

years ago, and was reported scrofulous, he simply had an abscess, the result of pressure in taking horse-riding lessons,—nothing connected in the least with disease of the bones or joints.

“They say the emperor has millions. I sincerely hope it may be so; but I have it, on the highest authority, that he is poor. The empress has property; and the Prince Imperial has property, left him two years ago by an Italian lady who died in Paris; but the emperor is not a rich man.”¹

¹ Testimony of Dr. Sims in the New-York Times, Nov. 4, 1870.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE OVERTHROW OF THE EMPIRE.



ING WILLIAM, in a letter which he wrote to Queen Augusta, speaks as follows of his fallen foe:—

“You already know, through my three telegrams, the extent of the great historical event which has just happened. It is like a dream, though one has seen it unroll itself hour after hour. On the morning of the 2d I drove to the battle-field, and met Moltke, who was coming to obtain my consent to the capitulation. He told me that the emperor had left Sedan at five o'clock, and had come to Donchery. As he wished to speak to me, and there was a château in the neighborhood, I chose this for our meeting. At one o'clock I started with Fritz, escorted by the cavalry staff. I alighted before the château, where the emperor came to meet me. We were both much moved at meeting again under such circumstances. What my feelings were, considering that I had seen Napoleon only three years before at the summit of his power, is more than I can describe.”

“At this conference,” writes one of the officers of the imperial staff, “the king showed the lofty feelings which animated him by exhibiting to the emperor all

the consideration which his misfortunes demanded ; and the emperor preserved an attitude of the utmost dignity."

The illustrious captive was assigned to the Castle of Wilhelmshöhe, near Cassel, one of the most attractive castles in Germany. Accompanied by his friends, supplied with every comfort, and surrounded by a guard of honor, the chains which held the prisoner of war were invisible.¹

The tidings of this great calamity soon reached Paris, and created intense excitement. The democratic party, which numbered in its ranks many of the lower orders of the Parisian populace, deemed it a favorable opportunity to overthrow the empire and to grasp the reins of power. An American gentleman then in Paris writes, under date of Sept. 4, —

"Paris is in a state of riotous excitement. Crowds are tearing down the imperial arms, and destroying the golden eagles of the empire. Fears are entertained that the city will soon be at the mercy of mobs."

The mob shouted, "Down with the empire!" "Live the republic!" Gen. Trochu, Governor of Paris, was called for. He told the mob, that, having taken the oath of allegiance to the empire, he could not thus renounce it. The crowd at length became so menacing,

¹ Wilhelmshöhe is one of the finest mansions in Europe. It is said to have cost about ten million dollars, and was built from the money which the Elector William received from England for the Hessian troops loaned her to fight the North-American colonies. The castle is situated but a short distance from Cassel, which was the capital of the kingdom of Westphalia. It is erected upon a hill commanding a magnificent view of the adjacent country. It is approached by a grand avenue, and is surrounded by one of the finest parks in Europe. The palace, which is built of white sandstone resembling marble, consists of a massive central tower, flanked by spacious wings. The garden, spreading out from the foot of the tower, is renowned for its picturesque beauty.

that the police dispersed it with fire-arms. At one o'clock, P.M., a crowd of a hundred thousand armed men surrounded the building of the Legislative Corps, and crowded all its avenues, rending the air with frenzied shouts. From all parts of the city, the agitated masses were converging towards the Legislative Hall. The friends of the government found it necessary to secrete themselves, or to keep silent. The Place de la Concorde presented a compact mass of human beings. A strong military force guarded the Tuileries. Shouts of "Vive république!" rose on all sides. The police were overpowered by the populace, and their arms thrown into the Seine. Paris was in the hands of the mob. The populace began to shout for the abdication of the empress-regent. Her life was menaced by brawny men and women.

There are few things on earth more to be dreaded than a Paris mob. The men were armed with muskets and revolvers. The tumults, the shouts, the surgings to and fro, and the menaces, were horrible. Terror had commenced its reign ; and the friends of order, utterly helpless, fled. The mob burst open the doors of the Legislative Hall. The president trembled in his chair as the *blouses*, with oaths and execrations, took possession of the room. Some of the radical speakers tried in vain to appease them. The friends of the government, composing the very large majority of the deputies, escaped as they could.

