SEDAN.

The Great Defeat.

Dr. Russell's Description of the Finishing Stroke to MacMahon's Army.

Dr. W. H. Russell sends the following account of the battle of Sedan, and the scenes on the field, to the London *Times*. He writes from Donchery on Sept. 3:—

The greatest event of our time has occurred under the eyes of those who saw the battle of Sedan. I think the British public must have had enough of battle-field horrors and hospital scenes. There will be plenty of letters describing *Kranken-tragers*, burial parties, wounded men, heaps of dead, the hideous reverse of the medal on the other side of which are the bright emblazonments of glory and victory. I will not dwell on the topic, but ask your readers to be content with the assurance that no human eye ever rested on such revolting objects as were presented by the battle-fields around Sedan. Let them fancy masses of colored rags glued together with blood and brains, and pinned into strange shapes by fragments of bones. Let them conceive men's bodies without heads, legs without bodies, heaps of human entrails attached to red and blue cloth, and disembowelled corpses in uniform, bodies lying about in all attitudes,

WITH SKULLS SHATTERED, FACES BLOWN OFF, HIPS SMASHED,

bones, flesh, and gay clothing all pounded together as if brayed in a mortar, extending for miles, not very thick in any one place, but recurring perpetually for weary hours, and then they cannot, with the most vivid imagination, came up to the sickening reality of that butchery. No nightmare could be so frightful. Several times I came on spots where there were two horses lying dead together in harness, killed by the same fragment. Several times I saw four, five, and six men, four, five, and six horses, all killed by the explosion of one projectile, and in one place there lay no less than eight French soldiers who must have been struck down by the bursting of a shell over a company, for they lay all round in a circle with their feet inwards, each shattered in the head or chest by a piece of shell and no other dead being within a hundred yards of them. A curious and to me unaccountable phenomenon was the blackness of most of the faces of the dead. Decomposition had not set in, for they were killed only the day before. Another circumstance which struck me was the expression of agony on many faces. Death by the bayonet is agonizing, and those who die by steel, open-eyed and open-mouthed, have an expression of pain on the features, with protruding tongue. A musket ball, which is at once vital, does not seem to cause much pain, and the features are composed and quiet, sometimes with a sweet smile on the lips. But the prevailing expression on this field of the faces which were not mutilated was one of terror and of agony unutterable. There must have been a hell of torture raging within that semicircle in which the earth was torn asunder from all sides with a real tempest of iron hissing, and screeching, and bursting into the heavy masses at the hands of an unseen enemy. I cannot imagine anything so trying to the bravest man as to meet death almost ingloriously in such a scene as that—nothing so maddening to soldiers as to be annihilated without a chance of vengeance—nothing so awful to the fugitive as to see his comrades blown to fragments all around him. It is well that wives and mothers and fond sisters were spared the sight of their beloved ones, and it is well that in France it is only mothers and sisters who will have to deplore the slain. Whether the Prussians buried their dead early—the night of the battle itself—or not I cannot tell, but their losses were almost nothing if they were to be estimated by the number of bodies on the field. Soldiers well know how deceptive is the appearance of ground viewed from an elevated point; and during the battle which raged for fifteen miles before and around us there were outbursts of firing from valleys and knolls which seemed purposeless, but which were at once explained when the positions were gained. I was surprised, knowing the French had capitulated, and that the Emperor had surrendered, to see great columns of the German army in motion towards the heights over the Meuse, and the Sixth Corps and the Bavarian Corps, in reserve, hastening up in the same direction. But it seems that

GENERAL WIMPFFEN, WHEN HE HEARD THE TERMS,

declared that he would die sooner than sign them. He could not think his situation was so desperate. He was informed that if he preferred the destruction of his army it was his own affair; but to show him that such destruction was inevitable, maps were produced and the position and force of the corps of the German army and of its batteries indicated. If at noon the capitulations were not agreed to, the attack on Sedan would commence.

