

Garibaldi on the War of 1870.

The following is a translation of the letter addressed by Gen. Garibaldi to Signor Bordone in answer to the accusation brought against the General and his son by M. Perrot in his report to the French Assembly on the campaign of 1870:

CARRERA, Dec. 15, 1874.

MY DEAR BORDONE,—There is no epoch in the whole of the military history of France, which is marked by so much humiliation, imbecility, as the period which began with the year 1870, and continuing, unfortunately, to these days, shows us yet no signs of ending. Corrupted by the two fold disease of masked despotism, and the most shameless and lying clericalism that was ever seen, that noble nation which for scarcely less than a century has proclaimed the sacred principles of liberty and the rights of man, presents to day to the eyes of the astonished world the sad spectacle of a humiliating decline such as history has never before witnessed. That degradation of France which goes by the name of ruras and priests would with its processions, miracles, lies, blot out the disgrace with which it has stained the glorious standard of France. Priests and aristocracy, old and new, have begotten or resuscitated the Empire, and—necessary consequence of that monstrous abortion—the complete destruction of the finest of armies in the four catastrophes of Metz, Sedan, Paris and the Jura; in which, without exception, the supreme commanders of the forces led their soldiers to massacre or servitude with an idocy and stupidity of which it is impossible to find examples elsewhere. Armies of more than 100,000 men surrounded by forces of inferior numbers, and compelled to lay down their arms—here are incredible things; but here is the true motive of the hatred and spite shown towards that brave little Army of the Vosges, which committed the great fault of not allowing itself to be beaten and surrounded like the great marshals of the Empire. “These are the barricades that saved the south of France,” said a French peasant, pointing to a shroud of red cloth which his plough had turned up, together with the bones of one of the brave defenders of Dijon. And the word of sympathy and fellowship of the French peasant is sufficient to compensate us for the cease, envenomed, and contemptible invectives launched against us from the sacristy and by the ruras. According to Perrot’s report to the French Assembly, Ricciotti, the youthful victor of Chatillon, with his 1,200 franc-tiradors, had in a cowardly manner permitted Manteuffel’s 30,000 men to march toward the east. The admiration of those who knew that young man upon the field of battle and had a sword of honor presented to him, as Chief of the Fourth Brigade, in those days by his brave companions in arms, free me from the necessity of condescending to a justification of the military conduct of my son. “Not a single day, nor a single hour did the Army of the Vosges fight against Manteuffel’s forces to prevent them from marching against Bourbaki.” Perhaps it was Perrot and his Versailles brethren who fought and drove back the enemy on the 21st, 22nd, and 23rd of January—three days of almost uninterrupted fighting—when I had at my disposition about 8,000 men of the Army of the Vosges and 15,000 mobilized National Guards commanded by Gen. Pellissier, of whom one half were without arms and the necessities of a campaign, and had only been placed under my

orders a few days previously—a force scarcely sufficient to defend our positions. Finally, contemporaneously with my armistice—to which without our knowledge, we had not the honour of being admitted—with the threatened capitulation of Paris and the retreat of the Army of the East into Switzerland—then, I say, they sent us cavalry, artillery, and as many mobiles as they, had at their disposal. But it was too late and if we had remained twenty four hours longer at Dijon we should have been surrounded and crushed by a force of immensely superior numbers. Oh, if France could only obliterate the pages of her history which bears the impress of the *annee terrible*, and which were written by the pen, dipped in mire, of her aristocracy, of her clergy, and of her Marshals! But who can erase the pages of history? And who will cleanse that noble people from the two fold disgrace of its aristocracy and its priesthood? Liberty will undoubtedly work this miracle.

Yours,

G. GARIBALDI.

P. S. If the Army of the East—informed, like myself, of the movement of Manteuffel—instead of retreating upon Switzerland by the Jura Mountains then covered with snow and ice, had withdrawn by the valley of the Doubs, which was its natural line of communication and supplies, with the forts of Besançon and Auxerre for its supports, and were so—occupying Mount Volland, which commanded Dole, Dijon, and their neighbourhood—would certainly have supported them with all our strength, their retreat would not have proved so terrible a disaster. Gen. Bourbaki, however, refusing to put himself in communication with the guerrilla Garibaldi, never sent me any information concerning his movements or his position, although his army might have executed its flank march from the Nièvre to the valley of the Doubs, covered by small bodies of our army on its left flank, where the enemy was posted. When I received information of that fatal retreat, and set out with a small vanguard by rail to assist it, having commanded all my forces to follow me, I found, on arriving at Lons le Janvier, that the Army of the East had already entered Switzerland.