"What the minister of war would have said, what M. Thiers, and even Jules Favre, would have said, remains to be imagined ; for the people would not hear, but yelled '*Déchéance!*' so savagely, that nothing else was heard. The crowd kissed the jubilant leaders of the

left, and hurraed until the hall rang. The president, putting on his cap to announce that such proceedings could not be tolerated, received such a blow on the head from a club, that he fell covered with blood, and was led away moaning, while other infuriated workmen were striving to hit him again. Enthusiastic blouses at once set off up the boulevard, bearing huge placards announcing that the republic was proclaimed by 185 votes against 113. But there really was no voting at all, and no one to vote against it."¹

In these hours of tumult and terror, the deputies being all dispersed by the vast riot, the Empress Eugénie was at the Tuileries. All were bewildered by the sudden outbreak of lawlessness and violence. Worn down with care and sorrow, she listened appalled to the clamor which was surging through all the streets. Tidings came that the mob was advancing to sack the Tuileries. Her woman's heart shrank from ordering the body-guard to shoot them down. The conflict between the small body-guard and the mob would be bloody, and almost certainly unavailing. The only safety for the empress was in immediate flight, with as few attendants as possible, that she might avoid observation.

The empress had but just retired by a private door, when the mob came surging through the gravelled alleys of the garden, burst open the doors of the palace, and rioted unrestrained through all its apartments. The flag of the French Empire was hauled down, and insulting sentences were scribbled upon the statues and the walls. Hundreds of degraded women, foul and drunken, ransacked the apartments of Eugénie, — that empress

¹ Paris correspondence of the Boston Journal, Sept. 5, 1870.

who for twenty years had proved that the children of sorrow could never appeal to her in vain. They broke into the private cabinet of the emperor. The Babel of their songs and cries resounded far and wide through the streets.

While these scenes were transpiring, a few of the leaders of the democratic party in Paris met in the Hôtel de Ville, and organized themselves into a provisional government. Gambetta, one of the most prominent of these men, repaired to the office of the minister of the interior, and, with but two men to support him, demanded the books. The imperial officers, aware that the mob of Paris was at the command of Gambetta, withdrew from the office, leaving him in full possession.

It was thus that the empire in France was overthrown by a few hundred men in Paris. The empire, in an appeal to universal suffrage, in every city and village in France, in the army, in the navy, and in Algiers, had been established by a vote of nearly eight millions. There were but about three hundred thousand in the negative. The republic was established by the democratic portion of the populace in Paris. The opponents were overawed, and dared not express an opinion. Outside of the walls of Paris, there were thirty-eight millions of French people. Their voice was not listened to at all. The ecclesiastics, almost without an exception, were in favor of the empire. The peasantry composing the millions of the rural districts were supporters of the empire with scarcely a dissenting voice.

The democratic party in the leading cities — Lyons, Marseilles, &c. — followed the lead of the democrats in Paris in renouncing the empire and in proclaiming a republic; but they refused to give in their adhesion

to the self-constituted provisional government in Paris, and established governments of their own. Thus immediately there sprang up four distinct governments in France, each claiming to be "the French republic." First, there was the self-constituted "committee of national defence" in Paris. The second was a sort of delegated government in Tours. The third was a committee of public safety at Marseilles, under the dictator Alphonse Esquiros. The fourth was the red republican committee at Lyons. And there was still another attempt to grasp the reins of power by the democrats of Grenoble.

During the progress of the French revolution of 1789, the people of France were divided in opinion respecting the best form of government to be adopted. The aristocracy, and all under their control, demanded the old monarchy. They were sustained by wealth, by the immense influence of ancestral rank, and by all the courts and nobles of Europe. On the other hand were the republicans, mainly composed of the energetic populace of the cities and the more intelligent of the inhabitants of the rural districts. In some portions of France, nearly all the peasantry were in favor of the old monarchy. Never was there a more dreadful war waged on earth than that between the French monarchists and republicans in La Vendée.

The empire was an attempt at a compromise between the old *régime* and the modern republic. It maintained monarchical forms; while it rejected all aristocratic privilege, rearing the whole fabric of the government upon the principle of *equal rights for all men*. It rejected the principle of the *divine right* of kings, and proclaimed the *divine right* of the *people*. The re-estab-

lished empire which the democratic party in the great cities was now endeavoring to overthrow had been adopted by the voice of universal suffrage. Every man in France, who was not a felon or a pauper, voted. The historic facts, beyond all dispute, were as follows:—

In 1848, the French people overthrew the monarchical throne of Louis Philippe, established a republic, and chose Louis Napoleon Bonaparte president by 5,562,834 votes. The fairness of the vote cannot be questioned, since the polls were in the hands of Gen. Cavaignac, a rival candidate, *who was then dictator*.

