CHAPTER XXV.

THE SIEGE OF PARIS.

THE empire in France was a republican empire, founded upon universal suffrage, recognizing the right of the *people* to organize their own form of government, abolishing all aristocratic privilege and all feudal immunities, and establishing the doctrine of equal rights for all men. Notwithstanding its attempt to conciliate Europe by its adoption of monarchical forms, and its disavowal of any design to disturb other governments by inciting democratic insurrections, its entire renunciation of "legitimacy" and of "privilege" rendered it obnoxious to dynastic Europe. If the *people* of France might choose their own sovereign, adopt such form of government as pleased them, frame their own constitution, and enact and execute their own laws, why might not the people of England, Prussia, Austria, demand the same right?

Still there was embarrassment. In France there were essentially three parties: 1. The old feudal party of legitimacy. 2. The compromise party of the empire. 3. The democratic party, in its various shades of moderates, radicals, and communists. The overthrow of the empire might not re-introduce the old feudal *régime*

under the Bourbons, or its somewhat modified spirit under the Orleanists, but might possibly be succeeded by some form of democracy under avowed and deadly hostility to every European throne: therefore the dynasties reluctantly tolerated the empire, fearing that its overthrow might lead to something worse.

It was under these circumstances that Count Bismarck formed the plan of re-organizing the ancient German Empire upon the basis of the divine right of kings and the exclusive privileges of nobles. Only such modifications of the old feudal *régimes* were submitted to as the changed state of the times rendered inevitable. The avowed object of this movement was to head off and crush out the sentiment of popular rights, which was gradually being disseminated throughout Europe. Count Bismarck and King William were in entire harmony in this aim; and they prosecuted their enterprise with sagacity, energy, and success, which has astonished the world.

It is said that revolutions never roll backwards. Perhaps they do not; but here there is an apparent reflex flow of the most appalling kind. This gigantic German Empire, formed, not by the *people* of Germany, but by the twenty-five German princes who hold their offices by divine right, and who have combined in the organization of the empire, can instantly silence, throughout all Germany, any voice which may dare to speak in favor of popular rights.

Still it may prove to be an excellent government. It may be that the German people are like children, who cannot be safely trusted with the management of their own affairs. It is for the interest of the emperor and his associate kings and princes to seek the prosperity

and happiness of their several peoples. In their combined action they are certainly so strong, that they can easily and instantly crush out any attempt at a popular uprising in any portion of their realms. It is also very certain that a democratic government *may be* very corrupt, oppressive, and ruinous. This holy alliance of the princes of Germany in a consolidated empire will undoubtedly secure Germany from revolutions for many years to come; and may, perhaps, confer upon the people blessings, which, under present circumstances, could not be attained in any other way.

The power of this new and majestic empire is controlled by the emperor and the associate princes. There are three bodies recognized in the government: 1. The Emperor. The crown is hereditary in the person of the King of Prussia, who is almost the absolute sovereign in his own realm. 2. The Imperial Council. This consists of the twenty-five princes of various degrees of power and dignity, whose realms constitute united Germany. Their votes are in accordance with the extent and population of their domains: the King of Prussia has seventeen votes, — one-third of all; Bavaria casts six votes; Saxony and Wurtemberg, four each; Baden and Hesse, three; Mecklenburg, Schwerin, and Brunswick, two; the rest, one each. The princes are all hereditary legislators, ruling by right of birth or divine right. 3. There is a third body, called the Reichstag. It consists of three hundred and eighty-two members, chosen by universal suffrage, — one deputy for each hundred thousand of the population. This gives Prussia two hundred and forty members, — nearly two-thirds of the whole.