General Wimpffen was in a deplorable condition, and one which his brave enemies commiserated. He had arrived only two days before from Algeria. He found an army already beaten to his hands. Marshal MacMahon was wounded early in the day, struck in the back and hip by a piece of shell or ball, and Wimpffen had to take command of the troops without knowing the Marshal's plans, or even the disposition of the corps on the plateaux over Sedan, except through others. "And now my name will go down linked with a humiliating capitulation for all time!" To make assurance doubly sure, and to show that the *gros bataillons* were on the side of the victors, this display of force was made all around Sedan, and when I got to the heights of Donchery the plains at our feet were covered with the masses of the Prussian army. The Wurtembergers had come up from the direction of Mezieres; the Bavarians were on the right of the second army. The hill-tops were black with troops, and all along them clustered the batteries in position. It was not a bright day, but the atmosphere was clear, and the position of the French admitted of their further study. The Meuse twists in such an extraordinary way that no one would suspect its stream runs in many places right across what seems a continuous champaign and undulating land, and thus it was that the semicircular bluff above the village of Floing, on which the cavalry charges and many most interesting episodes of the fight went on, comes close to the bluff over Donchery, although the road to it must wind for six or seven miles by the banks of the river, in a course which cannot be seen from the bluff. North of Floing stands a mamelon, or conical hill, with a fenced patch of forests (firs) on the summit. At each side of this wood the Prussian batteries, which brought such ruin on the defenders of the intrenched plateau over Floing, were established. This hill is about three-quarters of a mile from the bridge over Floing, and inside the ridge the French were intrenched—a breastwork taking the natural line of the slope, and a series of detached *epaulements* being formed higher up. Now, it is purely the old story of Chlum over again. *Generals ought to watch the weather.* It may be true that MacMahon's force did not permit him to occupy the mamelon. In that case his position was very weak on the northwest; but it was worth making a strenuous effort to do it. At all events, he should have got a great strength of artillery to sweep it and check Prussian occupation.

BUT IT WAS A FOGGY MORNING.

The weather, as well as the *gros bataillons*, helped the Prussians. Their advance and their passage of the Meuse below Donchery by two pontoon bridges were unnoticed; so, apparently, was their approach to the wood. The force which Marshal MacMahon had at his disposal consisted of the First, Fifth, Seventh, and Twelfth Corps, with part of the Sixth Corps. It was thought that they may have reached 110,000 men, with 460 guns, but I have no precise information as to their strength in either, nor will it be known for some days. It is almost ridiculous to suppose that MacMahon, with an enormous army under his nose, and with a river between him and them, should not have watched most jealously the slightest indication of an intention to throw pontoons across, and have tried to vex and defeat it; but the Prussians believe he was not informed of the existence of the bridges, and that their appearance before Floing was almost a surprise. *Everything about the war is a surprise from beginning to end.* The prisoners say it was believed they could hold out for five weeks in the intrenched position they had made. The batteries of the 5th and 11th Army Corps demolished their confidence. From the plateau of Floing the ground falls towards the Meuse, but retains its elevation and bluff-like formations towards the north, cut by several deep ravines running generally north and south. In one of these hollows, sweeping in a semicircle towards Sedan, lie the villages of La Chapelle, Illey, Givonne, &c. Woods on the summits of the ridges or sections formed by ravines conceal the features of the country from a general view. Sedan itself screens a good deal of the field from the eye. On the right, towards Bezeilles and over the road by which the Prince of Saxony advanced, the woods are so thick as to look like a continuous forest.

THE POSITION.

Any one with a good map (Reyman's Special Karte will do) can get an idea of the position and nature of the ground by filling the line from Cazal by Floing, and so on round by Givonne to Bazeilles, and he can mark the effect in cutting up the ground of the two little rivulets which flow into the Meuse east of Sedan. There were outposts in the villages towards Mouzon, but generally the ground held by the French was included within this semicircular line. The army of the Crown Prince of Saxony, consisting of three corps and of the Prussian Guards, came from the east side, and had to deal with the principal force of the French. It was at one time exposed to an offensive movement, and had to attack positions most savagely defended, including those which covered the depots. One division of this army was not engaged at all, but the losses were severe. (One battalion of the Queen's Regiment of the Guards, the Augusta, lost 28 officers and 500 men.) The Bavarians attacked Bazeilles and the works of Sedan. Of the Crown Prince's army on the west only the 5th and 11th Corps attacked, and all the divisions of these were not equally engaged. The Wurtembergers watched Mezieres towards Donchery on the left, covering the bridges. The 6th Army Corps was in reserve. Altogether there were about 170,000 men engaged and in reserve on the attacking force at the very least, and if we take MacMahon to have had 110,000, and count the prisoners and capitulated 90,000 off, there remain 20,000 to be accounted for as killed or wounded. The disparity in force was, however, more than compensated by the position held by the French as long as it was not bulged in or contracted; but as soon as they allowed their line to be forced they were exposed to a converging fire from the semicircle closing in from east and west and north, and put in desperate straits. Then there only remained the chance of breaking the fence and of forcing back one or other army, and their efforts were directed to repulse the Crown Prince of Saxony, with the result known by this time to all the world. The Prussian guns were

