

TRUE HEROISM.

Let others write of battles fought
On bloody, ghastly fields,
Where honor greets the man who wins,
And death the man who fights;
But I will write of him who fights
And vanquishes his sins,
Who struggles on through weary years
Against himself, and wins.

He is a hero staunch and brave
Who fights an unseen foe,
And puts at last beneath his feet
His passions base and low,
And stands erect in manhood's might,
Undaunted, undismayed,
Braver than he who wields the sword
In foray or in raid.

It calls for something more than brawn
Or muscle to o'er come
An enemy who marcheth not
With banner, plume and drum,
A foe forever lurking nigh,
With silent, stealthy tread,
Forever near your board by day,
At night beside your bed

All honor then to that brave heart,
Though poor or rich he be,
Who struggles with the baser part—
Who conquers and is free;
He may not wear a hero's crown,
Or fill a hero's grave,
But truth will place his name among
The bravest of the brave.

THE DEFENCE OF SEDAN.

A FRENCH ACCOUNT OF MACMAHON'S DISASTER.

Early in the morning of the 31st August, orders were given to bring into Sedan all the waggon trains and oxen which had been left outside the glacis. By this time the streets were blocked up by troops of every kind which had entered the town during the night. I tried to ride down to the Porte de Paris where the train was stationed to carry the orders. I was obliged to get off my horse and make my way as best I could between the horses and caissons which choked up every street and square of the town. As I reached the Porte de Paris, I met the wagon train entering as fast as possible, followed closely by the rushing oxen and intermingled with the weeping and terror-stricken peasantry of the neighborhood flying into the town for protection. They little knew that it was about the worst place they could have chosen. The gates on that side were immediately afterward closed, while the troops slowly filed out through the opposite gate toward Douzy, where all McMahon's forces were posted, expecting to be again attacked by the Prussians, who had closely followed up the French army.

About 10 o'clock that morning cannonading was heard six or seven miles away, toward the village of Bazeille. I went up on the rampart overlooking the country in that direction. Thence I could see the Prussian position, and with my field glass could watch the firing; but I could not see the French lines, which were hid from me by trees about a mile from the town. I therefore, at noon, walked out of the town at the Porte de Balan and ascended on my left the rising ground which is close by the town. Not more than a mile from the gate I passed through regiments of reserve infantry. Their arms were piled and the fires smoking, the soup not having long been eaten. I continued ascending and everywhere passed reserve corps of infantry and artillery. I got higher and higher, from hillock to hillock, till I reached a battery of reserve, the guns of which were unlimbered

and placed facing the rear of the French left. This battery was so pointed as to fire over the crest of the rising ground on which I stood. About a quarter of a mile distant in front of a little churchyard, stood also several officers of the different corps which were stationed on my right and left, all being of the reserve.

From the point I had now reached a charming prospect was within view. The French line of battle extended right in front, spreading on the slope of the ground which forms one side of this basin of the Meuse. In front of the centre of the French lines, and lower down in the vale, was the village of Bazeille, which was then beginning to burn, the Prussian shells having set fire to it. Parallel almost to the front of the French positions ran the Meuse, crossed by a bridge a little to the left of Bazeille. The French right was on a knot of wooded ground held by *trailleurs*, the wooded ground extending nearly to the grounds of Sedan. The left was lost to my sight behind the inequalities of the ground towards the road to Bouillon. As far as I could see, on the right and left and in front of me were massed regiments of all arms; but towards the left on the second line, was a very large force of heavy cavalry—dragoons and cuirassiers.

The sun was shining brightly and everything was plainly visible. The glittering of weapons, the bright and showy colors of the French uniforms, the white smoke curling under the blue sky or lingering like vapor beneath the trees, the lurid flames rising from the burning village of Bazeille, all seen from a commanding position, formed a spectacle such as one has rarely the opportunity to witness. The principal Prussian batteries were directly opposite the French centre on a plateau or table-land which terminated abruptly and made it a very strong position.

