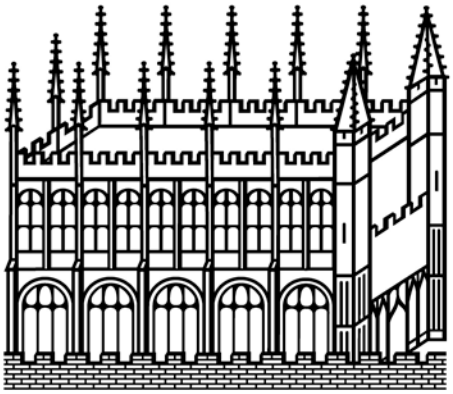
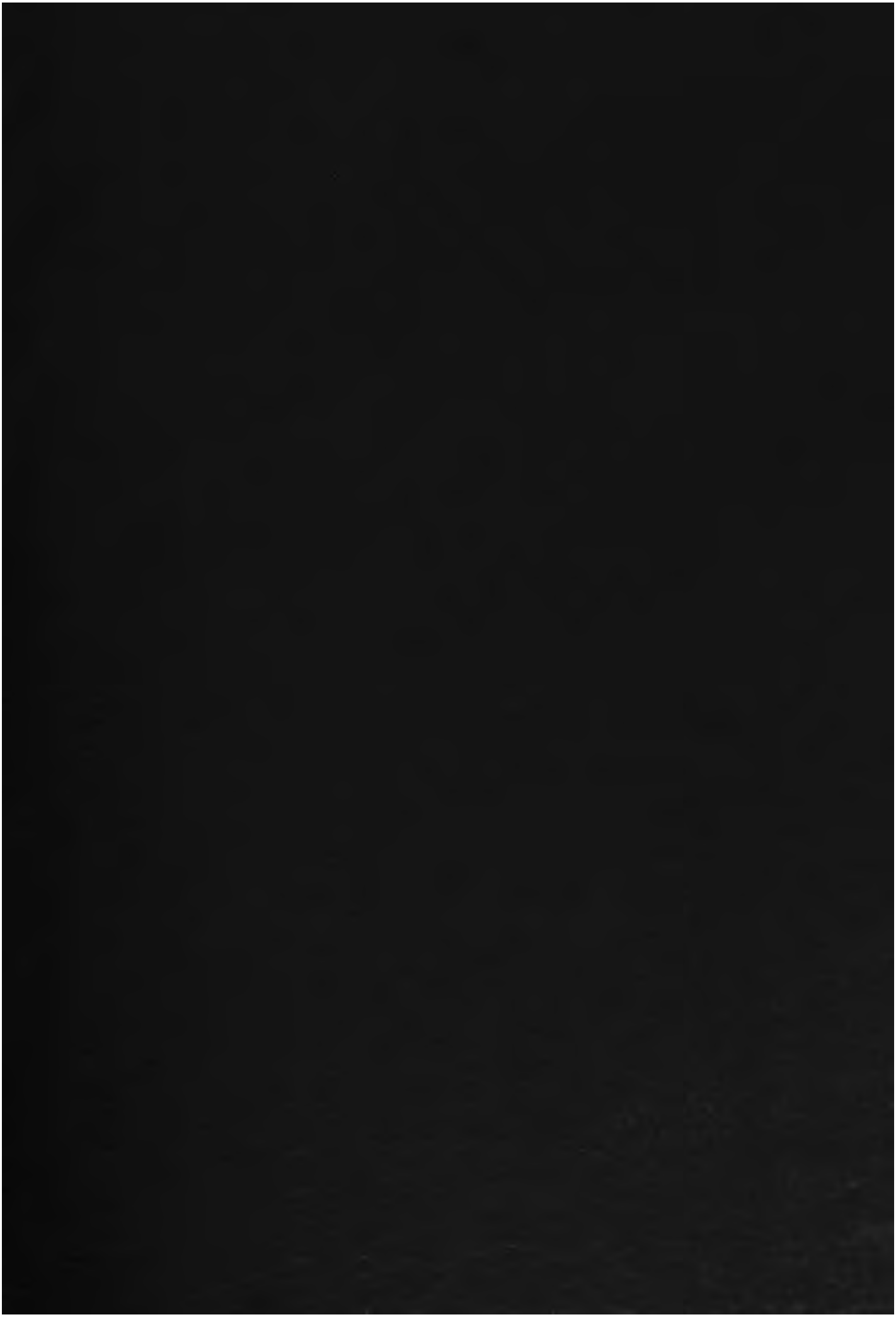


ROUGH NOTES

OF A VISIT TO BELGIUM SEDAN AND PARIS IN SEPT. 1870-71

JOHN ASHTON



BELGIUM, SEDAN, AND PARIS

ROUGH NOTES OF A VISIT TO BELGIUM, SEDAN, AND PARIS

In September 1870–71

BY JOHN ASHTON

HENRY S. KING & Co.
65 CORNHILL & 12 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON
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PREFACE.

THE AUTHOR of this little work has purposely avoided any reference to military movements or to the history of the war, and confined himself to a simple narrative of the scenes and incidents which came under his own observation.

The book has been written during the last few months, in such leisure as the pressure of his ordinary avocations afforded the author, and that circumstance must be his apology for any faults or imperfections.

MANCHESTER: *June* 1873.

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ROUGH NOTES.

CHAPTER I.

HULL TO ANTWERP.

Passports—A Night at Sea—The Scheldt.

In September 1870, circumstances made Hull the point of departure of my friend and myself in a projected tour through Belgium, and we proposed to extend our journey to Sedan, if we found it practicable to do so. We had neglected to provide ourselves with passports, and had some difficulty in obtaining them, the state of the Continent at the time rendering the consuls more than usually strict, and we unfortunately had no friends in the northern seaport. We managed, however, to surmount the difficulty, and having obtained these, as we then thought, necessary documents, but which subsequent experience showed we might have entirely dispensed with, took our way down to the docks about ten P.M. and embarked on board the steamer for Antwerp.

We found very few passengers, this way of reaching Belgium being not much used by travellers. We had a quiet, favourable passage till the following evening, when the wind and sea rose considerably, and caused the vessel to roll a good deal. I was left alone on deck, where I stayed till far on in the night. The stars shone out brilliantly, and as the vessel slowly ploughed her way through the dark waves, leaving a shining track of foam in her wake, I abandoned myself to the varied thoughts which the scene was calculated to excite. A hint from the pilot, conveyed in a mixture of Flemish and English, at last, however, showed me the desirability of retiring to my berth.

On reaching the deck next morning, I found we had entered the Scheldt, and were some thirty miles up that river. The navigation appears to be difficult on account of the many sandbanks, &c., and the country in its vicinity is very low and flat, and would in places be constantly submerged were it not for the artificial dykes and banks. After passing some forts we saw a company of Belgian soldiers marching along the right bank of the river, their bayonets glistening in the morning sun. Soon after we sighted the spire of Antwerp Cathedral, and speedily arrived at the quay, where we quitted the vessel, and after the examination of our baggage hired a carriage and drove to the 'Hôtel de l'Europe,' where we breakfasted in true

Continental fashion on veal cutlets, mushroom sauce, potatoes (dressed in the inimitable French style), and a bottle of claret, all excellent. It is not my intention to describe places so extremely well known as these Belgian cities, but simply to give a few rough sketches of some of the scenes and incidents of our brief visit.

CHAPTER II.

ANTWERP.

The Streets—French Prisoners—The Cathedral—Protestantism *versus* Catholicism—The Club—Jesuits' Church.

ANTWERP is a fine town, and has an air of lightness and gaiety very pleasant. One misses at once that heavy, humid atmosphere which is so familiar to us, at least in the manufacturing towns in the north of England, and instead we find a light, dry air and brilliant, invigorating climate. There is always something new to see in a foreign city on your first sight of it. Here were the blue-bloused peasants in their heavy wooden *sabots*, the strange head-dresses of many of the women, the numbers of small vehicles drawn by dogs—this last rather a painful sight, and one which I hope will soon be as impossible here as it is at home.

In the streets were some new features in consequence of the war. We met a few French Zouaves—some of them coloured men, and the wildest and most savage-looking fellows I ever beheld—other French soldiers, and of course numbers of Belgian troops of all classes. There

were also a considerable number of Red Cross men, though what duty could necessitate the presence of so many of them here and at Brussels I could not make out.

We went to see the cathedral. It is so closely hemmed in by buildings that you can see little more outside than the tower and entrance door. The former is beautiful and chaste; the carving is so delicate as to give it a somewhat fragile appearance. It is of great height, about 403 feet, one of the highest in Europe, and can be ascended by a spiral stone staircase. We went to the top and had a good view of the town and country about, and of the windings of the Scheldt. The view, however, hardly compensated for the tediousness and fatigue of the ascent. The dimensions of the interior of the cathedral are 500 feet long by 250 feet wide, and the general effect of the nave, choir, and aisles is majestic and imposing. Besides the high altar there is a considerable number of side altars, all more or less richly decorated. Before most of them a rough iron candelabrum stood on the floor of the building, and on these a greater or less number of candles were burning, though it was broad daylight. These are offerings made by the worshippers, and are vended by a priest in the building for larger or smaller sums, according to size and quality.

I saw one poor woman come in, buy a candle

of the thinnest and poorest description, light it, and place it before one of the altars, before which she then knelt in silent, absorbed devotion. The same scene was being enacted all over the cathedral; men and women of all ages, ranks, and classes of society were constantly coming in, quitting for the time whatever occupation they were engaged in, and kneeling in silent reverence before one or other of the altars for a longer or shorter period. In coming round a projecting arch we saw an old grey-headed man silently praying before a shrine in an obscure corner. He never turned his head or took the slightest notice of us, and on our part we trod as lightly and reverently as possible, so as not to disturb these silent worshippers. Sometimes the people would kneel on the pavement, in other cases on chairs fitted for the purpose.

Whatever of superstition might mingle with these acts of worship, one could not but think these people would be benefited by such brief pauses for devotion in the midst of their active everyday life, and it was impossible to avoid contrasting this building with our English Protestant churches, most of which are closed every day but Sunday, and in which when open, by the pew system, our worshippers are carefully divided into sections and classes of wealth and poverty. Here this grand old temple is open daily, its area free and

unobstructed; rich and poor kneel together without distinction before the Almighty Father. In this respect, and in the devotional attitude of the people, and indeed in many other ways, Protestantism might borrow from Catholicism with advantage.

The cathedral is rich in carvings and paintings. In the former, the confessionals and pulpit were most remarkable. The principal paintings are 'The Elevation' and 'Descent from the Cross.' It is not easy to define the feelings and emotions excited in you by viewing these two grand pictures. We gazed at them long in silent, absorbed attention. There were two artists engaged in producing reduced copies of the latter while we were in the building.

Coming out of the silence and solemnity of the cathedral, we saw opposite to us in the Place Verte the statue of the great painter Reubens. The town and churches abound with statues of the Virgin; we counted four or five at one view in some of the streets; many of those in the churches have the figure robed in rich dresses, and large numbers of gold and silver ornaments of the most various character are suspended near the shrines. These are offerings made by various individuals and at various times. All the churches have many paintings, and are rich in carving and decorations. The fine carved pulpits are very remarkable. In the Jesuits' church the pavement is entirely of tesse-

lated marble, and the high altar is gorgeous with paintings and gold and silver vessels, huge, highly ornamented candles, &c. On the walls of this church are painted seventeen views of 'The Way of the Cross.' The whole effect of the interior is splendid in the extreme.

We rested a little at one of the *cafés*, and got into conversation with a gentleman who was courteous enough to go with us and show us the building of a literary and artistic club formed here, which we understood had not less than from two to three thousand members. There is a good library, also smoking, card, and dining-rooms, and a really superb ball-room. Most of these are decorated with paintings by various artists.

At 6.30 we returned to dinner, which was excellent and well served, though it is difficult at first to get out of the way of expecting the large joints we have at home, and a novice might perhaps find his repast more exquisite than satisfying.

CHAPTER III.

BRUSSELS.

The Streets and Boulevards—The Grande Place and Hotel de Ville—The Houses of Legislature—St. Gudule—Belgian Fetes—A Belgian Sunday.

NEXT morning we left Antwerp for Brussels, which it much resembles, of course, in its main features. The white buildings, which are nearly universal in both places, have much to do no doubt with the cheerful appearance they present. In the old part of the city and a good portion of the new the streets are narrow, but some of them are fine, and contain good shops. The boulevards round the city are not very interesting. The Grande Place is very picturesque; one side is occupied by the Hôtel de Ville, and the others by many antique and curious old buildings. The general effect is very pleasing. The Hôtel de Ville is an imposing edifice, with a tower of great height and beauty. The interior contains many good paintings and much tapestry and oak carving. In the Grande Place are statues to Counts Egmont and Horn, who were beheaded on the spot in 1568.

The Houses of Legislature are not remarkable,

but the Senate Chamber is much more handsome than the one appropriated to the Representatives. The Cathedral of St. Gudule is a fine, massive structure, and contains many paintings, &c. At this time the church was draped in black in commemoration of the three or four hundred Belgians who fell in the last Revolution. A mass had been, or was about to be, celebrated to their memory. The building contains the usual confessional boxes, shrines, and offerings, with candles burning before the altars; and the same constant dropping in and out of worshippers of all classes is observable.

The covered market for the sale of flowers, fruit, and vegetables was a sight worth seeing, as the display of these articles was very fine and large. We met a good many French soldiers, wounded and unwounded, in the streets. At a *café* where we stayed one of them was telling his story to an attentive and sympathising audience. In one street we saw a building full of wounded Frenchmen attended upon, as we saw so frequently afterwards, by *Sœurs de Charité.*

The next day was Sunday, and a sort of gala day in honour of national independence; the city was gayer and more lively than usual, there was free admission to the theatres, &c., and various trade guilds marched in procession through the streets. In the afternoon we paid a visit to the Zoological Gardens, which contain an aquarium, said to be one

of the finest in Europe. It contains, amongst other specimens, a live crocodile, seals, oysters, &c., and various kinds of sea vegetation. It is placed in a pretty grotto, and is unique and most interesting. The *Mon Dieu!* every two or three minutes from a little Belgian girl, who was evidently seeing it for the first time, was very amusing, the expression as used by the French and Belgians not conveying the same idea of irreverence that it does to us.

On our return to the city we went through a free collection of paintings contained in an old palace, which is surrounded by well-kept gardens and grounds. The stairs leading up to the exhibition rooms were lined with plants and flowers, which had a charming effect. The paintings are modern and of great merit.

After this we strolled about the park, which in one place has a fine fountain throwing a jet of water some eighty feet high; the scene as we passed along the avenues of trees was extremely novel and gay, and presented a strong contrast, perhaps not to its advantage, to an English Sunday. Numbers of people gaily dressed strolled about or sat under the trees on little chairs; in some places a family party together, the ladies netting, reading, or talking, the gentlemen smoking, and the little bright, lively children playing about.

