

monarchies will be virtually tributary to these two gigantic powers. Russia enthroned at Constantinople, and Prussia the head of imperial Germany, occupying the whole Valley of the Rhine, from the sea to the Alps, can bid defiance to Europe in arms.

France is now powerless. Prussia is acting in co-operation with Russia. England, without the aid of France, can accomplish but little. Any alliance between England and *democratic* France is impossible. The British Government has even more to fear from democracy across the Channel than from Russia on the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles.

The last phase of this all-exciting and ever-changing question is, that England, Russia, and Prussia enter into a virtual alliance; that Prussia be permitted to work her will upon France, now prostrate before her; that Russia be permitted to do as she pleases with the Ottoman Empire; and that England seize upon the Suez Canal, thus appropriating to herself this new and magnificent avenue of East-Indian commerce, which France devised, engineered, and constructed. To this arrangement, France, without a government, without an army, impoverished, exhausted, bleeding, can present no opposition.¹

¹ Telegram from London, Dec. 1, 1870.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FRANCE INVADED.



ON Friday, the 22d of July, but one week after the declaration of war, immense divisions of the Prussian army were gathered on the French or left side of the Rhine. These vast military bands, numbering several hundred thousands, were marshalled between the two massive and almost impregnable fortresses of Coblenz and Mayence. Braver troops than these German soldiers, or troops better disciplined, armed, and officered, never marched to the sound of the drum. They were inspired, not only by patriotic fervor, but by the full conviction that their cause was just in the sight of God.

The next day, July 23, a division of this army, advancing from Saar-Louis, on the southern frontier of the Prussian-Rhine provinces, crossed the boundary, and, invading France, marched directly south, some ten or twelve miles, towards St. Avold. There was nothing to oppose them. The frontier was there but an imaginary line, unprotected by river, mountain, or fortress.

In these modern days there is great power in public opinion. Both France and Prussia were alike anxious to obtain the moral support of other nations. As the

Prussian troops commenced their march, Count Bismarck caused a communication to be inserted in "The London Times" of the 25th of July, in which he accused M. Benedetti, the French minister at Berlin, of proposing that Prussia should allow France to seize and annex Belgium in compensation for the conquests Prussia was making. This statement caused intense exasperation in England against the imperial government.

To this M. Benedetti replied in an official communication to the Duke of Grammont, the French minister in Paris. This document, which attracted the attention of all Europe, was published in the "Journal Officiel" of July 29. In this paper, M. Benedetti declares, that, instead of making that proposal to Prussia, Count Bismarck himself had made it to the French minister; and that, upon its being transmitted to the French emperor, he had immediately rejected it.

"It is matter of public notoriety," writes M. Benedetti, "that Count Bismarck offered to us, before and during the last war, to assist in re-uniting Belgium to France in compensation for the aggrandizement he aimed at, and which he has obtained for Prussia. I might on this point invoke the whole diplomacy of Europe. The French Government constantly declined these overtures. M. Drouyn de Lhuys is in a position to give, on this point, explanations which would not leave any doubt subsisting."

Count Bismarck had stated that he had this communication in the handwriting of M. Benedetti. To this the French minister replied, —

"In one of these conversations, and in order to form a thorough comprehension of his intentions, I consented to transcribe them in some sort *under his dictation*. The

form, no less than the substance, clearly demonstrates that I confined myself to reproducing a project conceived and developed by him. Count Bismarck kept the paper, desiring to submit it to the king. On my side, I reported to the imperial government the communications which had been made to me. The emperor rejected them as soon as they were brought to his knowledge.

"If the initiative of such a treaty had been taken by the emperor's government, the draft would have been prepared at the ministry, and I should not have had to produce a copy in my own handwriting: besides, it would have been differently worded, and negotiations would have been carried on simultaneously in Paris and Berlin."

These contradictory statements agitated the press of England and America. Probably each reader came to a decision in accordance with his predilections, whether they were in favor of Prussia or France. There seemed to be no room for misunderstanding. The contradiction was positive and unqualified. Either Count Bismarck or Count Benedetti must have uttered a deliberate falsehood.

We ought, in justice to the French minister, to state that Lord Lyons, the British minister at Berlin, wrote a letter to Lord Granville, in which he fully confirmed the statements of the French ambassador. This letter was dated "Foreign Office, July 29, 1870," and was published in "The London Daily News" of Aug. 2.

"Those who have watched," he writes, "the course of European affairs since the accession to office of M. Bismarck, are aware from which side have come those suggestions which are now attributed to France. Ever

since the year 1865, M. Bismarck has constantly endeavored to carry out his own plans by endeavoring to turn the attention of the French Government to territorial aggrandizement. He told M. Lefebvre de Behaine that Prussia would willingly recognize the rights of France to extend her borders wherever the French language is spoken, thereby indicating certain Swiss cantons, besides Belgium. These overtures the government of the emperor declined to entertain.

