

of Sedan with a picturesque group of round turreted towers of the sixteenth century, very useless against four pounder Krup field pieces. This building, I believe, is now an arsenal. Beyond this was the citadel in the heart of Sedan, on a rising hill above the Meuse, to the Southeast, but completely commanded by hills on both sides of the river, which runs in front of the citadel.

The French had flooded the low meadows in the valley before coming to the railroad bridge at Basaille, in order to stop the Germans from advancing on the town in that direction, with their usual stupidity, for one can find no other word for it. The French had failed to mine the bridge at Basaille, and it was of immense service to the Prussians throughout the battle. The Prussians actually threw up earthworks on the iron bridge itself, to protect it from the French, who more than once attempted, early in the day, to storm the bridge, in the hope of breaking the Bavarian communication between the right and left banks of the Meuse. This they were unable to do, and, although their cannon shot had almost demolished the parapet of the bridge, the bridge itself was never materially damaged. On the projecting spurs of the hill, crowned by the woods of Larmafu, of which I have already spoken, the Bavarians had stood two batteries of six-pounder, rifled, breech-loading, steel Krupp guns, which kept up a duello till the very end of the day, with the siege guns of Sedan. Across the Meuse, still further to the rank flank, or rather to the east, for our line was a circular one—a crescent at first—with Sedan in the centre, like the star on the Turkish standard, was an undulating plain above the village of Basaille, terminating about a mile and a half west of Sedan, at the woods near Rubschouf and Medway, that is to say, in the line from Basaille north, there is a ravine watered by a tiny brook which was the scene of the most desperate struggle and of the most frightful slaughter of the whole battle. This stream, whose name I have forgotten, if it ever had one, runs right behind the town of Sedan from the woods of Fliegreuse. On the north, behind the town, rises a hill dotted with cottages and fruit-laden orchards and crowned by the woods of Lagarrene which runs down to the valley of which I have just spoken.

Between the road and town were several French camps, their whole shelter of tents standing clear against the dark forest of trees. In the camp we could see throughout the day huge masses of troops which were not used; even during the height of battle they stood as idle as Fitzjohn Porter at the second battle of Bull Run. We imagined that they must have been undisciplined gardes mobile, whom the French generals dared not bring out against their enemy, the Prussians. To the left of the three French camps, separated from them by a wooded ravine, was a long hill, something like one of those in Long Island. This hill, on which were some of the hardest fights of the day, formed one of the keys to the position of the French army. When once its crests were covered with Prussian artillery the whole town of Sedan was at the mercy of the German guns, as they were not only above town but the town was almost within musket range of them. Further to the left lay the village of Illy, which was set on fire early in the day by the French shells; a broken railway bridge, blown up by the French to protect their right was a conspicuous object. The right above the railroad bridge, on the line to Messieres, was a wooded hill, crowded by men. It was here that the Crown Prince and his staff stood during the day, having a rather more extensive, but a less central view, and therefore more desirable than ours, where stood the King, Count Bismarck, Von Roon, the war Minister, General Moltke and Generals Sheridan and Forsythe, to say nothing of your correspondent.

Having thus endeavored to give some pointed idea of the scene, of what is in all probability the decisive battle of the war, I will give an account of the position of the different corps at the commencement of action, promising that all movements were of the simplest possible nature. The object of the Prussian Generals being merely to close the crescent of troops, with which they began, into a circle by effecting a junction between the Saxon corps, one of their right, and the Prussian corps on their left. This junction took place about noon near the little village of Dely, on the base of the Illwine, behind Sedan, of which I have already spoken once. This terrible circle form-

ed, and well formed together; it grew steadily smaller and smaller, until at last the fortifications of Sedan itself entered it. On the extreme right were the Saxons. One corps d'armee with King William's guards had suffered terribly at Gravelotte, where they met the Imperial guard, and the King would not allow them to be so cruelly decimated. Justice compels me to state that this arrangement was very far from being pleasing to the guards themselves, who were very anxious to be in the front of the battle. The guards and Saxons, then about 50,000 strong, were all day on the right bank of the Meuse, between Hubicourt and Lochapela, at which latter village Prince Albert, of Saxony, who was in command of two corps which had been formed into a little extra army by themselves. By day light of Thursday the ground, from Rubicourt to the Meuse, was occupied by the first Bavarian corps; the second Bavarian corps extended their front near the Bazaille Railroad bridge to a point on the highway from Doncherry and Sedan, not far from the little village of Torrey, below the hill on which the Crown Prince placed the ground. From Torrey to Illy, through the large village of Floing, was held by the first and second Prussian corps, belonging to Prince Frederick Charles, and temporarily attached to the army of the Crown Prince. This was the position of the troops at about nine o'clock on Thursday morning, Sept. 1st, and no great advance took place till later than that, for the artillery had, at first, all the work to do. Still further to the left, near Doncherry, were twenty thousand Wurtembergers, ready to cast off the French from Messieres, in case of their making a push for that fortress.

