

PRESIDENT MACMAHON.

HIS CIVIL AND MILITARY CAREER.

The Paris correspondent of a New York journal gives the following sketch of Marshal MacMahon, President of the French:—

"He was born in 1803, of a family that had emigrated from Ireland in 1686, after sacrificing all their property to the cause of the Stuarts. Settled in Burgundy the MacMahons rebuilt their fortunes, intermarried with the French nobility and became, in course of time, rich and influential land-owners. Maurice de MacMahon's great-grandfather was created Count by Louis XV., and his father, who was the intimate friend of the Count d'Artois, afterwards Charles X., was raised to the French House of Peers, in 1817 by the title of Marquis. This Marquis of MacMahon was in all points a nobleman of the old school. He abhorred Liberals, Protestants and Jews with an equal and pious hate; he talked of the Revolution and its 'rights of man' only with contempt, and the sum and substance of his political opinions were to be always Royalist and Catholic, and nothing more. In these views he educated his son, and he also taught him to be a keen sportsman, for, like his royal friend Charles, who spilt his time in unequal parts between mass and the hunting field, the Marquis of MacMahon loved nothing so well as to chase wild boars and deers, refreshing himself after his efforts with powerful stoops of that Burgundy vintage which cheers, strengthens and paints the nose red. It is not often that a French boy is brought up amid field sports, for the revolution, by reselling all the lands of the nobility, destroyed the great preserves and deer forests. But the MacMahon estate had, fortunately, escaped the common lot. Young MacMahon learned to ride before most other French boys can read, and to shoot long before he could spell properly. Yet was his education not neglected, for he had a Jesuit tutor, and it luckily happened that this priest had few of the cunning instincts for which the Order of Jesus is notorious, but was a thorough Christian and gentleman. He did not teach his pupil much mathematics or science, for he knew little; but he grounded him fairly in Latin, gave him a smattering of history and English, and sent him to the military school of St. Cyr at the age of seventeen, neither more nor less learned than most of the young noblemen of his time. This was in the year 1826; Charles X. had just ascended the throne, and the Bourbon dynasty seemed so firmly established that all who knew of the warm friendship existing between the Marquis of MacMahon and the King prophesied for the young Count Maurice the most brilliant destinies. It was felt that, whether the boy worked or not, his career lay smooth and prosperous before him; he would be given a commission in the Royal Guard, obtain a court sinecure, be sent as diplomatic attache on some special mission, and in due time succeed his father in the House of Peers and probably be promoted to a dukedom. However, the Count did work, and, to the great surprise of his companions, he passed the final examination of St. Cyr, the seventeenth out of 150, and, being thus classed among the first twenty, was qualified for a staff appointment.

He was then a straight, tall boy of nineteen, with wide blue eyes, light-flaxen hair and a demeanour somewhat solemn and thoughtful. Little given to dissipation, he preferred riding and the manly sports of his boyhood to the gambling, hard drinking and