Amidst all the pleasure-seeking and enjoyment on which the Belgians were intent to-day, we

failed to notice anything like drunkenness, or even coarseness, noise, or roughness—a cheerful, gentle temperance and politeness seemed to pervade all the people. They appeared to attend the various churches in great numbers in the morning of Sunday, and, judging from the Church of St. Jacques, where we went on this occasion, their demeanour there is most devout and reverent: the rest of the day is apparently given up to amusement.

CHAPTER IV.

WATERLOO.

Fellow Travellers—Forest of Soigne—The Village and Church—Mont St. Jean—La Belle Alliance—La Haye Sainte—Chateau of Hougomont—Relic Vendors—British Bravery—Napoleon—Obliteration of Traces of the Battle.

Most Englishmen who find themselves at Brussels for the first time make a point of visiting the field of Waterloo. In accordance with this custom, we next day, from the door of our hotel, mounted the coach which plies every day in the summer to that place. The coach was full, and our fellow-travellers were all either English or American. The latter, with national shrewdness, had secured the best seats. Their party included a young lady, whose lively smartness would have put to confusion the most redoubted gallant I ever met. There was also an English lady who was taking her husband about the Continent. The poor fellow was kept under the strictest control, and his best efforts to please were rewarded with little more than peevish and ill-natured remarks. Two solemn Britishers there were, who exchanged a remark with each other about once

in half an hour, but never condescended to address an observation to any of their fellow-travellers during the whole day. Ourselves and a spinster of mature years, wearing spectacles, and carrying a large guide book, to which she was constantly referring, completed the party. I did what I could to cheer the hen-pecked husband, and gave him a large Belgian cigar, which he patiently smoked for a long time, though it would persist in burning all down one side, and exhaled an odour neither pleasant nor fragrant, until at last, at my entreaty, he gave it up.

After passing along the boulevards and through the park, the road for some distance skirts the Forest of Soigne, the march of the British troops through which is thus described by Byron:—

"Ardennes waves above them her green leaves,
Dewy with Nature's tear-drops, as they pass,
Grieving, if aught inanimate ere grieves,
Over the unreturning brave—alas!
Ere evening to be trodden like the grass
Which now beneath them, but above, shall grow
In its next verdure, when this fiery mass
Of living valour, rolling on the foe,
And burning with high hope, shall moulder cold and low."

The forest is very extensive and pretty, and you get some charming glimpses into its dark recesses as you pass. There is nothing remarkable on the road, which is an exceedingly rough one, and the

country is not particularly interesting. After passing through two or three villages we arrived at that of Waterloo, where our party was joined by Martin Pirson, of Planchenoit, one of the local guides; and a remarkably intelligent, lively, and well-informed one he proved to be. This village gives its name to the battle, and was the head quarters of the British army before and after it. It is a small, quiet place, and has, doubtless, undergone very little change in all the years since it was made notable by the memorable engagement. The house where Wellington wrote his despatch the morning after the battle is indicated by an inscription affixed on the wall near the door. The spot where he met the Marquis of Anglesey the night before the battle is indicated in a similar way.

The little church is full of memorial tablets to English officers who fell, and on a large table within it photographs of the more memorable points of the field are to be had. We were touched with pitying melancholy in reading some of the inscriptions. Many a promising life was stopped in mid career, and many a bright young spirit was that day quenched for ever, as these sad records indicate; but, alas, those who then mourned for them must long ago have followed them into the mysteries of The Great Unknown. Southey thus describes this place:—

> Many a wounded Briton there was laid,
> With such poor help as time might then allow
> From the fresh carnage of the field conveyed;
> And they whom human succours could not save
> Here, in its precincts, found a hasty grave.

From the village of Waterloo we visited most of the principal places—Mont St. Jean; the farm of La Haye Sainte, memorable for its gallant defence by the soldiers of the German legion; La Belle Alliance, a little farmhouse, on a small table before the door of which Napoleon wrote his despatch that he had all but defeated the British; the place where Shaw, the noted guardsman, fell, and that where Picton was mortally wounded; also the great mound, surmounted by the Belgic lion, which stands in the centre of the field, and from the top of which the whole of it can be seen. Near this is an inn, kept by some relative of the late Sergeant-Major Cotton, and where they have a large collection of relics. As we passed from point to point we were, of course, assailed by the relic-vendors, who pressed us to buy the usual things—buttons, small French eagles, bullets, &c. The guide books tell you these things are spurious, but a very cursory examination inclined us to the opinion that most of them are genuine, improbable as it would appear.

At the *château* of Hougomont, as the most interesting point of the field, we made a pretty

considerable stay. This was the key of the British position, and was the object of Napoleon's most persistent and furious attacks. Large bodies of troops were hurled against it repeatedly during the day; and, though the carnage was awful and the hand-to-hand fighting terrible, the brave Coldstream Guards maintained it to the last against all the French efforts. Could the French have carried it, it would appear as if the fate of the day must have been different; still the idea that 'the Belgian yeoman's garden-wall was the safeguard of Europe, whose destinies hung on the possession of this house,' would appear to be an exaggeration. British troops never fought more gloriously and bravely than on that day; but, while our hearts beat high with national pride at the remembrance, it is surely going beyond reasonable probability to say that the fate of Europe hung on the issue of this battle. Napoleon was at the end of his resources; France was denuded both of men and money, and was in no condition to make head against the allied armies then converging upon her. If Napoleon had won the battle it would have been at terrible cost, and could only have delayed that final ruin which must speedily have overtaken him.

The orchard, our guide told us, remained in the same state as it was after the dead who fell there had been buried in it—the ground had never been

disturbed. The walls of the barn and house showed distinct signs of having been struck by shot and shell, though of course the lapse of time had well-nigh obliterated some of the marks. The orchard wall is still pierced with the rough loopholes made by the British, and its outer surface is in a crumbling, pulverised condition, said to have been caused by the continuous French musketry firing. They have a quantity of old rusty arms of all kinds here, in an outhouse, including one or two skulls, with musket balls deeply embedded therein.

Thus our party rambled over the field, our two solemn Britishers airing their French with the guide, the spinster lady constantly checking him off by Murray, and our lively American damsel going everywhere and continually making the most naïve and unsentimental remarks. The people who live on, and about, and *by* the battle-field are exceedingly keen and sharp after the francs; everything has to be paid for, and that handsomely; they appear to regard John Bull and his cousins as fair game, out of whom as much is to be got as possible. The final affair as we left was an active youth vending sticks cut, as he said, out of the wood at Hougomont; but, I confess, if the wood still exists I never saw it.

Speaking generally, there is little or nothing to be seen now of the traces of the battle; the very

configuration of the ground has been considerably altered by the raising of the great mound; and the extra fertility it is said to have manifested after the burial of the dead, and the darker spots, real or imaginary, in the corn in those places where the bodies lay thickest—an idea which our great novelist adopted in his 'Battle of Life'—must long ago have faded out.

> Was it a soothing or a mournful thought,
> Amid this scene of slaughter as we stood,
> Where armies had with recent fury fought,
> To mark how gentle Nature still pursued
> Her quiet course, as if she took no care
> For what her noblest work had suffered there.

CHAPTER V.

BRUSSELS TO ST. HUBERT AND BOUILLON.

Belgian Customs—Prospective Dangers—Fellow Travellers—English Cigars—Forest of Ardennes—Shakspeare—St. Hubert—French Prisoners—Belgian Beer—The Diligence—The Road—Traces of the War—Wounded Frenchmen.

We returned about 5 P.M., dined, and went to the Théâtre de la Monnaie, which is an extremely fine and elegant building. We were too late for the opera, but saw a ballet. Afterwards we strolled about the streets, and went into one or two *cafés*, one in the open air, with little chairs under the trees, &c. Many of the *cafés* here are magnificent with mirrors, gilding, and pictures. The people here, as in Paris, seem to live, to a great extent, at these *cafés*, and the whole population apparently turns out in the evening, as all the *cafés* are full, and the chairs and tables outside nearly all occupied.

Gentlemen entering and leaving these places invariably raise their hats to the lady in charge, which strikes you as a pretty and graceful custom. In going along the streets you will

always find the men uncover their heads when a funeral passes; and what can be more reverent, and appropriate than this silent tribute to the dead? There are many other little acts of a like nature which strike you as very becoming and graceful: altogether, Brussels is a most pleasant and agreeable city.

One afternoon as we sat in one of the *cafés*, enjoying the after-dinner cigar, we began to discuss the practicability and desirability of making our way to Sedan, in order to see what might be seen of the effects produced by the great battle which had raged around that town. The railway which directly communicated with Sedan had been partially destroyed in the course of the war; but it was possible to get there by taking the Luxembourg Railway as far as Libramont, and going the remainder of the distance by *diligence*.

Our hesitation arose from information obtained in the city that the Prussians had forbidden all persons other than peasants from going over the battle-fields, and also because fever and other diseases were said to be extremely prevalent in the town.* The *garçon* had informed us that both these announcements were to be seen in the London 'Times.' We therefore hunted about the *cafés* and news-shops

* The only real danger proved to be the fever. The author all but lost his life from an attack of virulent typhus, which supervened on his return home.

for some time, and at last, at the 'Café Londres,' we found a copy of the dear old Thunderer, and in its columns, amongst various items of war news, we found an announcement much to the effect stated above. Something we had heard also about *francs-tireurs* dodging about the woods, &c., in the vicinity of Sedan, and of course they might 'kill the wrong chap.' Taken altogether, this was not a very pleasant prospect, but as we had heard of some gentlemen who had just returned safely to Brussels, after successfully exploring the field of battle, we resolved to venture.

We accordingly returned to our hotel, and having given orders to be called at 5 A.M. the next morning, we retired to bed and sleep. Punctually at the appointed hour the *garçon* thundered at my door; and reluctant as I was to turn out in the half-darkness, there was no alternative; so I sent him to perform the same kind office for my friend. After a hasty breakfast we drove to the railway station, and at 6.5 A.M. started for Libramont. There was quite a curious medley of people travelling by the train: Sisters of Charity, in those black robes and curious white caps with which the illustrated papers made us familiar during the war; priests and monks of all sorts; numbers of gentlemen, and some ladies wearing the badge of the Red Cross. Considering the sort of service this implied, we were obliged to believe

either that the world contained a much greater number of good, self-sacrificing people than we imagined, or that this sacred sign was in some cases borne as the means simply of satisfying curiosity or for some possibly worse motive: these views were confirmed by the large numbers of these people we found everywhere—the fewest of them perhaps in the fever-smitten town of Sedan itself.

Besides these there were a number of English gentlemen in full travelling costume; some carrying sketch-books, others note-books, evidently correspondents or artists for the English papers. When the train started there was a good deal of kissing on both cheeks among the French and Belgian gentlemen at parting.

In our compartment were two priests or monks, both fine, portly men: one was a Franciscan; his head was shaved except the usual circle, and he had no covering for it. He wore a loose brown robe, which enveloped him from head to foot, and which was bound round his waist by a piece of thin rope, from which hung a wooden and brass crucifix and a string of beads. His feet were bare except sandals, but were scrupulously clean. The other was somewhat similarly attired, except that his robes were black and he wore a clerical cap. These were both kind, obliging, genial men, and we had a good deal of

broken conversation with them. The black priest was going to do his office among the wounded, the other was travelling on some other business. Our brown priest was certain that great evil would befall those nations and persons who had ventured to disobey the Holy Father. The black priest proved to be a great smoker; soon after we started he produced a large pipe, and when that was finished several of my friend's *English* cigars followed it. We, however, had a perfect *quid pro quo*, for they produced some very good claret and sandwiches, which we made pretty free with. The black priest gave us a pair of Chinese shoes, made of velvet, tastefully embroidered with gilt beads, which he said had been given to him by a wounded French soldier, who had taken them at the sacking of the Summer Palace at Pekin. We really enjoyed the short time we spent in their company, and when the time came we parted from them with sincere and unaffected regret, and with mutual good wishes.

The country through which we passed was pretty, being undulating and well wooded, and for some miles before you reach Libramont the line passed right through the forest of Ardennes—Shakespeare's 'Forest of Arden'—and we straightway began to think of Rosalind, Orlando, the pensive Jacques, and other characters of that charming comedy. The forest appears to be very extensive and dense, and

at intervals you get brief glimpses of openings in the line of trees, lighted for a little distance by the bright sun, but soon lost in the dark twilight of the sombre, quiet depths of the forest. We passed many little bits of woodland scenery which would have delighted an artist. Our clerical friends had advised us to leave the train at St. Hubert instead of going on to Libramont, and told us we should find a *diligence* there for Sedan, as indeed we did, but it would have been better and more expeditious to have gone on, as we afterwards found. However, when the train stopped at St. Hubert we bade our friends adieu and left it.

The scene which presented itself, as we left the little station, was very romantic. The station stands in the midst of a clearing in the forest, and is, of course, surrounded by it. The vast mass of foliage at this time bore the rich tints of autumn, and presented a gorgeous spectacle. Right in front of us was a little stone bridge, spanning a small stream, and on this bridge were lounging a few peasants, and two or three soldiers, whose red, loose trousers and military jackets and caps announced them to be French prisoners. We had a little talk with them — they had been wounded and captured in some of the battles, but how they had got to this place did not appear. They showed us their caps and jackets, torn with shell or rifle ball, as the case might be. They were very civil and respectful,

and their 'Je vous remercie, messieurs,' for some Belgian cigars, of which we had a stock for these purposes, were evidently sincere.

The forest of Ardennes is very extensive and wild; the following description may possibly still apply:—'The characteristic feature of the Ardennes is wildness, heathy and rocky hills, with dark rapid streams winding round them, vast forests of oak stretching over the plains and crowning the hills peopled with deer, wild boars, and wolves; villages at long intervals, dirty and poor cottages thinly scattered among the valleys, and castles frowning from rocky heights, embosomed in woods.' The town itself is a miserably poor place, and is said to have been founded by St. Hubert, who, like many other saints of ancient and modern times, compounded for the follies of his youth by the extreme and stern sanctity of his maturer age. He is said to have been a prince, and to have been converted by a miracle while hunting on a Sunday; but as it was a thousand years ago it is bootless to enquire into the truth of the legend. He, however, attained a vast reputation for sanctity, and miracles were wrought at his tomb. He is still, I believe, the patron saint of hunters and sportsmen.

We found we should have about an hour to wait for the *diligence*, and as under such circumstances visions of beer always float before

the mind of an Englishman, and as we certainly were not going to dishonour the national custom in a foreign land, especially as we had a better excuse for it than some of the thirsty souls at home, who are always imbibing in season and out of season, we felt, in fact, that a glass of beer would really benefit us, and accordingly adjourned to the 'bar' of the miserable *cabaret* near the station and ordered *deux bières*. They were promptly supplied: there was plenty of it for the money, certainly, and it did not look so bad—a deep red brown colour—a trifle muddy, perhaps—however, here goes a short drink! and by a mutual impulse we carefully and respectfully replaced the glasses on the table. I felt inclined to say with Mr. Toole, 'Belgians, this is too much!' Was that beer drunk by the peasants, oblivious, poor fellows, of the flavour of Bass, or did it return whence it came? This deponent knoweth not.