The number of the Prussian troops engaged was estimated by Gen. Moltke at 250,000, and that of the French at 120,000. We know that McMahon had with him on Tuesday 120,000 men. That is four corps of his own that was lately commanded by Gen. De Failley, and under Gen. Lebrun; that of Felix Donay, or rather of Gen. Abel Donay, killed at Weissenburg, and the fourth corps, principally composed of the garde mobile, the name of whose commander has escaped me. McMahon, although wounded, commander-in-chief on the French side.

It is almost needless to say that the real commander-in-chief of the Prussians was Von Moltke, with the Crown Prince and Prince Albert of Saxony, who were immediately in command. There were a few stray cannon shots fired, merely sighting shots however; but the real battle did not commence until six o'clock, becoming a sharp artillery fight at nine, when the batteries had each got within easy range, and the shells began to do serious mischief. At eleven fifty-five, the valley, in the rear of Sedan, which had opened about 11.25, became exceedingly lively, being one continual rattle, only broken by the growling of the guns which played with deadly effect in the Saxon and Bavarian columns. Gen. Sheridan, by whose side I was standing, told me he did not ever remember of hearing such a well-sustained small arms fire, it made itself heard above the roar of the batteries at our feet. At twelve o'clock a Prussian battery of six guns, on the slope above the broken railway bridge over the Meuse, near Lavellette, had silenced two batteries of French guns at the foot of Bare Hills already mentioned, near the village of Flairy. At ten minutes past 12 o'clock, no longer supported by their artillery, they were compelled to retire to Flairy, and soon after the junction between the Saxons and Prussians behind Sedan was announced to us by General Von Roon, who was eagerly peering through a large telescope, as being safely completed. From this moment the results of the battle could no longer be doubtful. The French were completely surrounded and brought to bay. At 12.25 we were all astonished to see crowds of retreating French infantry on the hill between Flairy and Sedan, the Prussian battery making good practice with the percussion shells amongst the receding ranks. The whole hill, for a quarter of an hour, was covered with Frenchmen running rapidly. Less than half an hour after, 12.50 Gen. Van Roon called our attention to another French column in full retreat, to the right of Sedan, on the road leading from Bazelle to Lagavenne wood. They never halted until they got to a small red roofed house on the outskirts of Sedan itself. Almost at the same moment General Sheridan, who was using my opera glass, asked me to look at the third French column, moving up the road through Lagavenne

above Sedan, doubtless to support the troops defending the important Bazelle ravine, to the northeast of the town. At one o'clock the French batteries on the edge of the road towards Torry, and above it, opened a vigorous fire on the advancing Prussian columns of the third corps, whose evident intention it was to storm the hill north west of Lagavenne and to gain the key of the position on that side. At 11.5 o'clock, yet another French battery, near the wood, opened on the Prussian column, which were compelled to keep shifting their ground till ready for their final rush at the hills, and in order to avoid offering so good a mark to French shells. Shortly afterward, we saw the first Prussian skirmishers, on the crest of the Lagavenne hills, above Toney. They did not seem in strength, and Gen. Sheridan, who was standing behind me, exclaimed, 'Oh the beggars were too weak, they can never hold that position against all those French.' The General's prophecy soon proved correct, for the French advancing, at least six to one, the Prussians were forced to retreat down the hill to seek reinforcements from the columns which were hurrying to their support. In five minutes they came to the attack again. This time they were in greater force, but were still terribly inferior to resist those huge French masses. 'Good heavens! The French cuirassiers are going to charge them,' cried General Sheridan, and sure enough a regiment of cuirassiers, their helmets and breastplates flashing in the September sun, form in sections of squadrons and dash down upon the scattered Prussian skirmishers without turning to form in line. Squares are never used by them. The Prussian infantry received the Cuirassiers with a crushing quick fire, at about a hundred yards distance, loading and firing, with extreme rapidity and unflinching precision, into the dense French squadrons. The effect was startling: over went horses and men in numbers, in masses, in hundreds, and regiments of proud French Cuirassiers went hurriedly back, faster than they came. Back they went, scarcely a regiment in strength and not at all a regiment in form. Its comely array was suddenly changed into shapeless and helpless crowds of flying men. The moment the Cuirassiers turned back, the brave Prussians actually dashed forward in hot pursuit at double quick, the infantry plainly pursuing the flying cavalry. Such a thing has not often been recorded in the annals of war. I know not when an example to compare precisely with this has occurred. There was no more striking episode in the battle. When the French infantry saw the cavalry was thus fleeing before foot soldiers, they in their turn came forward and attacked the Prussians. The Prussian infantry waited quietly, enduring the rapid and telling fire from the Chassepots, until their enemies had drawn so near as to be within a hundred yards from them. Then they returned, with the needle gun, the rapid fire from the Chassepots, and the French infantry could no more endure the Prussian fire than their cavalry, to whose rescue they had come. The infantry fled in turn and followed the cavalry to the place from which they came, that is beyond the ridge some five hundred yards on the way to Sedan."