AS SUPERIOR IN NUMBER AS IN POWER;

in fact, if Marshal MacMahon could, he ought to have evaded an encounter with such a force, and would have done so. But what men call fate was upon his track. The genius of Prussia, in the heads of two men, was, humanly speaking, irresistible. The Emperor and his army were hunted down, fenced in, brought to battle, and overwhelmed in a vast ruin, of which mankind will speak and read as long as history endures.

THE PRISONERS.

Beyond the town a strange scene presented itself. In the large fields near the railway station there was a body of French prisoners, unwounded, fenced in by a line of Wurtembergers. They were about 2000 in number, and were of several different regiments, comprising all arms, drawn up as if in military order to receive rations, their officers taking down their names and calling out their numbers. They were a remarkable fine body of men, taking them all in all. Many were too young—mere boys, but even in their depression, after a night of cold, after a day of terrible trial, they had that military as distinguished from a warlike air which is characteristic of the race,

A CONTRAST TO THE SLOUCHING, SHAMBLING

look of the men who were guarding them. Turcos and zouaves, lancers, chasseurs d'Afrique, hussars, cuirassiers, artillerymen, chasseurs, and line were there in ranks, many lying down, others fast asleep—let us hope, happy in their dreams, poor wretches! They had nearly all their great coats and cloaks, but the miserable throng looked as gay as a flower-garden, owing to the variety of kepis, turbans, and shakos. Further on lay a great spoil of the Prussian proper—a quadrangle filled with an army without arms—as many men as we can show royalty on a field-day at Aldershott, probably twelve thousand men—such a spectacle I have never seen yet in my life. There seemed to be whole battalions of them—five hundred and six hundred of single regiments. It is very unwise in a civilian to speak with prisoners of war if he has not authority to do so. Sentries are very jealous on that score, so I could not make inquiries. The men were passive and quiet—no movement, no voices in the multitude. Outside, here and there, like sheep seeking to regain the flock, were wounded men limping in twos, as if for company's sake, quite free, as their captors knew that a man wounded is too sensible to flee from his only chance of care and care and feed. Streaming along the road, there was almost a procession of such objects, now Prussians, now French, and now a Prussian and a Frenchman together, with shattered hands or limping gait or horrid face wounds. I made for Floing in order to begin

THE REVIEW OF THE BATTLE-FIELD.

The road was crowded with regiments and ammunition wagons, and, to my wonder, I saw it winding for three or four miles by the river bank towards the village or little town, the steeple of which looks very near from the Prince's hill. About a mile outside the village, on the roadside, I came upon dead horses, and then I remembered the dust, the firing of the Prussian infantry, and the wild confusion of what I thought was a rush of runaway steeds. And so it was, but the riders lay further on—cuirassiers and lancers, who had either attempted to cut their way through or had fallen in pursuit of the Prussians. I regret to say that the sheets I sent from the field contained my notes of the times of the occurrences I observed, as I cannot now remember them. There were many cuirasses strewed in the field and by the roadside outside Floing, and here and there among the turnips, wurzel, and potatoes, which the Prussians were gathering, lay dead men—all French. But there were *pickel haubes* and needle-guns lying about also, and multitudes of cowhide knapsacks. After a most irritating ride, getting over useless ground, I got into the village, which lies directly under the cliff-like side of the plateau. From the south side there is a steep stony lane, a continuation of it winding up north to it again. The side is in places scraped for patches of vines and vegetables, fenced with stone walls, and enclosures round small cabins. Floing was full of wounded men. The white flag and red cross floated all around; but it needed not that to tell there were victims of the fight here, for pale faces and bandaged limbs were at every doorway and window. The Place was almost impassable, owing to a wreck of arms, chassepots, needle-guns, helmets, swords, accoutrements, bayonets, knapsacks, littered all over with regimental accounts, papers, "*livrets*"—here and there wagons and commissariat carts, ammunition boxes, tumbrils—things that had cost poor Frenchmen far away a great deal of money, for which there was a barren return indeed. I pressed my horse up the steep, the beast sniffling and starting at the dead chargers which lay tumbled over in the fatal onset. Some Prussians were lying in the little churchyard covered with blankets and wreaths of flowers on the breasts till the grave-diggers came; rude crosses marked mounds which showed where they had done their work; a few hundred yards and there came in view the *epaulement;* over the ridges inside were rows of French. The ground behind was rent in every direction and scarred by shell.