By this time we heard volleys of French expletives proceeding from the paved space in front of the inn, and on looking through the window perceived that the angry expressions were induced by the efforts of the men to harness the horses to the *diligence*. The horse is said to be a noble, intelligent, docile animal; but why it is that in all countries it seems necessary to expend such an amount of strong language on him, to regulate his movements, is a problem I am unable to solve. But the

vehicle which was to have the honour of conveying us, how shall it be described? It was old and rickety, but it had a certain value as a study of the antique, and would have delighted the heart of a gentleman of mediæval tastes; these qualities were, of course, a full compensation for its inconvenient and dilapidated condition. The harness—and I had almost said the horses—were of the same era; the former was rotten and worn out, and was eked out with ropes and pieces of twine; the latter—well, they were not fiery steeds, inasmuch as it occupied them five hours to go twenty-three miles, but then the roads were very hilly.

There is nothing striking about the country except its wildness and loneliness and the absence of cultivation, the land lying nearly entirely in grass, and what timber there is is light. Anon we pass a large cross erected by the side of the road, or a lonely shrine to the Virgin; but the road for some time is solitary, silent, and dull. As we approach Bouillon we begin to see some traces of the war. A party of Belgian soldiers and their officers pass us; shortly after we see some of their artillery posted in a field. What are those waggons which approach us on the road, some closed, some open? When we get up to them they prove to be ambulance waggons, some full of wounded Frenchmen stretched side by side on the straw, looking desperately ill; another, closed, contains

either dead or severely wounded men; another is loaded with arms and accoutrements from the field—helmets, swords, knapsacks, uniforms, &c., all dirty, rusty, and huddled together.

These pass us at intervals until we reach Bouillon, which we do about five in the evening, pretty well tired already, as this journey of the *diligence* has been on the whole extremely tedious. The first thing we discover, as soon as our vehicle pulls up on the rough stones of the main street of this little town, is that we are going no farther. We had paid, or thought we had, to be taken on to Sedan, which we wished to reach that night, and to be left high and dry here, fourteen miles off, was sufficiently annoying. We were obliged to make the best of it, and after a great deal of trouble bargained with a French peasant, who was returning to Balan, near Sedan, where he lived, to take us on his conveyance. Meantime we adjourned to a *café* for some refreshment, and then strolled about the town a little. It is very dirty, wretchedly paved, and has all the appearance of poverty, but is beautifully situated.

CHAPTER VI.

BOUILLON TO SEDAN.

Bouillon—The Castle—The Streets—Vending Arms from the Field—Red Cross Man—Wounded Prussians—New Friends—Scenery—Peasants from Bazeilles—Landwehrman—La Chapelle.

BOUILLON is situated at the bottom of a long valley washed by a small river, called the Semoi, which winds round a rocky promontory, on which stands the ancient castle of Godfrey de Bouillon high above the town. It is now used as a military prison, but doubtless presents much the same appearance as when that pious and chivalrous hero marshalled his mail-clad followers therein for the first Crusade. The town itself is small and mean, and presents no objects of interest except the castle. Its situation, however, in the midst of verdant, wooded hills, and on the banks of the quiet, beautiful river, is very romantic and pleasing. There are said to be many splendid views and walks in the neighbourhood, which I can well believe. The events of the war had aroused the town from its ordinary quietude, and its streets were crowded with blue-bloused peasants in their sabots, Belgian soldiers, doctors, travellers, and a

good number of the Red Cross men. The late Emperor Napoleon had slept a night here, a short time before we arrived, on his way to Germany.

As we strolled about the town, two or three of the peasants got round us, and in a mysterious manner gave us to understand that if we chose they would sell us a chassepot, a sabre, a cavalry sword, or a bayonet—in fact, arms of all sorts were to be had. It is worthy of note that all they offered us were French, none Prussian, so far as we saw. We did not intend to buy any, though they were cheap enough, but followed some of the men just to look at what they had for sale, and were conducted to some dim and dark recess of their cottages, where the articles were produced with all imaginable secrecy. As far as we could judge, every peasant seemed to have a good stock of these arms, &c., which, of course, had been taken from the battle-field. One of our Red Cross friends was engaged in this traffic, as, after following him into a secret corner, he produced a splendid French cavalry pistol, which he offered us for a few francs. I could easily have understood this secrecy in towns in Prussian occupation, but could not account for it in this frontier town of Belgium. It arose, however, from the fact that the Belgian authorities had strictly interdicted this traffic, and would undoubtedly have taken arms from either peasant or traveller known to possess them.

We saw here many waggons full of wounded men, and got our first sight of the terrible Prussians in the shape of some half-dozen fair-haired, mild-looking young fellows lying badly wounded in a conveyance. These were the only German soldiers we saw over the frontier except a Landwehrman, whose acquaintance we made soon afterwards. It was now time to meet our French friend who was to take us the rest of the journey to Sedan. We found him, and had just got into his conveyance (a sort of pony phaeton), when a young fellow, sunburned and travel-stained, came up and asked us to permit him to join us, to which, as there was room, we of course had no objection, and he accordingly got into the vehicle and we started.

The first thing we did was to fill our pipes once more—how often we had done so during the day I had lost all idea of. Our new friend blew a cloud, of course, and we managed to hammer out a little conversation. He proved to be a horse-dealer, and told us he had done a splendid stroke of business after the capitulation. He went so far as to say that immediately after that event horses were to be had for a glass of beer or a cigar, and after that we were quite prepared to hear he had bought a great many. In point of fact, he offered me a splendid charger for 10*l.*; but admirer as I am of the noble animal at a distance, I was reluctant to make a closer acquaintance, and declined the offer.

So we smoked and talked, or tried to do so, in German, French, and English, as our little pony took us over the ground at a good pace. The scenery between this and Sedan is very fine indeed: a constant succession of hills, covered with trees to the summit, clothed with beautiful, variegated foliage. The road winds round, up and down these hills, and at every turn shows new and romantic views, amphitheatres of hills, deep ravines, and anon, at the top of some height, a broad expanse of brown moorland: for the whole distance, however, it was silent and solitary—not a house, nor a sign of cultivation, but wild, grand scenery all the way.

As we approached the frontier we passed an encampment of peasants from Bazeilles. There they were, men, women, and children in considerable numbers, on the bare hill-side. They had erected miserable brushwood huts, or tents, which looked as if the first sharp gust of wind would level them to the ground, and had put in and about them what few things they had saved of their goods and chattels. They were cooking, gipsy fashion, by means of an iron pot suspended over a fire. Fortunately the weather was warm and fine; if it had been otherwise, it would appear as if they must have perished from sheer exposure. Very soon after we came to the Belgian frontier, where there is a sort of small guardhouse, and a newly painted post by the road-

side, marked 'Belgique,' but nothing at all in the shape of a natural division of the two countries.

Soon after we left Bouillon a light Prussian provision waggon, driven by the Landwehrman before referred to, overtook us on the road, and continued to drive on behind us. We were obliged to dispense with the ceremony of introduction, and struck up a conversation with the driver. Like our friend the horse-dealer, he was a very jolly fellow, and smoked like a furnace. He wore the inevitable spectacles, though he was only about twenty-eight, had been mate of a ship when he was summoned to the war, and gave us a good deal of his history and opinions then and afterwards.

The twilight had by this time deepened into almost inky darkness, the lamps on our respective vehicles were lighted, and threw a passing gleam on the white road and the trees and grass which flanked it; as for ourselves, we could barely see each others' faces—indeed, little more than the red burning contents of our pipes—and hear nothing but the melancholy wind as it rushed over the hills and swept by us, or the pattering of the horses' feet and the jingle of the little bells on their collars.

After going some time in silence through the darkness, we got to a little village called La Chapelle, and stopped at its *cabaret*, where we

got down and went in. The little room was full of French peasants enveloped in clouds of smoke, discussing and talking loudly and with energetic gestures. Of course we had to hob-nob with our new friends, and four small glasses of *eau-de-vie* having been ordered and obtained, we clinked them, and drank together in all good fellowship: our friends wanted to reciprocate, but I managed to escape any more. This ceremony being concluded, we went on again, and after proceeding a little distance we turned off into a bye-road, and soon saw something rising high and black and involving the road in still deeper darkness in its shadow.

CHAPTER VII.

A NIGHT IN BALAN.

Too Late—The Cottage—Hard Fare—A Peasant's Story—German Coolness.

We were under the walls of Sedan, and formidable enough they seemed in the darkness. After driving round them some distance we came to one of the gates and found, as our friends had expected, that we could not get into the town that night. It appeared that there was no fixed hour for closing the gates, but it was generally done between six and eight in the evening. We, however, thought we had a friend in court in the soldier; and, indeed, he and our other friend left us to try if they could manage it. Meanwhile we sat in the vehicle close to the gate, with the Prussian sentries marching up and down before it. Our companions returned, however, with the information that it could not be done, and our Prussian friend was in the same predicament.

Our driver offered us two beds in his cottage, at which a few minutes afterwards we arrived and alighted, thoroughly tired and very hungry, having had little or nothing to eat since six in the morn-

ing, except a poor lunch of cold mutton at one of the villages. The cottage proved to be a very decent house of the sort, and possessed a good kitchen with a wood fire, and, of course, a table and chairs. We sat down and waited with some anxiety to see what they could give us to eat. We certainly were hungry enough not to be dainty, and as it had been said the peasantry in this vicinity were perishing of starvation, we did not expect much. Our peasant's wife, however, shortly put before us a joint of meat of some kind. I have not the faintest idea what it was, but it was plentifully dressed with onions and gravy. This, with one of the largest loaves I ever saw in my life, a salad to follow, and a couple of bottles of claret to assist digestion, formed a meal to which, under the circumstances, we did ample justice.

There cannot be a doubt that the deepest distress and privations were being suffered then and afterwards by the poor people in and about Sedan, but I could not understand how our host came to be so well provided. Our Prussian had gone out to look after his horse, and when that was done he came in to assist us, and when we had all finished, the joint of meat, only a very small one, was disposed of. Our host gave us to understand that every window in his house not broken by the actual contact of shot had been shivered to atoms by the concussion of the air, produced by the artillery firing,

the noise of which he described as awful and terrible. After the battle he had eight dead men lying before his door, five Frenchmen and three Prussians. His wife told us that just before the Prussians came they had been three days almost without food, the French having either eaten or taken all the provisions they had, and that biscuits, begged from the German soldiers, saved them from starvation.

The moment our horse-dealer had finished his supper he fell asleep; ourselves and the Prussian talked a while. He was very communicative of his private affairs; informed us he was about to have been married before the war, and intended to be when it was over (I hope the poor fellow survived to carry out his intention); told us how he had been lost at Pont à Mousson and found his way back to his comrades by aid of the map of France, which was supplied to every Prussian soldier, and which map, well thumbed and worn, we saw; how he had never been in a bed for three weeks, and was obliged to carry a loaded revolver with him for fear of the peasants, his duty taking him amongst them at times. He showed us the revolver, and was anxious to explain and illustrate its mechanism, but we assured him we perfectly understood it. I was considerably astonished at the coolness of this man; he was going to sleep this very night under the roof of a

French peasant, and surrounded by a population infuriated by their losses and frantic with national hatred. As is well known, these peasants were not slow to take revenge where it could be done with safety. I feel certain that his life would not have been worth an hour's purchase but for the immediate vicinity of the German garrison in Sedan. However, these things did not appear to trouble him; familiarity with danger of all sorts had doubtless made him indifferent to it. About eleven we retired to our bed, the linen of which was coarse but clean. Our horse-dealer had to sleep on the floor, the Prussian in the straw of his cart.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BATTLE-FIELD.

Balan—Debris on the Field—Dead Bodies—Situation of Sedan—Desolation—The Graves—Traces of the Struggle—A Letter found—Emperor's Last Proclamation—Destruction of Trees—Carlyle on War.

We slept well, rose next morning about seven, and after ablutions and a decent breakfast sallied out, the horse-dealer to his business, ourselves, our host, and the Prussian—who seemed to have nothing particular to do—to see the battle-field. It was a fine, bright morning, and we had no sooner set foot outside the door than the evidences of the conflict were to be seen on all sides. This little village had not suffered like Bazeilles, but there was hardly a house in it that was not pitted all over with shot-marks; many had large holes in the walls caused by cannon-shot or shells; of course every bit of glass in the windows was shivered to atoms. The street was littered all over with knapsacks, helmets, leathern water-bottles, ammunition pouches, military caps, jackets, pieces of shell, bullets, *mitrailleuse* cartridge cases—in fact, every kind of *débris* that can be supposed to appertain to

the personal equipment of a soldier or to military operations.

It was the same in this respect wherever we went; all the fields, woods, and heights for miles round were littered more or less with this kind of *débris*. The arms for the most part had been removed; you might find some occasionally, but they had, generally speaking, been taken either by the Prussians or the peasants. The dead bodies had of course at this time (about three weeks after the battles) all been buried—poorly and imperfectly indeed, as in many cases we could have pushed our sticks through the thin covering of soil which concealed them. Even at this time a dead body or two was found occasionally at the bottom of a deep ditch or pond, or in some secluded wood or thicket, but we escaped the sight of them. As may be imagined, the effluvia which arose under the influence of a hot sun was very perceptible and absolutely sickening in many places.

Sedan is situated in a fertile valley, watered by the Meuse, and is surrounded by heights which completely command it. The Germans having driven the French before them into the town, occupied these heights, and thus the whole mass of the French army lay under their guns and completely at their mercy. Difficult as it seemed at that time to imagine any combination of circum-

stances which could compel a trained, disciplined army of 84,000 men to surrender at discretion, no other result was possible from the position, as is perfectly evident from seeing the town and country about it. One is inclined to ask of what use fortifications could be in a town situated like Sedan. The little valley in which it lies probably before the battle presented some such appearance as is indicated in Wordsworth's lines:—

> The morn that now along the silver Meuse,
> Spreading her peaceful ensigns, calls the swains
> To tend their silent boats and ringing wains,
> Or strip the bough whose mellow fruit bestrews
> The ripening corn beneath it.

At the time of our visit it was simply a scene of ruin, desolation, and death. The demon of war had passed through it and left his usual traces. What had been quiet, happy homesteads and smiling fields were now blackened ruins and trampled clay. If the few and slight descriptions I am about to give are multiplied, and supposed to extend over this valley and the country around it for some miles in every direction, a very good idea will be formed of its general appearance. We did not attempt any regular inspection of the localities, but rambled hither and thither as our fancy led us.

