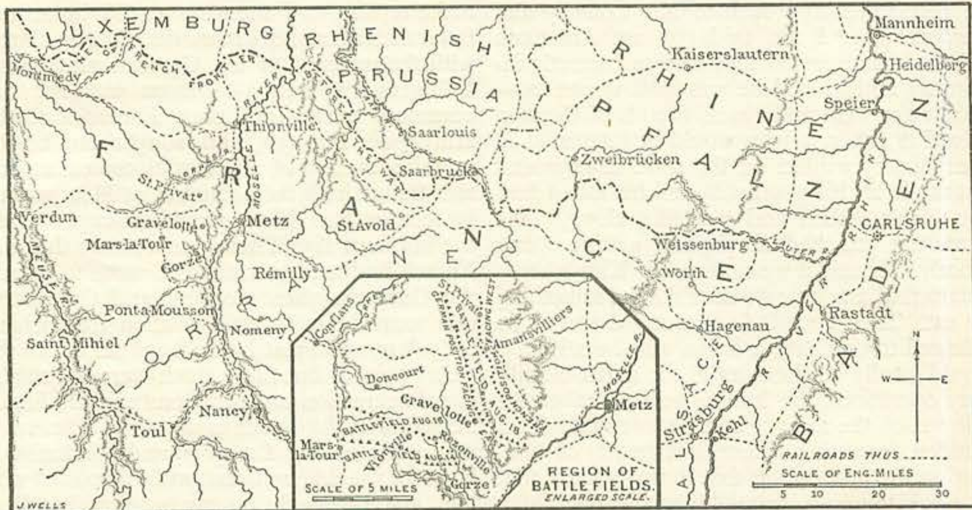
GRAVELOTTE WITNESSED AND REVISITED.



THE gayety of the French nation was suddenly eclipsed in July, 1870, by the gloom of the cloud of war with Germany. It is the common story that the war news was received in Paris with light-hearted enthusiasm, but it was my observation that the popular demonstrations of joyous excitement were superficial and artificial, while public opinion was exceedingly apprehensive, and the popular expression bitterly grave. The frivolity that appeared in those days of destiny came from the courageous vanity of the people, whose pride was enlisted in laughing while facing the fates that grin but never smile. Few of the French and none of the strangers within their gates knew that the imperial army was in a pitiful state of unreadiness. I had just satisfied myself with the fascinating experience of making the acquaintance of Paris, and, instead of going to Switzerland as the next scene of a summer in Europe, entered upon service as a war correspondent, as a first step soliciting through the American minister, Mr. Washburne, authorization from the War Office to accompany Marshal McMahon. Without waiting for the decision upon my application, I hastened to Metz, where the Emperor Napoleon III. had his headquarters. On the way I was informed that the correspondents of foreign journals who presented themselves would certainly not be received and probably would be arrested; but the warning was disregarded, and I speedily found myself under police surveillance, and so restrained and annoyed that I proceeded to Strasburg. An exchange of telegrams with Mr. Washburne, I had reason to believe, prevented my imprisonment at Metz, and a long letter written in that city, referring to the want of organization and ominous confusion in the army, was confiscated. The activity of the police was so great in Strasburg that I concluded to try my fortunes with the Germans, and did so by passing through Switzerland and obtaining papers of identification and authorization from the War Minister of Baden at Carlsruhe. Thus equipped, and accompanied by Mr. Moncure D. Conway, then of London, and now of New York, we crossed the Rhine at Mannheim with a division of German troops and pushed on to the invasion of France. Our plan of campaign was to stick to the railroad, confident that the vast forces in motion must follow the lines of rails. We came up with King William and Bismarck at St. Avold, which was then about three miles within the French frontier. There, sleeping on the floor of the wine-room in the Hôtel de Paris, I was aroused late in the night by a heated and spurred and dusty messenger inquiring for General Moltke, and ascertained that I was under the same roof with the brains of the invading army.

The King bowed graciously from a window of the post-office to the two American tramps; and a tall man wearing high boots and a small cap, and a big sword in a steel scabbard, stalked

along, receiving many salutations; and regarding this object of interest, whose appearance seemed familiar, behold, the likeness to a French caricature revealed the mighty Bismarck, much sunburnt, his mouth grim, and his eyes fierce. That he was a close observer presently appeared in his sudden approach to Mr. Conway and me, saying, "I am told you are American editors." I answered that he was correctly informed, and he said he was glad to see us — that there were millions of friends of German blood in America who would be interested in war history written on the spot. I expressed gratitude for his good-will, and he asked how we were attached and "getting along." We were not attached at all, and getting along poorly. He said if we came to the King's headquarters at any time we should have something to eat. Then I made known my desire to be allowed to purchase a horse, and he said that could hardly be done, as, in the midst of military operations, the horses were all taken for the use of the army; and he assented with a sudden deepening of tone and gravity of manner to the proposition that it was "hard that the one thing we wanted was the one thing that could not be had." Even his gigantic experience had not seemed to lack that fatality. He told me where to find a man to ask about the horse, and said I might mention that he had directed me, but he did not think I could get a horse; and I did not. As a military man, Bismarck was an unimportant subordinate.