It seems rather hard for France, that as the reward

for her having consented to the unification of Germany, which she could easily have prevented, she should be trampled so mercilessly beneath the feet of that gigantic empire. Père Hyacinthe said, in a speech in London the latter part of December, 1870, —

"Justice has been denied the second empire; for that government made the unity of Italy, and caused that of Germany. It was a generous policy, well expressed by Napoleon III., during the Italian campaign, in these words: 'Every one knows that before the flag of France there goes a great idea, and behind it a great people.'" [1]

On the 11th of August, 1870, as the Germanic legions were pouring into France, King William issued a proclamation, addressed "To the French Nation," dated at Saarbrück, in which he said, "Prussia wars, not on France, but on Bonaparte." To Napoleon personally he had no objections: they were friends. It was the republican empire to which he was opposed. But when the imperial army was overthrown, and Napoleon was a prisoner, and "the gentlemen of the pavement of Paris," as Bismarck designated them, had seized upon

[1] In a sermon preached by the Rev. O. B. Frothingham, and reported in the New-York Herald of Jan. 2, 1871, we find the following striking remarks: —

"We examine French imperialism, and we find that we cannot condemn t more than other imperialisms in history. You say that the country was licentious: there was not so much licentiousness in France under Napoleon III. as under Louis XIV. or Louis XV. You say the empire was extravagance: the cost of governing France for the last ten years was not so much as for five years under Louis' reign. It costs no more to keep Paris clean than to keep New York dirty. The empire was peace, order, and prosperity. You say the emperor was a tyrant: he was elected by the people. You say that the election was not a fair one, and that the ballot-boxes were stuffed: the ballot-boxes are stuffed in New York. In spite of cavil, Napoleon submitted the question of imperialism to the people four times; and four times the people said, 'Rule over us.' The empire was splendor: the glory of Paris was the glory of the world."

the reins of government, — thus transferring the supreme power, not back to the old *régime*, but forward to the democracy of the cities, — then Bismarck and King William were alarmed; and they would gladly have reinstated Napoleon upon the throne, after having wrested from France both banks of the Rhine, from Belgium to Switzerland. France thus deprived of any natural boundary, with Germany in possession of the whole valley of the Rhine and of the majestic fortresses which frown along its shores, was entirely at the mercy of Germany. At any hour the German legions could rush into France from these vast ramparts; while at the same time the Rhine and its fortresses presented an impassable barrier against any advance of the French troops into the new empire.

Under these circumstances, it became quite manifest that it was the policy of the German conquerors to restore Napoleon to his throne, after having so weakened France that she would be powerless in the hands of her victors. And it was cruelly reported that the Emperor of France was willing so to submit to such humiliation as to allow himself to be carried back to the Tuileries by the arms of the conquering Prussians. The emperor, with great good sense, had quietly submitted to his fate; for it had ever been one of the fundamental principles of his belief, that he was borne along by providences over which he had but little control. Prosperity did not elate him; adversity did not depress him. But, as the rumors of his plottings to regain the throne by some military stratagem became widely diffused, he, on the 12th of December, 1870, authorized, from his imprisonment at Wilhelmshöhe, the following statement to be made: —

"It would be quite well if it were publicly understood that I never intend to remount the throne on the strength of a military *pronunciamento*, by the aid of the soldiery, just as little as by that of Prussia. I am the sole sovereign in Europe who governs, next to the grace of God, by the will of the people; and I shall never be unfaithful to the origin of either. The whole people, which has four times approved of my election, must recall me by its deliberate votes, else I shall never return to France. The army possesses no more right to place me on the throne than had the lawyers or loafers to push me from it. The French people, whose sovereign I am, has the sole decision."[1]

Count Bismarck has testified to the cordial assent which France gave to the unification of Germany, and that Prussia had no fears that France would take any dishonorable advantage of the war between Prussia and Austria to regain her lost boundary of the Rhine. It was always the desire of the imperial government, in accordance with its declaration that "the empire is peace," to avoid all war, and to obtain a rectification of its boundaries by "reason," and not by "iron and by blood."

In 1866, when all the military energies of Prussia were concentrated in the march upon Sadowa, Count Bismarck said to Mr. Benedetti, "Our trust in the good faith of the French Government is so firm, that we have not a single soldier left on the left bank of the Rhine."[2]

As we have mentioned, France, at the commencement of the war, had but about four hundred thousand sol-

[1] Correspondence of the New-York Herald, Dec. 30, 1870.

[2] Testimony of the Marquis de Gricourt.

diers in the field. Prussia, all prepared for the conflict, with her troops in marching-order, her rail-cars for their transportation all ready, and her vast magazines on both banks of the Rhine filled with the *matériel* of war, instantly, upon the declaration of hostilities, sent into France nearly a million of men; while another million were held in reserve, following in a continuous stream, to take the place of those who fell in battle, and to replenish the German armies wherever they needed reenforcements.