THE SEAMS AND FRAGMENTS AND FURROWS

told how they had met their death. Many were buried by the simple process of throwing down the bank. It is very likely there were many men there who had dug their own graves, singing and laughing all the while. These men had all been clean destroyed by the batteries on the mamelon, and were thus rendered unable to prevent the advance of the Prussian infantry to the village and up the slopes. The ground on the top is partly in cultivation—turnips, carrots, and potatoes—which the Prussians were digging up; and the plateau was dotted with burial parties, medical men, and idlers. The dead were generally bootless, stockings and footgear gone, coats were torn open, pockets turned inside out by plunderers. About 12 o'clock, while I was on the plateau, a squad of the gendarmerie swept off the stragglers and ordered them to bury the dead. An irregular line of dead horses almost at right angles to the line of the *epaulement* indicated the position of the French batteries, which made a long and gallant but ineffectual attempt to check the murderous Prussian guns, flanking and raking it from the ridge beyond, at the same time that it was torn to pieces by the batteries posted on the mamelon. Men of the 32d French and the 83d Prussian, the 37th and 89th French, were lying together. A few Prussians scattered on the trampled earth indicated the site of the first and successful charge. Further on towards the river there was evidence of the terrible retribution. Such heaps of horses, gray and white! And here were the luckless riders as they fell—Chasseurs d'Afrique, in light blue; men with red kepis, marked "1.," with blue band, and peaks lined with green, whom I conjecture to have been hussars, and men in light blue, with white facings; the luckless 4th Regiment of Lancers, the 8th Lancers, not more fortunate, what once belonged to the life and beauty of the gallant brigade which had tested the lance against the needle-gun. Among these bodies, which were not thick, but scattered all over the plain, lay men of the 6th Artillery Regiment. Near them was a sort of earthwork, very rude, with embrasures, six in number, for mitrailleuses, with a profusion of empty cartridge cases all about it. The direction of the two charges—the very formation of the Prussian companies which met them—could be traced, and then the course of the flying cavalry round the flanks in a vain attempt to escape and reform. On this field there were here and there wounded men moving uneasily in the blankets around them, and waiting for the arrival of the cacolets and ambulances. Prussian and French medical officers were going over the field together.

A JOURNALIST SHOT.

As I am writing this there comes news which I hope is not true. It is of the loss of a friend, of one who eagerly pressed to be employed in your service, and who has in that service lost his life in the field. I can scarcely proceed. Perhaps, before these lines reach you, the telegraph will have broken the intelligence to those to whom the blow will be terrible. My last words to him were to warn him that he was not to seek danger, and that in the capacity in which he was engaged it was his bounden duty not to run risks. It is now 5 o'clock, and Colonel Walker, in reply to an inquiry, caused by a rumor I had heard, has written to say that the Crown Prince of Saxony informed him the *Times* correspondent, Lieutenant-Colonel Pemberton, was killed by his side during the battle, by a bullet. I am shocked and grieved, as will also be as many friends as a young man ever had when they hear it by this news, that only a sense of duty impels me to continue my narrative. Had he fallen for his country in battle it would have been some consolation to those he has left to mourn his fate. Cheerful, witty, full of life, spirit, and talent, he has met the death he, above all deaths, would have desired—a soldier's. "Kit Pemberton dead!" I fancy how these words will fly through many an English home. I have written to the Crown Prince of Saxony, and will try to have his resting-place properly marked, or obtain some clue to its locality. But headquarters move on to-morrow, and the place, now deserted by the army, where he fell is many miles away.