The next day, walking along the railroad, there was a train of freight cars filled with troops awaiting its turn to go on; and in one of the doors sat an officer reading intently a small volume which I saw, in passing, as he held it to the light under my eyes, was an English copy of Shakspere. I ventured to speak to him, and found that he was pleased to talk English. He was kind, and his intervention gave us a chance to go along with the division of the telegraph corps whose duty it was to connect the headquarters of the King every night with Berlin. This position had its advantages. We soon swung to the left from the railroad which ran direct to Metz, and after a march through a fine country crossed the river Moselle at Pont-à-Mousson, about nineteen miles south of Metz. This swing was the famous turning movement by which the German army was thrown upon the line of retreat of the French, and caught them on the flank, staying their march until the forces arrived to fight the battles of Mars-la-Tour and Gravelotte, and drive Bazaine within the fortifications, from which he and his army emerged prisoners of war. I have felt at liberty to believe that the messenger who asked me at the Hôtel de Paris in St. Avold where Moltke was to be found must have been the one to convey to him the information that the French had left the passes of the Moselle unprotected. They had not blown up a railroad bridge nor torn up a rail, and they had left the telegraph in such good order that few halts were required to make repairs, and the wires could be strung faster than the march was made. Unacquainted with the meaning of the German movement, I lingered in Pont-à-Mousson watching the enormous masses of Prince Frederick Carl's army pass through, and sought one bright morning the top of a beautiful conical mountain from which the cathedral at Metz was to be seen outlined like a great bird-cage against the northern sky. There was a rumor that the French had made a rush and were to attack the Germans where we were, and the mountain seemed a wonderful position from which to look upon a great battle fought in the lovely valley below. But the French were not thinking of aggression, and Mr. Conway and I found ourselves in the hands of a party of peasants who were looking for spies, and if it had not been for the big red seal with tricolored ribbon, and the eagle on my passport, handled with alertness on our part, aided by a little strategy that led the peasantry to deceive themselves as to the course we intended to take,— a deception by which we evaded an ambuscade,— we would have paid with our lives for our curiosity in ascending Mount Mousson. It will be remembered that killing alleged spies was an amusement of the period.

We heard in Pont-à-Mousson of the bloody struggle of August 16, and saw the dreadful procession of wounded, but had no guiding intelligence to take us to the fields of deadly strife. The King's headquarters remained in the town and our telegraphic company was unemployed. We were far from the cars that we had purposed to campaign in, and about at the end of our resources — without horses or any home in the army, and getting into the enemy's country where the continued existence of straggling spectators would not have been insured for a day at a high premium, even by a canvassing life-assurance agent.

On the evening of the 17th of August there was a sharp knock on my door — the apartment was over the shop of a hair-dresser on the main street leading from the great bridge to the open square in the center of the town — and a tall Prussian officer strode in, the proprietor following in a deprecating way. When the officer was informed that English was the language preferred, he said he had a card for that room. I replied that I had been told the army cards did not cover apartments regularly rented and occupied, and he said that was so. Mr. Conway and I were paying five francs a

day for the room, and told him the fact. Upon this the officer demanded another place, and got it a story higher. As he came downstairs, having made sure of his bed, I asked him to walk in and take a glass of wine. There was plenty of good wine and not much other nourishment to be had. The officer partook of food in a liquid form and wanted to know what I was doing at the seat of war. He knew something of the requirements and the eccentricities of journalism, and presumed that the primary object was to see a great battle. This was assented to, and we parted and were soon in bed. After 2 o'clock there was a jarring knock that aroused me, and when my door was opened, there was my tall friend of the evening before, his buttons blazing in the light of the candle I held high, to see what sort of caller we had; and he said he judged from the orders received that if we made our way as early in the day as practicable to the village of Gorze and beyond, we would "witness a military operation." I thanked him, and he bowed and disappeared.

It was a raw sort of morning for the season, and there was a faint low mist in the valley and floating over the pale river. Two-o'clock-in-the-morning courage, Napoleon said, was the rarest; and that morning I confess it did not seem to me a very agreeable recreation to get up and wander off to witness the shock of embattled legions, reflecting at the same time that in modern warfare the small-arms of precision and rifled artillery were in the habit of slinging lead and iron about the country with carelessness and profusion, and raising the dust at astonishing distances. However, it would not do to go so far to see a battle and not take the chance. If we had made an appointment to be shot, we had to keep it. We breakfasted on a bit of chocolate cake and a sip of wine and a rank and rough cigar, and after a toilsome march, broken by the chance that the telegraph wagons happened to be going our way a few miles, we reached Gorze some minutes after 10 o'clock, and saw a Frenchman hanging by the neck beside a well, his breast torn by rifle-shots — a ghastly spectacle, to warn the people that they must not pollute the water to prevent the German soldiery from drinking it. We pushed on, a shade sickened by an object so repulsive. A beautiful bronze figure of an angel, the signal of the establishment of a benevolent sisterhood, appeared above low trees on the right. There was a remote rattle of musketry in the same direction, and occasionally the grumbling, beyond wooded hills, of cannon.

