

THE WARNING SHADOW OF SEDAN

A Review of the Remarkable
Overturn of France to Democracy in 1871, and the
Practical Example It Sets Us
Now in Demands Upon
Germany.

The pendulum swings back to Sedan, French troops, supported, in as strange a development of history as anything that has occurred in modern times, by American troops, are approaching the little old city of the passenger chair on the Meuse. It is possible that their occupation of Sedan will mark the downfall of the empire of William II. of Germany, just as the victory of the Germans there in 1870 marked the downfall of the empire of Napoleon III. of France.

Since the pendulum is so exact in point of geography, it may turn out to be so in certain other ways as well. Amazingly mechanical, absurdly repetitions, is the see-saw of the nations. Indefinite subdivision is transmuted into adamantine union in Germany and Italy; solid, blocky Russia becomes a congeries of broken States. From side to side swings the pendulum of the nation's fate. And where France was in 1870, Germany stands today.

The Double Approach to Sedan.

So Germany's approach to her own Sedan suggests the question whether her fate be different, or for a long time, may not repeat that of France after 1870. The elements of the same story are there. In each case, a mushroom empire, ruled by a willful and selfish man, goes down. A strong, clever, and people, hypnotized by this man's rule, has been backing him up in everything, but now realizes that its blind devotion has been its ruin. The nation, in each case, shoulders an unheard-of burden, and reconstructs itself. Men who will lead, and not tyrants—men who will think of the people and not of themselves—must be found.

The pendulum, it seems, swings to the same spot.

When Napoleon III. surrendered at Sedan, and the Prussian army marched on and invested Paris, a revolution in France was left. Louis Napoleon and his perfumed and pinchbeck French Junkers had centred everything in themselves. The whole nation was steeped to the eyes in the sleepy juices of imperialism. Louis Napoleon had been elected president by an almost unanimous vote because the people were sick of changes and revolutions. By an even more nearly unanimous vote—7,824,183 votes to 223,145—the people had sanctioned his assumption of the imperial title. And then they went on voting for him. Plebiscite after plebiscite justified him. If any body said that the French people were not with the emperor, all he had to do was point to these successive popular votes. As a matter of actual fact, the French people liked the empire. They were with it. It was nevertheless, less iniquitous, ruinous. But defeat was required, and an awful national humiliation, to teach this to the French people—just as it is taking the same treatment to teach the same lesson to the German people.

When the French second empire was overthrown, what was to take its place? A republic? There were no

republicans in France. Monarchists of various types and purposes and colors there were, and Jacobins there were, and many millions of just plain people who didn't care. But of republicans there were none. After Sedan, after the fall of Paris, the French nation looked about at itself with a wild amazement, and wondered what it should do. Yet there was nothing else for France to make of itself, and so a republic was proclaimed.

The first thing was to get as good terms out of the conqueror as possible. Armies surrendered unconditionally, but nations do not. They bicker and haggle to the last item of their possessions. They get the very best terms they can get. Here the French nation's commercial ability came into good play. Men had to represent it. The men who came forward to speak for France, with the general consent, were a coalition of interests and parties. At the head of them was a little writer named Louis Adolphe Thiers, a very canny little southerner, the author of some commonplace but popular works of history, who had great political gifts and had proved them as a minister under several governments.

Probably the new Assembly entrusted the leadership to Thiers because it was felt that he was going to be a man in internal affairs. France then—the great majority of the people of France—was desperately afraid of republicans. It really did not want a republic. And Thiers, although a liberal, was classed as a monarchist. (He did not turn out to be a monarchist.) He, it was felt, would never turn the country over to the Jacobins. He was more likely to bring back the king. Nobody, probably, ever suspected the qualities of Washington and Hamilton in him.