THE CAVALRY CHARGE.

Let us leave the scene of the cavalry charge. Never can I forget the prelude. When I saw the French who had lined the advanced trench on the first retiring to what I now see was another epaulement, where they were again raked by the flanking batteries of the outer ridge and pounded and brayed by the mamelon guns, I did not know how they had suffered and could not perceive why they retreated. The Prussians coming up from Floing were invisible to me. Never can I forget the sort of agony with which I witnessed those who first came out on the plateau raising their heads and looking around for an enemy, while, hidden away from view, a thick blue band of French infantry was awaiting them, and a brigade of cavalry was ready on their flank below? I did not know that Floing was filled with advancing columns. There was but a wide, extending, loose array of skirmishers, like a flock of rooks, on the plateau. Now the men began to fire at the heads over the bank lined by the French. This drew such a flash of musketry as tumbled over some and staggered the others, but their comrades came scrambling up from the rear, when suddenly the first block of horse in the hollow shook itself up, and the line, in beautiful order, rushed up the slope. The onset was not to be withstood. The Prussians were caught *en flagrant delit.* Those nearest the ridge slipped over into the declivitous ground; those in advance, running in vain, were swept away. But the impetuosity of the charge could not be stayed. Men and horses came tumbling down into the road, where they were disposed of by the Prussians in the gardens, while the troopers on the left of the line, who swept down the lane in a cloud of dust, were almost exterminated by the infantry in the village. There was also a regular cavalry encounter, I fancy, in the plains below, but I cannot tell at what time; the Cuirassiers, trying to cut their way out, were destroyed, and a charge of two Prussian squadrons, which did not quite equal expectations, occurred. The feat of these unfortunate cavaliers only cleared the plateau for a little time. In a few minutes up came the spiked helmets again over the French epaulement, crossing their sabred comrades, and, therefore, all alive to the danger of cavalry. They advanced in closer order, but still skirmishing, and one long, black parallelogram was maintained to rally on. As the skirmishers got to the ridge they began to fire, but the French in the second line of epaulement soon drove them back by a rattling fusillade. The French rushed out of the epaulement in pursuit, still firing. At the same moment a splendid charge was executed on the Prussians, before which the skirmishers rallied, on what seemed to me to be still a long parallelogram. They did not form square. Some Prussians too far on were sabred. The troopers, brilliantly led, went right onwards in a cloud of dust, but when they were within a couple of hundred yards of the Prussians one simultaneous volley burst out of the black front and flank, which enveloped all in smoke. They were steady soldiers who pulled trigger there. Down came horse and man; the array was utterly ruined. There was left in front of that deadly infantry but a heap of white and grey horses—a terrace of dead and dying and dismounted men and flying troopers, who tumbled at every instant. More total dissipation of a bright pageantry could not be. There was another such scene yet to come. I covld scarce keep the field-glass to my eyes as the second and last body of cavalry—which was composed of light horse also—came thundering up out of the hollow. They were not so bold as the men on the white horses, who fell, many of them, at the very line of bayonets. The horses of these swerved as they came upon the ground covered with carcasses, and their line was broken, but the squadron leaders rode straight to death. Once again

