his gift of Metz to his Majesty, William—protested against this manifesto by Gambetta: he declared that the elections would not then be free, and that liberty was so dear to his heart, that he had rather break the armistice than in any way cramp the freedom of the elections.

George, on hearing this, broke out into a rage.

"What," he cried, "this Bismarck, who has warned the Prussian deputies to be careful of their expressions in speaking of the nobleness and the majesty of King William, 'because laws exist in Prussia against servants who presume to insult their masters'—this very Bismarck comes here to defend liberty, and support the accomplices of Bonaparte! Oh! these defenders of liberty!"

Unhappily, all this was useless; the Prussians were already in the forts of Paris, and the menaces of Bismarck had more weight in France than the words of Gambetta. Therefore, once more we had to yield to his Majesty, William, and many of our deputies are indebted to him for their admission into the Chambers of Bordeaux.

These defenders of the Republic immediately showed that they were not ungrateful to Bismarck; for they hissed Garibaldi, who had come from Italy, old, sick, and infirm, with his two sons, to fight the enemies of France, and uphold justice, when all Europe held aloof!

Garibaldi was not even allowed to reply: these representatives of the people hissed him down! He calmly withdrew!

The Sunday following—I am ashamed to say it—our curé Daniel, and many other curés in our neighborhood, preached that Garibaldi was a *canaille*. I am not condemning them; I am simply stating a fact. They had received orders from their bishops, and they obeyed; for the poor country

priest is at his bishop's mercy, and under his orders, like a whip in a driver's hand; if he disobeys, he is turned out! I know that many would rather have been silent than said such things, and I pity them!

Well, Bismarck might well laugh; he had more friends among us than was believed. Those who want to make their profits out of nations, always come to an understanding; their interests and their enemies are the same.

Then the Assembly of Bordeaux voted peace. No hard matter; only involving the sacrifice of Alsace and Lorraine, and five milliards as an indemnity for the trouble which the Prussians had taken in bombarding, devastating, and stripping us!

Then our unhappy deputies of Alsace and Lorraine were declared to be German by their French brothers, against every feeling of justice; for nobody in the world had the right to make Germans of us; to rend us from the body of our French mother-country, and fling us bleeding into the barbarian's camp, as a lump of living flesh is thrown to a wild beast, to satisfy it; no, no one in the world had this right. We alone freely ought to choose, and decide by our own votes, whether we would become Germans or remain French. But with Bismarck and William, right, liberty, and justice are powerless; might is everything. Our sorrowing deputies at last protested:

"The representatives of Alsace and Lorraine,

previous to any negotiations for peace, have laid upon the table of the National Assembly a declaration, by which they affirm, in the clearest and most emphatic language, that their will and their right is to remain Frenchmen.

"Delivered up, in contempt of justice, and by a hateful exercise of power, to the dominion of the foreigner, we have one last sad duty to fulfil.

"We again declare null and void a compact which disposes of us against our consent.

"The revindication of our rights remains forever open to each and all, after the form and in the measure which our consciences may dictate.

"In taking leave of this Chamber, in which it would be a lowering of our dignity to sit longer, and in spite of the bitterness of our sorrow, our last impulse is one of gratitude for the men who for six months have never ceased to defend us; and we are filled with a deep and unalterable love for our mother-country, from which we are violently torn.

"We will ever follow you with our prayers; and with unshaken confidence we await the future day when regenerated France shall resume the course of her high destiny.

"Your brothers of Alsace and Lorraine, separated at this moment from the common family, away from their home, will ever cherish a filial affection for their beloved France, until the day when she shall come to reclaim her place among us."

These were their words.

Monsieur Thiers asked them if they knew any other way of saving France? No reply was made. Unfortunately there was none: after the capitulation of Paris, the sacrifice of an arm was needful to save the body.

Half the deputies were already thinking of other things; peace made, they only thought of naming a king, and of decapitalizing Paris, as the newspapers said, to punish it for having proclaimed the Republic! All these people, who had presented themselves before the electors with professions of republicanism, were royalists.

Gambetta, having accepted the representation of the Bas Rhin (Alsace), left the chamber with the deputies; and other old republicans, contemptuously hissed whenever they opened their mouths, gave in their resignations.

Paris was agitated. A rising was apprehended.

About that time, early in March, 1871, Prussian tax-collectors, controllers, *gardes généraux*, and other functionaries, came to replace our own; we were warned that the French language would be abolished in our schools, and that the brave Alsacians who felt any wish to join the armies of the King of Prussia, would be met with every possible consideration; they might even be admitted into the guard of his Royal and Imperial Majesty. About this time, an old friend of Cousin George's, Nicolas Hague, a master saddler, a

wealthy and highly respectable man, came to see him from Paris.