The imperial troops of France, after a few bloody battles, were overpowered, and all either slain or captured. The German hosts were so numerous, that on every battle-field they could outnumber their foes by two or three to one. The world probably never saw braver and better disciplined soldiers, more skilful commanders, or better armaments, than the Germans brought into the struggle.

Having annihilated the imperial armies, the Germans had troops enough to send four hundred thousand men to lay siege to the city of Paris, to besiege with overpowering numbers every fortress and walled city which the French still garrisoned, and also to send resistless armies in all directions to gather supplies and to impose contributions upon the people. The French soldiers in garrison, and the new recruits who were hurriedly summoned to the field, fought valiantly, but with almost unvarying defeat. Every day witnessed the triumph and the advance of the German arms.

The sieges of some of the walled towns were awful beyond all imagination, attended with an appalling loss of property and of life, and an accumulation of misery which God only can gauge. In the midst of terrific

bombardments, shells exploding in the crowded streets and in the thronged dwellings, conflagrations blazed forth; and scenes of tumult, dismay, and woe, were witnessed, which could not have been surpassed had fiends been the agents.

The annals of war contain no other record of such a career of victories as attended the German arms. In the course of a few weeks, Strasburg, Phalsburg, Toul, Vitry le Français, Verdun, Metz, Laon, Soissons, Bitche, Mézières, Rocroy, Schelestadt, Neuf Brisach, Thionville, Montmédy, Perronne, Longwy, and many other places of minor note, fell into the hands of the invaders. Many of the towns were military posts of the first order. The world was astounded to see these fortresses, one after another, crumbling before the batteries of the Germans.

In the course of a few months sixteen pitched battles were fought, with often two hundred thousand men or more on either side. In nearly all these battles, the Germans were victorious. If they met with a momentary repulse, they immediately replenished their thinned ranks, and advanced again to certain victory. Besides these general battles, there were innumerable minor conflicts. For five months, there was not an hour, by day or by night, in which, in some part of the vast field swept by these opposing hosts, the murderous thunders of battle were not heard.

One division of the German army, under Gen. Von Werder, swept in a broad path down the eastern frontiers of France, scattering all opposition, a distance of two hundred miles, to Dijon and Chalons. Another division, under the Crown Prince, battering down fortresses, routing armies, capturing opulent towns, ravaged the north-

ern sections of France, through the whole breadth of the empire almost to the English Channel. Another host, more than two hundred thousand strong, marching directly beyond Paris, bore their victorious banners through many a bloody fight to the banks of the Loire, capturing Orléans and Tours, and every other place on their lines of advance.

King William, taking the magnificent palace of Versailles for his headquarters, with Count Bismarck and Baron Moltke in his suite, invested Paris with four hundred thousand veteran troops. The city was encompassed by military lines thirty or forty miles in extent. The investment was commenced on the 19th of September, 1870; and was continued until the 25th of January, 1871. Wherever there was the least possibility of the beleaguered garrison attempting a *sortie*, ramparts bristling with artillery and mitrailleuse were thrown up, so as to render escape impossible.

There were two millions of inhabitants within the city, about three hundred thousand of whom were armed. They probably accomplished all that, under the circumstances, mortal valor could accomplish. Week after week and month after month, for one hundred and thirty days, they beat off their foes. Gradually the lines of the beleaguering hosts drew nearer. Three several times, at the head of over one hundred thousand men, Gen. Trochu endeavored to cut his way through the coil of batteries and ramparts ever tightening around him. The slaughter on both sides was immense. But the Germans invariably held or regained their positions. Every hour, hope in Paris grew fainter; and despair settled down over the doomed city in darker folds.

Several armies were gathered in the provinces to

march for the relief of Paris; but they were speedily overpowered and dispersed by the Germans. The peasantry had long been jealous of the disposition of the democratic leaders in the great cities to usurp the control of affairs without consulting the inhabitants of the rural districts. The sudden and lawless overthrow of the government which had been established by the overwhelming majority of the people of France, and had been maintained by them, by repeated votes, for more than twenty years, and the usurpation of the government by a self-appointed committee without the shadow of constitutional or legal authority, so alienated the people, that there was no disposition to rise *en masse* under such leaders, even to assail the invading Prussians.