frivolous gallantries in which most of his brother officers indulged; but, on the other hand, he was a noted and skillful duellist. This was one of the necessities of the position. An officer who went much to court and had personal reasons for being attached to the King could not in those days stand by indifferent whilst the Royal Family were assailed by liberal journalists and by Bonapartist officers of Napoleon's old army. MacMahon made a point of attending the *Cafe Valois* in the street of that name, which was then the headquarters of Royalist officers, and there duels were arranged almost every night as coolly as pigeon matches would be in these our times. It was the custom for the liberal papers to be placed in a heap on the central table. At five o'clock officers dropped in, and at six, when the room was full, the papers would be read aloud, and if one of them contained anything offensive to the King the officers drew lots among them as to who should go and challenge the editor. Important journals were generally provided with a responsible fighting editor, whose sole mission was to accept challenges. He was generally an old half pay officer or sergeant, and now and then it happened that he could not even read. MacMahon fought seven of these gentlemen in the course of five years, and it is on record that he was never once wounded, nor did he ever kill his man. He was singularly expert in the art of pinking his adversary in the fleshy part of the right arm, just above the elbow, inflicting a wound that was not dangerous, but which obliged his adversary to drop his foil like a hot coal, and to keep his arm in a sling for six weeks. This thrust got to be known as "*la botte MacMahon*," and it earned the young officer many encomiums, for which he little cared, being in his heart averse to dueling. It 1829, being then twenty-one, he was promoted to a lieutenancy, and in 1830 he was sent at his own request to take part in the expedition against the Dey of Algiers. This expedition was short and brilliant and Lieutenant MacMahon much distinguished himself in it by his coolness under fire and by his steady zeal. But just after Algiers had fallen the news arrived that the revolution of July had taken place, and that Charles X. had been dethroned and driven into exile. This was a heavy blow to the MacMahons' and if the young Count Maurice had been but a mere carpet soldier his prospects of advancement would then have ended. As it was, The Marquis of MacMahon forfeited his peerage by refusing to swear the oath of allegiance to the new King, Louis Philippe. He advised his son, however, to remain in the army, and Maurice did so. He disliked the new regime and cherished an ardent hope that it would collapse, being well resolved in such an event to lend his sword in restoring him whom he conceived to be the only rightful sovereign of France. But meanwhile he volunteered for active service wherever it was to be found, his object being to keep aloof from the court. In 1832 he accompanied the French army to the siege of Antwerp as aide-de-camp to General Achard, and obtained his captaincy. In the following year he set off for Algiers again, and battled unceasingly against the Arabs till 1837, when he was wounded at the siege of Constantine and decorated with the Legion of Honour. By that time his reputation for quiet, unobtrusive bravery was well established that an offer was made him of a post at court with the rank of King's aide-de-camp; but declined it, and, after three years' more tough and wearisome campaign-

ing, he exchanged his place on the staff for the rank of major in a line regiment, and in 1842 exchanged again into the Foreign Legion, with a lieutenant colonel's epaulet. Thrown very much by the chances of camp life into the society of the Orleans princes, MacMahon grew to like them, and in 1845 he so far relaxed his hostility to Louis Philippe as to return to France as Colonel of the Forty-first foot and to swear the oath of fealty which was then required of all officers in command of regiments. Matters had much changed since MacMahon had last been quartered on French soil. In 1845 Louis Philippe looked as securely seated on his throne as Charles X did in 1825, and the gallant Marquis (for his father had recently died) was given to understand that if he would only show himself at court he might hope in the course of a few years to take his seat in the House of Life Peers which had succeeded the old hereditary Chamber. But MacMahon's loyalty did not go the length of seeking political honours. He accepted military promotion because rewards of this sort required no formal surrender of his private opinions; the oath he had sworn pledging him simply not to bear arms against the King. He was still a legitimist, however, and when Louis Philippe fell, in 1848, he was sincerely pleased, though he sympathized with the Orleans princes, and wrote to the Duke of Aumale a frank and manly letter of condolence. The new Republic at once promoted MacMahon to Major-General's rank. He was too efficient and honorable an officer to be passed over, and the Republican Government had hoped to win him over to their side; but in this way they were mistaken. MacMahon promised to obey the established Government of his country, whatever it should be; but his dislike for "Republicanism" was too deep-rooted to be plucked out by honors, however flattering, and until the *coup d'etat* of 1851 he lived in the daily hope that Henri V. would enter France, be acclaimed by the National Assembly and resume the reins of power which had fallen from his grandfather's hands in 1830. The restoration of the Second Empire seemed to him to cut down all such hopes forever, and accordingly the Marquis of MacMahon gave in his sincere allegiance to Napoleon III., and was recompensed with the grade of lieutenant general. Comparatively young at this date, being only 42, rich, well born and much liked by his brother officers, the Marquis of MacMahon was just such a soldier as the Emperor liked to have about him. He well knew that MacMahon served the Empire rather from necessity than from love; rather because he deemed it the only form of government possible than because the name of Napoleon had any great attractions for him; but the Emperor did not dislike legitimists. A splendid marriage with General MacMahon made in 1853 with the daughter of the loyalist Duke de Castries further won him the good opinions of the Emperor, and the Empress Eugenie laid herself out to be especially gracious to the young Marchioness whenever the occasion offered itself. As for MacMahon himself, the Empress liked him from the first, and one day said aloud at court, "He has the eyes of an honest man, and will never betray a trust."

But the war with Russia was hurrying on apace, and before his honeymoon year was over General MacMahon was sent to the Crimea. In command of a division at the battles of Alma and Inkermann he behaved with his usual cool intrepidity, and when Marshal Canrobert was recalled from before