A conspiracy was formed by the leaders of the Legitimist, Orléans, and Jacobin parties, to overthrow this republic. The monarchists deemed it too democratic in its character, and the red republicans deemed it not democratic enough. Thus the monarchist Thiers and the radical Louis Blanc clasped hands for its overthrow. Each hoped upon its ruins to rear his own favorite governmental fabric.¹

By the *coup d'état*, on the morning of Dec. 2, 1851, the president thwarted this conspiracy, and rescued the republic from the destruction with which it was menaced. An immediate appeal to universal suffrage, on the 20th of December, sustained the president in the *coup d'état*. Thus France made the act her own, and rewarded Napoleon by re-electing him president of the republic, which he had saved, for an additional period of ten years. The vote was taken throughout the eighty-six departments of France. There were 7,439,216 votes in favor of the president, and but 640,737 against him.

¹ See Alison's History of Europe, vol. vii. p. 535.

And now the people of France resolved to re-establish the empire, — the old republican empire of Napoleon I. Petitions were sent in from all parts signed by millions. "It became every day more evident that Paris, all entire, associated itself heart and soul in the wish universally and spontaneously uttered by the departments. From all parts of the territory, addresses soliciting this change, covered by thousands of signatures, flooded the Senate, which alone, in accordance with the constitution, could effect amendments of this nature. Thus it was the totality of France which demanded the re-establishment of the empire."¹

The polls, to decide upon the question whether the empire should be re-established, were opened on the 21st and 22d of November, 1852. This was eleven months after the *coup d'état*, by which the president had saved the republic. There were 7,864,180 votes in favor of the empire, and but 253,145 cast against it.

Thus the empire was re-established with a degree of unanimity quite unparalleled in the history of nations.² It is said that Napoleon, having taken an oath to be true to the republic, could not, under these changed circumstances, lend his aid to the establishment of the empire

¹ MM. Gallix et Guy p. 594.

² It is generally estimated, that, where suffrage is universal with all males over twenty-one years of age, there is one voter to about five of the population. The empire was established by a vote of 7,864,180. This represents a population of 39,320,900. Surely such unanimity was never before manifested in the establishment of a government. For twenty years, this government conferred upon France prosperity never enjoyed before, and was repeatedly sanctioned by the votes of the people. The opposition was confined to the great cities. It is easy to say that the vote was fraudulent; but the cordial support of the empire for twenty years proves that it was in harmony with the popular sentiment.

without perjury. Such is Senator Sumner's opinion. He says, —

"Promise, pledge, honor, oath, were all violated in this monster treason. Never in history was greater turpitude. As I am a republican, and believe in republican institutions, I cannot forgive the traitor."¹

The re-establishment of the empire made but a slight change in the republican constitution, which still remained in force. The government consisted of the supreme executive called Emperor, his Ministers, a Council of State, a Senate, and a House of Representatives called the Corps Législatif.

The emperor, chosen by universal suffrage, transmitted his crown to his natural heirs. He appointed his ministers.

The Senate was composed of the cardinals, the marshals, and the admirals of France, with enough others, appointed by the crown from citizens most distinguished for their services, to bring the number up to a hundred and fifty. The senators held their seats for life. After being appointed, they were entirely independent of the crown.

The members of the Corps Législatif were chosen by the people; one deputy for every thirty-five thousand electors. Every Frenchman over twenty-one years of age was a voter; and the deputies were chosen for a term of six years.

The councillors of state were from forty to fifty in number, were appointed by the emperor, and were removable by him. No law could be established, or tax imposed, without receiving the sanction of the Council

¹ Senator Sumner on the war, — New-York Herald, Oct. 29, 1870.

of State, the Senate, the Legislative Corps, and the signature of the emperor. The executive, legislative, and judicial functions were clearly defined, and carefully separated. This constitution could at any time be amended by the votes of the people, without rendering it necessary to resort to revolutionary violence.

While this constitution was less popular in its provisions than that of the United States, it was an immense advance from the spirit of the old Bourbon *régimes*, and was decidedly more republican in its character than the constitution of Great Britain.

