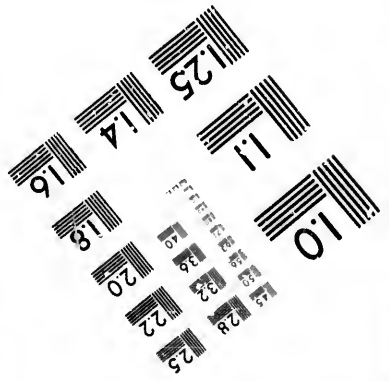
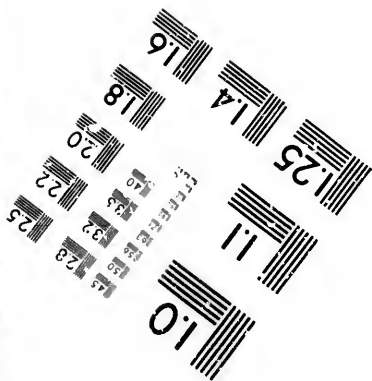
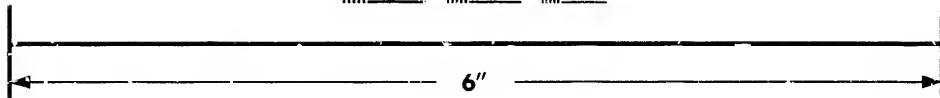
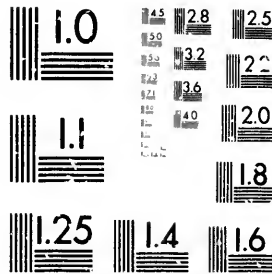


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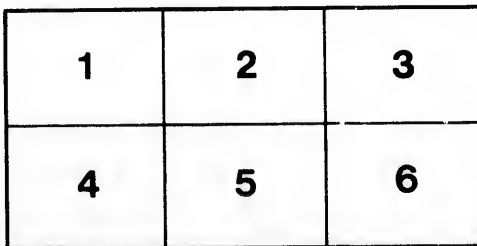
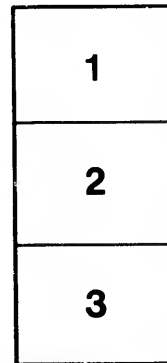
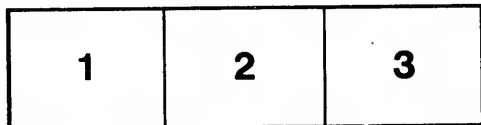
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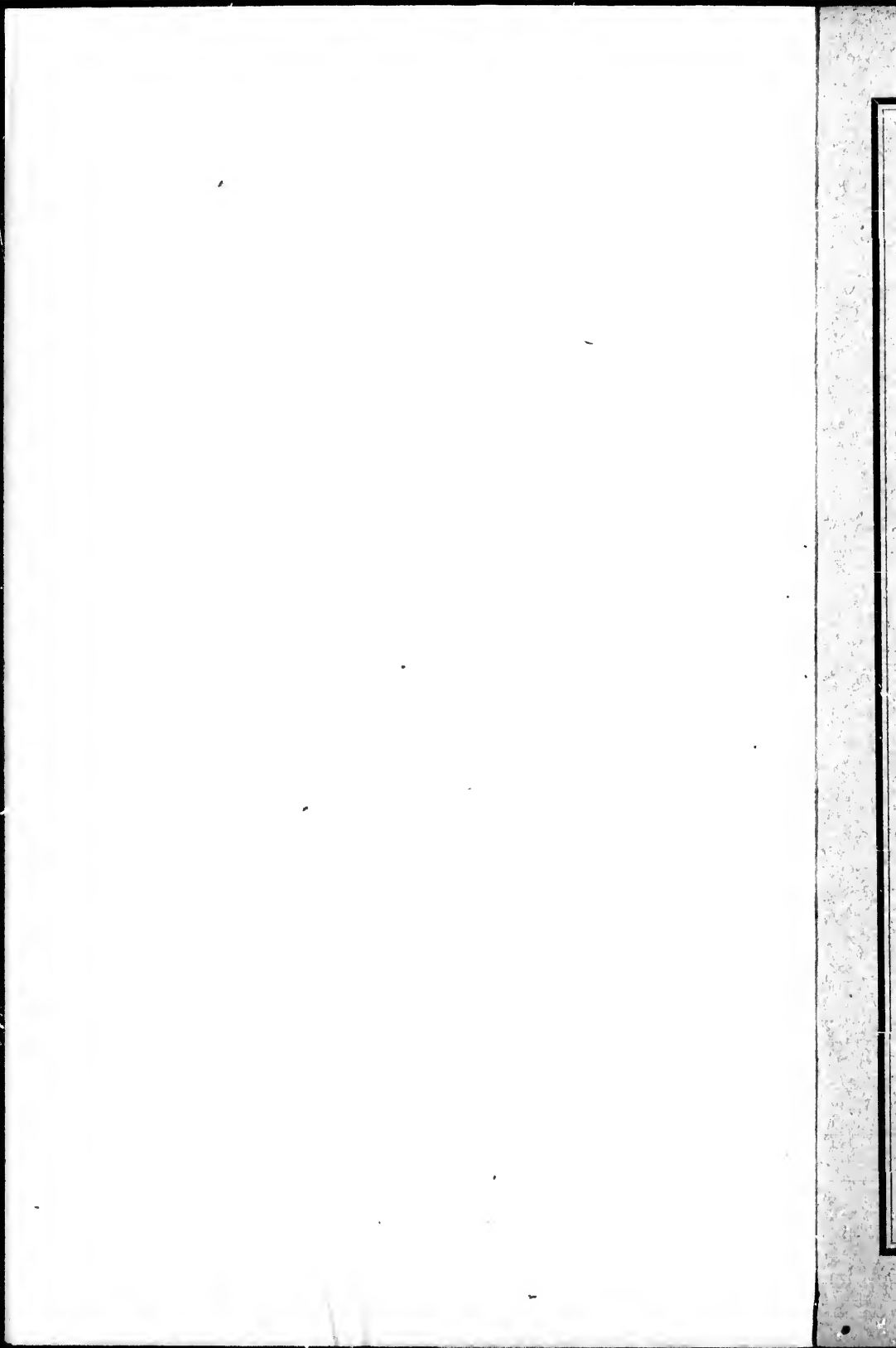
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OF

SEDAN.



