

AN ENGLISH WAR CORRESPONDENT.

"Archibald Forbes once a private soldier? Then his origin must have been very humble and his education self-acquired." Not so fast, good readers. There are those who have poverty thrust upon them, and others who thrust poverty upon themselves. I am afraid Archibald Forbes belonged to the latter class. His father, Louis Forbes, was a Presbyterian Doctor of Divinity, while his mother belonged to the old family of Leslie. Living in the north of Scotland, Forbes studied first at school, then with a tutor, and finally at the Aberdeen university. Though excelling in classics, he had such an aversion to mathematics that when the senatus academicus recently proposed to confer upon him the degree of LL. D., an irate professor exclaimed:

"I can never consent to such a mockery. As a student Mr. Forbes was 'plou'ed' in mathematics. I shall never consent that a man should receive an honorary degree from this university who has failed to pass his examinations."

Fortunately for Forbes, success on the battle field does not depend upon the appendix of LL. D.

During Forbes' second collegiate year, his father dropped dead in his pulpit. There being nine children, and little fortune, Archibald left Aberdeen for Edinburgh, with designs first upon the law, and secondly upon the church. While endeavouring to decide upon a career, he spent all his money, and fell in love with a young lady, with whom he arranged to elope in a gig on a certain Sunday when the obdurate father was to be at church. Alas, "the best-laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft a-gley!" The obdurate father waylaid our hero, romonstrated with practical determination, and turned the love-orn youth into a ditch, whence he arose sadder and wetter.

Attaining his majority in 1850, Forbes became possessor of \$2,500, and determined to join a cousin in Canada who owned a large tract of land near Lake Huron. On reaching Quebec, he lingered in the old town, held by the loving eyes of his landlady's daughter. At the end of three months, the wild Scotchman had exhausted his resources, confessed his poverty to the landlady's daughter, and abandoned the idea of joining his cousin. With eight shillings in his pocket, he shipped for home as a sailor, and steered twelve hours a day for weeks, when his vessel became water-logged. No timber-ship can sink, otherwise Forbes would have gone to the bottom. There was no cooking for a week, life being maintained on biscuits and salt meat. After several sailors had been washed overboard, the crew took to the boat, which was picked up by the cotton ship *Moses Taylor*, from New Orleans. Finding that the crew were sadly diseased, Forbes, who had studied medicine in amateur, got out the medicine-chest, killed one patient and cured the rest. Of course his susceptible heart fell a prey to the captain's daughter, upon whom, when bidding her farewell in Liverpool, after three months' tase of salt water, he squandered his last eight shillings in grapes.

What was to be done? Never without resource, Forbes sold a fine field-glass, and, with the money, went to London, where he was recruited in the Royal Dragoon. Despite his tendency to "larks," he made rapid headway. In addition to his appointment as school-teacher to his company, Forbes was made acting-quartermaster sergeant, without the rank of sergeant, as he happened to be the only man of his company who could solve the following stupendous problem in mental arithmetic:—"If one man is allowed the thirty-seventh part of an ounce of pepper per day, what is the amount to be drawn for two hundred men per week." Having compassed this, Forbes was let off from punishment drills, and became an object of admiration to his companions. Already articles by him had been accepted for "Household Words" and the "Cornhill Magazine." Shortly after, he completed for a prize essay of fifteen guineas, to be written by a working-man. On the advantages the mother-country derives from her colonies. He was then stationed at Weedon, where libraries are conspicuously absent, and as he knew nothing about the colonies, how could he obtain dates? Discovering an old encyclopedia, he collected his material from it, wrote his essay, and secured the prize.

Owing to literary earnings, Forbes had more money than his fellows, and conse-

quently got into frequent trouble. His colonel—now General Warburton—was a strict disciplinarian, and meted out punishment unflinchingly. Toward the end of his military career, which lasted five years, Forbes bore a very good character—a happy change, which would probably have led to promotion had not his health given way and caused him to be invalided. After enduring ignorant army-hospital treatment for eighteen months, he went to London, got well in six weeks, and was then sent to Aldershot to show the military surgeons how easy had been his cure.

In losing an obstreperous soldier, England gained a new species of correspondence. Forbes' first contribution to journalism was published in 1866, in the "Evening Star." He became a casual writer on the "Morning Advertiser," and once received eighteen pence for a paragraph accepted by the "Daily News." On this promising income he married; after publishing an article in the "Cornhill" on "Army Reform," and another in "St. Paul," entitled "Soldiers' Wives," both of which were well received, Forbes started a paper called the "London Scotsman," intended like every other newspaper, to fill an aching void. It provided Scotsmen with condensed news from their own country, but as they either failed to see its necessity, or expected to get it for nothing, the editor did not amass a fortune. He eked out a precarious existence by occasional dramatic and musical criticism contributed to the "Morning Advertiser."