Soon we were on the edge of the field of combat in which the foremost German division had struck headlong the flank of the, then on the ground, immensely superior forces of the French, and clung to them with desperate tenacity; and the trees began to be whitened with fresh splinters showing where the fire hail had stricken them, and dead men and horses were in the way. As we emerged from the wooded ravine and neared the plain, now famous and marked with a multitude of monuments recording the names of the glorious dead, so far as the officers are concerned, and the numbers of the sacrificed soldiers, a horseman who seemed to be confused accosted us and asked if we could render assistance to wounded who were sheltered in the leafy brush a little way off; but we were not skilled in surgery or able to do more than take care of ourselves. Another horseman appeared riding in the direction we were going and asked whether we had seen the King. We had not for some days been favored with a view of his Majesty, but it seemed likely that the inquiry might be a valuable pointer. The noble field, superb, widespread, lined far and near with Lombardy poplars standing in endless and lofty ranks along the white roads, opened before us as we mounted the crest of the Moselle hills from which the Romans built, when they were rulers of the world, an aqueduct far across the valley of that river, as a row of venerable broken arches still strangely testifies.

We were on the battle-field of Mars-la-Tour, and about us were strewn, "like the leaves of the forest when autumn has blown," knapsacks and letters, caps and helmets and canteens, and there were furrows that cannon-balls had plowed, and occasionally an unexploded shell, its copper nipples shining in the dust, but few dead soldiers or horses; for the burial parties had been busy, and we had not reached that part of the stricken field where the slaughter by cavalry and artillery had taken place. An ambulance had been shattered by a shell, and out of the wreck had tumbled an armchair in good condition. This I picked up and carried along, and was now equipped with this chair, which seemed to give me confidence, a field-glass a foot long, a bag containing writing-materials and a cake and a half of chocolate, with a small bit of boiled mutton reserved for emergencies.

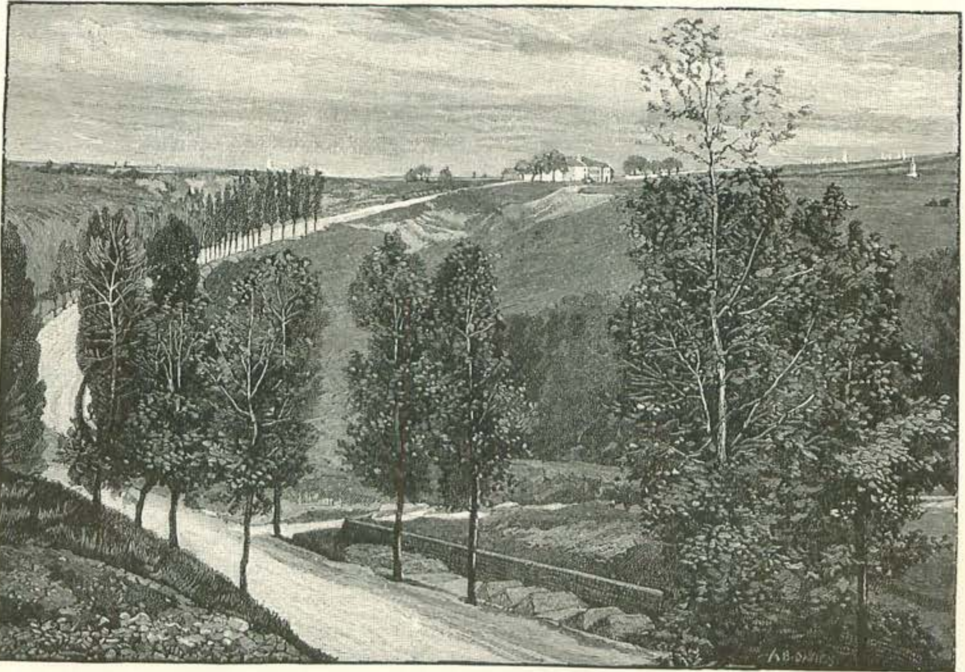
On a gentle ridge of the easily rolling landscape to the north we observed a group, evidently officers, with three carriages a few rods to the rear, and upon inspecting them with the big glass, I saw that one of the carriages was that of the King, whose postilions were readily distinguished by their high silk hats covered with black silk oilcloth. We moved, as rapidly as our fatigue permitted, to join his Majesty, thinking he had chosen at least as good a position for observation as we were likely to find for our-

