



1870.

(FROM THE FRENCH OF LOUIS FRECHETTE.)

'Twas after those dark days of Gravelotte,  
When, 'mid the groans of France, th' Iscariot  
Bazaine, oaths, honor trampling in the dust,  
Had forfeited, with Metz, his country's trust.  
As hungry wolves spring on the caravans,  
A torrent broken loose, the fierce Uhlans  
Eyes flashing, sword 'twixt teeth, twenty to one  
Swept over Strasbourg, over Sedan, Verdun,  
Burning each town, o'erwhelming every village  
Drunken with wine, with horrors, blood and pillage ;  
Footprints of carnage, ruin, where they trod,  
Swept down on Paris, this new scourge of God.

Rapine, loot, nameless horrors, none might brave  
Or check these awful caterers for the grave.  
The Province, drained of blood, pale unto death,  
Trembled beneath their grip and held her breath.  
Alone, unaided, amidst other's fears,  
Paris, Fame's boulevard this thousand years,  
Paris, the Caesar's pride and Rome's despair  
The throne of Science and the Muses' lair,  
Fickle as Babel, wise as Solyma,  
Learned in a single day the art of war ;  
With head erect, and eyes that flashed disdain,  
Behind her forts defiant swept the plain.

Afar the world, scarce breathing, hung on the news  
Of each succeeding day.

Europe flung loose  
Each night and morning, on the storm blown air  
Her bulletins of daily heaped despair  
Paris besieged !

'Twas in this day that France  
Staking her last hope on a single change,  
Stood boldly up against her cruel foe.—  
A poem, tender, dolorous yet clear  
Breathed from this remoter hemisphere.  
While others stood apart and mocked her woe—  
Others, for whom in most divine compassion  
*La France* had spent her best blood, soldier fashion—  
Across the Atlantic, on that late found shore  
Whose strand the blue St. Lawrence washes o'er  
Frenchmen, Armorica's brave race, e'er while  
Bartered so gaily by a monarch vile.  
A humble nation, from its mother's knee  
Orphaned, alas ! in earliest infancy,  
Noughtwards that mother by the world denied  
With yearning love her heart, arms, opens wide.  
Blood will be heard, that pure idolatry  
Best gift to patriot heart of God on high,  
Wakes in each breast anew. Where'er you seek,  
A flood of burning tears bedews each cheek ;  
And 'mid the sobbings of a grief profound  
"Vive la France" rings from myriad voices round

Deep in the valley, 'neath the hoary walls  
And towers of proud Quebec ; where sinuous crawls  
Between historic banks on either hand  
St. Charles, a score of clustering hamlets stand  
Faubourg St. Roch, where all day long there toil  
A race of noble hearted sons o' the soil.  
There most of all, where in each manly breast

The sense of justice dwelt, a welcome guest,  
Rang out and lingered the despairing cry  
"France lies a bleeding ! She will surely die !

One dark and stormy autumn eve, the wind  
Blew shrilly thro' the battlements that lined  
The citadel ; when 'mid their watch and ward,  
Just as the vesper bell had ceased, the guard  
That leaned above the ramparts heard a shout  
And, far below, the "Marseillaise" ring out,  
Mingled with shriek of life and roll of drum  
Floated along the breeze—the noisy hum  
Of the faubourg. Like a wave rolled back by the storm  
They gained the upper town, pressed on to swarm  
About the Consulate, where above the door  
Symbol of France in tears, drooped low the tricolor.

The leader of their march, a brawny torso  
Like Hercules himself,—within a coarse  
And rugged shell, a hero's heart and will  
Shone, like a lion, caged, but lion still.  
A blacksmith strong and swart, yea rude I ween ;  
Yet one glance cast upon his tranquil mien,  
His aspect calm yet proud, his open brow,  
Sufficed to mark the heart that beat below.

Before the Consul he stands out alone,  
And with a tranquil voice, in whose deep tone  
A distant thunder growled.

"They say below  
That France has need of soldiers. Is it so !  
We don't know just what war is, us lads here,  
But we come of a stock that never learned to fear ;  
And, I should say, our fathers had enough  
Experience of Prussians and such stuff.  
And for the rest, it don't need much to tell  
Us how to use an axe—we know that well ;  
And 'tis with axe in hand we mean to sail  
For France, dye see, Sir, if my words prevail,"

He paused, choked down the sob that checked his flow  
Of speech, and dealt a vigorous blow  
With his swart fist just where his chest half bare,  
Shewed the green cord of his scapular there.  
"Yes, yes, my Consul, we stand here to-day  
Five hundred only. We'll have more, *Allez !*  
Take but those five, and when they know, believe  
Ten thousand will cry 'Here' to-morrow eve.  
Our mother France, to her we long to fly  
For her to fight, or, if needs be, to die  
And by the God whom I adore, I swear  
No traitor villain stands amongst us here."

No more, for at the word the crowd broke bound  
And with loud cries of "Vive la France" had drowned  
What else he purposed.

Poor silly hearts yet true  
Naught of laws international they knew  
Framers of treaties seldom take a notion  
To give a clause to filial devotion.

What could the Consul do but weep, what cry  
But "thank you, sir, France thanks you," for reply.

ARTHUR J. GRAHAM.