THE CURLING SMOKE SPURTED

out from the Prussian front, and to the rear and right and left flew the survivors of the squadrons. The brown field was flecked with spots of many colors, and, trampling on the remains of that mass of strength and courage of man and horse, the Prussians, to whom supports were fast hastening up right and left and rear, pressed on towards the inner epaulement and became engaged with the French infantry, who maintained for some time a steady rolling fire in reply to the volleys of the Prussians. To me the French force seemed there very much superior in number. But they had lost courage, and what was left of it was soon dissipated by the advance of a Prussian battery, which galloped up to the right flank of their infantry and opened a very rapid fire, to which there was no French battery to reply. The French left the epaulement and made for a belt of wood, dropping fast as they retreated, but facing round and firing still. In a few moments more the plateau was swarming with battalions of the 11th Corps, and the struggle there was over. Only for a minute, however, because from the flanks of the wood came out a line of French infantry. The musketry fire was renewed; but it was evident the Prussians were not to be gainsayed. Their advance was only checked that they might let their artillery play while their columns assisted it by incessant volleys. At the time I stated in my former letter the plateau over Floing was won. A fierce onslaught by the French, made after they had retired behind the wood, only added to their losses. The Crown Prince's army, notwithstanding the cavalry success at the outset, had by 3 o'clock won the key of the position of the French right with comparatively small loss. It was startling to be addressed, just as I was about leaving this part of the position, by an English voice. There stood the speaker—not of the House of Commons, but a member of it—Mr. Winterbotham, with the Johanniter badge upon his arm, much interested in what he saw for the first time—a battle-field; and not able, I fear, to do much in the way of aiding the wounded, but full of zeal. I was about going towards Sedan when a staff officer informed me that the approach to the city was dangerous, as the Turcos—everything is laid to them—fired on officers in uniform. It was necessary, therefore, to make a detour and turn inside the line of Prussian sentries, but the deviation brought us more immediately on the scene of other combats, and to the ridge running in the direction of St. Menges, where a French Cuirassier charge is said to have been delivered, though I saw no trace of it. A French soldier, one of several who were either prisoners at large or who had ventured out of Sedan, gave me a direction to find Bazeilles, and within three hundred yards the French sentries paced up and down the green ramparts, but did not fire. Captain von Girl assured us they had wounded a son of General Freyberg, and fired repeatedly on the Prussians; others repeated the statement, adding that they had killed and wounded some French prisoners, and had wounded the Prussians who were guarding them. The ground I crossed towards Givonne gave a view of the Bois de dos du Loup and of the Bois de Francheville, portions of the great Foret de Sedan through which the Saxon Prince's army had to fight its way. Everywhere were traces of the terrible cross-fire of artillery, which rendered the battle so hopeless as the day wore on. Near a field hospital south of La Chapelle there were great numbers of French, further on the remains of a reserve ammunition train—numbers of dead so great that they explained the protracted musketry from a large body of French infantry cut off by the rapid advance of the 11th Corps at one side and the 5th Corps at the other, so that the only resource left was to sell their lives as dearly as possible. There was between this point and that at which the right of the Saxon Prince's army beat back the French and gained the plateau only an interval which could be covered by musketry fire at long ranges; through this a few thousand Frenchmen fought their way into Belgium, but a strong column which made an effort to get through also was overcome by artillery fire and suffered fearfully in their retreat over the brow of the hill, where they were also exposed to a very destructive fire of musketry. The troops of the 2d Army were in force at this point. A post of infantry stopped us to pass inspection in the civilest possible manner, but then, as on other occasions through the day, it was insisted that I and my companions were "Fransozen," though a Frenchman would not have admitted it if he had heard us speak. The village of Givonne lay at our feet, and as a soldier led the way a "cheery" but careful young officer came out from a cottage and hailed us. The production of papers produced a most agreeable result. Our young friend, as he proved himself in a minute, was a descendant of a family of Shetland, as I understood him, named Barton, and belonged to the Queen Augusta Regiment of the Guards. He led us to the room in the hovel where dinner was laid in camp for him and for the officers of the company, who insisted on our drinking "the Queen's wine," and partaking of their rations; but our banquet was short, for an order arrived at 3·30 for the party to move, and as they were hastily packing up I proceeded on my way, and ascended the ravine, arriving at the ground where the Bavarians touched the left of the 2d Army as soon as the latter had carried the positions in front of them. It was always the same story. Lines of dead Frenchmen mangled by artillery fire, some Prussians, some Bavarians, principally killed by the Chassepot. Now we arrived on the Bavarians' field of action, which extended from Bazeilles to Sedan. In their gallant and most injudicious attack they lost 3000 men. It is said there was a misunderstanding. Their advance column seized the railway station at Sedan. It is maintained at headquarters that there were explicit orders given that they were not to develope their attack till the Crown Prince of Saxony had come out on their right, but the authorities of their own corps declare the orders they received were not quite to be thus understood.