selves. Besides, we thought, in our untutored way, that there would be a rational care taken of his personal safety. Drawing nigh, we saw the famous staff around the King and Moltke. They had halted on the way from Rezonville to Gravelotte, at a point from which could be observed the movements of the right wing of the German army, and there they remained three hours. Bismarck was reclining on a blanket doubled and thrown on the dusty ground, where there were remnants of stalks of clover. He had a French knapsack made of calf-skin with the hair on for a pillow, and his head was sheltered by a strip of French tent, held by two wooden spikes. His attitude was that of dejection as well as weariness. The King wore a very long light blue overcoat and his helmet, and was erect and alert. A colored servant was in charge of his carriage. The three carriages belonged respectively to the King, Bismarck, and Moltke. Standing near the King, his feet wide apart, and holding a field-glass to his eyes, was General Philip H. Sheridan, who was Bismarck's guest, and had ridden to the field in the carriage of the Chancellor. The old uniform of Sheridan was dingy beside the new clothes worn by the German leaders, who had been in the field but three weeks, and had not encountered many rain and dust storms. The hour was twenty minutes after eleven, and the sounds of battle began to thicken and deepen. The scattering shots of the skirmishers were lost in the roar of firing by regiments, and the tremendous German artillery began to play like some sublime orchestra. There were many dead horses and many blood-stains about, and a penetrating, sour smell came from them. Between two swollen monsters I located my cherished chair, and, taking the only "reserved seat" at that stupendous performance, adjusted my field-glass, and was soon absorbed in one of the grandest scenes that mortal ever gazed upon. It occurred to me at the moment that no descriptive language could be better than that employed by Henry J. Raymond in writing of the battle of Solferino. He said that two storm-clouds seemed to have descended to the earth, and to be pouring their lightnings and thunderings into each other. The masses of pearly white gunpowder smoke—here pillars of fleecy snow rising to the skies, and there whirling abysses of vapor, vibrating as if electrified—were darkly streaked by burning villages, and the sky over the French lines where the iron rain of the German artillery fell was spotted with the tiny clouds puffed by the exploding shells. I could see the galloping of horsemen bearing orders through the fiery mist—the surging march of the troops, block after block of the blue divisions of Germany crowding to the left—the sparkle of steel and of the helmets, like flashes of starlight on a raging sea—the long darts of fire from the breech-loading cannon of the Germans, which were each discharged at times almost as fast as a cowboy fires his revolver—I could discern the French positions for near three miles outlined by flickering fire, and billows of smoke that seemed to swell from a series of Niagaras; and I heard the awful uproar comprehending a thousand stunning shocks, rising at times to a majesty that was beyond all faculty of measurement, and reminded one of a transcendent burst of music—but there was nothing in all the wonderful pyrotechnics and monstrous clamor to tell how the battle was going.

That which confounded me was the German army facing towards Germany. How that could have happened came conjecturally and slowly. Mr. Conway was missing from my side for a while, and returned with a rough plan of the battle, drawn on an envelope by an obliging staff-officer, a Grand Duke, I believe. He explained thus: "The fight on the day before yesterday was for the road from Metz to Paris. The road forked at the village yonder, where you can see the spire of the church through the fleecy smoke. There is the village of Gravelotte, which will name the battle. The northern branch leads to Verdun. The fight to-day is to drive the French into Metz. That will prevent the concentration of their forces between us and Paris."

The French front was near six miles long, beginning at a turn of high ground beyond a deep ravine east of Gravelotte, and extending to St. Privat and Doncourt, with several stone houses and villages, notably Amanvilliers and Mosku, for points of support. The German plan was as simple as swinging a gate. It was to hold the French firmly all along their position and then crush their right flank. This task was assigned to the Guards. The French were placed very much as to selection of ground as the English were at Waterloo, though covering five times the space, behind what might be termed a crest, a wrinkle in the ample plain with a long, easy slope in front, giving their Chassepot rifles—a better weapon than that of the German—a broad, clear sweep.

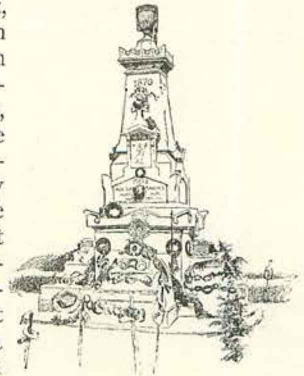
At three points the impetuosity of the Germans carried them too fast and exposed them to a murderous reception. Steinmetz thought the French yielding on their left, which was really invulnerable, and rushed his masses of brave men to hopeless slaughter. He suffered for this the stern displeasure of the King and disappeared from history. The Saxons, a mile and a half farther north, were premature and



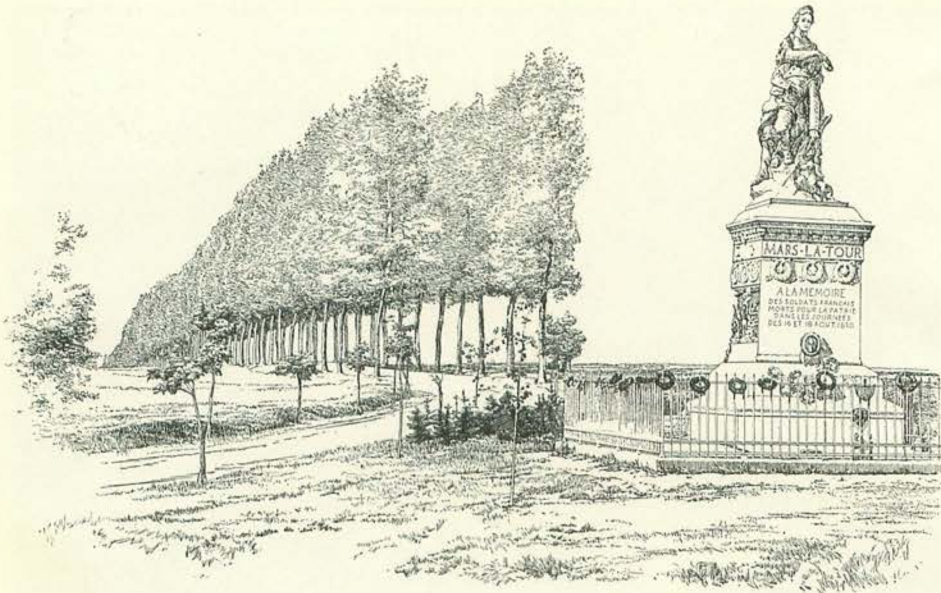
RAVINE OF GRAVELOTTE.