The fields are trampled all over with the feet of men and horses, and cut up in deep ruts in the places where the artillery has passed, and are

thickly studded with graves—in some cases merely indicated by the raised soil, but usually marked with rude crosses made of roughly-dressed wood. Some of these are simply bits of twig from neighbouring trees, roughly tied together. The common soldiers are buried uncoffined, and in irregular numbers from two or three to one hundred, just as they happen to lie; the officers in smaller numbers and in rude coffins. In some cases Prussian helmets still hung on the crosses, indicating the nationality of the dead beneath. Occasionally French and German lie together in one grave. 'Hier ruhen in Gott 25 Preussen, 31 Franzozen.' On most of the crosses you may read that so many Bavarians, Prussians, or French lie there. Here is a grave with a faded wreath of leaves on it, and on the cross we find an intimation written in pencil—'Here rest in God one colonel, seven captains, and three lieutenants, Prussian.'

> Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
> Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
> Hands that the rod of empire might have swayed,
> Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.

Passing behind a hedge and near a wet ditch, we saw a single grave marked with a bit of twig rudely tied in the form of the sacred emblem. The peasants had found some days after the battle a dead Bavarian in the ditch, shot through the head. They had lifted him out and scooped a shallow

grave close by, and laid the poor fellow there. One grave in the garden of a *château* was pointed out to us as that of some relative of Bismarck, who was said to have been shot by a peasant woman of Bazeilles. We saw the spot where he was said to have been killed. It was a narrow lane, near the garden-wall of the *château*, and close to the spot where he is buried. I doubted the whole story, but some poor fellow lay there, whoever he might be. Some of the dead officers have been removed to Germany for reinterment.

In one place we saw a ridge behind which some troops had been posted, and where some heavy fighting had taken place:—the dead in this case had simply been laid in the trench and the earth thrown over upon them:—then more graves, more trampled fields, a deep lane over the banks of which men had been hurled pell-mell, marking the place by displaced earth and torn hedges, the ground thickly covered with discharged cartridges—the scene of a cavalry fight—the ground covered with the marks of horse-hoofs in every direction. Here we pass extinguished camp-fires, bones of horses, &c. There is a position which was taken and re-taken several times; the graves about it are large and numerous. We are constantly picking up and throwing down again some of the relics which lie scattered about. Here is a Bavarian knapsack, with a bullet-hole

right through it, and stained with blood. We brought it home, with a number of other things. We had a small discussion on the field about this knapsack. The Frenchman said the man had been shot in the back. The Prussian would not have it, but said the ball had passed through the breast, and so through the knapsack afterwards. He need not have been so careful of the reputation of the poor fellow who had worn it, for friends and foes alike would admit that the Germans kept their faces to the enemy.

Amongst the *débris* scattered over the field were French and German newspapers, a few letters, and various other papers, regimental books, &c. Here is a letter we picked up amongst others :—

Loudeaux, July 31, 1870.

My dear General,—I reply to your letter, which has given me great pleasure to learn that you are in good health; as for us, we are well for the present, and I wish my letter may find you the same, as since you and Clésion have gone away I have not had half so much pleasure. I have been obliged to go and fetch the big Roan, who does not please me at all, and the Cof, who was with Pégon; therefore I assure you I put myself out of humour. . . . If, perchance, you can end it all at once, come back quickly. I will tell you, also, that Alfred Morsion is gone away, also Burno, Taupet, Marno, Joseph, Glius, Clésio, and Matthieu le Sclago, who is going away shortly. Clésio wrote to me a day after you, and asked me for your address. I am going to give it in the letter I am writing to you. I have also written to him, and am going to put yours

in his. Without anything more at present, I conclude in kissing you with all my heart.—Your Friend who loves you,

I do not prepay my letter, as I am told that soldiers get them free as long as they are on service. Matthieu Coher is also gone away; there is only myself to go, and the house will be empty.

The Clésio Francois, 44th Regiment of Infantry, 2nd Battalion, 4th Company, at Metz, Department of the Moselle, or following the regiment.

My dear General,—I was finishing my letter at nine o'clock on Saturday night. At half-past ten there was a cry of fire at our door; it was at François Priony's. In the space of four hours the whole working-shop was burnt, and the loss is estimated at 12,000 francs. Thus you see how a misfortune happens at the time when one little expects it.

Here is a sonnet of some amorous young Frenchman to 'Ma Chérie Marie,' but, alas! never sent. Here is a letter which none of my friends can make out, or even indicate with certainty in what language it is written. It is probably a provincial *patois* of some sort. Here is a proclamation of the Emperor, which we found pretty frequently in the vicinity of the town, stained with mud, and sometimes with blood—a grim commentary thereon. I suppose it appeared in the English papers at the time, but as it was probably, from its date, his very last official act prior to the surrender, it will bear reprinting:—

Proclamation of H.M. the Emperor.

Soldiers,—The commencement of the war not having proved favourable, I have resolved, by setting aside my own personal intentions, to commit the command of the armies into the hands of the Marshals chosen by France, and more particularly by public opinion. Up to the present moment our efforts have not been crowned by success; I am, however, informed that the army of Marshal Bazaine has been recruited beneath the walls of Metz, and that the losses experienced by the army of Marshal MacMahon yesterday were not considerable. There is, therefore, no present cause for your discouragement. Hitherto we have prevented the enemy's entrance into the capital, and all France now rises to repel her invaders. Amid circumstances of such serious import, the Empress in the meantime worthily representing me in Paris, I have preferred the *rôle* of soldier to that of sovereign. No sacrifice shall be counted dear by me in order to save our country. She still contains, thank God, brave-hearted men; and if, indeed, there are cowards to be found, the military law and public contempt will not fail in their punishment. Soldiers, show yourselves worthy of your reputation of former days. God will not forsake our country if each will do his duty.

The Imperial Quarters, Sedan, August 31, 1870.

Napoleon.

Printed by Jules Laroche, 22, Rue Napoleon, Sedan.

Gloomy and despairing must have been the council of war from which this document emanated. Its writer, after a sad and inglorious exile of two years, has died in seclusion and sorrow. He is dead; and according to a good and charitable

custom, let that fact lead us to speak as lightly as possible of actions which abstract morality must severely condemn, but which, judged by royal and imperial precedents, have at least been equalled. Certainly, whether from policy or better motives, he was England's friend, a fact which Englishmen will not readily forget.

The country about Sedan is pretty full of trees, which bore evident marks of the severity of the artillery-firing. In some cases they were cut clean in two; in others the trunks were smashed, and the tops bent down to the ground, or large branches were torn off and strewed beneath. In one place a small grove had been levelled by shot, and the trees lay in scores on the ground.

Our rambles for miles in all directions only produced a constant succession of scenes and circumstances like those I have described. The rude crosses which mark the graves will soon disappear. Here is a field in which some hundreds of Bavarians are buried; the peasants are ploughing over their graves. As in past battle-fields so in these, soon no traces will exist to show where these gallant men fought and died for their country, except, indeed, it be the extra fertility of the land where they found their graves. Ere long 'gentle Nature' will obliterate all or most of the traces of the devastation and ruin of war, though she cannot destroy the memory of the brave.

But when I stood beneath the fresh green tree,
Which living waves where thou did'st cease to live,
And saw around me the wide fields revive
With fruits and fertile promise, and the Spring
Come forth her work of gladness to contrive,
With all her reckless birds upon the wing,
I turned from all she brought to those she could not bring.

Carlyle has some caustic remarks in his 'Sartor Resartus' on the folly and absurdity of war, and though the case he puts is applicable enough to most wars, it does not apply to this. Not a man among the intelligent, educated Germans but had a clear perception that he was fighting for hearth and home and the liberty and integrity of Fatherland against an ambitious or misguided despot, and an army, if not a people, puffed up with national conceit and a vain desire for glory. This knowledge it was that imparted to the German soldiers that cool and steady bravery, that contempt for life (which was yet dearer to them than to the constituent elements of most European armies), which carried them victoriously through the whole terrible and bloody campaign.

We call it a scandal that in the enlightenment and Christianity of the nineteenth century two of the foremost nations of Europe should refer their differences to such an awful arbitrament, and yet were our own country placed in the same circumstances that Germany was, would not the very Secretary of the Peace Society

himself cast away his pen, gird himself with the panoply of war, and rush to the front? Men dream of a time when wars shall cease and mankind dwell together in one universal brotherhood, undisturbed by jealousies and angry passions. Such a time *may* arrive, but it will only be when human nature is greatly exalted above its present condition. Horrible as war is, it is not all bad, inasmuch as it fosters, strengthens, and developes courage, patriotism, and self-sacrifice—virtues which long-continued peace, luxury, and uninterrupted pursuits of commerce are apt to deaden. War has characterised every age of the world, every phase of civilisation, every form of government and religion, and is apparently one of the inevitable conditions of human society as at present constituted. As Alexander cut the Gordian knot with his sword, so war in many cases constitutes the only possible solution of a difficulty.

Were statesmen, governments, and peoples always actuated in their objects by a single desire for justice and equity, then arbitration, as a substitute, might be practicable; but nothing but force will prevent the strong despoiling the weak, when determined to do so and conscious of the power.

CHAPTER IX.

BAZEILLES.

French Characteristics—A Ruined Château—Letter Found—Family Sorrows—Struggle at Bazeilles—German Atrocities—The Ruined Town—The Church—A Miracle—Turenne's Birth-place—Sufferings of the Inhabitants—The Plain of Death.

WHILE we were breakfasting in the cottage a little scene occurred. Some five or six peasants came in hurriedly and commenced an eager colloquy with our host. We could not make out what the subject of discussion was, but the men were very much excited about it, and the peculiar French intonation of the last syllables of their words was strongly developed, and their talk was accompanied with those energetic gestures, shrugging of the shoulders, and spreading of the hands without which a Frenchman seems unable to express himself fully. Our German stared at them through his spectacles with cool indifference. Excitement, however, in a Frenchman does not necessarily imply either anger or any other emotion, but rather seems to be his normal condition. Nothing came of the affair, however, as the men retired after a while.

On the road between Sedan and Bazeilles stand several houses, all in a more or less shattered condition. One was a modern *château*, elegantly and subtantially built of stone; it was much damaged in various ways, but the roof was entire, and of course the house had not been burned. It was enclosed in what had evidently been extensive and well-kept gardens and grounds—now a mere mass of tangled shrubs, grass, and earth; and what trees there were were more or less injured. This garden was covered with the usual relics of the battle—knapsacks, helmets, &c.—and contained a considerable number of graves. The furniture the house had contained had most of it been removed either before or since the attack on Bazeilles, but the bare floors, walls, and windows bore evident traces of the conflict. In the upper rooms there were many large shot-holes in the walls; all the windows were broken: we noticed one where a bullet had entered, made a small hole in the glass, struck a mirror which still remained on the mantel-piece, then glanced off, and buried itself in the opposite wall.

There had apparently been fighting within the building; some of the doors were split by bayonet thrusts, and in one room was a bed with a huge gory stain on it, how caused we could only conjecture. The balustrade of the stairs was broken down, and every room in the house more or less

wrecked and damaged. Near the graves in this garden we found the following letter—the names are, perhaps, better omitted :—

Monsaquet, 4 août 1870.

Mon cher Enfant,—Je te remercie bien d'avoir pensé à me donner de tes nouvelles. Dans les circonstances actuelles une pauvre mère ne peut que se chagriner. Cela est aisé à comprendre, mais j'ai confiance en Dieu, et je le prie et le prierai tous les jours de te conserver à notre affection et sans infirmités.

J'espère que tu nous donneras souvent de tes nouvelles, car tu ne doutes pas que j'en ai besoin pour avoir du courage et qu'un silence tant soit peu long nous laisserait dans des angoisses mortelles.

Je suis bien heureux que tu ne t'ennuies pas, d'ailleurs l'inquiétude et le chagrin n'éloigne ni l'approche ni le danger, et il n'arrivera que ce qu'il plaira à Dieu. Attendons tout de sa bonté !

On nous dit que les Français ont eu quelque avantage sur la frontière ; peut-être que cela découragera les ennemis et leur fera désirer la paix.

Toute la famille et nous aussi nous portons bien. Tous te font des compliments.

Selon tes désires je te dirai que nous avons acheté un âne, qui nous a coûté 57 francs. Je ne sais pas autre chose qui puisse t'intéresser, au moins qu'il ne te soit agréable de savoir que hier il a plu saisonnablement et que le temps menace encore. C'est bien un peu tard, car nos récoltes ont bien souffert, mais les vignes pourront encore s'en trouver bien.

Adieu, cher enfant ! Pense à nous, qui aurons toujours nos cœurs vers toi ; nous t'aimons et t'embrassons de toute notre âme.

TA MÈRE.

[Addressed to—]

Monsieur ———, soldat à la 26me Compie. du 4me Régiment d'Infanterie de Marine.

CONLON.

Translation.

Monsaquet, August 4, 1870.

My dear Child,—I thank you for having taken the trouble to give me your news. You will easily comprehend that a poor mother is in great anxiety under existing circumstances; but I have confidence in God, and I pray Him, and shall pray every day, to preserve you to our affection and in health.

I hope you will often give us news, for you must know that I have need thereof to sustain my courage, as a silence even of short duration, leaves us in mortal fear.

I am very glad that you are comfortable, as inquietude and grief neither keep away nor increase the danger, and nothing can happen to you but what pleases the Almighty, from whom let us hope for His mercy.

They say the French have obtained some advantage on the frontier, which, perhaps, will discourage the enemy and cause them to wish for peace.

I and all the family are well, and send you their compliments.

According to your desire I inform you that we have bought an ass, which has cost us 57 francs. I don't know anything else to interest you, unless it is agreeable to you to hear that it rained moderately yesterday, and that we may expect a continuance. It is rather late, and our harvest has suffered a good deal, but we hope the vines will be benefited by it.

Good-bye, dear child! think of us, as we always have our hearts with you; we love you and embrace you with all our soul.

YOUR MOTHER.

It is addressed, as will be seen, to a soldier of the French marines, then stationed at Toulon, but who subsequently took part in the defence of Bazeilles, and suffered heavily. From what we learned there is little or no doubt the soldier to

whom it is addressed had been killed, and was buried close to the spot where we found it. These letters lying on the field, we were told, almost always appertained to dead men, inasmuch as when bodies were buried the pockets were turned out and anything of value preserved, while worthless things, like letters and papers, were thrown aside. They were also frequently taken out of their pockets at the last moment by dying men, and were found in their hands or by their sides after death.

The hopeless and grievous sorrow which must have fallen on this quiet household at Monsaquet is, alas! but an unimportant episode of war, and is only a type of thousands of like cases both in France and Germany. The silent griefs of mothers, widows, and orphans do not enter as much as they ought to do into the calculations of statesmen when contemplating war. Great, indeed, is the responsibility of those whom anything but the direst necessity induces to plunge their country into that which entails sorrows like these.