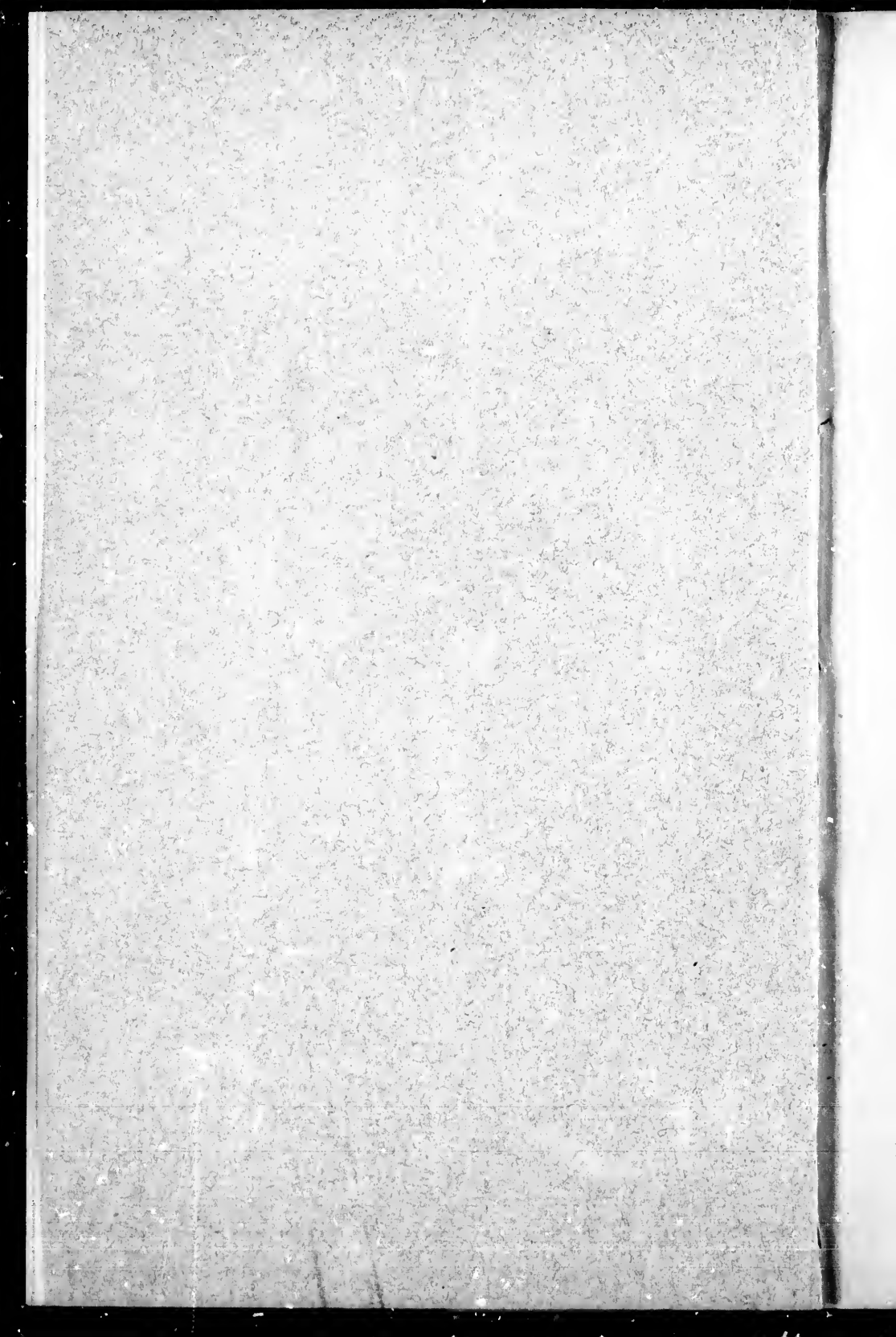
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SURGEON BRITISH ARMY.

PRICE 25 CENTS.

HALIFAX, N. S.

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I OWE an apology to my readers for the imperfect manner this pamphlet has been presented to them. At best, the experiences narrated, are fragmentary, and crudely rendered; but as delivered in a reading for the redemption of the Debt of Christ's Church Dartmouth, I have published them with the hope of further lightening the burden.

RECOLLECTIONS OF SEDAN.

PAST miseries drift so quickly from our recollection, and events since the Franco-German war, have followed each other with such frightful rapidity, that its scenes have become to us almost matters of history ; and we are already in some danger of forgetting the many war lessons to be learnt from the sufferings of 1870—the utter break-down of the centralised system of Intendance, of which the French were so proud, and which we were beginning to imitate in our own service—the fatal effects of the want of sanitary precautions, in both German and French field-hospitals and ambulances alike ; even the intolerable misery among the peasants, inflicted by an army whose discipline was stricter, and whose arrangements more civilized than any which ever took the field. War, however of itself is so brutalising a thing, that, as was once said by a Prussian officer of high rank, “if two armies of angels were set to fight with each other, in six weeks they would become devils.”

The English did their best, both for the wounded in hospital and the peasant victims of the war. About £600,000 was received by the different societies in money subscriptions alone, and it is hardly possible to estimate the value of the goods contributed besides. Little gratitude has been felt or expressed abroad for our exertions, except in individual cases by those who have themselves seen the work or have been benefited personally by them. The feeling that nationally we have indeed “done what we could,” and the experience which we ought to gain for our own use, in the management of our War Services, are the only rewards of our labours which we shall get, or indeed can expect.