endured shocking losses, holding their costly gains of bloody ground but making no serious impression. Their artillery did surprising work, as we could see, but was sorely shattered. The Guards too, carrying out the flanking movement in the northern portion of the field, were cut down in thousands, their slain literally covering the field. This massacre of the flower of the army was the most memorable incident of the day, and the valor of the French at St. Privat is one of the comforts of their broken country. Far away to the north were visible, from my point of observation, two mingling clouds, a mountainous mass of yellowish mist, and vast white pillars of smoke like the steam that swells from Vesuvius in eruption, and frothy specks that told of the splutter of shells. The French stood up to their work manfully. In spite of all the frauds of the Empire they had one real army, and with the huge fortress of Lorraine behind them, they did their duty with a devoted courage that redeemed the fighting reputation of their race.

Marshal Bazaine was a good but not a great soldier, faithful to the Empire but not truly loyal, under the test of misfortune, to France. His army was well placed and bravely fought, but he made one mistake that seems unpardonable and cost him the final disaster of the day. He could not divest himself of the erroneous opinion that the point of peril was on the left — that the purpose of the Germans was to turn his left instead of his right flank, and to thrust their columns between him and the river and the city. He was protected in that quarter by fortifications that were far too strong for assault or even for bombardment; and though the impending blow on his right had been announced unmistakably, one would think, by the whole movement of the German army, he held his reserves for the imaginary stroke on the left until it was too late to save the right, which was his flank in the air, and they could only cover the disorderly retreat of the troops that, after standing so successfully against the Guards, were at last overwhelmed and thrust by main force, with intolerable fire and pressure of steel, from the field they had made glorious forever. If Bazaine had used his reserves in time on the right, or had put them in support of an aggressive movement on the left, the fortunes of the day, it is the judgment of military men, might have been changed; but such was the superiority of the German army that there was hardly a chance, even with management the most consummate,



MONUMENT TO THE FRENCH SOLDIERS WHO DIED UNDER THE WALLS FOR THEIR COUNTRY.



ROAD FROM THE BATTLE-FIELD TO PARIS.

to inflict upon it such a defeat as to impair its organization, or to throw it back into the valley of the Moselle through the scarred and blood-stained ravines of Gorze.

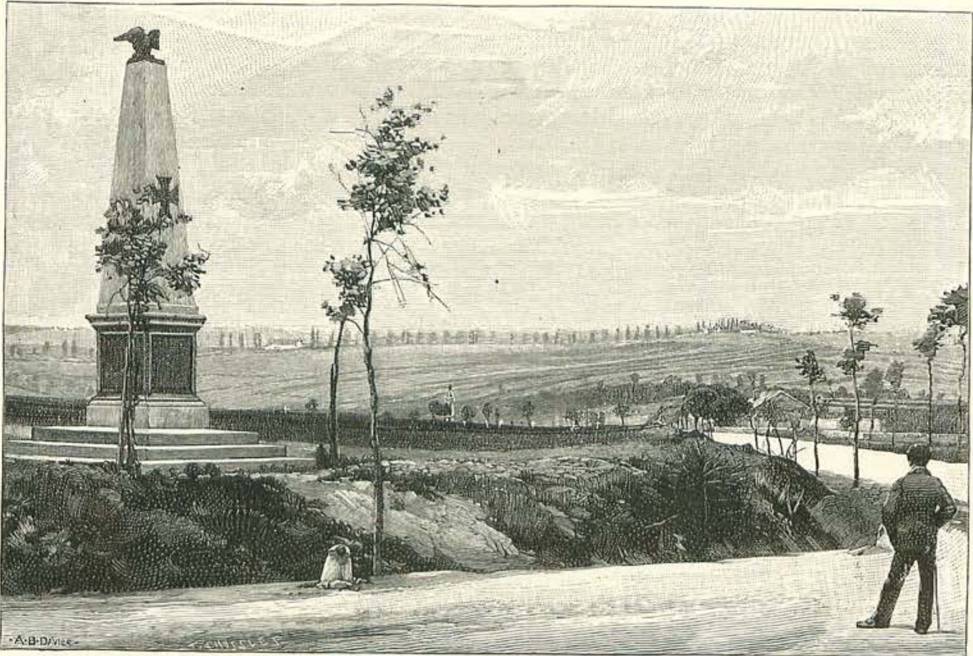
Late in the afternoon the declining sun shone like a globe of dull red fire through the dust rising above the twinkling bayonets and helmet spikes of a long column of German re-enforcements who perplexed us extremely by turning up from the west. The King with Bismarck, Sheridan, and the staff mounted their horses and rode forward at a rapid trot, and my companion and I, attempting to follow on foot, found that the farther we advanced the less we could see; so, exhausted with the exertions and excitements of the long, sultry day, we returned to the spot the King had abandoned to go into a place that we afterward learned was too warm for his Majesty, causing dismay at the prospect of his personal danger. Sheridan's keen eye had detected the gravity of the situation from a monarchial point of view, but the old man would have his way, and had the good fortune to sleep that night unharmed in a dingy little stone house in Gravelotte that bears an inscription telling the story. Upon that part of the field which I could see, the French, though hard pressed, held their lines unflinchingly until night, and defended them when it grew dark with bursts of fire that played along the low, dusky ridge like summer lightning on a cloudy horizon. But they had lost the grim game. Their right was smashed and gone, and the rest must go, and the next morning they were out of the way of the main body of the invaders, and "bottled up" in Metz. The Germans had paid a frightful price for their victory, many thousands of brave men having fallen in their ranks who might have been spared had the generalship that directed them been less mechanical, and if they had not in their confident course committed the dangerous mistake of underrating their enemy.

