

The officers smiled incredulously.

"I do not know what are the intentions of the Imperial Chancellor," replied a captain of cavalry, "but religious skirmishes have already commenced in the new German Empire. The government protects the ecclesiastical professors who were excommunicated by the bishops. These excommunicated professors continue to teach the Catholic youth, despite the prohibition of the bishops and the pope, whose infallibility they deny. The government pays regular salaries to these suspended priests who have denounced the pope. I regard this as more than a declaration of war; it is already an assault on the outposts."

"It certainly is!" exclaimed the count. "But are these reports correct?"

"You can depend upon them," replied the colonel. "All the German newspapers mention the fact."

"Here is one that I have just received," said the major. "There is no doubt," he exclaimed, "that in some of the states of Germany the combat against the Church has already begun. What will be the end?"

"The victory of Germanism over Romanism!" answered the colonel. "The papal power in Germany will be overthrown and uprooted. In ten years the Emperor will be the head of our national Church, just as the Czar is in Russia. Hypocrites and papists have had their day; they can emigrate or be converted, and the German National Church will satisfy all religious wants, which will be very few among the intelligent class of the present age."

"If I am not mistaken, Napoleon I, cherished the same idea," said the count. "He also desired to separate France from Rome, and establish a National Church. But an accident prevented the execution of the imperial plan: Napoleon was overthrown and died in exile. Thus it happens, gentlemen, that at this very moment there are bishops, priests, and Catholics in France, and a pope in Rome."

"In the time of the first Napoleon, affairs were different from what they are now," said the colonel. "In our day, however, things are much more favorable for the execution of the design in Germany. On all sides there is felt the need of a religion which will keep pace with the present advanced state of civilization. Hence it is that Germany protests against papal usurpation, and the Pope of Rome declaring himself infallible, who thus strives to tyrannize over the conscience of every Ca-