Our interest was at that period centred around Paris, “one of the eyes of the world,” as she must always be, in spite of her errors and her crimes ; yet nothing has happened more remarkable than the sudden capitulation of 70,000 men, and the instantaneous fall of their master from being one of the greatest potentates on earth down to the “Man of Sedan ;” and the first days of September,

now nearly seven years ago (a year indeed for the world to look back upon), must always preserve their painfully dramatic interest, culminating in the summary punishment of the chief offenders for bringing on the war.

The following "notes" were taken on the spot, and at the time, I being actively engaged in the work described at and about Sedan and Bazailles:—

Sedan is a pleasant town in French Flanders, situated on the Meuse, in the heart of the beautiful scenery of the Forest of Ardennes. The town is surrounded by low hills, covered with orchards, vineyards, tobacco-fields and corn, backed by the great woods of oak, beech and pine, which extend on the side of Luxemburg and Belgium for forty or fifty miles continuously. There are scarcely any roads, only great ridings, through the forest, where wolves and boars are hunted every winter, and deaths from wild beasts are not uncommon.

In July the town was an extremely well-doing community, of about 12,000 inhabitants, with several large manufactories of cloth, whose origin dates as far back as the sixteenth century. These have descended, as ancient family properties, from father to son, and a great deal of old friendly feeling exists between the masters and workmen, instead of the fierce class antagonism which has become so general at Paris, in the north of France and elsewhere.

When the war broke out, the good people of Sedan were quite out of the probable line of attack and defence, and took things easily, wove their cloth, prepared to gather in their grain, and dry their great tobacco leaves; and, in spite of the pacific influence of trade, upon even the French mind, expected, "with light hearts," news of the "promenade à Berlin." Even when the tremendous events at Wörth and Gravelotte happened, it did not occur to them that their pleasant places could be wrecked and torn by becoming a battle-field. At length however, the great hordes of soldiers, pursuing and pursued, apparently on the direct road to Paris, doubled back suddenly from Chalons. The Emperor did not dare to return to the capital without a victory to back him; "the language of reason was not understood there," he complained bitterly. The great army of MacMahon, supported by the defences of Paris, could scarcely have been beaten, but strategic reasons were not allowed to hold good against the interests of the dynasty. MacMahon, sorely against his will, and against his better judgement,

was forced by direct orders from the Empress and Council of State, to attempt the relief of Bazaine, shut up in Metz—"a measure of the greatest imprudence," he declared, and that his "soldiers were discouraged and mutinous." An army of 100,000 men was thus marched into the small town of Sedan, utterly unprovisioned and unprepared for a siege. The food of the inhabitants had been always procured from the surrounding districts, no stores had been laid in, when thousands of mouths were thus suddenly added to the consumers, while the usual sources of supply fell into the hands of the enemy. For three days before the battle the shops had been completely cleared, not even a candle or a drop of oil was to be had.

On the 30th and 31st of August there was fighting near the town, and the French, outnumbered from the first, found themselves penned in close to the Belgian frontier, with no means of escape. On the 31st the Emperor, Machamon, and the whole *Etat major or staff* entered the place, followed closely by the ambulances of the English Society for the relief of the Sick and Wounded. The suite of imperial carriages and servants was enormous. "All Napoleon's pomp as if he had been at St. Cloud"—britzkas, barouches, broughams and coaches defiled, one after the other, and the progress of the whole army was stopped till they had passed along the road.

It perhaps made little difference in the end, for the disorganisation was by this time universal and complete. Food, ammunition, everything, had run short, and the disheartened officials, civil and military, had given up even the attempt to restore order, *e. g.*, a supply of provisions broke down on the railroad, within a few miles of Sedan, and the military authorities were told that if a fresh engine could be sent out, the trucks might easily be brought into the town, in about twenty minutes. No measures were taken to secure them, and in a few hours the train was seized by the Germans. Yet, even at that early period, there was already something like famine among the French troops; hardly half a ration had been served for four days, and it was in this condition, half-starved, discontented, and out of heart, having taken seven days to perform the fifty miles from Rheims, that they were called upon to resist two German armies, that of the Prince of Saxony on one side, and that of the Crown Prince on the other, who, by wonderful forced marches—the last of twenty-five miles in one day—had caught up his retreating foe. "Scarcely ever, it was said, had such marching been seen as that of the Prince and his men."

A complete circle of fire gradually closed in round the town, as the different corps, composed of men representing most of the German States, came up. The great woods were so fitted for defence by sharpshooters that the Prussians could hardly believe in their own good fortune as they made their way through the forests on the steep slopes, expecting a gun in ambush behind every tree, and positively reached the crest of the hills, and looked down into the "kessel," or basin, in which lay the town, without having met with a single interruption.

There had been a rumour among the Germans that Louis Napoleon himself had entered the place with the rest of the French army, but it was not believed. "Il a fait bien des fautes," said Bismark, "mais il ne sera jamais allé se fourrer dans cette souricière." When, soon after reaching the summit, the news was known to be true, the army set up such a hurrah "that we thought it must have been heard in Sedan itself." "Now we have him!" said the soldiers, joyfully,

The extraordinary discipline prevailing among the German troops, from the King down to the smallest drummer-boy, seems to have struck the French most forcibly. A Prussian is no doubt hard and cold, said they, and makes himself wonderfully disagreeable; but the power given their arms by this universal sense of duty was marvellous in their eyes. "It was a great body with one soul, Moltke." Grand dukes, princes, generals; high and low, obeyed implicitly, whatever might be the order. "If we are told to go and look down a cannon's mouth, about to be fired, we go and look down it," said a young prince, an officer of high rank, while in the French army, every man was as good as his neighbour, the soldiers caring nothing for their officers, and showing them neither respect nor obedience. On the other side, the want of interest of the officers in their men was painfully remarkable to observers belonging to neutral nations. It was mentioned at Orleans later in the year, as a great advance in discipline that the "soldiers were really learning to salute their officers." At Wörth, MacMahon, hard pressed, sent to De Failly for reinforcements. He is said to have replied that he was a marshal of France, as good as MacMahon any day, and had no orders to receive from him—no troops were sent. Nothing and nobody were in their place. At a critical moment in the same battle MacMahon's ammunition ran short. He sent in hot haste to the rear for more—two large supply waggons galloped up—they were found to contain boots and bread.