"After the battle of Sadowa, Count Bismarck told the French ambassador that the course of France was clear: The French Government should go to the King of Belgium, and explain that the inevitable increase to Prussian territory and influence was most disquieting to their security, and that the sole means of avoiding these dangerous issues would be to unite the destinies of Belgium and France by bonds so close, that Belgium, whose autonomy would, however, be respected, would become in the north a real bulwark of safety for France. The French Government declined to listen to these proposals. These suggestions were again made at the time of the Luxemburg affair. They were categorically rejected by the emperor."

Lord Lyons closes his long letter by the statement, "that the document under the handwriting of M. Benedetti was written under the dictation of Count Bismarck, who wished to entangle the French Government in a conspiracy against the liberties of Belgium."

On the 26th of July, at half-past six o'clock in the evening, King William left Berlin for the seat of war. The queen accompanied him to the railroad-station, which was decorated for the occasion with flowers. The king was greeted with the cheers of an

immense multitude. He issued the following proclamation:—

"On my departure to-day for the army, to fight with it for Germany's honor and the preservation of our most precious possessions, I wish to grant an amnesty for all political crimes and offences, in recognition of the unanimous uprising of my people at this crisis. My people know, with me, that the rupture of the peace, and the provocation to war, did not emanate from our side; but, being challenged, we are resolved, placing full trust in God, to accept the battle for the defence of Fatherland."

Two days after, on the 28th, the French emperor, taking with him his son, fifteen years of age, left St. Cloud for the frontier. The empress was left as regent.

As the emperor took his departure for a conflict into which he had been so reluctantly drawn, he said, in a brief and by no means exultant address to the Legislative Corps, "We have done all in our power to avoid war; and I can say that it is the entire nation which has, in its irresistible impulse, prompted our resolution."

In his proclamation to the army, he said in despondent tones, which, at the time, were severely censured, "The war which now commences will be long, and hardly contested; for its theatre will be places hedged with obstacles, and thick with fortresses."

On Sunday, July 31, there was skirmishing between the advance-posts of the French and Prussians near St. Avold. The French were repulsed; but, as larger French forces were in the vicinity, the Prussians recrossed the boundary, and retired upon Saarbruck. On Tuesday, the 2d of August, the French troops crossed the frontier, marched upon Saarbruck, and in a short conflict,

which lasted from eleven o'clock, A. M., to one o'clock, P. M., stormed the heights. The emperor and the Prince Imperial were present. It was an affair of but little moment, rendered memorable only by the private despatch which the emperor, proud of his son's heroism, sent to the mother of the boy. The telegram from the battle-field was as follows:—

"Louis has just received his baptism of fire: he behaved with admirable coolness. A division of Gen. Frossard took the heights which overlook the left bank of Saarbruck. The Prussians made a short resistance. We were in the first line: the balls and bullets fell at our feet. Louis has kept a bullet which fell near him. Some of the soldiers wept on seeing him so calm."

There were many who ridiculed this despatch as absurd. "The London Echo" of Aug. 4, quoting from "The London Standard," says,—

"The stern ordeal with which the Prince Imperial was confronted was a state necessity. The baptism of war is a sacrament which the French nation regards with peculiar devotion. When we are told that many soldiers wept at seeing him so calm, we perceive that the incident may have its theatrical side to English eyes; but to Frenchmen it is an episode not easily forgotten: and it may be, that, in after-years, the memory of the baptism of fire at Saarbruck will serve the prince better than all the traditions of his house."

CHAPTER XIX.

PRUSSIAN VICTORIES AND FRENCH DEFEATS.



EN. DOUAY'S division of Marshal MacMahon's corps was stationed at Weissenbourg, which was the extreme north-eastern post of France. The pretty little town, on the south bank of the Lauter, contained about five thousand inhabitants.

The country around, rough and broken, was covered with dense masses of forest.

There were about thirty thousand French troops at Weissenbourg. Considerably over a hundred thousand Prussians, advancing from the strong fortresses of Landau, Mannheim, and Mayence, emerged unexpectedly from the forests, and fell upon the French with great fury. The battle was long and bloody. The Prussians, marching recklessly upon the ramparts of their foe, were cut down with awful carnage by the accuracy and rapidity of the French fire. The mitrailleuses annihilated whole regiments; but the French were overpowered, routed, and put to flight.

The Crown Prince of Prussia led the German troops in this brilliant and successful assault. MacMahon retreated in a westerly direction to Bitche and Woerth. The Prussians pursued vigorously. The French, having