MONUMENT TO SILESIAN GRENADIER REGIMENT, NO. 11, NEAR GORZE.

As we retired from the field, wondering how we were to pass the night, tired, faint with hunger and parched with thirst, shaken by the enormous tragedy we had seen as in a vision,— feeling as if we had witnessed a combination of earthquakes and tornadoes,— the musketry still crackling and the artillery at intervals bursting forth in prodigious volleys, we had the fortune to encounter an artist for a German illustrated newspaper, sketching the murky scene over which hovered dust and smoke, dimly and fantastically lighted by the flames of burning houses, while the air was filled with the marvelous murmur and hum and clang of the voices and arms of myriads of men in eager and angry motion. The artist hailed us, and his friendly words were a joyful surprise. He knew we must belong to the press— for we did not look as if we could have any

other business — and wanted to know where we were going to sleep and to get supper. If there was anything in the wide and gloomy world we did not know, that was it; and our artist friend invited us — and I never prized an invitation more — to go to his room in Gorze and take his bed, for he should sit up all night with his work. We accepted that invitation in part, had mutton-chops and coffee — luxuries that an hour before would have been incredible — and were too happy to sleep on a carpeted floor, where there was neither dust nor dew, to think of going to bed.

The following morning we returned to the field not knowing whether the battle was to be renewed, for we knew nothing of the decisive defeat of the French on their right. The first man we encountered was the distinguished war correspondent Archibald Forbes, not then, as now, a man famous for writing history under fire. He had a skeleton horse that tottered when he trotted, and soon helped himself to a fine saddle that had belonged to a French officer — the horse and his rider were "in one red burial blent." Forbes was an old soldier, and not satisfied until he got to the ragged edge of the front, where the skirmish line was drawn, and had a chat with the skirmishers. The information to be gleaned in that quarter did not occur to Mr. Conway and me to be worth the effort, though there was no display of marksmanship just taking place, and we quietly, but I may say resolutely, parted with our adventurous friend. While walking on the side of the road where the sacrifice of cavalry had been made by the superheated Steinmetz, four men rode by,— two officers followed by orderlies,— and at a glance Bismarck and Sheridan were recognized; and the latter, who had n't known that I was looking after the army, wanted, with an uncommon want in his tone, to know what I was doing there and what I meant by doing so. I answered that I was there because it seemed to be an interesting part of the country. Bismarck laughed heartily at this exchange of Americanisms, and graciously — his lips, but not his eyes, smiling — bowed to his St. Avold acquaintance who had wanted to buy a horse and had given the Chancellor his confidence. I said to Sheridan, "Please tell me what happened yesterday." "Did n't you see the fight?" he replied. "Yes," said I, "as much as I could of it; but I know nothing about it except that the French held on well for the day, but must have fallen back in the night." "Ah," said he, "the Germans won, though the French held their ground along here. Bazaine is driven into Metz — headquarters goes back to-night to Pont-à-Mousson; the Crown Prince is on the march to Paris." Sheridan's report made matters plain. We spent some hours looking over portions of the stricken field, which was far too extensive to be comprehended within one day's walk, and witnessed many harrowing scenes of the burial of the dead and the agonies of



MONUMENT TO THE 29TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, NEAR ST. HUBERT.

MONUMENT TO THE 45TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, AND COLUMBARY.

the wounded and the dying. That night we made our way painfully and drearily back to Pont-à-Mousson, walking much of the distance, and for the rest hiring a wretched carriage with an exhausted horse and a sleepy driver. Tramping near one of the sinister villages through which the road ran, we had to get out of the way of a carriage with high-stepping horses and humming wheels, guarded by a squad of lancers riding in twos; and as the party whirled and clattered by, on the back seat we made out, through the shadows of the night, the white flannel cap and portly form of Bismarck and the burly figure of Phil Sheridan. I thought of calling and asking if Conway and I could n't take the front seat, and some years after inquired of Sheridan what would have been the response to such a call, and he said, "Why, we would have taken you in." That would have saved leg-ache, but I was too modest. Many things would have been changed but for that.

Seventeen years after, on the anniversary of the battle of Mars-la-Tour, I returned to the field in a carriage, with a French guide and a driver, all found in Metz, and spent two days studying the ground, with the aid of maps, seeking to revive and verify memories, and keenly relishing the contrast of the occasions. Metz is a dismal city. In the hotels as many swords as hats are hanging in the halls. The boots displayed in the windows are decorated with spurs. By night and by day the roll of drums and the bugle-calls, the tramp of battalions of infantry and the clatter of squadrons of cavalry, are almost incessantly heard. The beautiful park, adorned with chestnut-trees, that overlooks the broad and shining expanse of the valley of the Moselle, and from which the blue knots of lofty hills far up the river are seen, is deserted by the French and at night is inexpressibly lonesome. The statue of Marshal Ney, musket in hand, as he fired on the banks of the Beresina the last shot of the Grand Army on the retreat from Russia, glitters somberly under an electric light, solitary and alone in gloomy state. Looking at Ney's striking figure in the lonely night, his attitude seems to be one of a defiant listener, who expects a signal that shall be a speedy summons to heroic and mighty deeds. Who shall say what may some time stir again that ominous air?