Nicolas Hague had bought many vineyards in Alsace; he had planned, before the war, to retire amongst us, as soon as he had settled his affairs; but after all the cruelties perpetrated by the Germans, and seeing our country fallen into their hands, he was in haste to sell his vineyards again, not caring to live amongst such barbarians.

George and Marie Anne were delighted to receive this old friend; and immediately an upstairs room was got ready for him, and he made himself at home.

He was a man of fifty, with red ears, a kind of collar of beard around his face, large, velvet waistcoat adorned with gold chains and seals; a thorough Alsatian, full of experience and sound common-sense.

His wife, a native of Bar-le-Duc, and his two daughters were staying with their relations; they were resting, and recruiting their strength after the sufferings and agonies of the siege; he was as busy as possible getting rid of his property; for he looked upon it as a disgrace to bring into the world children destined to have their faces slapped in honor of the King of Prussia.

I remember that on the second day after his arrival, as we were all dining together at my cousin's, after having explained to us his views, Nicolas Hague began telling us the miseries of the siege of

Paris. He told us that during the whole of that long winter, every day, were seen before the bakers' shops and the butchers' stalls strings of old men half clothed, and poor women holding their children, discolored with the cold, close in their arms, waiting three or four hours in rain, snow, and wind, for a small piece of black bread, or of horse flesh; which often never came! Never had he heard any of these unhappy people expressing any desire to surrender; but superior officers and staff officers had shamelessly declared, from the earliest days of the siege, that Paris could not hold out! And these men, formerly so proud of their rank, their epaulettes, and their titles, who were solely charged to defend us, and to uphold the honor of the nation, discouraged by their language those who were trusting in them, and whose bread they had eaten for years passed in useless reviews and parades, in frivolous fêtes at St. Cloud, at Compiègne, the Tuileries, and elsewhere.

According to Nicolas Hague, all our disasters, from Sedan to the capitulation of Paris, were attributable to the disaffection of the staff officers, the committees, and those former Bonapartist place-holders, who knew well that if the Republic drove out the Prussians, nobody in the world would be able to destroy it; and as they did not care for the Republic, they acted accordingly.

"There is a great outcry at the present moment against General Trochu," said he, "principally got

up by the Bonapartists, who, in their hearts, reproach him with having supported France rather than their dynasty. They make him responsible for all our calamities; and many Republicans are simple enough to believe them. But, when it is remembered that this man arrived only at the last moment, when all was lost already; when the Prussians were advancing by forced marches upon Paris; when MacMahon was forsaking the capital, *by order of the Emperor*, to go to Sedan, to get the army crushed down there which was to have covered us; when it is remembered that at that moment Paris had no arms, no munitions of war, no provisions, no troops; that the whole neighborhood, men, women, and children, were taking refuge in the city; that wagons full of furniture, hay, and straw were choking the streets; that order had to be restored amidst this abominable confusion, the forts armed, the National Guard organized, the inhabitants put upon rations, etc.; and, then, that all those thousands of men, who did not know even how to keep in ranks, were to be taught to handle a musket, to march, and, finally, led under fire;—when all these things are remembered, it must be acknowledged that, for one man, it was too much, and that, if faults have been committed, it is not General Trochu who is to be blamed, but the miserable men who brought us to such a pass. Above all, let us be just. It is quite clear that, if General Trochu had had under his orders real soldiers, com-

manded by real officers, he might have made great sorties, broken the lines, or at least kept the Germans busy round the place. But how could I, Nicolas Hague, saddler, Claude Frichet, the grocer round the corner, and a couple of hundred thousand others like us, who did not even know the word of command—how could we fight like old troops? We were not wanting in good will, nor in courage; but every man to his trade. As for our percussion rifles, and our flint locks, and a hundred other discouraging things, you feel utterly cast down when you know that the enemy are well armed and supported by a terrible artillery. Trochu was well aware of these things; and I believe that neither he, nor Jules Favre, nor Gambetta, nor any of those who declared themselves Republicans on the 4th of September, are responsible for our misfortunes, but only Bonaparte and his crew!”

At last, having heard Nicolas Hague explain his views, seeing that we had been delivered up by selfish men—as Cousin Jacques Desjardins had foreseen four months before—but that the Republic was in existence, and that no doubt justice would be done upon all who had brought us into this sad condition, by which means we might rise some day and get our turn, I had resolved to sell my mill, my land, and everything that belonged to me in the country, and go and settle in France; for the sight of Placiard and the other Prussian functionaries, who were fraternizing together, and shouting,

“Long live old Germany!” made my blood boil. I could not stand it.