A little beyond this house we get to Bazeilles. The struggle in this place was severe and hand to hand, and was often renewed before the Bavarians carried it by storm. These Bavarians appear, in some measure, to have acted the part of the dwarf in the fable of the Giant and Dwarf in the 'Vicar of Wakefield.' They did not capture it without severe loss, as the number of their helmets and

knapsacks scattered about would be sufficient to testify. The place might almost claim to rank as a small town, as it had 2,500 inhabitants, was well built of stone, and had one or two churches, châteaux, &c.

Let me say a few words on what led to the destruction of Bazeilles, and I think I can do so impartially, as, since the promulgation of the monstrous conditions of peace my sympathies have been largely transferred to poor, unhappy, broken France. These conditions, however, are the act of the German Government, which is not a synonymous term for the German nation. We were told by some Bavarian soldiers we met in Bazeilles that the inhabitants had fired upon the German troops from their windows (for that, however, except that it was irritating and useless, I should not much blame them), but these men told us further that a considerable number of their comrades, including forty men of their own regiment, had been cruelly assassinated by the French inhabitants while lying wounded and helpless in the streets, and that the women were conspicuous in these dastardly actions. It will be remembered that the first attack on Bazeilles failed, and the Germans were driven out, leaving their dead and wounded behind them. It was in the interval between the first and second attack that the inhabitants—men and women—were said to have rushed out and assassinated the

German wounded; and if this be true, it excuses, if it does not justify, the destruction of the place and severe punishment of the inhabitants.

Whether it was fired by accident, as a consequence of the shelling, or was deliberately burned, seems uncertain; but the former appears probable, as the *mairie*, which was filled with wounded, both German and French, was destroyed with all within it. In confirmation of what these soldiers told us let me quote the testimony of an eye-witness, one who manifests and confesses to 'strong French sympathies':—'Shall we ever forget the horror of that scene? A long street, every house burning—some smouldering, some blazing still—no human being there, but dreadful forms lying about the streets in attitudes of pain and agony, their clothes still smoking, and with clenched hands and upturned faces, the blood issuing from their mouths, showing how fearful their deaths must have been. All were Germans, and there were deep gashes in the throats of some that told a tale of revenge, and possibly murder, that had been done by no soldier's hand.'

The Bavarians are charged not only with firing Bazeilles deliberately, but with a series of horrible actions, including, not to mention worse, the throwing of infants out of the windows into the street and driving women and children into the flames at the point of the bayonet. Now, we were some

considerable time in the place, and amongst the few inhabitants left, yet we heard little or nothing of these alleged German atrocities. It is fair, however, to say that we made no special or strict enquiry into the matter. The absolute truth will probably never be known, but I may be allowed respectfully to express my own disbelief in any such actions being committed by the German troops, and I found that opinion on what I saw and heard of them in Sedan and in other places subsequently, and on their general conduct during the war.

In the course of it rather a considerable number of French towns and villages fell into their hands, and in some cases they had been irritated, as soldiers will be, by long resistance on the part of the defenders, yet I am not aware that their occupation of these places was followed by the actions attributed to them here. Remembering what war is, and making allowance for individual exceptions, my opinion is that the general conduct of the German soldiers in France was highly praiseworthy, and redounded to the credit of their country. I venture to think that if the case had been reversed, these stories would have been told of the French army in Germany with an infinitely larger foundation of fact.

Be this as it may, however, certain it is that Bazeilles is an utter wreck: such a spectacle

of destruction does it present that no words or description can give an adequate idea of it. The long street which traverses it presents on both sides buildings utterly ruined and gutted; nothing but bare, tottering, scorched walls, and heaps of ruins; not a single house, mansion, or church that is not completely destroyed. When the place was shelled numbers of the inhabitants, as in other places in like circumstances, took refuge in their cellars, and there is too much reason to fear that in many cases they must have perished miserably. One of the buildings we went into we were warned to quit, as the cracked, scorched walls were unsafe.

We went into what had been a church; now it was little more than bare, scorched walls; the altar broken down, a mere heap of stones and mortar, with the rails which had enclosed it torn up and lying broken on the top of its ruins. Two pictures of saints had been burnt, but the peasants told us the flames had failed to destroy a large wooden crucifix which had been fixed over the altar. The crucifix, if not destroyed, had been removed. One has heard and read of a like miracle before, but I don't know that the poor people are any the worse for believing it. An instinctive feeling of reverence led us to stand with uncovered heads within these walls, though there was nothing above us but the sky.

The sacred taper's lights are gone,
Ruined lies the altar stone,
The holy image is o'erthrown,
The bell has ceased to toll,
The roofless aisles are burnt and shrunk,
The sacred fane to ruin sunk.

Near the church is an old château, antique and curious; there is enough left of it to show that it had been an extensive building. Remains of groined arches, mullioned windows, and old carving can still be seen. Turenne was born in this place, perhaps in this house. One is inclined, in fancy, to re-people the old building and recall some of the scenes it must have witnessed.

Here oft in Time's departed day
War waved his glittering banners high:
Here many a minstrel poured the lay,
And many a beauty tranced the eye.

But never midst the gorgeous scene,
Midst the proud feasts of splendid power,
Shone on this pile a fiercer gleam
Than that which marked its falling hour.

Here was what had been an inn; the sign still swung over the door, but there was nothing but roofless walls behind it. In some stables attached to the château a number of poor animals had been burnt alive, and a great mass of charred bones remained in the building. Near this place were some graves, in rather a confined spot, and the peculiar deadly smell of decomposing matter arising

from both was so fearfully strong that we had to take a hasty pull at our brandy flasks and quit the vicinity at once.

This was Bazeilles—three weeks before a prosperous, thriving place, now a blackened, scorched desert; all its inhabitants, or nearly all, fled, and those who remained wandering about their ruined homes, utterly desolate and impoverished, and begging a few centimes from the passing traveller. Just opposite the church door they had collected a few trifling articles, which showed the effects of the flames—a bit of melted glass, a smoked, blackened cup, or some household utensil half melted by fire. These poor things stood on a few little tables before the ruined building, and were offered for the merest trifle. When we were there, rough boxes had been fixed up in different parts of the village, soliciting contributions from the benevolent. I believe afterwards the Prussians ordered these to be removed, for what reason I know not.

The whole place was a miserable spectacle, and gave one a vivid idea of the horrors of war—ruin, desolation, misery, and death everywhere. I say nothing of my own and my friend's reflections on these sad scenes, but it must not be supposed we were not deeply moved with grief and pity at the sight. On our way back to Sedan we made a detour in the direction of the river, now clear and bright, but at the time of the battles filled with

bodies of men and horses. From this point we gaze over this plain of death, so recently resounding with the cries and groans of wounded and dying men, calling in vain for that help and relief which, in many cases, it was impossible to administer. A little change of time and circumstances, and how like a modern battle-field after an action is to an ancient one! The horrors and sufferings endured and witnessed are common to all time and to every country.

Day glimmers on the dying and the dead,
The cloven cuirass and the helmless head;
The war-horse, masterless, is on the earth,
And that last gasp has burst his bloody girth;
And near, yet quivering with what life remained,
The heel that urged him, and the hand that reined;
And some too near that rolling torrent lie,
Whose waters mock the lips of those that die.
That panting thirst which scorches in the breath
Of those that die the soldier's fiery death,
In vain impels the burning mouth to crave
One drop—the last—to cool it for the grave.
With feeble and convulsive effort swept
Their limbs along the crimsoned turf have crept.
The faint remains of life such struggles waste,
But yet they reach the stream, and bend to taste.
They feel its freshness, and almost partake.
Why pause? No further thirst have they to slake.
It is unquenched, and yet they feel it not.
It was an agony—but now forgot.

CHAPTER X.

SEDAN.

Its Fortifications — Defences of England—Scotchmen — German Notice—Scenes in the Town—Ambulances—Diseases Prevalent—Wounded Frenchmen and Sœurs de Charité—Tobacco—French and German Soldiers contrasted — Captured Artillery — French Hatred of the Germans—Red Cross Service—English Benevolence —Newspaper Correspondents—At Dinner—Mèzières.

By this time we had parted from our obliging German friend, and, mounted once more on our peasant's vehicle, we drove to Sedan, and soon came in sight of its frowning walls. The fortifications consist of a high wall completely surrounding the town. This wall is mounted with cannon and flanked by earthworks, and a broad deep moat encircles it. There are two or three gates with bridges over the moat, which can be raised by means of weights and chains. The fortifications have suffered little or nothing from the German guns, but are in places somewhat dilapidated from natural decay.

A fortified town has a strange appearance to an Englishman. We happily possess in the 'melancholy ocean' or the 'strip of silver sea' a better frontier of defence than the most elaborate forti-

fication ever planned. Since the Roman wall was built to keep out the Picts and Scots—those enemies of our boyhood's peace—we have known little of frontier defences. True, our ancestors built a few forts in the North, in the vain hope of thereby keeping Scotchmen in their own country; we, wiser than they, accept the inevitable, and the forts have long since crumbled to ruins.

As we drew near the gate we saw the sentries, with their fixed bayonets glistening in the sun, marching to and fro high above our heads on the ramparts. Just over the bridge and through the archway was the Prussian guard-house, with a stack of rifles with bayonets fixed before the door. Beside the sentries on duty, a number of soldiers sat on benches or lounged about. Our driver had advised us to put our spoils out of sight, and we had carefully done so. I confess we felt slightly nervous as we drove past, as notices were placarded in the town by the Germans, forbidding any persons other than the peasants from traversing the fields, and by consequence, I suppose, appropriating anything found there.

This certainly applied to arms, for we understood that anyone who found them and did not at once take them to the German depôt was punished by fine and imprisonment. We heard afterwards that a German soldier had been shot the day before our visit for selling arms from the field.

Possibly this was not true, though the German discipline was strict enough. We had none with us, however: what things we had were utterly poor and worthless in themselves. But the soldiers took not the slightest notice of us, and we passed entirely unquestioned. Our first object was to find an hotel where we might dine and sleep. We drove first to one near the Place Turenne, so called from the statue which stands in the square. This was full, but at the 'Hôtel de l'Europe' we found two beds at liberty, which we engaged; and, after depositing our luggage in the bedroom and getting posted up as to the time of the *table d'hôte*, we went out for a walk in the town.

One could easily imagine the scene it had presented so recently, when filled with the masses of French soldiers, utterly demoralised and panic-stricken, the men breaking their rifles and casting their arms, swords, belts, knapsacks, &c., in all directions. Soldiers of all regiments, cavalry and infantry, mixed up together, with guns, ammunition and baggage waggons jammed amongst them, so completely blocked the streets that locomotion of any kind was impossible, while ever and anon a screaming shell from the German guns burst among the mass and added to the terror and panic which prevailed. Old bronzed French officers, their breasts covered with medals, were said to have stood crying in the streets like chil-

dren, and the terrified inhabitants peeped out of their windows at the scene. The Emperor Napoleon is said to have sought death when his army was finally defeated here. There seems considerable reason to doubt this statement, though the utter wreck of his fortunes on that disastrous day might well have driven him to such a course. Horrors of every kind accumulated at the time; provisions for such a mass of men were not to be got, while water also was extremely scarce: it is said that every river and stream, and most of the wells, were contaminated with blood, and were more or less choked with corpses.

The town is a good one, has about 18,000 inhabitants, and has been comparatively little damaged. It contains many large buildings, one of which was used as a barrack by the Germans, while most of the other large buildings were ambulances. The number of wounded who were left in Sedan and the villages about after the battle was said to have been very great: of course it had now been largely reduced, but, judging from the number of red-cross flags suspended from windows in every street, a great many must still have been in the town. The same melancholy emblem was to be seen on all the châteaux in the vicinity. That there was a great deal of dangerous and infectious sickness of all sorts in the place at this time seems certain, and we were expressly warned not to go into these

ambulances, on account of the danger of infection. One place—a sort of college—was, we were told, quite full of fever patients. There is no doubt it was in some respects more dangerous to visit Sedan at this time than it would have been earlier. The streets were full of French and German soldiers, the former invalids in various stages of convalescence.

The river Meuse takes a sudden bend and passes through the town. It is not very wide at this point. Near the bridge which crosses it is a place which is, I suppose, the island on the Meuse where the French prisoners were kept prior to their transmission to Germany, and where many of them are said to have perished of hunger. In this spot, being under the eyes of the garrison, the arms, &c., still lay thickly over the ground, and there were enough of them apparently to have equipped several regiments. Two peasants were gathering the things under a Prussian guard: if we could have transported them, or dared to have taken them, we could have got any quantity of arms as relics here.

In one street we saw a church full of wounded Frenchmen, attended upon by Sisters of Charity. Some of the men, it being a fine warm day, had been carried outside on their couches and laid in the sun, with extemporised shades, made of news-

papers, over their heads; others sat on the steps, or limped about the doors, as was the case at all the ambulances. Some of the poor fellows on the couches were *minus* arms or legs, and were frightfully pale, but were all, or nearly all, smoking. I do not know whether the Anti-Tobacco Society has made such progress in England as to warrant it in sending out missionaries abroad, but if so, all parts of the Continent present a great field for its operations. The intense enjoyment these poor wounded men (some of them almost too feeble for the exertion, light as it was) found from the pipe or cigar was very evident.

While we were watching this scene, a troop of the famous Uhlans rode up the street; their horses and themselves were dirty and travel-stained, and showed unmistakably the traces of long and hard service. They were fine, soldierly-looking fellows, and we gazed at them with great interest. We saw also a regiment of the regular Prussian infantry, with the spiked helmets, fully armed and equipped, and setting out on some duty. The garrison of the town, however, was mainly composed of Landwehr regiments, who appear good troops and fit for anything in the shape of fighting. Some of them are smallish men, but the bulk are fine-looking fellows.

There are occasional specimens among these German soldiers that strike one with admiration.

Many a time we turned round to gaze at some magnificent fellow who passed us. My own ideas of the physical qualifications of Germans had mainly been gathered from the gentlemen of that nation I had seen at home; but I must say, that they hardly give us a fair idea of their countrymen in this respect. I presume, however, that these tall, big fellows came for the most part not from German towns, but from the villages and forests of the interior.

When we saw the French and German soldiers together, as we did in this place, there seemed to be no question of the great physical superiority of the latter. Little, slight men seem to predominate among the French, and, however gallant they may be, they lack the strength and endurance of the Germans. But that is not all, or even the greatest deficiency of the French. The soldiers of that nation, and even many of the officers, are deplorably ignorant even of the geography of their own country, to say nothing of their want of other knowledge. It would seem as if the French must inevitably fail when matched with the Germans on equal conditions, though of course arms of precision have done much to obliterate the advantage which mere physical powers used to confer. It is said that there is not a company of German soldiers which does not contain men able to take the officers' places if they be shot down, and all

the men have an intelligent appreciation of the movements, &c., which they are called upon to execute. If a French company loses its officers, its cohesion seems to be destroyed, and it resolves into a rabble. It is evident that education is an enormous advantage, even in a profession apparently so little dependent on it as that of arms.