The Bourbonists, the Orléanists, the Imperialists, the Red Republicans, and the Communists were alike opposed to those "gentlemen of the pavement," as Bismarck scornfully termed them, who, some in Paris and some in Tours, called themselves "the Committee of National Defence." Under these circumstances, there was no hope of the vigorous uprising of the nation. The democratic party, which was mainly confined to the great cities, was divided into three quite distinct and bitterly hostile sections, — the Moderate Republicans, the Red Republicans, and the Socialists. Notwithstanding the pressure of the war, these factions in Paris conspired against each other; and there were frequent scenes of insurrection and bloodshed.

To add to the gloom of the condition, there was not a single nation in Europe who manifested any sympathy for the anarchic committees who assumed to govern France; not one who would cordially recognize them as a government, or enter into any diplomatic relations

with them; not one which did not apparently feel that Europe had more to dread from the establishment of such a *régime* in Paris, antagonistic to every surrounding monarchy, than even from the enormous encroachments of Prussian absolutism, which, though it threatened to dominate over all Europe, would lend its influence in every kingdom to arrest the rising tide of democracy.

So heroic, notwithstanding all these discouragements, was the defence of the inexperienced young soldiers in Paris, that the Prussians did not succeed until the 9th of January in planting any batteries sufficiently near to throw shells over the walls into the city. On that day, these terrific bolts of war, thrown from a distance of four or fire miles, descending as from the clouds, fell thickly in the western portion of the city, killing women and children, kindling conflagrations, destroying the most venerable works of art, and scattering dismay and death on every side. Direful famine added its horrors to the woes now desolating the most gay and beautiful metropolis upon this globe.

On the 12th of January, a balloon succeeded in leaving the city. Its despatches informed the outside world that the bombardment had continued with great violence; that shells were falling near the Palace of the Luxemburg; that several citizens had been killed, and others wounded; that the Red Republicans had placarded the streets with revolutionary posters, trying to excite insurrection, declaring the Government of Defence cowardly and incompetent. Thousands of shells had fallen, creating havoc in all directions; killing women and children, and striking hospitals, ambulances, houses, and churches.

The next day the Germans succeed in capturing a

French battery, which enabled them to push their siege-guns a mile nearer the city. From Versailles could be seen the smoke of numerous fires caused by the shells; and still far away over the frozen fields of France the battle raged, and the trampled snow was crimsoned with the blood of the slain as the drifts swept over the victors and the vanquished sleeping in death together.

And so it was, that day and night, over distant fields and around the doomed city, the awful struggle was continued without intermission. An eloquent writer says, speaking of the state of things on the 17th of January, "The surroundings of the city are in ruins or in flames. Explosive bolts of iron of over two hundred pounds in weight, howling like demons in their destructive flight, are plunging down through the humblest roofs and grandest domes in the heart of the doomed metropolis. It is the bombardment of Strasburg ten times magnified. In its destructive projectiles, and in the warlike engines and forces employed, it dwarfs all precedents of ancient or modern times. The remorseless siege and destruction of Carthage, we do not forget, involved the extinction of a great nation and a great people; nor wil the intelligent reader fail to recall the appalling loss of human life — eleven hundred thousand souls — involved in the siege and burning of Jerusalem by Titus; nor do we overlook the sacking and burning of Rome by Alaric. But neither Babylon, Tyre, Jerusalem, Carthage, nor Rome, furnishes any thing in the horrors of war more shocking to the Christian humanitarian of the nineteenth century than this horrible bombardment of Paris, with its blind and indiscriminate killing and mangling of soldiers and non-combatants, the strong and the helpless, men, women, and children."

In seven months these German armies had crushed the most renowned military power of modern times, had captured its emperor, and had taken possession of one-half of its territory. Prince Frederick Charles was pursuing the routed forces of Gen. Chanzy, driven beyond the Loire. Gen. Bourbaki, in the east of France, was nearly surrounded by the Germans under Von Werder and Manteuffel, and his doom seemed inevitable. In the north, the posture of affairs was still more gloomy. Gen. Faidherbe was sullenly retreating before the stronger forces of Gen. Von Goeben.