Cousin George, to whom I mentioned my design, said: “Then, if all the Alsacians and Lorrainers go, in five or six years all our country will be Prussian. Instead of going to America, the Germans will pour in here by hundreds of thousands; they will find in our country, almost for nothing, fields, meadows, vineyards, hop-grounds, noble forests, the finest lands, the richest and most productive in Central Europe. How delighted would Bismarck and William be if they saw us decamping! No, no; I’ll stay. But this does not mean that I am becoming a Prussian—quite the contrary. But in this ill-drawn treaty there are two good articles; the first affirms that the Alsacians and the Lorrainers, dwelling in Alsace and Lorraine, may, up to the month of October, 1872, declare their intention of remaining French, on condition of possessing an estate in France; the second affirms that the French may retain their landed estates in Germany.

“Well, I at once elect to remain a Frenchman, and I take up my abode in Paris with my friend Nicolas Hague, who will be happy to do me this service. I don’t want to become a burgomaster, a municipal councillor, or anything of that kind; it will be enough for me to possess good land, a thriving business, and a pleasant house. Yes—I intend to declare at once; and if all who are able to secure an abode in France will do as I am doing, we

shall have German authorities over us, it is true, but the land and the people will remain French and the land and the men are everything.

“Were not the old *préfets* and *sous-préfets* of the *honest man* intruders, just as much as these men are? Did they care for anything but making us pay what the chambers had voted, and compelling us to elect for deputies old fogies who would be safe to vote whichever way the Emperor required them? Did they trouble themselves about us, our commerce, our trade, any farther than merely to draw from us the best part of our profits for themselves, their friends, their acquaintances, and all the supporters of the dynasty of the perjurer?”

“These new *préfets*, these *kreis-directors*, these burgomasters, set over us to defend the Prussian dynasty, will not concern us much more than the others did. At first they will try mildness; and as we have been well able to remain French under the *préfets* of Bonaparte, so we may live and remain French under those of Emperor William.

“My principal concern is that a large majority should declare as I am about to do. The fear is lest the *Placiards*, and other mayors of the Empire kept in their places by the Prussians, will be able to turn aside the people from declaring themselves as Frenchmen, by intimidating them with threats of being looked upon suspiciously, or even of being expelled; the fear is lest these fellows

should keep back day after day those who are afraid of deciding: for when once the day is past, those who have not declared for France will be Prussians—their children will serve and be subject to blows at the age of twenty, for old Germany; and those who have already fled into France will be forced to return or renounce their inheritance forever.

“My chief hope now is that the French journals, which are always so busy saying useless things, will now, without fail, warn the Alsacians and Lorrainers of their danger, and explain to them that if they declare for France their persons and their property will be guaranteed in safety by the treaty; but if they neglect to do so, their persons and their property fall under the Prussian laws. They would even do well to furnish a clear and simple form of declaration. By this step, all who are interested would be clearly informed, and these papers would have done the greatest service to France.

“As for me, here I stay! I am here upon my own land; I have bought it; I have paid for it with the sweat of my brow. I will pay the taxes; I will hold my tongue, that I may be neither worried nor driven away. I will sell my crops to the Germans as dearly as I can; I will employ none but Frenchmen; and if the Republic acquires strength, as I hope it will—for now the people see what Monarchies have been able to do for us—if the nation transacts its own business wisely, sensibly, with moderation, good order, and reflection, she will soon

rise again, and will once more become powerful. In ten years our losses will be repaired: we shall possess well-informed constituencies, national armies, upright administrations, a commissariat, and a staff very different from that which we have known.

“Then let the French return; they will find us, as before, ready to receive them with open arms, and to march at their sides.

“But if they pursue their old course of *coups d'état* and revolutions; if the adventurers, the Jesuits, and the egotists form another coalition against justice; if they recommence their disgraceful farces of plébiscites and constitutions by yes and no, with bayonets pointed at people's throats and with electors of whom one-half cannot read; if they bestow places again by patronage and recommendation of friends, instead of honestly throwing them open to competition; if they refuse elementary education and compulsory military service; if they will have, as in past times, an ignorant populace, and an army filled with mercenaries, in order that the sons of nobles and bourgeois may remain peaceably at home, whilst the poor labor like beasts of burden, and go and meet their deaths upon battle-fields for masters they have no concern with:—in a word, if they overthrow the Republic and set up Monarchy again, then what miseries may we not expect? Poor France, rent by her own children, will end like Poland; all our conquests of '89 will be lost. Switzerland, Italy, Belgium, Holland, all

the free nations of the Continent will share our fate; the great splay feet of the Germans will overspread Europe, and we unhappy Alsacians and Lorrainers will be forced to bow the head under the yoke, or go off to America.”