Nevertheless, when he came to face the Germans around the council table, and to sit unashamed within the shadow of that mountain, Thiers was able to make a bargain which history regards as wonderful. The strange part is that he did not fight with Bismarck. He let Gambetta do that. Gambetta was a republican, and a radical one at that; also a fierce lawyer, and a tremendous talker. He had been included in the French Government and among the negotiations because his party could not be quite overlooked.

Bismarck, at the peace table, liked to fight with Gambetta—liked Gambetta in fighting with him. "Un rude homme!" he said of him—and said it admiringly. It was as if we should say, "A regular fellow." Thiers showed Gambetta against Bismarck constantly—but all the demands Gambetta made were put up by him, by Thiers.

Thiers had everything in his head—every strategic point, every deposit of minerals, every valley, every woodland. He sat quietly and did all the figuring. He was the son, by the way, of a prosperous locksmith of Marsais, and perhaps the tradesman instinct came out in him. At all events, when the conference was over and the treaty was signed, it was found that Thiers had saved Belfort, which has been the southern bulwark of France ever since, and though the Germans had insisted on taking Lorraine he had managed to split one from Lorraine the iron mines of Briey and Longwy. The Germans have been furious about this ever since.

The Germans were to continue to occupy portions of France proper, and to remain even in the environs of Paris, until a ransom of 5,000,000,000

francs was paid. Whoever governed France must raise and pay that in order to get the Germans off the soil. Task enough for any statesman! Thiers, remaining at the head of the Government, raised the money, and paid the debt all off—that is, made the French people the creditors of the Government for the whole amount instead of Germany—in three years.

But he had to do a vaster and more terrible thing than that, and had to do it instantly. The Germans marched down the Champs Elysees, in triumphant entry into Paris, in accordance with their stipulation in the peace treaty, on the first day of March, 1871. The King of Prussia was proclaimed German emperor at Versailles. And then, with the Germans encamped about them, the Bolsheviks of Paris broke loose. They were not very numerous, any more than the Bolsheviks of Petrograd were numerous. But they proclaimed the Commune; they proposed to overturn the republican government; they murdered generals and the Archbishop of Paris; they raised the red flag of terror.

But they did not do what the Bolsheviks did in Russia. Adolphe Thiers was not a man of the soft fibre of Kerensky. Perhaps he had something of the cruelty of the south in him. But boyhood he realized that the crisis of the liberty and of the independence of France had come—that if the land was ever to lift up its head again, this red senseless insurrection must be put down. He put it down.

With a sigh, history draws a veil before the bloody punishment inflicted upon the insurgents of the commune. The safe founding of the Third Republic, which has endured for forty-eight years and promises to endure forever, seems to justify his severity. But he might have done it with less bloodshed.

After that, the task of France was one of reconstruction of the nation and of construction of the republic. He laid the foundation deep. Under the new constitution that was adopted, he became president of the republic. He was president. He ruled. But he was not a selfish dictator. He kept Gambetta by his side, but minimized his power. The people of France began to find out that they were republicans after all. Thiers kept the country quiet—no resurgence of Bolshevism at all; he disappointed the monarchists terribly for they thought he would restore the monarchy. He had no intention of doing any such thing. He made the republican idea his lodestar.

His fiscal measures were an astonishing success. Like Hamilton, he "touched the rock of public credit, and the stream of revenues gushed forth." In three years the last German soldier was gone. He advanced the fixed date for evacuation, indeed, by the anticipation of payments. France was on its feet once more.

His theory was that a conservative republic was the only payment regime possible in France, and he said so in his public deliverance. But the royalists got, for a time, a majority on the chamber. A vote was passed against him, and in May, 1873, faithful to the principle of responsibility, he resigned the presidency, to be succeeded by Marshal MacMahon, an avowed royalist.

If Thiers' wisdom had in truth founded the Third Republic, the foolishness of the monarchists helped him, to make it secure, for the government of MacMahon was a failure. By that time the people of France had acquired the sense of self government. They gave MacMahon the choice of submitting to their will, or resigning—and he

resigned. Since that time the president of France has been but a figure-head, and a responsible ministry has governed the country. Instead of revolutions, France now has ministerial crises—and gets along very well.