There were a few French officers here of high rank, one of whom—his breast covered with orders and medals—passed us on the street. In an open space of ground were the long lines of guns and *mitrailleuses* taken at Sedan. There was an immense number of them, all as far as we saw, of brass or bronze, and stamped with the French eagle. It was an imposing sight, and we got down from the road to have a nearer view of them, but were stopped by the German sentry on duty. The man was perfectly civil, but, fond as I am of arguing in a general way, I gave it up for once, and obeyed his orders. We were perhaps a little too timid in these matters, but it was delicate work going about a town under martial law, especially as we remembered that our passports were not in proper order, not having been *visé* (as we learned they ought to have been) by the German Consul. From the German soldiers, however, throughout, in the little intercourse we had with them, we met with nothing but perfect courtesy and civility.

You could see very plainly from the demeanour of the inhabitants that they were full of suppressed hatred to the Prussians; indeed, it would have been wonderful had it been otherwise; but they let 'I dare not wait upon I would,' as any outbreak would have been at once sternly and severely suppressed. Most of the shops were open, and the ordinary business of the town appeared to be going on as usual. We bought some little trifles in one of them from a most lively and energetic shopwoman. We wished to post some letters, and after some trouble found the *bureau de poste*, but it was closed; no letters being allowed to be sent from here, except such as were open for examination by the Germans, and sent through their postal service. We managed, however, to send our correspondence to Bouillon that night, and it was posted there.

We saw many of the Red Cross men here, of course. I have not the slightest desire to impugn the motives or under-estimate the services of these people. No doubt in many cases, perhaps in most, their duties were faithfully performed, and involved dangers, discomforts, and privations of no ordinary kind, and were undertaken from the purest impulses; but still the service had its compensations. The wearers of the *brassard* were introduced to the most exciting scenes of the war—an advantage which other non-combatants found it

difficult to obtain, money and influence notwithstanding. Their badge protected them from all its dangers, and made them equally safe, whichever army had the advantage. Besides, the nature and character of their duties, and the scenes they were constantly witnessing, were admirably calculated to keep up a strain of high enthusiasm, very pleasant to some people. They had the consciousness, too, that when all was over and they returned home, they would become the lions of drawing-rooms and clubs, and the objects of the admiring wonder of their friends.

It is not at all surprising that considerations and attractions like these drew a great number of people to engage in assisting the wounded. Fancy what a picture an imaginative enthusiastic young lady of Ritualistic tendencies would draw of the glory of going out, with the Crusader's badge on her garments, to succour and tend the poor wounded and dying soldier! Religion and poetry, the unconscious love of applause, and other motives would combine to form powerful inducements to such a course. Many would undertake a mission like this who would hesitate to spend their time and energies in helping the sick and wounded in life's battles, or the poor victims of poverty, vice, misfortune, and disease who abound in our own land. Such a service as this latter is indeed destitute of all the

romance and glory which attach to the former, but who shall say it is less meritorious?

Contrast with some of these red-cross votaries the noble, patient, self-denying heroism of the poor *Sœurs de Charité.* Foremost in every peril, and invariably present in scenes and circumstances of the greatest danger, how many poor soldiers have had their lives saved or their dying moments soothed by these good women! No playing at self-sacrifice for a time with them, and no expectation of anything in the way of reward, except the poor broken thanks of those they had soothed or saved. When their work in these scenes of excitement and enthusiasm is over, they turn patiently and humbly to other work of as dangerous and self-denying a character, but in different scenes, and out of the eyes of the world, and so on to the end, nameless and unknown, except by the good deeds they wrought.

But there might be a question whether a good deal of this English effort was not superfluous and unnecessary. Immediately after a battle no possible means could be adequate to the requirements. At such a time a great amount of unrelieved suffering is inevitable. But when the immediate pressure was over, were not the nations of France and Germany able to take care of their own people, wounded and struck in their own cause, and dear

to them by every tie of nature and patriotism? Why should English effort and English treasure have been poured forth so lavishly with the effect, to some extent at least, though not with the intention, of relieving France and Germany of their own sacred duty, and saving the pockets and efforts of their people? I venture to think that the English nation would be jealous of foreign aid in such a case, and would think it a reflection upon itself. That a large portion of our splendid subscriptions was wasted and frittered away without benefiting the wounded at all seems scarcely to admit of a doubt. This money so lost did not need to have gone begging to find good and useful objects for its use in our own country. English benevolence, great and praiseworthy as it is, is still of an essentially impulsive and erratic character.

These remarks are founded mainly on what I myself saw and heard, but if anyone will read some of the published records of personal experiences during the war, I am disposed to think they will find them not entirely destitute of foundation, nor altogether wanting justification; and of course I am far from arguing that we should selfishly confine our benevolent efforts to our own country, when real necessity exists for their exercise abroad.

At half-past six we returned to the hotel, and sat down to dinner with a number of people—Prus-

sian officers, doctors, travellers, correspondents, &c. By the way, what wonderful fellows some of these correspondents were! They were on the most intimate terms with great personages, and had access to exclusive sources of information. Many of them could anticipate Von Moltke's plans, or fathom Bismarck's policy—things which ordinary people had long given up as insoluble. Or, from their accounts, they could have commanded armies or laid out campaigns much better than the people to whom such things were entrusted. I remember reading several letters from the correspondent of one of the London papers, giving a detailed series of instructions to General Chanzy, showing him how he could completely retrieve the French losses and drive every German out of France. Unfortunately that general, like his *confrères*, was hopelessly beaten before these valuable letters could reach him, else the result had been different perhaps.

Another correspondent was led out to be shot; they had gone so far, I think, as to arrange the firing party, when the whole thing was fortunately discovered to be a mistake. What a line that was for his letter! It was almost worth all the terror and excitement he had undergone. We were told of letters 'from inside Paris' written in London, and I believe the fact was proved. These

remarks, however, only apply to some of the great number of war correspondents; there were certainly letters and communications of the highest possible value and of undoubted authenticity.

At our table were two Red Cross men, dressed in long grey coats which came down to their heels, and which were composed of a material admirably calculated to carry infection. Let me sketch these two gentlemen. Both were Englishmen—one a portly man in the prime of life, and who evidently, though no doubt sincere enough in discharging the duty he had come to perform, was yet more practical than sentimental; the other was in striking contrast—a young man of a thin, almost attenuated figure and pale countenance: his whole bearing, speech, and manner gave you the idea of an inspired enthusiast, whose physical powers were slowly wasting under the strain of exalted feeling. Besides these were one or two ladies wearing the same badge, and with complexions completely tanned by exposure to sun and weather. There was also a Prussian major, a fine-looking man, in a plain blue frock-coat, with a star at the throat. He was very quiet and taciturn, and spoke very little during dinner. The waiters were extremely deferential to the major; all the dishes were first offered to him, and then to our humble selves.

Whether it was the hard fare at the cottage and

on the journey I don't know, but we voted the dinner more than tolerable, and not very dear under the circumstances; but no doubt the Germans were at free quarters, and the hotel people got as much out of those who paid as possible. An Englishman who sat next me asked for the latest news, what the feeling was in England about the war, &c. I judged from what he said that the wounded were well cared for here then, though that was not the case at first, the pressure being too great.

After dinner, and while over our cigars, an English gentleman staying at the hotel asked us to remain another day, and go to Mézières about twelve miles from here. That town was then invested by the Prussians, who were daily expected to bombard it. We agreed to go, but were subsequently told by a German gentleman that it would not be prudent to do so, as we might unwittingly stray within the lines of investment, and he warned us that soldiers fighting were apt to be not over civil, and we therefore abandoned the idea. Our countryman, however, was not to be daunted, and next day he went alone, and no doubt he got safely back again. We rather regretted afterwards we did not go, though we should have seen little or nothing of the expected bombardment, it having been postponed. After dinner we turned out, and

went into a *café*, had some coffee, a game or two at billiards (charged by time), and then returned to the hotel. No one was allowed in the streets after nine P.M., as they were then filled with military patrols. We consequently retired to bed in good time, the more so as we were pretty well tired.

CHAPTER XI.

THE COTTAGES.

French Politeness—Cheap Blessings—Château Belle Vue—The Cottage—The Room—Its Furniture—Mementoes.

NEXT morning, which was as usual bright and fine, we arose early and walked out on the Mézières road towards Donchéret, to see the now famous cottage where the Emperor met Bismarck, and the Château Belle Vue, where the capitulation was signed. They are both situated nearly together, about a mile and a half from Sedan, and about a mile from Donchéret. The road took us past another part of the battle-field, and the same scenes we had passed through yesterday were again repeated, only less frequently, as the fighting here had not been so severe. On our way we passed the Sedan railway station, and saw the captured locomotives, black and dusty, and the silent, unused station, with the inevitable sentry on guard.

We did not so easily find the places we were seeking. We went to one château, which we thought they said was Belle Vue. Under this impression we enquired if we could enter, and

were promptly introduced to the proprietor, a gentleman who politely informed us of our mistake, and told us we might see his château if we chose, though it was full of fever patients, and they had been obliged to burn some of the furniture, bedding, &c., in consequence. We just went through the lower rooms, when the gentleman kindly offered to accompany us and show us the Château Belle Vue. We walked with him through his grounds, which had been much damaged in the course of the battles. He said it would cost fifteen to twenty thousand francs to restore them. Near the gate leading into his grounds was an old Frenchwoman, whose face was a mass of wrinkles, such as extreme longevity produces. She was a dear old woman, and the little gratuity we gave her produced us quite a number of blessings in the sweet and musical language of her country, and which we felt none the worse for, small as was the sum that procured them.

The French proprietor of the château was very communicative, and gave us his opinion on the war and political events with the greatest freedom. He asked us if we thought the King of Prussia would attack England after he had conquered France; said he thought the Republic would not last, &c. Probably he was a monarchist of some section. He had been on the ramparts of Sedan during the battles. We soon arrived at

the *château* Belle Vue, and our friend left us after we had thanked him for his kindness and courtesy. At the moment of parting he took off his hat, and bowed to us with a grace and dignity we vainly tried to imitate. His conduct, however, is only what you constantly meet with in France and Belgium not only from gentlemen, but from the poorest workman.

The *château* is a very pretty building and commands a beautiful view of the valley, with the Meuse running through it, and from it you can see the bridge over the river which was blown up by the French. A portion of the stone-work on each bank remains, but the arches over the stream are quite destroyed. This *château*, like all the rest, was occupied as an ambulance, the red-cross flag hanging from the windows. We had been advised not to enter it, and did not do so, though we felt somewhat disappointed. Leaving it, we gained the road again, and I had left it and was wandering over the battle-field as usual, picking up a relic now and then, when suddenly I espied a Uhlan riding towards me at a rapid pace down a lane which ran by the side of the field I was in. I felt startled for a moment, but the man passed on and left me unmolested, and without an adventure to record.

After some little trouble we found the cottages. They are built on some ground a good deal raised

from the road, and standing in front of them you can see the village of Donchéret, which was the head-quarters of the Crown Prince of Germany's army. The cottages are extremely well built of stone, and the timber used appears to be all oak. We went into the lower room or kitchen, which opens directly out of a small garden in front, and found several peasants—men and women—in it. The women were cooking and carrying on their usual household work. On enquiring if we could see the house, we met with a polite affirmative. A woman came out and showed us the exact spot (it would have been nothing, of course, if she could not have done that) where the Emperor and Count Bismarck placed the chairs brought out of the cottage and sat down; also, a few yards off and near the gable end of the house, the spot where the staff-officers stood during the interview.

After standing here a little while, overlooking the battle-field and trying to realise the scene and incidents of this memorable interview, we asked if we could see the room in the cottage where they sat in the first instance. Of course we could. We had to go round to the back of the house to get upstairs to it, and when we did so we found a quiet, modest French girl, who showed us the room. She said it remained in exactly the same state as at the time of the interview, except that the ceiling had been whitened. It is a small room,

with a window at the gable end, and had no covering on the floor, which is of oak, extremely well put together. The only furniture it contains are the two rush-bottomed chairs which were used (they are very good chairs of the sort, and made of polished wood); a table, made of oak, in what we should call here old-fashioned style, having hanging oval leaves; and also a very good oak wardrobe. On the mantel-piece were a few poor ornaments common to the country, which the girl said were there at the time of the interview. We asked if she would sell us one or two as mementoes. She would not take money for them, but would give them to us if we liked. My friend selected a common image of the Virgin, with a small vessel underneath for containing holy water; but the girl did not seem to like to part with that; we accordingly took a small chalk medallion and a shell, and brought them back with us.

I have been thus particular in giving these trifling details as some people delight in such things, but I confess I never could see much or get up much excitement in these sort of places, but one goes to them as a matter of course. On the mantel-piece was a round tumbler glass, out of which some great personage had drunk, but who he was I really forget. My friend sat on the Emperor's chair, I on Bismarck's, and there you had the whole affair reproduced, with the important exception

that we were substituted for the fallen Emperor and the crafty statesman. The girl told us that some of the visitors had already begun to pull rushes out of the chairs and carry them away as relics. We had no reason to suppose the people here to be otherwise than what they appeared—simple, honest peasants—but when they realise better what it is to have a show-place of this sort, they will begin to demand the francs as they do at Waterloo; in fact, I have read somewhere since that the charge to see this room now is five francs. Having satisfied our curiosity, we left the place. They made no charge, but of course we gave them a small gratuity.

CHAPTER XII.

SEDAN TO BRUSSELS.

Relics—Concealed Arms—Prussian Indifference—Relic Selling—A Hard Drive.

We returned to our hotel to breakfast, at which meal we met an Englishman who had just arrived to assist in nursing the wounded. He told us that so many men who had no right to it wore the red cross, that he had carried his badge in his pocket till he got here. After breakfast we adjourned to our bedroom and emptied our pockets, which were full of all sorts of muddy things we had gathered, and packed them up in our luggage. Our boots and garments generally were covered with mud from our rambles over the fields, and we got the *garçon* to brush as much of it off as he could at short notice, paid our bill, and took our way to the *diligence* for Bouillon.

We drove out of Sedan past the Prussian guard-house and sentries, no enquiries being made or the slightest search instituted. Two gentlemen who came back with us had found, one a bayonet, the other a large cavalry sword, which they concealed on their persons. The gentleman with the sword was under the necessity of keeping

his legs stretched out before him all the way. We did not like to run the risk of taking arms from here, as we knew we could get the same things in Bouillon for a few francs, and did not fancy getting an inside view of a Prussian guard-house. Of course we could not foresee we should pass unquestioned, or we might have done as our companions did. There was always the possibility of a Prussian inspection.