The crowd of French soldiers in and about Sedan, after their first battle, was little more than an armed mob; the fortress had so many defenders as to be indefensible. From the moment indeed that the French found themselves unable to carry the war into Germany, all their plans seemed to collapse. There was, moreover, no real head; since even after the Emperor had nominally resigned the command, he kept up a sort of tacit control over everything, and the marshals felt that their orders were liable to be countermanded.

All the maps possessed by the army were of Germany, and the ignorance of the officers concerning their own territory was complete. The Emperor, on the 31st, had posted himself on a hill near Sedan overlooking the battle. As he lay on the ground smoking, with his favourite Zouave beside him, Macmahon, with two aides-de-camp, came riding violently up. "Sire, la journée va mal, elle ne peut pas plus mal aller," said he, jumping off his horse. They then began to discuss the question of whether or not there was a bridge across the Meuse higher up. No one of the party knew anything about the matter, when a bystander called out that they had better ask the proprietor of the ground on which they stood, who was present. He was summoned up to give the required information, and afterwards told the story. At that time there was scarcely a lieutenant in the Prussian army who had not a map of the ground, and a knowledge of the bridges in question.

On the first of September the batteries were in position, and the bombardment began at 4 a. m. It was a very sultry day, and in the early morning the mist lay so thick as to interfere for some time with the firing. Every man and every officer in the Prussian army, from the King downwards, was at his post by three o'clock; while the indifference of the French generals to their duty was such that one of them was known to have continued tranquilly in his bed till seven, and another not to have sent for his only horse till twelve. The guns of the Germans, six hundred in number, were posted on the heights surrounding Sedan, from two to two and half miles away, and the fire went on increasing with fearful violence, a veritable *feu d'enfer*, while the two armies were scon engaged all round the town, hemming it in from Bazailles to Donchéry and Floing.

The great ambulance of the English Society for Sick and Wounded had fortunately reached Sedan the night before the battle, and

we were put in charge of a barrack, the Caserne d'Asfeldt, 300 feet long; which was converted into a hospital, and contained 384 beds. It stood on the highest ground within the fortifications, sixty or seventy feet above the river, and had a splendid view over the town and the neighbouring country; and the Prussian battalions and guns could be seen coming into position on the hills around, the bayonets and spiked helmets gleaming in the hot sun above dense masses of dark blue. About ten o'clock the firing became incessant and furious; for six or seven hours the town was regularly shelled; shells struck the barrack several times, burst in front, behind, above, and on each side; fortunately none entered the hospital, but one of the infirmiers just outside the door was blown to pieces, and another wounded. All this time the wounded were arriving in hundreds. Those who could walk were sent on into the town, and only those most gravely injured were admitted. During the whole day, from early morning till dusk, we performed capital operations in the direct line of fire; and the continual whizzing of the projectiles, and the noise of those bursting close at hand was tremendous. Every moment it was expected indeed that a bomb would burst in our midst, for though the barrack was very strong, and the roof bomb-proof, there was nothing to prevent a shell from entering by one of the large windows facing the batteries. The sensation of relief when the fire slackened was delightful.

The operation cases did well on the whole, but the attempts at conservative surgery, and what is called resection, were hardly ever successful.

The testimony by those who only saw a few cases, concerning the nature of the wounds caused by different guns is very conflicting. "Wounds from the chassépôt are more serious than those from the needle gun. The fractured bones were so comminuted that it seemed as if one were handling a bag of nuts," says one witness. "The needle guns had wrought dreadful havoc; the bullet is egg-shaped, and the external wound bears no proportion to the injury it makes. It is heavier, and makes a worse wound than does that of the chassépôt." But the truth is that the nature of these wounds differs considerably according to the manner in which the projectile strikes and its velocity.

The majority of patients brought in on the first day had been injured by shells, as Sedan was the centre of the Artillery fire. A wound from the mitrailleuses is rarely seen, as few of those struck

ever survive, their lateral range is small, the balls do not spread, but each is $1\frac{3}{4}$ oz. in weight, twenty-five to each discharge, and troops within their murderous range are completely riddled at fourteen or even fifteen hundred yards distance. Between the villages of Balan and Bazeilles, which were taken and retaken four times, to which spot I had gone early in the day to assist Surgeon Major Frank, a number of Bavarian soldiers were found lying literally torn in pieces by discharges of mitrailleuses. Along this road Dr. Frank (who had a separate commission from the English society) had established himself in the hottest part of the action, the wounded (of both nations) were carried into houses so entirely under fire that we performed many operations lying on the floor beside the patients, to avoid the bullets coming in through the windows.

The men were laid wherever shelter of any kind was to be found. It was a curious commentary on Christian civilization to see a large and beautiful church crowded with wounded and dying men, some of them suffering great agony.

The difficulties from the want of surgical instruments were felt both by the Germans and French almost as soon as the war began; there were no means of mending or sharpening those which had been spoiled or blunted by use, and they were often thrown away. Birmingham and Sheffield had been stripped of them, and at one time not even a pair of artery forceps was to be bought. Food during the first three days of September was very scarce; both medical men and patients had to be content with bread and water, with a little wine—trying enough in the face of the work to be done.