That the country was plunged neither into anarchy nor into despotism after its great defeat and humiliation—that it enjoyed a new birth into a greatness it had never known—was due in great measure to the little high-voiced literary man, who had no graces of oratory, but talked straight on in a conversational manner, and who could see the end of things from the beginning.

Upon two principles of national action Thiers founded the Third Republic:

(1) Sound public finances, with full national responsibility for the debts of previous governmental systems, and a public debt owed to the people.

(2) Governmental responsibility to the people, with political stability maintained at all hazards.

Perhaps there is not much of good government outside of these principles.

Now about Germany. Here is a nation which has been as badly fooled by the Hohenzollerns as France was by Louis Napoleon. Will it have the sense to discover the fact, and, whether or not the victorious Entente Allies remove the Hohenzollerns from all connection with public power and all possibility of return to it, will it displace the government and the system that they represent, and in some form institute popular rule, republican rule or democratic rule? Some may say that the hope of this is vain, because the German people are really with the Kaiser. But so were the French people with Louis Napoleon. The French people's support of his imperial rule had been proved in repeated plebiscites. No plebiscite has been taken in Germany on this question; the nearest approach to it is the last vote for members of the Reichstag, in which the party having by far the largest vote is the Socialist party.

Appalling Conditions Among Belgian Children Fate of Coming Generation Rests on Relief Work.

MANY people have thought that the United States loans to Belgium have financed all the Relief Work necessary. As a matter of fact the loans provide the minimum ration to sustain life in a grown person.

The bowl of soup and two pieces of bread are totally inadequate to build bone and muscle for a growing child. The results are ghastly!

"These cases, running into hundreds of thousands of sick and defective children . . . cannot be taken care of by the general funds," writes Mr. Hooper on July 31st of this year. "There is an increasing need for funds for these cases. . . . our last reports show that the soup-lines of Belgium have increased from one-and-a-half to two-and-a-half million persons . . . I wish particularly to remove any doubt as to the acceptability of contributions to the Commission for Relief in Belgium for the special purposes above indicated."

Unless the sick and starving children of Belgium are given a chance for life, Tuberculosis, Rickets and kindred ills will claim the next generation. That is Belgium's outlook.

And yet a few dollars will restore health and strength to one of these tiny sufferers. Will you open your purse and help?

If Fate had willed it that you should SEE these babies starving, you would share your all with them. Must you SEE, before you will help?

Make cheques payable and send contributions to

Belgian Relief Fund

(Registered under the War Charities Act)

to your Local Committee, or to

Headquarters: 59 St. Peter St., Montreal.



How Many Crowns for Your Honor Flag?

Of course every city, town and district will earn its Honor Flag.

But how about the crowns?

For every twenty-five per cent. in excess of its quota, each city, town and district will be entitled to add a crown to its flag.

Can you do fifty per cent. better than your quota—that means two crowns for your Honor Flag.

But double your quota and it means four crowns.

Hang a flag in your hall, that for years to come will show that your city, town or district did better than well—

That it was a real factor in the huge success of CANADA'S VICTORY LOAN 1918.

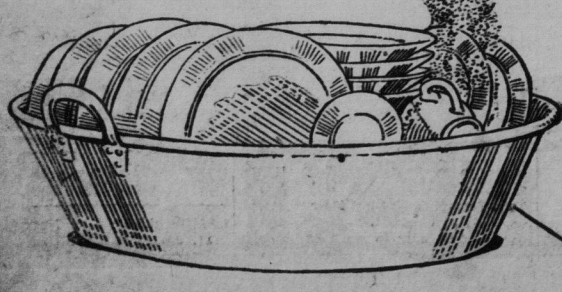
Issued by Canada's Victory Loan Committee
in co-operation with the Minister of Finance
of the Dominion of Canada

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