This speech of George's made me reflect, and I resolved to wait.

Many Alsacians and Lorrainers have thought the same; and this is why M. Thiers was right in saying that the Republic is the form of government which least divides us: it is also the only one which can save us. Any other form of government upon which Legitimists, Orleanists, and Bonapartists could well meet on common ground, would end in our destruction. If it should happen that one of these parties succeeds in placing its prince upon the throne, the next day all the others would unite and overthrow it; and the Germans, taking advantage of our division, would seize upon the Franche Comté and Champagne.

The Deputies of the Right ought to reflect well upon this. It is to reinstate the country, not a party, that they are at Versailles; it is to restore harmony to our distracted country, and not to sow fresh dissensions. I appeal to their patriotism, and, if this is not enough, to their prudence. New *coups d'état* would precipitate us into fresh revolutions more and more terrible. The nation, whose desire is for peace, labor, order, liberty, education, and justice for all, is weary of seeing itself torn to

pieces by Emperors and Kings; the nation might become exasperated against these anglers after Kings in troubled waters, and the consequences might become terrible indeed.

Let them ponder well; it is their duty to do so.

And all these princes, too—all these shameless pretenders, who make no scruple of coming to divide us at the crisis when union alone can save us—when the German is occupying all the strong places on the frontier, and is watching the opportunity to rend away another portion of our country! These men who slip into the army through favor; whose disaffected newspapers impede the revival of trade, in the hope of disgusting the people with the Republic! These princes who one day pledge their word of honor, and the day after withdraw it, and who are not ashamed to claim millions in the midst of the general ruin. Yes, these men must conduct themselves differently, if they don't wish to call to remembrance their father Louis Philippe, intriguing with the Bonapartists to dethrone his benefactor Charles X.; and their grandfather, Philippe Egalité, intriguing with the Jacobins and voting the death of Louis XVI. to save his fortune, whilst his son was intriguing in the army of the North with the traitor Dumouriez to march upon Paris and overthrow the established laws.

But the day of intrigues has passed by!

Bonaparte has stripped many besides these Princes of Orleans; he has shot, transported, to-

tally ruined fathers of families by thousands; their wives and their children have lost all! Not one of these unhappy creatures claim a farthing; they would be ashamed to ask anything of their country at such a time as this: the Princes of Orleans, alone, claim their millions.

Frankly, this is not handsome.

I am but a plain miller; by hard work I have won the half of what I possess: but if my little fortune and my life could restore Alsace and Lorraine to France, I would give them in a moment; and if my person were a cause of division and trouble, and dangerous to the peace of my country, I would abandon the mill built by my ancestors, the lands which they have cleared, those which I have acquired by work and by saving, and I would go! The idea that I was serving my country, that I was helping to raise it, would be enough for me. Yes, I would go, with a full heart, but without a backward glance.

And now let us finish the story of the Plébiscite.

Jacob returned to work at the mill; Jean Baptiste Werner also came back to demand Grédel in marriage. Grédel consented with all her heart; my wife and I gave our consent cordially.

But the dowry? This was on Grédel's mind. She was not the girl to begin housekeeping without her hundred livres! So I had again to run the water out of the sluice to the very bottom, get into the mud again, and once more handle the pick and spade.



Grédel watched me; and when the old chest came to the light of day with its iron hoops, when I had set it on the bank, and opened the rusty padlock, and the crowns all safe and sound glittered in her eyes, then she melted; all was well now; she even kissed me and hung upon her mother's neck.

The wedding took place on the 1st of July last; and in spite of the unhappy times, was a joyful one.

Toward the end of the fête, and when they were uncorking two or three more bottles of old wine, in honor of M. Thiers and all the good men who are supporting him in founding the Republic in France, Cousin George announced to us that he had taken Jean Baptiste Werner into partnership in his stone quarry. Building stone will be wanted; the bombardments and the fires in Alsace will long furnish work for architects, quarrymen, and masons: it will be a great and important business.

My cousin declared, moreover, that he, George Weber, would supply the money required; that Jean Baptiste should travel to take orders and work the quarries, and they would divide the profits equally.

M. Fingado, notary, seated at the table, drew the deeds out of his pocket, and read them to us, to the satisfaction of all.

And now things are in order, and we will try to regain by labor, economy, and good conduct, what Bonaparte lost for us by his Plébiscite.

My story is ended; let every one derive from it such reflections and instruction as he may.