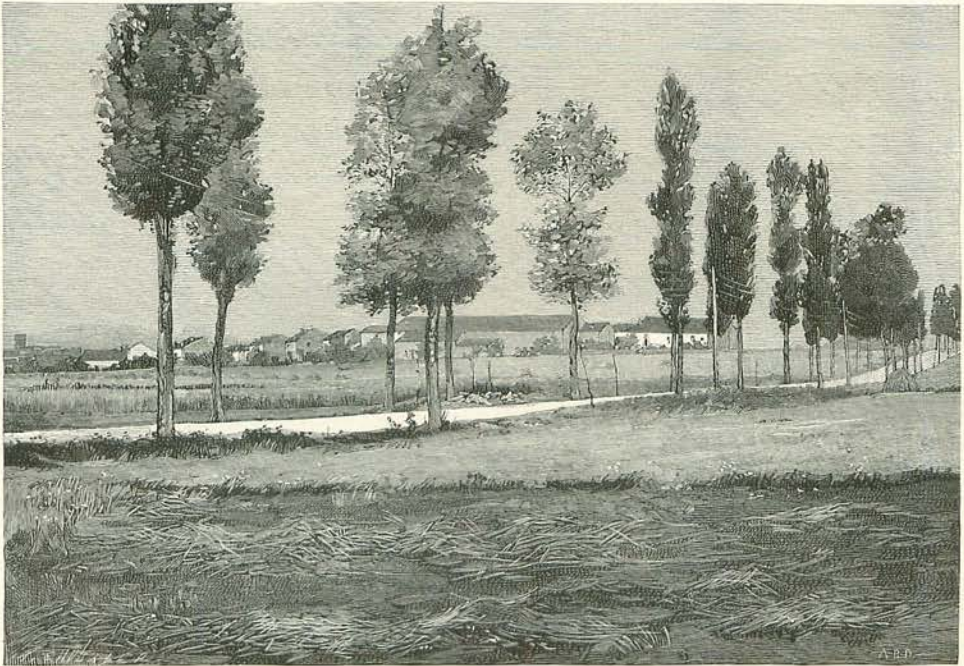
AMBULANCE CEMETERY AT BOULAY.

There are very strong fatigue parties of German soldiers marched out every morning to work on the fortifications, which have been modernized and extended in every direction, and can never be reduced save as they were taken from the French — by blockade. The garrison of Metz is an army ready for instantaneous active service. There is a camp of thousands of cavalry that could be mustered for a charge in a few minutes. On the way into the city from the battle-fields on the west — the walls of the memorable place are surrounded on all sides by the scenes of combats — I met within a mile and a half three cavalry patrols, equipped and vigilant, as if in expectation of immediate action. The neighboring villages are intensely French, and one sees in the sad, severe faces of the people hopes of vengeance miserably deferred, but cherished without a shadow of turning or remorse. The German conquerors are not diffident or delicate in their ways. They are not unwilling the conquered shall feel that the yoke is heavy, and that the fetters are tempered and sharpened steel. One thing to their credit is, that they insist upon the education of the children of the people, and the little French boys growing up for the massacres of the future go about with their school-books, as if the highly paternal form of government was looking after them closely and really expected to Germanize them.

MONUMENT TO PRUSSIAN GUARDS, NEAR ST. PRIVAT.

During my two-days' second visit to the fields of Gravelotte and Mars-la-Tour I began at St. Privat, which I had not seen before, and followed the French line to Point de Jour, which ended the first day's exploration.

The next day I followed my own track to the field as closely as practicable, passing through Gorze, recognizing the golden angel on the hill as an old and charming friend, and the ravines where we first saw officers who had been slain, lying with their caps



SCENE OF THE FAMOUS CAVALRY FIGHTING OF AUGUST 16, 1870.

covering their distorted faces; and pushed on zealously, seeking landmarks and recovering, so far as might be, the vanished recollection of the broad and picturesque landscape, as enchanting in its loveliness—for there is no land in this world that is fairer than this—as it is distinguished in its history.

The same strips of woods; the long, white roads; the rows of feathery poplars, their towering plumes touching the skies; the sunny sweeps of fertile and fenceless fields; the softly rolling hills; the dusky villages, their low-plastered walls roofed with red tiles—all were there, but how mysteriously great the change! The armies had gone their ways. I could not find the house in Gorze where I had slept, and the town was three times as large as I had thought, and no new house to account for the increase. The distances from place to place were greater than I had believed them, and the roads were to me so misplaced as to escape identification. There are a multitude of monuments dotting and dominating the immense plateau—hundreds of simple iron crosses, and many imposing structures, some of them strikingly artistic; and as it was the anniversary of the death of tens of thousands, all the crosses and more ambitious memorials were decorated with wreaths. Several of the graves bore records of the burial of hundreds of men in each, and there were long lists of the officers who were moldering where they perished. In a field that had just been closely harvested I could not find a trace of a trench—not a mark—where I had seen more than a thousand Frenchmen laid in a ditch and the earth shoveled upon them. Or, if there was a sign of that huge grave, it must have been in the blood-red poppies that bloomed on low stems in the golden stubble. I thought that the spot where I had placed my chair, while the world was in a tremor from the booming batteries, and where I had drawn my field-glass and looked upon the vivid and startling panorama of the battle of the giants, in which one empire fell and another arose, was indelibly fixed in my memory. There I had been for hours on a day that decided the destiny of nations, within a few yards of the victorious King and the Field-Marshal and the Chancellor, and each tree and house and hill should be familiar; but I could not find the place, and after an effort, absurdly prolonged to make sure, gave it up. And while I never had been boastful that I knew much of the battle, from