THE BAVARIANS OF VON DER TANN'S CORPS,

on whom devolved the difficult task of carrying the village or town of Bazeilles and Balan (a suburb of Sedan, outside the fortifications), suffered enormously. They were exposed to a fire of infantry in the houses, and to the guns of the works and the musketry from the parapets. The inhabitants joined in the defense, and as soon as the Bavarians had crossed the Meuse by their pontoons and by the railway bridge they could receive but little protection from their artillery placed on the heights. The French made the most strenuous attempts to repulse them, in which the marines were particularly distinguished; and three divisions of Bavarians, which began to fight at 4 o'clock, were exposed to three distinct onslaughts from the town and from the corps under the walls. At one time it appeared as if they would be overpowered, although it seemed as if success against them would scarcely have secured the French army from its ultimate fate. It is believed by the Bavarians that MacMahon himself was wounded very early in the day, when directing his troops in an offensive movement against Bazeilles.

GENERAL DUCROS THEN TOOK COMMAND

of the whole army, but General de Wimpffen, producing a sealed letter, showed that he was authorized to assume the control of the operations of the army in case of any accident to Marshal MacMahon. The Marshal was wounded early in the morning, and according to the reports of French officers, prisoners to the Bavarians, there was a difference of opinion between General Ducros and General Wimpffen respecting the plan of attack which the French adopted at one period of the day as the best means of defense. Having beaten the Bavarians out of Balan at one time, the French made a rush in the direction of Illy, as if determined to cut their way through on the flank of the Saxon army and pass towards Metz. But the Crown Prince of Saxony had by that time resumed the offensive and had brought an overwhelming force to block their way. They were driven back, delivering the Bavarians from the stress to which they had been exposed. Their divisions advanced once more, and Bazeilles, or as much as remained of it, was firmly occupied. But the fight about Balan lasted much later. Here it was, according to Bavarian reports,

THAT THE EMPEROR,

declaring that he only served as a private soldier, went with the attacking column, composed of the remnants of various regiments, to drive out the Bavarians. But the artillery on the heights above the road were too much for troops shaken by incessant fighting and fearful losses. Shot and shell rained fast about the Emperor, one of them bursting close to his person and enveloping him in smoke. The officers around entreated him to retire, and the Bavarians quickly following occupied Balan and engaged the French on the glacis of the fort. I cannot say whether this was previous to the period referred to by General Wimpffen in his address to the army. He speaks therein of a supreme moment when it was necessary to make a final effort and cut their way through the masses of the enemy at any hazard. But of all that great host of 90,000 men, there were only 2000, he says, left who answered to the appeal. Of the remainder there were probably 20,000 in the hands of the Prussians, but 60,000 men, deducting killed and wounded, had by this time become a disorganized mass, without cohesion, "willing to wound, but yet afraid to strike," and crushed out of all semblance of military vitality by an overwhelming and most murderous artillery, of which the moral effect was at least as great as the physical. The bitterness of recrimination between officers and men shows that long before the battle a radical element of force was wanting. There was not only a deficiency of cordial relations in their kind between the officer and the soldier, but a worse evil still—an actual apprehension on the part of the officers of those whom they were to command—a fear to enforce the ordinary rules of discipline, lest the soldier should become unmanageable altogether. The scene cannot be either imagined or described which occurred when the army, or that uniformed rabble, had been fairly driven in by the beaters, to be shot down at will. The French artillery had practically ceased to exist as a protecting arm. The guns on the works are ridiculous small ordnance of the date of 1815, with a few heavy pieces here and there, and Sedan, commanded completely from the south bank of the Meuse, was to all intents and purposes an open town, with the inconvenience of having a walled *enceinte* to embarrass the movements of the troops. The Emperor retired, I believe, within the place, but not, surely, for safety, but rather to escape from the surging mass of impotent soldiery. There was a rain of Prussian and Bavarian bombs upon the town, filled with terrified citizens who had had no time to escape. The troops outside had been fighting without food since the morning, and there were no resources within the city to meet their wants. They were in an angry and terrible mood, upbraiding their officers, mutinous, and every shell that fell increased the evil of their spirit. To one of many missiles was now reserved a great mission. A shell fell into a warehouse or manufactory in which was stored some inflammable material. A vast volume of flame rushed for a moment into the air, and a volume of thick white smoke which towered and spread out so as to overshadow half the city gave rise to the apprehension on one side and expectation on the other that some central magazine had gone up. But no noise ensued. Still, at the moment the resolve was taken that Sedan and all that it contained should be placed in the power of the victor, in the belief that it was impossible to resist with any prospect but that of ruin complete, however lingering.