As the week went on a great number of men were brought in who had been lying on the field for four or five days,* and untended for two days in tents. Of those whose injuries dated back a week scarcely one was saved, and it was striking how, in proportion to the length of time before help was obtained after the wound had been received, was the patient's chance of recovery. Tobacco was found very useful in soothing the nervous system after the excitement of a battle—particularly when defeat had rendered the reaction more intense it became almost invaluable.

After the battle of Sedan fourteen thousand French wounded were brought into the town and the ambulances. Some of the cases were fearful to see. A cavalry officer had had both legs and both

* It is interesting to compare Sir Charles Bell's account of the fearful sufferings of the French wounded whom he attended after Waterloo, and sad to see how little progress has been made after all in our war arrangements.

arms amputated. and made a good recovery ; a ball had struck his leg, passed through his horse, which it killed, to the leg on the other side, while a second went through both his arms. The amputations were performed by his own surgeons, in spite of his entreaties to be left to die.

All the cases admitted at the Caserne d'Asfeldt were most severe:—

| | |
|---|-----|
| Wounded, registered | 593 |
| Sick and wounded, not registered | 200 |
| Extra patients during battles of 31 Aug. and Sep. 1 . . . | 400 |

1193

One hundred and seventeen deaths were from gunshot wounds, 30 at least from pyemia, out of 77 amputations 30 were fatal, 40 deaths after other operations. The ventilation of the place was very imperfect.

With regard to the success of the surgery of the two nations, great things had been expected of the Germans, from the high position held by the profession in the scientific world; but their practice did not appear to be good ; and the wounded, hospital stores, and the like, are evidently looked upon by the military authorities as mere impediments to operations. The French surgeons were better, but the excessive centralisation of their medical service, and the manner in which the Intendance undertook a combination of duties of all kinds made a break down at head-quarters fatal. The dangers of the hospitals were indeed such, from fever, gangrene, and erysipelas, and the torture of transport so great, that the chances of recovery for the poor fellows who crawled under the cover of the hedgerows were greater than for those lying in the foul infectious atmosphere of over-crowded surgical wards. There was little such disease in the huts, field ambulances, or temporary edifices, which admitted of the freest possible ventilation, and a rope-walk in fine weather was found to be the most healthy shelter of all. The testimony to the value of fresh air is very remarkable. It is an old experience. When the French army in Spain was retreating on one occasion, they prepared to leave their wounded behind in hospital ; the men, however, preferred to run their chance and accompany their comrades, and in spite of the suffering attendant on the rapid travelling, the constant change of air had such virtue that a larger proportion recovered than in hospital. But neither French nor German authorities have as yet realized this fact in sanitary science. There are few subjects on which the two nationalities were agreed; but here, at least, was one point in common : "Fermez

les fenêtres," cried the French doctors whenever they entered wards cared for by the English Staff. "Kein Engliches zug hier," said the Germans sternly when they saw the open windows; as if a draught were an English manufacture, like flannel or cutlery. According (as we should say) the proportion of deaths in hospital was very large. This however, is no new feature in the French medical military annals. In the autumn of 1813 one-half of the patients perished in some of their hospitals, a third or fourth in the best. "In the Crimea the failure of the French medical service was complete. In a death-roll of 95,615, only 20,000 men died in the field or of wounds, more than 75,000 of disease. In the brief Italian campaign, the deaths in hospital far out-numbered those in the field, and the wounded were sometimes left for days uncared for after the battle was over. There was an insufficient supply of surgeons—not even one doctor to 1,000 men—and an utter neglect of hygiene. Drainage, disinfection, good nurses and abundant food were required to reduce the fearful mortality of the hospitals; but in all these the French administration was utterly deficient;" and at Sedan the Intendance was hopelessly disorganized.

The absence of sound sanitary arrangements was generally still greater among the Germans; except in rare instances, such as the Crown Princess's admirable hospital at Homburg, almost all necessary precautions were entirely neglected; typhus and low fevers prevailed in their hospitals to a grievous extent from the dirt, the sickening smells, and utter want of care even thus early in the campaign.

There has been great unwillingness on the part of the German authorities to allow the full extent of their losses from sickness during the war to be known—"the health of the army" was always announced to be "excellent." A semi-official statement has however at last been made in Berlin, by which it appears that the Central Bureau under the highest military authorities has authenticated 623,000 cases of sick and wounded; of these 78,000 belonged to the French, the remaining 555,000 to the German army. "These frightful figures," says the *Volkstaat*, "are far below the truth. If the wounded are reckoned at 100,000 in round numbers, we shall be within the mark if we estimate the unwounded sick at half a million. How many of these have died, how many will drag on incurable sickly lives, we have as yet no means of judging—the figure must be a terrible one."

The great field hospital for the Bavarians was the Chateau de Bazeilles. Three thousand of them were collected there on the 2nd of September, distributed in the buildings and under the trees and sheds. The ground was literally saturated with wound secretions while a great number of men and horses had been buried in extremely shallow graves about the gardens and immediate neighbourhood. A second country house close by was nearly as overcrowded, and as pestilential.

The Meuse was in a fearful state from the number of corpses of men and horses drowned there, or thrown in to be got rid of. It was indeed only wonderful that more disease was not engendered, for the stench in the town and the neighbourhood was terrible and dangerous. The English surgeons suggested the lighting of great peat fires, but the authorities were paralysed, and nothing was done.

For days before and during the battle of Sedan the French soldiers had been fearfully underfed, while enduring the greatest physical strain in a prolonged fight, ending in a disastrous and most depressing defeat, which told much upon the chance of cure. Where amputation of the lower limbs took place, few patients recovered; "of thirty-four cases of operations of the knee-joint, all were fatal."

Diarrhœa and dysentery were very troublesome, causing directly and indirectly many deaths. In the Caserne d'Asfeldt this was increased by using the water of a well into which the dead bodies of three Zouaves had been thrown. And it was curious what a dislike we entertained for water for sometime after the discovery of the bodies. Grievous loss of life was occasioned by the transport of the wounded; often in common country waggons without even straw for the patients to lie on, "the system of the Prussians being to order removal as soon as possible, in many instances before any idea could be formed of the case." Frightful hardships were sometimes undergone from the want of horses to forward these long lines of miserable sufferers on their way. In one case four hundred peasant waggons, filled with wounded, were left out all night, without shelter, wet through, after travelling two days from the field of battle near Metz.