Unfortunately for art, Forbes is not the only example of the wrong man in the wrong place. When sent to pronounce upon the merits of a performer on the pedal piano-forte, the ex-soldier regarded the artist from a gymnastic point of view and praised him as an acrobat!

On the breaking-out of the Franco-German war, Forbes was engaged in writing a novel for his paper, while cherishing the idea that nature had designed him for war correspondence, an idea he communicated to James Grant, editor of the "Morning Advertiser," who soon after said to him:

"I've concluded to offer you a position as war correspondent. Choose whichever side you prefer."

Having studied German tactics, acquired a slight knowledge of the German language, and feeling sure that the German eagle would win, the ex-soldier-editor went direct to Saarbrück, and witnessed the "baptism by fire," on August 2, 1870. It is strange that he should have beheld the defeat at Sedan, seen Louis Napoleon dead at Chiselhurst, and his son dead in Africa.

At Saarbrück, Forbes helped to save the life of Major Battie, who belonged to the celebrated Indian Guides, and has since been killed in Afghanistan. Following the Germans as a spectator, Major Battie lost his temper on seeing a soldier killed beside him. Seizing the dead man's needle-gun, he opened upon the French, and promptly received a chassepot bullet in the ribs. Forbes picked up the impetuous major, carried him to a place of safety, and temporarily repaired him by stitching him in brown paper pasted over with paste.

Present at the battles of Courmoules, Viouville, and Gravelotte, Forbes advanced with the Germans to Paris. He and his companions were so far forward as to be ignorant of the flank movement to the right, which ended in the battle of Sedan, and held on their way alone through Chalons until actually warned by the French in the street to be careful or they would fall into the hands of the Germans, who had been seen in the night-artillery. Recovered touch of the Germans, Forbes was under fire the entire day, and the next morning witnessed Napoleon's surrender to Bismarck. He and his young Dutch companion, De Leede, were the only civilians who witnessed the historic event.

On the night of the day Napoleon left for Wilhelmshöhe, Forbes and De Liefde, being unable to find quarters elsewhere, asked for lodging in the Chateau B. House, which had been the ex-emperor's temporary residence. Their request was granted but without to do. While Forbes was writing his despatch on the table on which the capitulation had been signed, De Liefde saw a grain of ham taken from their own stores. Failing by this means to appease a ravenous appetite, he threw the bone in disgust upon the table, and up at Forbes' ink. On returning to the Chateau, three months later, Forbes was gravely shown the stain of his own ink as a souvenir of the capitulation! The French commander had upset the bottle in

his rage at Moltke's exorbitant demands! It was then that De Liefde and Forbes tossed for the right to sleep in the ex-emperor's bed. The ever lucky Forbes won. On a table by the bed, with leaf turned back, was the book which Napoleon had read before going to sleep.—Bulwer's "Last of the Barons!"

Forbes was the first non-combatant to ride round Paris before the city was entirely invested, and while waiting at Meaux for the progress of the environment, he received orders to return home. The "Morning Advertiser" no longer required his services, for the quaint reason that this journal already had a correspondent inside of a city which was about to be besieged! Forbes reached London in three days, sole possessor of information concerning French plans. As his essay in war correspondence had abruptly ended in recall, he concluded to return to his miserable "London Scotsman." However, he determined, if possible, to sell his knowledge. As "The Times" turned a deaf ear to his application, Forbes stood in Fleet street, and tugged "odd man out," one of the three papers—"Daily News," "Standard," and "Telegraph"—he should go with his copy. The "Daily News" won the toss. He found favour at last, and was told to write three columns. On returning to the office to state that the subject was not yet exhausted, the editor replied:

"Write on, then, until it is. We'll take as much as you like of this kind of copy."

Forbes wrote six columns and arranged for another article to appear the day after, but when he presented his second manuscript the manager said:

"I don't think we want it."

The tone greatly irritated the already jaundiced Forbes, who politely requested Mr. Robinson "to go to the devil," and he proceeded to go elsewhere himself. Chasing the correspondent up the street, the manager finally overtook and calmed him by the magic announcement:

"I want you to go to Metz to-night for us."

It was four o'clock in the afternoon: Forbes left three hours later. This was his first engagement upon a journal with which he has been connected ever since.