THE EMPEROR COULD NOT OPPOSE COUNSELS

dictated by obvious prudence, nor could he encourage the despair of brave men. A white flag was called for, but none was forthcoming. A lancer's flag was raised aloft. General Lauriston stood upon the battlements and waved it, while a trumpeter sounded, but in that infernal din neither sight nor sound attracted the besiegers, and it was only when the gate was opened, after attempts in which officers and men were killed and wounded, that the Prussians recognized the first omen of their stupendous victory. The firing suddenly ceased after the discharge of a few dropping shots, and then, as all along the bloodstained hills and valleys in which the smoke of battle had been hanging the news, or rather the instinct, prevailed that the enemy had asked for terms, there rose, I am told, cheers such as only can be given by a triumphant soldiery. Shakos and sabres rose in the air. What an additional pang of agony that must have been to the wounded French, who felt that they had given their blood in vain, while the Prussians beside them, maimed as they were, tried to swell with their feeble voices the chorus of joy! An officer related to me that he saw a huge Prussian who had been lying with his hand to his side in mortal agony, rise suddenly to his feet as he comprehended the reason of the ringing voices, utter a loud hurrah, wave his hands on high, and then, as the blood rushed from his wound, fall dead across a Frenchman.

The officer who came out eventually and met General Moltke in consultation was, I believe, General Reille, who was the officer in attendance on the King when he was at Compiegne. He was the bearer of an autograph letter from the Emperor addressed to his Majesty, and written in no agitated hand. You already know the terms:—"*Mon Frere—N'ayant peut mourir a la tete de mon armee, je depose mon epee au pied de votre Majeste.*" This letter was immediately conveyed to the King, who, with Count Bismarck, General Moltke, and his staff, were looking down from a height above Wadelincourt on the extinction of an empire. His Majesty's answer was courteous and firm, and meantime General Wimpffen was informed that the terms offered to the army was the surrender of the whole force, guns, horses, and material, to the Prussians. I do not know whether the officers were then exempted from general surrender, but, any way, the French commander declared he would sooner perish in the field than sign such a disgraceful capitulation, and so the sun went down in the west, lighting the path of the King to Vendresse, through the most enthusiastic ovation from all the soldiery along the road south of the Meuse. The Crown Prince received a not less joyous reception as he proceeded back to Chimery. It was known that the Emperor had absolutely surrendered, and that the army was about to capitulate. As a German soldier expressed it, "*Kaiser captirt; armee capitulirt.*" The street in the mean little village in which the Prince lodged presented an extraordinary spectacle. It was lined by soldiers holding lighted candles, which did not flicker in the quiet air. It was almost a disappointment to them when the Crown Prince came unattended by the Emperor. And what a people these good French are to govern! The cottagers feigned to partake of the joy at the overthrow of their Imperial master. They stuck lights in the window. My host, an old soldier of Africa in Louis Philippe's time, who had often doubtless shouted "*Vive l'Empereur!*" too, begged of me to lend him a second candle to put in his window, for, said he, "*Cela sera plus digne.*" It was late

WHEN THE CROWN PRINCE SAT DOWN TO DINNER,

and for the first time during the campaign a toast was proposed by his Royal Highness, "The King and the Army." It was drunk in champagne—also an innovation at the royal table—which was intended for the Emperor Napoleon, and was captured with other stores by a Prussian dragoon regiment and presented to the Crown Prince. Although the army in general believed that peace was now secured, those around the Prince's table discussed the question with less security of the result. The hesitation to sign the capitulation did not signify much, for a night's reflection, strengthened and matured by the sight of the preparations for maintaining possession of what remained of the French army by force, would, it was felt, render a positive refusal out of the question. The French officers at the parley had admitted that the demoralization of the troops was complete. They were apprehensive even that the Prussians who might return with the answer to the Emperor's letter might be fired at; and one of them, applying a coarse expression to his own men, said, "*Il tire sur nos leurs officiers.*" Orders were sent to the various corps to close up around the town, and when the watch-fires were alight Sedan seemed a black spot in a broad belt of fire, which lighted up the heavens. What a night it must have been for the wounded cannot be imagined by those who have not seen how great are the sufferings which kind nature, however, appeases, generally as time wears on and life ebbs away.