

punishment as severe as befell Sodom and Gomorrah, and the judgment of God overtook them, not in the form of a rain of fire, but in the curse of war. All gayety had ceased, the majority of the citizens of Paris had fled to foreign lands, while others were starving in the streets of the once beautiful city, or else obliged to eat the flesh of dogs, horses, and rats. The German soldiers, who had taken up their quarters in the chateaus, were at first astonished at the splendor that everywhere prevailed; but they were compelled, by the severity of the winter, to use as fuel the most costly and elegant furniture; they stretched their wearied limbs upon soft cushions, turned the gilded saloons into stables for their horses, and laughed aloud when they saw the amazement of the animals as they looked at themselves in the lofty mirrors. The modern Sodom was almost a barren waste; and not only did the shells of the victorious Germans fall upon the doomed city, but the projectiles, also, of the French insurgents; until at last the fiendish mob, in a spirit of mad frenzy, sought to destroy the city by fire.

In all this abomination of desolation, Count Rethel recognized the avenging hand of God.

"The Lord never changes!" said Rethel. "He who banished our first parents from Paradise, who cursed the earth on account of sin, who destroyed a wicked world by the deluge. He who overthrows kingdoms, and scatters whole nations by the breath of his nostrils, has also admonished France that he is still living. He permitted the Philistines to overrun Israel, and He has allowed the Germans to conquer France. O France, my beautiful country, wilt thou turn a deaf ear to the warning? Wilt thou not see the finger of God in thy chastisement, and return to the Lord?"

In such terms would the count often give vent to his grief; for of the three sons who had fought for the honor of France, only one had returned from the battle-field. The awful calamities that had fallen upon his native land had sorely afflicted him, and in proportion to his anguish, was also his hatred against the Prussian soldiers, whom the French papers described as barbarians, incendiaries, and as ruthless murderers and tyrants. The new German empire also awakened his dislike, for to him it appeared like a constant threat against the independence of France; he became melancholy, and a smile seldom or never lighted up his aged features.

Suddenly a change came over him. The journals contained news from Germany, which seemed to rejoice him greatly.