At Metz Forbes began to revolutionize war correspondence by living on foreposts, witnessing every fight, and substituting for curt telegrams of bare facts, long descriptive letters telegraphed in full. According to Forbes, successful war correspondence depends upon three attributes:—faculty of organization, capacity of physical endurance, and the gift of lucid writing, resulting from studiously acquired military knowledge. From a journalistic as well as from a military point of view, the base of a campaign must be secure; open communication and presence in the right place are indispensable. Forbes seems to see a battle afar off, and is ready to live in a squalor, as he did for six weeks within easy range of French cannon before Metz capitulated. It was the wettest autumn on record, and typhoid fever and dysentery were his constant companions. During a sortie, Forbes received a flesh wound in the leg which continued open for months, but which did not force him to leave the front. For these six weeks he did not sleep in a bed except on occasional visits to the telegraphic base at Saarbrück. Before the capitulation was effected, he was the first to enter Metz, and immediately joining the sanitary volunteers, he devoted himself to the removal of sick and wound, 2,000 of whom were in a state of semi-putrefaction. As the most infectious disorders reigned, including the rare type of fiery typhus, Forbes' leg was attacked with gangrene, which had to be burned out with nitric acid. By constant smoking, never removing his boots, and carrying in his mouth a sponge saturated with vinegar, he managed to keep on his legs, but was finally ordered to England, lest, by a longer stay in so foul an atmosphere, amputation would become necessary.

On reaching London, Forbes showed his disabled leg to Mr. Robinson, who remarked with a shudder:

"As a fellow-man, I say you ought to lay up for six months; as a newspaper manager, I wish you would start for the siege of Paris to-night."

Forbes started immediately, and his leg got well, probably owing partly to his rule of being a total abstinent seven days out of twenty. Attacked by the headquarters of the army commanded by the Crown Prince of Saxony, Forbes witnessed the hardest fighting of the siege. After the final bombardment of St. Denis, he contrived to get

inside the walls, which had been reduced to a most dilapidated condition, and was offered food by a Protestant pastor. The meat consisted of part of a young gray horse that had been killed by a shell.

During the siege, Forbes wrote letters in full, which were sent to an agent on the frontier, who telegraphed them to London. This feat excited great surprise among the Germans, who knew that Forbes had permission from the Crown Prince to telegraph only short messages from the offices within his army. One day a Forbes telegram appeared dated at a place where there was no telegraph office. It was reported to Prince George of Saxony's staff by a jealous correspondent.

That same night, Forbes dined with this staff, and was asked to explain the incomprehensible.

"Why," he replied, jestingly, "I have my own private wire, and shall telegraph from here directly."

Knowing that orders had been given at Prince George's office to receive no telegram that night from him, Forbes quietly wrote a letter directed to his frontier agent, and put it in the post. The next day, it was telegraphed to London, and copies of the "Daily News" were sent to Prince George with Mr. Forbes' compliments.

Pending the capitulation of Paris in February, 1871, some fifty journalists waited hungrily to enter on the side of Versailles. Forbes arranged to enter by the north, through St. Denis, and accomplished his purpose on horseback, dressed as a Prussian, and was, in consequence, very nearly killed by a drunken National Guard. Having little knowledge of French and no knowledge whatever of Paris, he had great difficulty in finding Mr. Washburne's bureau, where sat Colonel Hoffman, who gazed with surprise upon the first man he had seen from the exterior world. He sent the stranger to Unthank's English Hotel, in the Faubourg St. Houore, the only hotel open during the siege. Forbes brought forth from his wallet five pounds of sliced ham, which Unthank's people put on a large covered plate and exhibited in the Faubourg at ten centimes a peep, as the first outside marketing to enter Paris.

After walking about dark streets all night, Forbes, who had stabled his horse without leave, rode to Vincennes, where he passed the Prussian line. He then galloped fifteen miles to Ligny, the terminus of the German railroad system, which he reached in time to catch the train for Germany, but killed his poor horse in the effort. On went the war correspondent for forty-two hours, without stopping. Reaching Carlsruhe at two o'clock in the morning, he made his way to the telegraph-office, where the two girls in charge refused to take a long telegram until day set in. Coaxing and bribery, however, accomplished their purpose. At eight o'clock the despatch was finished which gave the first details of the interior of Paris that had reached England for a week. Taking the next train to Paris, Forbes entered the Hotel Chatham on the morning of the third day after his departure, and was roundly chaffed for his delay by two journalists who had just got in. Fancy their feelings on reading the "Daily News"! Couriers were so untrustworthy that it was not unusual for Forbes to carry news to England twice a week. He was often the only passenger, and nearly died from fatigue.

After witnessing the great parade at Longchamps, Forbes on the same day accompanied the German troops into Paris. Leaving the German cordon and entering that part of the town still in French hands, he was assailed by the mob as a German spy. A fight ensued, in which Forbes' clothes were torn off. "Let us drown him!" shouted the mob, who throw him on the ground and proceeded to drag him over the stone streets. Rescued by a National Guard picket, the supposed spy was taken to a police-station, and brought before a magistrate whose sister spoke English, and who testified her belief in Forbes' representations. On being released, Forbes borrowed apparel from the brother of his benefactor, who accompanied him to his hotel. "How can I pay you for all that you have done for me?" asked the correspondent. "More easily than you think," replied the Frenchwoman. "My brother and I are literally starving. He has received no salary for six months, and, as gentleness, we cannot stand in the queue with the populace to receive claims. Doubtless you know persons connected with the distribution of England's gift. Any food will be a godsend." As one of the