MONUMENT AT ST. MARIE-AUX-CHÊNES.

STREET IN GRAVELOTTE.

the accident of being an eye-witness, it was a surprise, when I compared some of my impressions with the charts exactly locating the forces on both sides, to find how far off I had been as to the verities, and how little I knew of that which I saw, or thought I saw, in an atmosphere of miraculous transformations.

The battle-fields, though far within France in war time, are all included within what is called German territory; but the village from which the combat of Mars-la-Tour takes its portentous name is on the French side of the new line, and I reached it to obtain luncheon and to see a monument erected to the "immortal memory" of the French soldiers who fell on the 16th and 18th of August, 1870, at Rezonville-Vionville — as France names the earlier contests — and Gravelotte in defense of their country. The monument is impressive, and was loaded with decorations and surrounded by a swarm of people, fierce with passionate enthusiasm for their gallant dead and for the revenges they believe in and never forget. It was the anniversary day for that field, and in their way the French on the frontier were celebrating it with tears of grievous rage and frantic exclamations. The walls of the church in this place are filled with plain tablets giving in long array the names of officers who died for France and were entered upon the rolls of glory seventeen years before, as they and those who loved them fondly hold in their religion, that teaches the worship of France.

In the door of one of the houses of this village was seated a boy of ten years with a bright face, typically French, waving a tiny tricolored flag, and singing a song that called it the flag of glory — "*O le drapeau de gloire!*"

As I passed beyond the ravine behind Gravelotte, on the road to Metz, the sky was black with a storm that had been rising and muttering several hours, and the lurid cloud that at last rushed from the west threw the grand field of battle into the deepest shadow, when along its formidable front blazed with tropical intensity streams of lightning, followed with ringing grandeur by an outburst, that seemed to shake the historic hills, of the artillery of the heavens; and as the reverberations rolled, I closed my eyes and almost persuaded myself that the old time had returned and the battle was on again, and that I could hear once more "the thunder of the captains and the shouting."

NOTE.— In the Franco-Prussian war there were three battles west of Metz before the investment of that city. The first was August 14, 1870. This was a blow by the advance of the Germans, which had passed the Moselle at Pont-à-Mousson, upon the flank of the French retreating from Metz, stopping their march. It was a swift stroke, made with great resolution and a sacrifice of blood by the Germans, to gain a position from which the retreat of the French army could be stayed. Five German brigades fought against 5 French divisions, and lost 5000 men, including 222 officers. The French loss was 3608 men, including 200 officers. In this contest the Germans did not reach the roads by which the French were moving. The great combat of Mars-la-Tour took place on the 16th. It was a gallant struggle, the French outnumbering the Germans,

whose forces were coming up by desperate marches. The German loss was 15,790 men, including 711 officers, and the French loss 17,007 men, including 879 officers. There was nothing decisive when night ended the battle, but in the night the French fell back and lost the roads to Paris. The Germans had headed off the French and were facing east, and their next move was to strike the French with all their force and hurl them back upon Metz. Bazaine retired to the Gravelotte position, and the Germans with superior numbers attacked them on the 18th, and succeeded in their object, but paid a frightful price for it. There were several costly moves on the German side, and their loss during the day was about 20,000 men, of whom 900 were officers; but the French loss was much less, as they clung to their ground, which was well chosen, except at the right—but that was vital. It was there that the Prussian Guard lost 307 officers and nearly 8000 men in half an hour. The French army exceeded 150,000 and the German 230,000 men, making a total of nearly 400,000 combatants. The three battle-fields of the 14th, 16th, and 18th of August, 1870, are one vast and beautiful field, decorated with monuments and crosses almost innumerable.

Murat Halstead.

25TH HESSIAN DIVISION.

A SECRET SONG.

O SNOWBIRD! snowbird!
Welcome thy note when maple boughs are bare;
Thy merry twitter, thy emphatic call,
Like silver trumpets pierce the freezing air,
What time the radiant flakes begin to fall.
We know thy secret. When the day grows dim,
Far from the homes that thou hast cheered so long,
Thy chirping changes to a twilight hymn!
O snowbird, snowbird, wherefore hide thy song?

O snowbird! snowbird!
Is it a song of sorrow none may know,
An aching memory? Nay, too glad the note!
Untouched by knowledge of our human woe,
Clearly the crystal flutings fall and float.
We hear thy tender ecstasy, and cry:
"Lend us thy gladness that can brave the chill!"
Under the splendors of the winter sky,
O snowbird, snowbird, carol to us still.

Elizabeth Gostwycke Roberts.