As at Sedan the number of wounded increased hour by hour, the Protestant pasteur offered his church as shelter for twenty-five men. He then sought up and down the town for bedding materials, but scarcely anything could be either bought or borrowed. The state of the streets was almost indescribable; a perfect hail of shot, shell,

and bullets was falling, from which the soldiers were sheltering themselves under the walls of the houses, swearing, half starved, furious, and miserable—the variety of hideous noises, the hurtling bomb of the cannon balls, the hissing of the shells, the peculiar and terrible sounds of the mitrailleuses,—the dreadful smells, the bones and entrails of dead horses lying about in every direction, the ribs showing raw and bloody, their flesh having been, the instant they fell, cut off by the soldiers—who could get no other food; if they could manage to cook it they considered themselves lucky, if not, they ate it raw—the whole scene utterly wretched and hopeless.

The wounded began to arrive at the church; but the few mattresses were soon exhausted, and they were laid on the floor, on the benches, almost on each other, with a little straw under them, and perhaps a hymn book under their heads; some sat on the pulpit stairs. Instead of the twenty-five patients prepared for, one hundred and seventy were sent in during the course of the day and night, and were laid down in the schoolroom, the little yard, the sheds; the altar was seized as an operating table by the military surgeons, of whom at first only one could be spared for the work, and the three sisters of the pasteur dressed the wounds as well as they could, and helped to pull off the shoes and wash the feet of the men, which was some refreshment, but pretty nearly the only relief which they could give. No food was to be had for them except a few cases of chocolate and Liebig's extract until the next day, when the Intendance sent in the soldiers' meagre rations; these were cooked in great caldrons in the open yard by the ladies and distributed by them. Two shells burst one after the other over the church and the presbytère, and the surgeon insisted on the wounded being carried into the crypt, where the children of an orphanage had, however, already been taken, and it was represented to him that the men would be stifled. "Then," said he, "we will be buried alive under the ruins, *tant vase crever*." The prospect was not reassuring, but there was nothing to be done. A white flag had just been hung up as protection when a third shell struck the church; "Oh!" cried the women tumultuously crowding up from the houses near, "pull it down, it draws the fire, it is a mark." It was, however, their best chance of escape, the pasteur held firm, and the church was not again disturbed.

At first the French wounded were extremely depressed, but their spirits soon revived. The Germans on the contrary, as the time

went on pined for home ; and the idea of being incapacitated for future labour, with the extremely small pensions allowed by the Prussian system, seemed to pray on their minds. Their superior education was very striking ; the sick men were trying to learn French, studying maps of the country, &c. One day an infirmier besought me to come to a wounded German who he felt sure was mad, or "communicating with spirits, for he was making cabbalistic signs." I found a young fellow repeating his Euclid by heart, and making the figures in the air as he went on.

The extreme ignorance of their enemy shown by the French people and army alike was such that the men were almost paralysed at finding the Germans, whom they had been taught to despise, were better soldiers than themselves. It is necessary to turn back to the dismal tragi-comedy of the French newspapers after the puerile attack upon Saarbrück to realize the state of feeling at the beginning of the war. "The backs of the Prussians was all that they allowed us to see of them." "They positively ran at the first discharge of the mitrailleuses," was repeated in every variety of jubilant key. It was so self-evident a truth that a Frenchman must beat a German, that when Paris heard of a battle it was taken for granted that it was a victory. After the engagement at Wörth, a friend of mine, a gentleman arriving from its neighbourhood, found the Rue de la Paix dressed with flags, and a crowd marching about with songs of triumph for "a great victory." "But," observed he, "it was a great defeat ; I was there." No one would listen to him and he was advised to hold his tongue, it was not safe to hint at such an opinion, he would be taken up as a Prussian spy. The system of illusions and delusions was carried on from the highest to the lowest ; things were "made pleasant" to the Emperor, but they were equally "doctored" before being made known to the Paris mob. "How can you put news in your paper which you know to be perfectly false ?" was said to a French editor. "Il leur faut absolument des victoires, il n'y en a pas, il faut que je leur en fasse," was the answer, and accordingly they were manufactured to order in every variety. Nothing was too wonderful to be believed. "The Crown Prince had been taken with half his army !" "Two corps d'armées, 40,000 Prussians, had fallen into the quarries of Jaumont, shot down and buried under stones hurled in by an indignant peasantry," the veracious narrator declaring that "the groans still filled his ears ;" a splendid coloured print was publish-

ed of the event, which continued to be sold till the end of the war. One paper told how "a lieutenant-colonel wounded had just returned to Paris, and related that such had been the slaughter of Prussians that he was able to protect his guns behind a parapet of Germans slain; we repeat that the source from which this account was received rendered it perfectly authentic." Other writers accused the English papers of having "invented not only French defeats, but battles which had never taken place and places which did not exist." The wife of a late English ambassador, writing from Vichy three days after the news of the capitulation of Sedan had been heard of at New York, observed that "as the French had been successful everywhere, she should return by Paris and spend some weeks there."

Under the necessity of a victory at all hazards, MacMahon and his army had marched, as it were, into a trap; crowded into a town where it was impossible to stand a siege, without supplies, food, or ammunition. The general was wounded early in the day, and De Wimpfen, who "took command of an army already beaten," as he complained bitterly, proposed to the Emperor to cut his way into Belgium. The slaughter, however, must have been tremendous, and after the fearful losses of the previous weeks, Louis Napoleon, sick and dispirited, seems to have felt that any end was better than the continuance of such dreadful scenes, and fancied (we may give him at least the credit of believing) that his abdication would end the war.