ILLINOIS.

The most disastrous conflagration which has visited this city for years, occurred this evening, involving the entire destruction of one of the finest blocks in the city, and a loss of between three and four million dollars, and, it is now feared, from ten to fifty lives. The fire broke out about five p.m. in the five story building of Lafin, Butler and Co's. paper warehouse on Wabash avenue, between Washington and Madison St., being south of the store, in the elegant block owned by John B. Drake, of Tremont House, J. V. Farwell & Co. and Thatcher Bros., the buildings all being five stories high, with a basement and French roof. The fire spread with fearful rapidity to Farwell & Co's. immense wholesale dry goods store, adjoining and in an incredible short space of time both buildings were wrapped in flames. Large numbers of employes of Farwell and others went into the store, and were engaged on the first and second floor getting out goods, shortly before a portion of the walls fell, carrying down both floors, and it is believed that not all of them got out. Some persons believe that fifty men were still in the building when the floors fell, and that they all perished.

It is generally thought however, that

not more than ten or twelve were lost, and this even is not certain. Several firemen were injured by the falling walls. From Farwell & Co's., the fire spread to Drake's block, over the most magnificent structures in the city, occupied by Kirkland, Ordway & Co., wholesale boot and shoe manufacturers, and by Smith & Nixon, and Lyon & Healey, music dealers; and although this building did not burn so rapidly as the others, at this hour, midnight, nothing but the north and west walls remain. The losses so far as ascertained of John V. Farwell & Co., Dry goods, is one million one hundred thousand dollars, to one million eight hundred thousand dollars; Insurance nine hundred thousand; Kirkland, Ordway & Co., boots and shoes, two hundred and fifty thousand; insurance \$150,000; Smith & Nixon and Lyons & Healey, music, \$150,000; insurance \$75,000; Lafin, Butler & Co., \$250,000; insured \$100,000; Field, Lieter & Co. had \$180,000 worth of dry goods stored in one of the burned buildings, insured for \$150,000. The loss in the buildings amounted to about \$450,000. Some of the goods were saved from the lower floors, but most of all the stock was consumed. Immense crowds, estimated at 50,000, gathered in the vicinity, crowding the streets and vacant lots.

HOMESTEAD LAW.

By act of Congress of May 20, 1862, any person who is the head of a family, or who has arrived at the age of twenty-one years, or has performed service in the army or navy, and is a citizen of the United States, or shall have filed his declaration of intention to become such, and has never borne arms against the Government of the United States, or given aid and comfort to its enemies, shall, from and after the 1st of January, 1863, be entitled to enter a quarter section (160 acres) of unappropriated public land, upon which he or she may have already filed a pre-emption claim, or which is subject to pre-emption, at \$1.25 per acre; or 80 acres of unappropriated lands at \$2.50 per acre. In order to make his or her title good to such lands, however, such person must make affidavit that such application is made for his or her exclusive use and benefit, and that said entry is made for the purpose of actual settlement and cultivation, and not, either directly or indirectly, for the use or benefit of any other person or persons, whomsoever; and upon filing the affidavit, and paying the sum of ten dollars to the register or receiver, such person shall be allowed to enter the land specified; but no certificate or patent is issued for the land until five years from the date of such entry, and the land must, during that time, be improved and not alienated (it cannot be taken for debt). At any time within two years after the expiration of said five years, the person making the entry, or, in case of his or her death, his widow or heirs, may, on proof by two witnesses that he or she has cultivated or improved said land, has not alienated any part of it, and has borne true allegiance to the United States, be entitled to a patent if at that time a citizen of the United States. In case of the abandonment of the lands by the person making the entry for a period of more than six months at one time, they revert to the United States.

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