Our Military Deficiencies and Their Remedy.

The military question is turning up as, probably the most important of the season. We have again and again called attention to the subject, while the public generally seemed heedless and callous, in the apparent belief that as no harm had come to the aid in the past the future would take care of itself while they pursued their scrambles after gain and personal ambition. The matter cannot longer be concealed, strive and struggle against the conviction as the public may, that in a military sense Great Britain is in a very imperfect, not to say dangerous position. We are glad to note the most intelligent of our Members of Parliament are taking up the question and attempting to face it one way or another. The Duke of Cambridge, as commander in chief, the other night, told the merchant tailors of London the views he held on the present position of affairs. He, like a sensible man, combated the absurd and shallow dogma of certain weak and amiable minds, that moral power needed no physical power to back and enforce its claims, and told them that without physical there could be no moral power. It is not the province of the commander in

chief of the British Army to philosophise on the ethics of force, but he did not conceal the fact that our army is in a very critical position, for the want of proper men to serve in its ranks; and from his position as military guardian of British interests, he told his audience in plain terms that there are now only two alternatives open to the British public, viz., that of conscription or increased taxation. He told them the military meaning of a cheap army or navy was nothing else than compulsory service. Mr. Cowan, the junior member for Edinburgh, the other day, spoke sensibly on the subject, and last week we had the member for Renfrewshire and the member for Paisley both treating the question with ability and concern, for the public interest. No one can know the whole bearings of the question better than Colonel Mure; he has served in two wars—at the Cape and in the Crimea; he was a Colonel in the Scots Fusilier Guards, and is still in active command as Colonel of the 2nd Renfrewshire Rifle Volunteers. From his political views, he may be presumed to be in the interests of peace and economy, and yet the picture he draws of our military position, so far as our regular army is concerned, is a very melancholy one indeed. Colonel Holms, an extensive manufacturer and a Liberal Member of Parliament, has had no special military training, beyond that which he has acquired as an active and intelligent Volunteer in the Lanark Artillery Brigade, and may also be presumed to have strong economic leanings in the discussion of public questions. Differing as these officers do in detail more or less, they are at perfect agreement as to our wretched military position, and that without our Volunteers the country would at the present moment be invitingly open to danger from without. We do not profess to be the prophet of national disaster, but the warnings given by specially observant authorities cannot long pass unheeded, even by the most callous and the most supine. Both Colonel Mure and Colonel Holms deprecate conscription, and think that the evil may be met by an increase of the soldier’s pay. They seem to think that, by taking a leaf out of the trades unionists’ book, and increasing the wages of soldiering they will fill the ranks and strengthen the miserable physique of the British Lineeman. It betokens a dark day for British glory when it is told that our soldiers are unfit to carry their knapsacks or stand an average day’s march, but it will, we fear, take a very large amount of cash out of the British ratepayers’ pockets if the soldier’s wage is to be put into competition with that of the miner. We hardly believe the country will stand the increased pay which is requisite—say 2s 4d per day, or double what it now is. We have no hesitation in saying that the increase of the soldier’s pay, at least in the regular army, is, as things now are, an absolute necessity; at the same time, we do not think that increase of pay will alone afford the remedy. The word “conscription” is an ugly word to British ears; everyone of us repudiates it with his whole heart, though there are not a few of us who look with favour upon compulsory service. We do not believe the military questions can be solved without a combination of increased pay and compulsion. Government has offered a premium to army officers for an essay on the best mode of recruiting the army, for which, as Auxiliaries, we are debarred from competing. We do not hesitate, however, and we have not hesitated in time past from our stand point as Volunteers, to offer suggestions on the military question. Under Lord Cardwell’s organization scheme