His interview with the ruler of kings, Bismarck, took place in front of a labourer's cottage in a village near Sedan. The Emperor in the undress uniform of a general and a *kepi*, the Chancellor in his white cuirassier coat, fur cap, and long boots, sat on a stone bench before the door on a slope close to the edge of the dusty *chaussee*, which stretched far and straight into the distance, bordered with the inevitable poplars. One who was present described how the Emperor went on pulling the vine leaves from the trellis one by one, and scattering them on the ground as the interest of the conversation increased, whence they were picked up by the bystander after the interview was over.

The hard part of the bargaining having been done by Bismarck, the meeting with the King of Prussia to receive the Emperor's abdication took place at Belleville, a country-house in the neighbourhood. There is a certain dignity given by circumstances to per-

formers in really important events, if they do not strive after any such effect; and the behaviour of both emperor and king is described as having been calm and "digne" on the occasion. Louis Napoleon refused to pretend to be able to compromise the future of France, though he and his army were compelled to surrender unconditionally, and next day he was forwarded to his place of captivity.

But it is after the chief performers have removed off the scene that some of the worst horrors of war have to be faced. The prisoners remained to be disposed of, the frightful hosts of wounded still left on the battle-fields to be tended, the hideous remains of those who had passed away to be put out of sight. "Three clear days after the fighting was over I found eight or ten men lying with both arms fixed in position, as if they were raising their guns to the shoulder to fire, though the majority of the corpses lay on their backs with every muscle relaxed." "Here lay a group of dead horses, there a line of dead men with heaps of broken weapons, the meadow on the hillside was full of mangled horses and dead cuirassiers. For days these remained unburied, as the peasants were either afraid to interfere, or too little accustomed to act without orders to volunteer service of any kind."

The scene on the battle-field was *unusually* terrible. "No human eye ever rested on such revolting objects as were presented by the battle fields around Sedan. Let them fancy masses of coloured rags glued together with blood and brains, and pinned into strange shapes by fragments of bones. Let them conceive men's bodies without heads, legs without bodies, heaps of human debris attached to red and blue cloth, and disemboweled corpses in uniform, bodies lying about in all attitudes, with skulls shattered, faces blown off, hips smashed, bones, flesh, and gay clothing all pounded together as if brayed in a mortar, extending for miles, not thick in any one place, but recurring perpetually for weary hours; and then they cannot, with the most vivid imagination, come up to the sickening reality of the butchery. No nightmare could be so frightful. Several times I came on spots where there were two horses lying dead together in harness, killed by the same fragment. I several times saw four, five, and six men, four, five and six horses, all killed by the explosion of the same projectile; and in one place there lay no less than eight French soldiers who must have been struck down by the bursting of a shell over a

company, for they lay all round in a circle with their feet inwards, each shattered in the head or chest by a piece of shell, and no other dead being within a hundred yards of them. A curious, and to me unaccountable phenomena, was the blackness of most of the faces of the dead. Decomposition had not set in, for they were killed only the day before. Another circumstance which struck me was the expression of agony on many faces. Death by the bayonet is agonising, and those by steel, open-eyed and open-mouthed, have an expression of pain on the features, with protruding tongue. A musket ball that proves at once fatal, does not seem to cause much pain, and the features are composed and quiet, sometimes with a sweet smile on the lips. But the prevailing expression, *on this field*, of the faces that were not much mutilated, was one of terror and of agony unutterable. There must have been a hell of torture within that semi-circle in which the earth was torn asunder from all sides with a real tempest of iron *hissing, and screeching*, and bursting into the heavy masses at the hands of an unseen enemy.

The difficulty of guarding such an unexpected number of half-starved prisoners as had fallen into the hands of the Germans was immense. Seven hundred of them were confined on a peninsula surrounded by the Meuse, the neck of land being commanded by a Prussian gun. Their sufferings from want of food were sad, and the Pasteur of Sedan, having collected what little was to be begged or bought (what could it be among so many ?) took it down to them "You had better drive well into the midst, or you will be pushed into the river," said the German sentry. The carriage was literally stormed, and he was in danger of his life before the distribution was over. Mr. Trench, who also attempted to supply the poor wretches, is loud in his blame of the German authorities ; but it must not be forgotten how suddenly and unexpectedly they were thus called on to feed a second army.

The French had been for four days on the shortest of rations from the bad management of their own commissariat, one day almost without food of any kind ; they were thus thrown entirely upon the provisions of their enemies, who were of course totally unprepared for such an unexpected addition to their mouths. The Germans seem to have done their best, and their own men were stinted till fresh provisions came up. At the beginning of the war there is no doubt that their captives were treated with humanity, and

the French peasants dreaded the approach of their own soldiers as much or more than that of the more disciplined Germans ; but, as the struggle went on, the bitterness on both sides increased to a frightful extent, and the war exactions around Paris and in the north of France have been terribly severe. "I hardly recognize my good quiet Germans," said one of their own officers at Versailles towards the end of the time.

After this frightful week the great wave of events roiled on far away from Sedan. The Emperor had been taken to Wilhelmshöhe, the eighty-six thousand unwounded French prisoners "interned" in Germany, the sick had been disposed of in distant hospitals, or had disposed of themselves in quiet graveyards, the great German army had marched on Paris, and poor Sedan was left to itself and its miseries

Everything had been swept away ; provisions, crops, fuel were gone ; the houses were shattered, whole villages ruined ; the "hopeless misery of the burnt Bazeilles, once a flourishing suburb of Sedan, with a population of about three thousand persons, now the most utter ruin that can be conceived, surrounded with the wrecks of beautiful little villas," was the most dismal of all.