We had a pleasant drive, varied, however, by a narrow escape of the vehicle, passengers nd aall, being pitched over a high bank, in consequence of one of the breaks giving way; and the road took us over another part of the battle-field, where the fighting had been severe and the relics lay thick. The boys of Sedan and the villages *en route* on the French side were waiting on the road, loaded with various relics to sell—books, epaulettes, knapsacks, bullets, bits of shell, &c.

When we arrived at the frontier the coach was stopped, and a sort of search of the luggage instituted by the Belgian officials for arms. To their queries all in the vehicle denied having any, and as it appears they rarely resort to personal examination, our friends escaped. I had the box seat, and was amused by the driver calling to his three horses, 'Allez, Bismarck! high, allez, Bismarck!' &c. He had dubbed his horses M'Mahon, Bazaine, and Bismarck. The latter

got most of the whip, but then he was a lazy gentleman, and perhaps deserved it. At least it was thrashing Bismarck by deputy!

We arrived at Bouillon about half-past one, and bought a bayonet and pistol for a few francs. There were plenty of chassepots, but we did not care to be encumbered with one. Of course there was no conveyance for Libramont: they seemed to arrange to deposit you at Bouillon, both in going to and returning from Sedan, and leave you to make the best bargain you could to get taken on. It was a three to four hours' drive to Libramont, and only one train from there to Brussels, about 5 P.M., with the alternative, if we missèd it, of staying the night at the former place, where you have to walk two miles from the station to find even a cottage. Three or four gentlemen, like ourselves, were rushing about in all directions to secure a conveyance. Of course we could have stayed in Bouillon all night, but we did not wish to do so. At last we got a 'trap' for thirty francs, and started. We had very little time to spare, but by very hard driving—having a good little horse and a light vehicle, getting out at all the hills, which was about every quarter of an hour, and towards the last running up them, on a dusty road on a broiling day—we just managed to save the train by five minutes, and arrived at Brussels about ten o'clock P.M., dusty, travel-stained, and weary.

CHAPTER XIII.

BRUGES AND OSTEND.

Dulness of Bruges—The Chapelle du Sang—The Hôtel de Ville and Grande Place—St. Sauveur—Ostend—Bathing—The Kursaal—Ostend to London.

We left Brussels next day at twelve, and arrived at Bruges about three. This quiet, dull old town presented a great contrast to the life and excitement of the capital. It is a quaint, antique-looking place, and apparently as destitute of business as pleasure. There are comparatively few people in the streets, some of which were as quiet at high noon as they could be at midnight. In two or three of them the grass was growing pretty thickly in the interstices of the rough pavement. Every quarter of an hour the beautiful and melodious chimes rang out from the belfry tower of *Les Halles*. We ascended this tower, and had a good view from the summit of the town and country about, and then examined the clock and museum in the building.

The Chapelle du Sang is finely decorated, and all the windows are of stained glass, which adds to the rich effect of the interior. There is a

very curious old pulpit, and the shrine of 'The Holy Blood;' this is made of gold, or silver gilt, is about twenty or thirty inches high, and is decorated with jewels. Once a year it is carried in procession.

The Hôtel de Ville and Grande Place are very fine, and the latter contains some very old buildings, including a palace of Charles the Second. The Church of Notre Dame is a massive pile, containing many altars, pictures, carvings, and shrines, with gold and silver offerings. One of the chapels has twenty paintings in panels. The organ screen is surmounted by a lofty crucifix, which almost reached the roof of the building. There is a fine painting of the Last Supper, 1526, which looks quite fresh; also a Crucifixion, by Van Eyck; the tombs of Charles the Bold and Mary of Burgundy, made of black marble, with recumbent figures of copper gilt, date 1476. There is a curious crucifix outside the building, with a lamp before it, and underneath some rough stones and apparently human bones built in together.

In the Cathedral of (St. Sauveur) they were about to hold a service in memory of a deceased bishop; one of the chapels was hung with black cloth, and in the centre, on a tomb, were laid the late bishop's vestments and mitre.

While we were in one of these churches the organ pealed forth for evening mass. The solemn sounds

reverberated from the lofty roofs and arches, and produced a grave and soothing effect. The rays of the setting sun shone through the stained windows, lighting up the figures of saints and martyrs with which they were decorated with a new and radiant glory. Here and there on the walls pictures of sacred subjects by the great masters of painting attract our attention and admiration The solemn procession of gorgeously robed priests and acolytes enter and group themselves before the high altar. We reflect that in this ancient edifice generations of men have worshipped before us and passed away, and that we too ere long must follow them.

Is it surprising that scenes and reflections like these fill the mind with awe and veneration, and place it in a fitting frame for worship? Will any unprejudiced mind say that divine service in these circumstances is not another, and in some respects a better, thing than when performed in the tawdry buildings which modern Christianity erects, and where the service is as plain and devoid of sentiment and attraction as the building itself.

If one wished to account for the hold which Catholicism gained in the past, and still maintains upon the great mass of the Christian world, it may surely be found in the fact that it is either based upon a study of, or has arisen from the necessities and emotions of, human nature.

Not only in its splendid temples and the accessories of its worship is this manifested, but in many of its doctrines and practices. To take one or two at random as illustrative of this point:—

Who has not felt at some time anxious to disburden his mind of conscious sins or perplexities of a nature and character he could not disclose to his dearest friend, and has not desired an immediate human judgment and direction apart from, and in addition to, his confession to the Almighty. To such the confessional, with its inviolable secrecy and its sacred character, is not without attractions.

Then the right of private judgment, the sheet-anchor of Protestantism: What thinking man, who has brought his reason, and still more his human instincts and affections, to bear upon some of the doctrines and narratives of the Bible, has not felt that this right or privilege is a painful and onerous one. To the mind perplexed by intellectual doubts and torn by conflicting feelings there is something attractive in the idea of casting off these troubles and submitting to an inspired and infallible teacher; and, but that no Church can possibly by any reflecting man be so accepted, one would cheerfully transfer the burden.

Then the monastic system. How many, wearied of the toils and troubles of life, or overwhelmed with sorrows or the consciousness of sin, long for

a quiet, calm retreat from the world out of the sphere of temptation, passion, or trouble, there to spend the remainder of life in purifying and sanctifying exercises and occupations. To say that such may find their remedy without severing themselves from the world is only true in certain cases. There are natures strong and fierce, or weak and yielding, whose only safety and peace is found in absolute and unalterable retirement.

But I must close this long digression. My object has been, not to defend in the smallest degree a system so opposed to civil and religious freedom and progress as is *practical* Catholicism, but rather to show that some of its tenets and practices are in the truest accord and sympathy with human desires and feelings, and, considered apart from the abuses with which they have been loaded, not opposed to the spirit of Christianity.

They have a curious collection here of missals, crooks, and tapestry of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. We dined at a *café* in the city, and were the only guests, and late in the evening left by train for Ostend, where we arrived in an hour. After depositing our luggage at the hotel, we went into a *café* and watched the play at billiards and *écarté*, the latter game apparently for considerable sums. In this *café* we saw the second of two drunken men we had met with in our whole

journey. This one was an Englishman and a *gentleman*.

Next morning we rose pretty early, breakfasted, and strolled out. There is a fine beach and grand expanse of water, and the bathing arrangements are excellent. A boat or two lie off the shore during the bathing, ready in case of need, and, in addition, the bathing men are all provided with life-lines. The bathing dresses here are some of them pretty and striking, the ladies' costume especially so. The Kursaal on the beach is a light, handsome building, with several saloons for reading, music, &c. The band plays in it every evening. There is nothing striking or remarkable about the churches. There is a sort of Babel of languages talked here—German, Flemish, French, and English, and in some cases, as in that of the porter of our hotel, a combination of all, understandable by none. The majority of the people, however, speak English, and the various nationalities are well represented among the visitors. To-day, though it is the 1st of October, it is so fearfully hot that we cannot bear to remain out on the sandhills over the beach, and are obliged to return to the Kursaal.

About 9 P.M. we embarked on the steamer for Dover, and had a quiet, favourable passage. It was a beautiful, starlight night. I got into con-

versation with a young Englishman who had been a Papal Zouave, and he told me that many of our countrymen of wealth and position had served with him as privates. About two in the morning we reached Dover, very weary, and soon after took the train for London, where we arrived in due course.

APPENDIX.

List of other Papers found.

1. A letter from Paris addressed to M. Bourgerie Herbulot, Bazeilles, giving copy of a previous order for 250 weighing machines.

2. Bill for taxes of M. Lemoine Lambine, of Lamoncelle.

3. Shoemaker's bill of André Lemoine, of Lamoncelle.

4. Receipt of Demantin Émile, clerk in the Government Tax Office, Port Marly, for 300 francs from his father-in-law, Bourgerie Herbulot, maker of weighing machines at Bazeilles, on account of the dowry of his wife, Héomance Bourgerie.

5. Some essays on insects, on Latin and Romulus, probably written at school.

6. Certificate of burial of a child aged five and a half years, signed by the curate of the Church of St. Martin of Bazeilles and of Lamoncelle.

7. Letter from Hermance Bourgerie, Versailles, to her parents, thanking them first for her watch, and then giving them news of what she and her husband, Émile, are doing.

8. Printed rules for rations—such as salt, meats, wines, and brandy—substitutions in case of being short of forage for horses, and instructions to the officer about it.

9. Letter which appears to be written in Polish, bearing the post-mark of Fraustad, in Poland.

10. Letter to a brother at home urging him to settle the patrimony, and to let him have his share, as he wants to go to America.

11. List of loans amounting to 10 francs 16 centimes, signed by the sergeant.

12. Questions about chemistry.

13, 14. Two French regimental books of the 72nd Regiment of the Line, referring to regulations, discipline, &c.

15. One French regimental book of the 2nd Regiment of the Infanterie de Marine.

PARIS IN 1871.

CHAPTER I.

DOVER TO CALAIS AND PARIS.

The Channel Passage—Mal de Mer—First Sight of the Germans.

We arrive at Dover about ten o'clock on a dark, rough night in September 1871, bound for Calais and Paris, and make our way down to the pier for the packet, the outlines of which are only imperfectly visible in the gloom.

What possible use can they have on board for that large number of white crockery hand-basins? Can it be for—we dare not pursue the thought, but with gloomy forebodings pace the small deck or dive down into the little dismal cabin.

At length the mails are on board, with the last passengers, and we are off. For a few delusive minutes the motion is slight, and we are recovering our courage, and will not yet resign our cigars. We are standing on the windward side. What is

that? The little steamer makes a sudden plunge, somewhat like that of a restive horse when spurred. A torrent of spray dashes over us, and we grasp at anything to preserve our balance. Evidently we are going to have it, and we get it; it seems as if the vessel performed every variety of evolution and combination of evolutions possible, and only stops short of turning over altogether. To beat a hasty retreat to leeward is '*not* the work of a moment,' but it is accomplished, and by dint of getting as nearly as we can sit under the lee of the funnel, and planting our feet firmly before us, we manage to get the spray down our backs only about once in five minutes and to keep ourselves from falling absolutely prone.

At first, we make an attempt at continuing to smoke, feeling jolly and keeping up a conversation about the pleasure of being out on the bounding wave, &c.; but the conversation languishes, the cigars go out, and are *not* re-lighted. I glance at the face of my friend who sits next me in the faint light of moon and stars, and find it fixed in steady, solid contemplation—his thoughts evidently too deep for utterance. At last, after a long silence, he rises to his feet on the wet deck, and is immediately pitched against the bulwarks, to which he clings, and remains intently gazing on the waves, uttering from time to time inarticulate sounds.

My other friend, usually most amiable, is

unaccountably fractious and, though the spar on which we are sitting is making itself felt more and more, cannot be induced to move, but gazes with stolid, stupid look at the contortions of our friend who has gone over the line. By-and-by I partake his feelings so far that I do not feel the slightest inclination to laugh, or even to speak, but cling to my position like the drowning man to his piece of wreck, and move not. The spray may drench me, and those who are able may jeer me; the inhuman sailor as he passes, with his legs wide apart and his tarpaulin coat glistening with the wet, may say I am all right. I rise above the gibes and sneers of the world, and am sublimely indifferent to all. I look on everything with a lack-lustre, mental eye, and begin to think there is nothing in anything, and that life itself is a mistake and a grand delusion. Human hopes, fears, and passions are no more to me than the wild foam swept around us by the wind.

So the vessel rolls and pitches on her way through the midnight sea, when, happy sight, we distinguish amid the storm-wrack around us a light dimly twinkling over the rough waters. 'Calais lights, sir; we shall be in in a quarter of an hour.' Blissful words, and soon realised, as the vessel enters the harbour and we stagger over the gangway on to the rough stones of Calais pier.

We make a brief stay to refresh and recover ourselves, as far as may be, from the effects of the rough passage, and then make our way to the station to take our places for Paris. My recollections of Calais are confined to a few rough, straggling, dimly-lighted streets, which was all that the darkness, or indeed our inclination, permitted us to see.

We get our first sight of the Germans at Amiens, where the train stops a few minutes. The party consisted of some twenty or thirty infantry soldiers, who were evidently on duty, though what it consisted in further than marching to and fro on the platform, or lounging on the benches, did not appear. Similarly we saw parties of German soldiers at all the principal stations on the line.

CHAPTER II.

RUINS OF PARIS.

The English Abroad—Paris and London—The Palais Royal—The Madeleine—The Place de la Concorde—The Tuileries and Louvre—The Hôtel de Ville—The Champs Élysées—The Arc de Triomphe—German Graves.

On our arrival in Paris we drove to an hotel, and took a pretty long rest. At 6 P.M. we dined, and everybody knows with what perfection that can be done in Paris. The hotel at which we were staying was a great resort of English visitors, who largely predominated at dinner. Why is it that our countrymen and women abroad, for the most part, impress us so unfavourably? Certainly here it was so; all the English appeared to be endeavouring to impress everybody else with their cleverness, their position, wealth, &c., and, of course, the British idea that nothing approaches Old England was strongly represented.

Then there were the small airs and affectations, the 'French' where it was not required (as all the servants spoke English), the excess of dress, or, on the other hand, the contempt of it, &c. Taken altogether the spectacle was neither fascinating

nor by any means likely to impress the 'intelligent foreigner' with favourable ideas of *les Anglais*.

Like most French hotels, this one enclosed a courtyard, all round which were placed plants and flowers growing in boxes. The dining-room opened into this courtyard, and it was very cool and refreshing to sit out here after dinner enjoying our cigars.

Next day we drove about the city. What a contrast it presents to the dull heaviness of London—the white buildings, broad streets, boulevards, squares, fountains; the splendid shops, *cafés*, &c.; the climate and air, light, invigorating, and inspiriting; and the lively, gay, and courteous manners of the people.