For some time cannonading continued on both sides. At 2 o'clock a force of Prussian infantry advanced across the bridge in the village of Donzy, and immediately there began a very sharp fusillade, lasting, however, not more than ten minutes. I think the French must have lost ground in that encounter, although I could not see it, because of some trees that intervened; but a battery of six mitrailleuses advanced and opened fire through the trees. Six volleys came all at once. The Prussians fell hurriedly back, leaving whole ranks behind them, which had gone down like those leaden soldiers which children play with.

At about 4.30 the firing had ceased everywhere. The village which had been blazing all day was still smoking. The French remained in the same position. Though the day had apparently been without result, its description is a necessary prelude to the bitter story of the morrow. At 5.30 I returned to the town.

The Emperor who had arrived during the night had issued a proclamation which was posted on the walls, saying that he had conferred the command of the armies to the generals whom public opinion had seemed to select as most capable of leading them, and that he himself intended to fight as an officer, forgetting for a while his position as a sovereign.

The next morning, Thursday Sept. 1, I returned, as soon as the gates of the town were opened, to my post of observation on the elevated ground where the battery was still placed. The French positions did not seem to me much altered, but the right was now on the other side of Sedan. At 7 o'clock the cannonade began in earnest; some slight firing having taken place earlier. The Prussian batteries facing us appeared to me

much more numerous; indeed it seemed to me there were batteries everywhere. They roared from every point of the Prussian line which then stretched nearly parallel in front of the French. I could follow the falling of their shells which exploded as they touched the ground and fell with wonderful precision. I noticed also how quickly they changed and corrected their fire. As soon as a French corps took up a position it was instantly assailed by shells. The first would perhaps fall a few feet short or beyond, but the second or third was sure to find its way to the troops and do its awful work among them. The French shells on the contrary exploded generally before they reached the ground, and the smoke of the explosion formed innumerable little clouds at different heights, some so high that the shell could do no harm. I should think, to the enemy.

I noticed some inexplicable movements. A few squadrons of Prussian cavalry made as if they would charge a French force which was toward the left. Immediately two regiments of French cavalry charged in turn upon the Prussian squadrons, which fell back and fled. But at the same moment a Prussian corps of infantry opened a murderous fire upon those too eager French cavalry regiments, and they came back sadly shattered from their rash pursuit. About nine o'clock I could not help fancying that the Prussians were extending farther to the left, for, on asking whether certain new batteries were French, I was told that they were Prussian. The Prussian line was evidently curling around us.

I have learned since that the Crown Prince had crossed the Meuse during the night about five leagues from Sedan, and that this had not been known to MacMahon. A large force of Bavarians must also have arrived after the commencement of the battle, for it was Bavarian troops who began pounding us from the left. At 10½ o'clock the advance of the Prussians was perceptible on both wings at the same time. Some French infantry which was close to the town on the east side gave way, as it seemed to me, rather quickly. Soon afterward shells were coming from behind my left, and it became evident that the French position had been turned, and that a fresh German corps had taken a position in our rear.

The reserves were now necessarily directed against these points. The battery near which I stood was already in action, and I thought it quite time to beat a retreat. The place was becoming as dangerous as any in the field. Among the guns close to me, the Prussian shells began falling with their usual beautiful precision. So I got on the other side of the slope and made my way towards the town.

As the road to Bouillon, which crossed the field of battle, was wholly closed to me now, I also perceived that I should be shut up in that circle which the Prussians had been drawing about the army and the town, and which was ultimately completed. I made my way as fast as I could by the safest paths. When I reached the suburb before the Porte de Balan, I found it encumbered with soldiers of all corps hastening as I was into the town. It was a defeat, evidently, yet it was not 11 o'clock, and the battle was destined to continue at various points for some time longer, though continuing without any real hope of victory.

To one entering the town as I did, there was no longer any battle to describe. It was first a retreat and too soon a rout. I thought myself lucky to get away from the field as I did; for an hour afterward the route of those forces that had been near by me was complete. Already soldiers were crushing