Such, in brief, was the government which the democratic leaders in the great cities, in the midst of the terrible disasters by which France was overwhelmed, had overthrown, and replaced by several self-constituted committees of public safety.¹

Gen. Dix, who was for several years the American ambassador to the French Empire, in his parting speech to the American residents in Paris said, —

“It speaks strongly in favor of the illustrious sovereign who for the last twenty years has held the destinies of France in his hands, that the condition of the people, materially and intellectually, has been constantly improving; and that the aggregate prosperity of the

¹ “It was not from the necessity of circumstances that France chose Louis Napoleon. It was because France preferred him above all others, without exception. It is because he is the only man truly popular; the only name to which attach souvenirs of grand achievements accomplished for the country. What can any one say respecting the achievements of our *legitimate* kings? Who, in cottage or shop, knows any thing of them? Nobody. But all the world knows of the man who raised France to grandeur unheard of before; who subdued anarchy, and brought Europe to our feet; the man who knew how to recompense services rendered, and to discover merit wherever it existed; the man who took the son of the citizen to make him a marshal, and the son of a workman to make him a king.” — *MM. Gallix et Guy*, p. 9.

country is greater, perhaps, at the present moment, than at any former period.

“As you know, debates in the Corps Législatif, on questions of public policy, are unrestricted. They are reported with great accuracy, and promptly published in the official journal and other newspaper presses. Thus the people of France are constantly advised of all that is said for or against the administrative measures which concern their interests. In liberal views, in that comprehensive forecast which shapes the policy of the present to meet the exigencies of the future, the emperor seems to me decidedly in advance of his ministers, and even of the popular body chosen by universal suffrage to aid him in his legislative labors.”

Bismarck scornfully called the new governments which had usurped the place of the empire the “gutter democracy,” and refused to recognize them. M. Thiers, the Orléanist, would not acknowledge their authority, though terribly embarrassed in consequence in his endeavors to obtain a treaty of peace. The monarchies of Continental Europe, almost with one accord, refused to recognize any of these *governments*, which were founded neither upon legitimacy nor upon popular suffrage.

For twenty years the empire had been the acknowledged government of France, recognized by all the nations of Europe and America. Nearly every civil, ecclesiastical, and military office was in the hands of the friends of the empire. The marshals and generals and the rank and file of the army were, with scarcely an exception, ardent imperialists. Fearful as was the pressure upon them to drive back that Germanic invasion which was perilling the very life of France, their energies were in a degree paralyzed by the rebellion against

the government which had so suddenly sprung up in the great cities. Marshal Bazaine, at Metz, scornfully refused any recognition of the self-constituted committee in Paris, — a committee co-operating with the Prussian armies in overthrowing the established government. But for the presence of nearly a million of armed Prussians in France, the empire would have remained firm.

The democratic leaders in Europe are generally infidels, bitter foes of the Church. The peasantry, almost to a man, were friends of the empire, which respected their religion. The priesthood had immense influence in all the rural districts; and the whole priesthood, as a body, were opposed to the democracy. Thus, when Favre and Rochefort called upon France to rise *en masse* to repel the invaders, there was no cordial response. The priests and the peasants scarcely knew which to dread the most, — the Prussians, or the democrats; and when Garibaldi, who, by his assaults upon the Church, had rendered himself extremely obnoxious to all the Catholic priesthood, hastened to the aid of the democratic government in France, thousands of the Catholic soldiers refused to serve under such a leader.

Thus France was apparently doomed to destruction. With no acknowledged government, with democrats reviling imperialists in the most unmeasured terms of abuse, and imperialists treating the democrats as the enemies of religion and order, while at the same time the empire was overrun by as terrible an invasion as ever afflicted a people, and with but few words reaching French ears from England or America but words of scorn, the cup of misery the nation was doomed to drain seemed to be full to the brim. There was a latent Orléans element in the community, which did not develop itself in these disastrous hours.

Bismarck seemed appalled. He had expected that the overthrow of the republican empire would re-introduce the old monarchy under a Bourbon or an Orléans king. Instead of this, the democrats leaped upon the vacant throne, and grasped the sceptre. Bismarck, in consternation, would gladly have wrenched the sceptre from them, and restored it to the emperor. Democracy he feared above all things else.

"A republic," says Mr. Headley, "stares him in the face. He knows, from the effect of the last French republic on Germany, that another one established to-day will threaten the stability of his government more than Strasburg or Metz ever did or can; that a republic surging up to the borders of Germany is a more fearful menace than a hundred thousand French troops stationed along the Rhine. This very fact may furnish the key to his conduct in insisting on the overthrow of Paris. He knows that Paris is not France; and though the *city* may vote for a republic, the *entire country* has just cast an overwhelming vote in favor of an empire.

"Therefore, could he once occupy the capital, — so that, on the one hand, it could not overawe the provinces, and, on the other, give free scope to the monarchists to electioneer among the people, — a similar result would follow, and thus France become an empire. With this he could accomplish a double object, — secure Europe from the dreaded effect of a vast republic rising in its midst, and obtain also such a frontier as he desires. Such a plan would be worthy of this prince of diplomatists."