The cloth manufactories having been built within a walled town, and much cramped for space, were in the habit of distributing their looms among the villages near, which were thus dependent for work upon Sedan itself. Such were the heavy contributions demanded by the Germans that there was no money for wages, and no buyers for the cloth if it had been woven. Provisions were not to be bought, the autumn sowing could not take place, neither food nor work were to be had, and whole villages were on the brink of starvation. Great soup-kitchens, supported by money sent out from England, were organized by the indefatigable sisters of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, who arranged working parties of women to make up warm clothing, which was afterwards given away. Many of the sufferers had been well off,—accustomed to give, not receive charity. Often a portion of the food and clothing received was given back, with a kind word for others : "Our neighbours are as poor as we are, may not this be sent to them ?"

The assistance given by the different societies has done excellent service in keeping body and soul together among these starving sufferers till peace could allow work to be resumed. Charity, however, is a demoralising thing if it continue long enough to dis-

courage men from exerting themselves (as we are now finding to our cost with the poor of London), and there has been some difficulty in preventing the usual results of cheating and quarrelling among the recipients of the relief from England. But the grain supplied for spring sowing, and the idle looms which have been set to work have, it is hoped, helped the peasants and artisans to help themselves. The men were thoroughly disheartened by the system of requisitions. Obligated as they were to use their own little horses and carts—the pride of an industrious peasant—to draw goods for the army of their enemies, they put no heart into their work, and got into habits of idleness. The German soldiers and horses passing to the front had to be lodged and fed by those who had nothing left to seize, so that they scarcely dared to put their houses or gardens in order. Although, however, there has been much talk of cruel exactions, true no doubt in individual instances, “in general there was but little taken in the neighbourhood of Sedan by the German army except according to the bond of the fearful system of requisitions; there had been hardly any of the plundering of bad old wars, and none of the still sadder outrages on women,” says one eye-witness. “The German soldiers had in general genial, good faces, with square, heavy chins, and, keen, shrewd eyes, and almost all kind to children. I saw one day a big, stolid fellow seize a baby out of its terrified mother’s arms, cover it with kisses, return it to her and silently go on his way.”

The villages, for two miles or more round Sedan, suffered much in the battles of September. At Givonne the branches of the trees had been carried away by cannon shot—the groups of houses “nestling in their sleepy hollows, which looked so happy last year, now lie grey and cheerless, the stone walls broken by shot and shell, the sides of the cottages peppered with bullets, hardly any smoke to be seen from the chimneys,” while the forests were cut down and the timber sold to a great extent by the German authorities. At Mézières, about twelve miles off, worse horrors took place. It gives some slight idea of the frightful proportions to which the war miseries attained, that its bombardment passed almost unnoticed amidst the great excitement of watching the movements of the army of the Loire and the siege of Paris. Two lines or so in a telegram “Mézières is besieged,” “Mézières has capitulated,” was nearly all the notice which it received. Yet the description of its sufferings makes one’s heart ache. The fury of the fire seemed

to have driven the people wild, the noise, the crumbling of the houses under the shells," said one of the members of the relief committee. Men and Women, silent and dazed, were passing up and down the wretched streets, which looked like nothing but a quarry of stones; out of five hundred houses only a hundred and twenty were standing. A crowd had collected round one pile of ruins on the bitter winter's day; the house had fallen in upon the cellar, where thirteen persons had taken refuge from the fire. They were all dead, from the old grandmother to a baby. In another an unhappy woman had sheltered herself to give birth to a son; the walls had, in like manner, crumbled, and she was found charred and burning, with the little one carefully wrapped in her petticoat.

The help sent from England assisted numbers of these houseless, starving people. The soup-kitchens have supplied hundreds of families during the winter, and the work given out from the *Daily News* and other funds to the women, constituted pretty nearly all each household has had to live on. Many women came ten miles to fetch it, and refused all money help. "We have always worked," they say; "all we want is work, not charity!"

The stories of some of these poor creatures, given to "les dames de la soupe," are piteous. "A young woman, from Thelonne, came on Friday for the first time. I never saw a face with such an expression. It was as if she had cried so much that there were no tears left. She was alone, she said, out of seven. 'Where are the others gone?' 'They have all died in the war. On the "Day of Bazeilles" my father-in-law was shot; my mother-in-law died of the shock soon after. I had read in the papers that it was better not to forsake one's house in time of war, and we staid on, my husband and three children.* They came and set fire to the house. I don't know what happened then. All of a sudden I woke up in the cellar, and heard the cries of the soldiers, and saw an officer who was trying to protect us from them. I turned round and found my baby, eight months old, dead by my side; and, when I looked on the other side, the second child was dead too. Then they took my husband away to shoot him. They carried him about from place to place; but he got away at last, and hid himself. I escaped to my parents, at Thelonne, with my little boy,

*The Bavarians, who burnt the town, believed that the peasants had fired on them from their houses; The officers did their best to restrain their men, but the havoc was frightful, although the commander, Van der Tann has of late denied the worst part of the outrages. I saw none but those incidental to war.

six years old, in my arms. My husband came in a few days after ; but he fell sick, and died of his troubles, and the little one too.' and the tears fell slowly down her pale, thin cheeks. She was only twenty-seven years old, There was a dead silence in the room while she was telling her fearful story ; the other women looked at each other with terror.

It is by details of such individual miseries as these that we realize the horrors endured by "war victims," and are made to feel greater sympathy than by any amount of general descriptions or bare lists of numbers and statistics of deaths.

Such, ladies and gentlemen, were my experiences of Sedan ; placed before you in a fragmentary and imperfect manner, for after all, to those actively engaged amongst the wounded and dying, war presents a special feature difficult to describe, and differently described by each participator in the action, each one's experience is fragmentary. The blended narratives of many, not only show this, but more, they also all tend to show to the peaceful citizen the hardships their defenders have to undergo, and to strike a chord in each heart, that while ready to defend our hearths and homes from the enemy, that we must be tender and womanly in our care of the wounded and sick—not only of our countrymen, but of our adversaries, and according to their means at the fitting moment to act the good Samaritan, each according to his power, for the alleviation of their sickness and distress.