On the 19th of January it was reported, that, the day before, four hundred and fifty shells had been thrown into the city; that Sèvres was in ruins; that a German battery was within four miles of Notre Dame; that Prince Hohenlöhe had declared his determination to destroy all the principal edifices in Paris; that batteries were already reared for the destruction of St. Denis, the sepulchre of the ancient kings of France; and that in Paris "abominable plots" were formed for the overthrow of the Committee of Public Defence, and for the establishment of the reign of terror. An insurrectionary procession, numbering six hundred, had paraded the streets.

Still the dismal hours of war and woe passed slowly away. Nothing was to be heard on any side but disasters to the French. Starvation threatened Paris. All the animals in the menagerie were eaten. Horses, dogs, cats, rats, furnished eagerly-coveted food for the famishing people. The conservatory of the Jardin des Plantes, containing the most magnificent collection of exotics in the world, was in ruins; and in the city there were every hour new indications of hostility to the Provisional Government, and new menaces of revolt.

Gen. Trochu, utterly disheartened, tendered his resignation as Governor of Paris. But no one could be found to take his place. It was mid-winter: the fuel was all consumed; the people were freezing as well as starving. The German batteries were drawing nearer, the storm of shells growing more thick and terrible. There was no possible shelter. The government was in bewilderment: it knew not what to do. *Sorties* were impossible. Every hour of resistance was only submitting to helpless massacre. Starvation was steadily approaching: capitulation would seal the destiny of the Committee for Public Defence.

Under these circumstances, Jules Favre, the leading spirit in the Provisional Government, with anguish of spirit which must have been awful, on the 25th of January sought an interview with Count Bismarck, at Versailles, to propose terms of surrender. France, Paris, was at the feet of the conqueror. He could exact, and he did exact, his own terms. Scornfully rejecting any recognition of the "gentlemen of the pavement" as the government of France, he consented to an armistice of twenty-one days, upon condition that all the troops in the city should surrender their arms, and that the forts surrounding Paris should be given up to the Germans. This was, of course, the unconditional surrender of Paris. The German troops could march into the city unresisted any hour of any day.

It was also exacted, that on the 8th of February there should be an election, throughout France, of a Constituent Assembly. This body should meet on the 15th, and immediately adopt some form of government which Germany would recognize, and with which Germany would treat for conditions of peace. To that

government King William would present the following terms, which, in the name of France, it must accept, or the *slaughter* would continue; for *war*, on the part of the French, seemed no longer possible: —

1. France was to surrender to Prussia Alsace and Lorraine, with Belfort and Metz;
2. To pay as indemnity for the expenses of the war ten milliards of francs, — equal to two thousand million dollars;
3. To surrender to Prussia the French colony of Pondicherry; and,
4. To transfer to the German navy twenty first-class French frigates.[1]

Such, essentially, were the terms which the victor professed himself ready to offer to his prostrate and humiliated foe.

[1] London Times, Feb. 1, 1871.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE POLITICAL EMBARRASSMENTS.

THERE is no satisfactory evidence, that, at any time during the war, the masses of the people in France were in sympathy with the self-constituted committees in Paris and Bordeaux. For obvious reasons, the populace in large cities are more liable to sudden impulses and to fickle changes than the inhabitants of the rural districts. Still, in the great cities there was no harmony of views in accepting what was called the Republic, — a usurpation which did not dare to appeal to the votes of the nation for its recognition. Even in Paris, the democratic party was so divided, that there were insurrections against the Government for the National Defence, and fearful menaces of civil war, even when the bombardment of the Prussians was shaking the windows of the Hôtel de Ville.

Jules Favre, who may, perhaps, be considered a moderate republican, was at the head of the government in Paris. Gambetta, a *red* republican of the most crimson die, was the leader of that portion of the government which had taken refuge in Tours, and afterwards, upon the approach of the Prussians, had escaped to Bordeaux. From the commencement of the so-called repub-