One can easily understand the longing of the involuntary exiles in our own less favoured climate for their beautiful capital. I remember once meeting an elderly French lady in England, who talked with all the national eagerness and excitement of her love for her beautiful Paris. Speaking of the variations of climate in our northern capital, she said, 'In the morning you say it is cold, at noon it is hot, and at night we cannot see the way in your streets for the "vapour." Ah, the clear blue sky of France, I never see it here!'

We looked, of course, to see the traces of the terrible conflicts from which the city was then just emerging, and everywhere saw abundant indica-

tions. Near our hotel was the Place Vendôme. The base of the column remained; all the broken *débris* had been removed. The Palais Royal is burnt and destroyed, but the fine range of shops, with their brilliant display of jewellery, &c., were apparently uninjured.

The Madeleine is much marked, and damaged externally with shot, but the injury is not perceptible at a little distance, and the interior does not appear to have suffered at all, the white marble walls, the painted ceiling, &c., being perfect.

The splendid Place de la Concorde, not speaking of the buildings, shows but few apparent traces of the siege, except on a rather close inspection, when you can see that the statues, lamps, fountains, &c., are considerably wrecked and damaged. The obelisk, brought from Egypt and erected here at such an enormous expense, appears to have entirely escaped injury.

The Tuileries and Louvre are almost entirely destroyed, and a dreadful spectacle they present of mad, purposeless ruin and destruction. It is inexpressibly depressing to gaze on the ruins of these magnificent buildings. Everywhere on the public buildings we notice the Imperial insignia defaced and destroyed, and the Republican motto substituted.

As we drive about the streets we see traces everywhere of what had taken place; the shop windows

in all directions were pierced with bullets, and had been temporarily repaired with paper; the walls of numberless buildings were pitted with shot-marks and otherwise damaged in various ways; in some cases a single building lay in ruins, in others whole rows were in that condition. This was especially the case in the Rue Royale; but still, taking the whole extent of the city into account, the destruction was not so great as we had anticipated, and, as is well known, almost the whole of the damage had been caused by the second siege. We were told on all hands that the city had suffered little from the German guns.

The magnificent Hôtel de Ville and various Government offices are totally destroyed—nothing remaining but scorched, ruined walls. Notre Dame had almost entirely escaped. They showed us the shell which was said to have entered the organ and remained there without exploding. This grand old building has witnessed many extraordinary scenes, and has often apparently been in the greatest danger of destruction, but by a singular good fortune has escaped the fate which has frequently appeared inevitable. Among other places we visited the Pantheon, with its tombs of Rousseau and Voltaire, its crypt and echoing gallery; St. Sulpice and some other churches; the Invalides, with its gilded dome, visible all over Paris, its tomb of Napoleon, &c.; the Grand Opera

House, at this time used as a hospital. We also visited the baths on the Seine: the water is tolerably clear, and the bathing arrangements good.

Next day we drove through the Champs Élysées. We did not find the destruction of the trees, either here or in the Bois de Boulogne, so entire as we had expected: great numbers had been cut down, but the majority remained. The Arc de Triomphe, though it had been struck repeatedly, was not much worse, its massive construction no doubt having contributed to its preservation.

Driving through the Bois we soon after saw Mont Valérien in the distance on our right on a commanding hill, and the ground we were traversing was that passed over by the French in their last unsuccessful sortie. Immediately beyond were what had been the German lines of investment; the ground was covered with various *débris* appertaining to the construction of earthworks, and scattered about were the lines of wooden huts erected by them during the winter. In the midst of the position, in a small wood was an enclosure, containing the graves of German officers who had fallen about the spot. Most of them had granite headstones, recording the names and ranks of the dead. It was a quiet, gloomy place enough now, though it had so recently been the scene of much excitement and suffering. There were said to be many bodies of private soldiers, both German and

French, buried in the vicinity, but there was nothing to distinguish the graves. The French troops were now encamped close by, and as we passed through we saw the soldiers in every variety of occupation—cooking, cleaning arms and accoutrements, or lounging about, smoking and talking. The trees and what buildings there were in this vicinity were very much damaged.

CHAPTER III.

ST. CLOUD.

Ruins of the Palace—Destruction in the Town—French Gaiety.

At St. Cloud we stopped and went up to look at the palace, of which nothing remains but bare, ruined walls, many of which were chalked over with French denunciations of vengeance on the Germans. The rest of the place is also almost utterly destroyed, only thirteen houses, it is said, remaining uninjured. The narrow streets present nothing but lines of tottering walls or heaps of ruins, and one felt somewhat nervous in passing through them, lest some of the cracked, shaken walls should suddenly collapse. We observed one house; the whole front wall and all the floors were gone, but in what had been one of the upper rooms the mantel-piece still stuck to the wall, and was covered with bottles, household articles, ornaments, &c., and on nails in the walls about it pictures still hung.

It is singular that the little church here, though occupying perhaps the most prominent position in the place, has been very little injured.

In one place they were offering some remains of the Imperial crockery and other valueless *débris* from the palace for sale.

Notwithstanding the awful ruin and destruction visible on every side, St. Cloud was quite gay; flags were hung out at all the river-side *cafés* and on the boats, &c. The former were full of customers, and the people generally appeared quite gay and light-hearted,—as if the destruction of the place was a mere disagreeable episode to be forgotten as soon as possible. Workmen were busy with repairs, but it must take a very long time to restore the little town to its former state.

CHAPTER IV.

VERSAILLES.

The Palace and Gardens—The Assembly—The Communists.

AFTER leaving St. Cloud, we passed through another French encampment (the number of troops then in and about Versailles was very large) and arrived at Versailles, so long the head-quarters of the German army of investment, and after lunch went to see the palace and gardens.

The Assembly was sitting, and we saw many of the deputies in and about the town. There was apparently some exciting subject of debate, for we could hear the noise from the theatre where they were assembled quite plainly. We saw the usual sights at Versailles—the various rooms, pictures, state carriages, gardens, fountains, &c. The main picture gallery and some other parts of the building were, however, closed, being occupied by Government officials. In the orangery in the grounds were confined some thousands of Communist prisoners, many of whom we could see walking restlessly about the large room like wild animals in a cage. These miser-

able prisoners, we were told, comprised among them men of almost every nation in the world, and from all classes of society,—poor and rich, cultured and ignorant; wild, dreamy theorists and savage, reckless ruffians, all united in a cause perhaps the wildest and most strange the world has ever seen—theoretically so exalted, but in its practical issue and consequences so abhorrent. A considerable number were Poles, and many were said to be Englishmen, but that seems more than doubtful. The female relatives and friends of the prisoners were permitted to visit them and supply them with such little luxuries as their means permitted.

CHAPTER V.

ST. DENIS.

German Soldiers—A Street Scene—The Cathedral—Sunday in Paris.

On our return to Paris we passed through Sèvres, decidedly not an attractive place, and on entering Paris observed the Palais de l'Industrie, which was the scene of severe conflicts, and was much damaged in consequence. The next day (Sunday) we spent part of the morning in the undestroyed portion of the Louvre, and were much interested with the statuary, antiques, &c. In the afternoon we took the train to St. Denis, and on leaving the station at that place the first people we saw were a number of German soldiers in full marching order—being told off for the purpose of evacuating the town. The expression on the faces of the men, and the heartiness with which they responded to the roll-call, showed how delightful the prospect of returning to Fatherland was to them, and the reason of this was pretty evident on one ground at least, for it was plain from the demeanour of the inhabitants that they (very naturally) entertained

the most violent hatred to the German soldiers, and though this feeling would find expression rather in little trifling annoyances than in more serious acts, it was quite sufficient to make their occupation of the town highly unpleasant to the Germans.

This disposition on the part of the townsmen was illustrated by a little incident we saw. A German officer was coming along the street when he was slightly jostled, no doubt intentionally, by a man, apparently a French workman. The officer turned round and half drew his sword, but the other passed on quickly and nothing came of the matter.

The fine old cathedral here is very little injured; it was covered to a considerable height on the exterior with bags of earth for protection. One other church had a few shot-holes in the roof, but the town generally is little worse. We remained a considerable time inspecting the old monuments in the cathedral and admiring the various parts of the edifice. The town was lively enough; a sort of fair was being held, and the vendors of various articles were calling their wares or exhibiting them in the streets.

After spending some time here we returned to Paris. Sunday is the gayest day in the week in Paris; it is then the theatres, *cafés*, &c., do their largest business. Most of the principal amuse-

ments are on Sunday; there were some races at Longchamps to-day. The shops are open in the morning, but are, for the most part, closed in the afternoon, which is apparently exclusively devoted to pleasure-seeking. The morning mass, however, at the various churches is apparently very well attended, and of course a Catholic Frenchman violates no principle of his religion in seeking *innocent* recreation in the later portion of the day.

CHAPTER VI.

NEUILLY.

Porte Maillot—Ruins—Communists—Street Fighting—Civil War.

Our driver next day took us through the Porte Maillot, the scene of tremendous fighting, of which the traces could be seen everywhere, in the dismantled and destroyed buildings in its vicinity. We went on to Neuilly. This place is nearly as completely destroyed as St. Cloud, but in a different way and from another cause. The fighting here between the Versailles troops and the Communists was at close quarters. The walls of such houses as were not in ruins were pitted all over with a perfect hail of bullets and *mitrailleuse* balls. Trees, walls, houses on all sides wrecked, smashed, and destroyed, till we were weary and sick at the sight.

One tumbled heap of ruins our driver told us had been a house full of Communists, who fired out of the windows on the troops; the latter shelled the building, and before the Communists could escape it fell, burying them in the ruins, under which he told us many of the bodies still

lay. The streets we were driving through had been completely covered with dead and mangled bodies. It was simply horrible; and still more so to remember that this was not a contest with a foreign foe, but a fratricidal conflict between Frenchmen, destitute of any of those redeeming features which have sometimes characterized even civil wars. The whole horrors entailed by this sanguinary struggle will never be fully known. What is known makes us blush for humanity.

From hence we drove along the banks of the Seine—saw a suspension bridge over it, which had been burnt, and several other bridges partially blown up, and a French gunboat which had been sunk by a German shell.

CHAPTER VII.

FORT ISSY.

The Fort—Investment and Capture of Paris—French Valour.

Passing again through St. Cloud we arrived at Fort Issy, from whence we had a splendid view over Paris and the line of forts, Vanvres and Mont Rouge being nearest to us. The sentinels on duty would not permit us to enter the fort, but it mattered little, as what is to be seen can be viewed from the outside. All the internal buildings, barracks, &c., are totally destroyed, and the walls which protect the earthworks grievously damaged, especially in places. The fort is surrounded by a deep fosse or dry ditch, and is protected by palisades; the ground in the vicinity is completely ploughed up by shells, bits of which you can pick up or buy from the soldiers. When we stood here and gazed over the city, and saw the vast extent of the German line of investment, and remembered the immense number of soldiers in Paris, we were amazed how it could ever have been taken or the investment maintained. On the spot it seemed more marvellous than it did when we read of it at home.

Our driver, an Englishman who had been in Paris all through both sieges, did not hesitate to ascribe it to the cowardice of the French troops. He said they were absolutely unreliable when they got beyond the protection of their forts. But whenever we talked with Frenchmen on this subject we were told another story, according to which the German soldiers who invested Paris always 'fled like sheep,' when the French troops got to close quarters with them; or if the circumstances made that story plainly absurd, then the French were 'betrayed,' or they had not sufficient 'ammunition' or provisions, or something else was wanting, but it was never courage or endurance on their part; and they either believed or affected to believe in their own immeasurable superiority to the Germans on anything like equal terms. The tales we heard from them of the number of Germans killed by the French in the various sorties were, had they been accurate, more than sufficient to dispose of the whole investing army.

We met in the city, in the faded uniform of a Garde Mobile, and with his hair closely cropped, a young gentleman whom we had formerly known as one of the gayest of French exquisites, and when we put the question plainly to him why had not the French troops broken through the line of investment, we had the same story that the Germans could not stand against them for a moment; and if

they had only been properly led, or had more ammunition, or some other thing which they had not, Paris would never have been taken. Unlike some gallant men, this small Frenchman entertained us with an account of his own personal exploits, showed us in active pantomime how he had himself killed the Germans and what a terrible fellow he was. The fact remains, however, that, notwithstanding this French valour, the city was taken, a result which would have been pronounced impossible were it not an actual fact.

On this drive we saw the spot where Von Moltke's quarters were, and from whence he directed the siege operations.

CHAPTER VIII.

PARISIAN LIFE.

Caricatures of Germans—Of the Emperor—The Boulevards at Night—Parisian Enjoyments—Boulogne to Folkestone.

On our return we passed the Champ de Mars, on which some troops were exercising, and, crossing the Bridge of Jena, saw the ruins of the Corps Législatif, the Palace of the Legion of Honour, and other buildings in the Rue de Lille all utterly destroyed. Strolling through the Palais Royal after dinner, we noticed in the print-shops in the vicinity numbers of photographic caricatures of the Emperor of Germany, Von Moltke, and Bismarck, who were depicted in all sorts of humiliating and disgraceful positions and circumstances, some of them ludicrous enough. In others German soldiers, generally in spectacles, were caricatured. A favourite conceit appeared to be to represent them as running away with French clocks under their arms. In some of the shops of the lower class were caricatures of the Emperor Napoleon and the Empress, a few of them of a disgraceful character.

The Boulevards at night were very gay and brilliant while the *cafés* were open, but afterwards were somewhat gloomy, only about one lamp in three being lighted. This was said to arise from a scarcity of gas. The groups which sat at the little tables in front of the *cafés*, and the manners, air, and appearance of the people, and the adjuncts of the whole scene were most striking—in the *cafés* cards, billiards, &c.; outside theatres, *cafés chantants*, and all the manifold attractions of Parisian life, so well known and so highly appreciated. The Parisians seem to study the art of enjoying life in every possible way, and their arrangements for the purpose are successful in the highest degree,—being carried to a pitch of exquisite refinement which surely cannot be excelled. It is to be feared, however, that morality is little thought of if it stand in the way of pleasure. In nobler views of life the French do not impress you very favourably; they are gay, frivolous, and vain to an inordinate degree, and, as far as can be seen, even the terrible lesson they have just received will only have a very temporary beneficial influence upon them.

Next day we took our departure, and on our return journey one of us who could not speak a word of French got into the wrong train at Creuil, and was carried back to Paris. We were much amused with his adventures when he joined us in

the evening at Boulogne. We spent a day there, and at night embarked for Folkestone. It was a calm, clear night, but we had a long passage. In the middle of it we were roused from an attempted sleep on deck by a cry of 'Hard a-port!' and learned we had nearly run down a small vessel. Immediately afterwards two or three rockets shot up in the air, and we bore down to the vessel from which they had been fired. It proved to be a steamer for Boulogne, which had broken down in her engine, and we had to lie by her for some time.

We got to Folkestone just as day was breaking, and after a hurried breakfast took the train for London.

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