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MY EXPERIENCES OF
THE WAR BETWEEN FRANCE AND GERMANY
BY
ARCHIBALD FORBES.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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OF
THE WAR
BETWEEN
FRANCE AND GERMANY

BY
ARCHIBALD FORBES,
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PART III.

PARIS.

CHAPTER I.

To the great Sortie.

HAVING returned to England for a few days after quitting Metz, it became my duty to proceed to the vicinity of Paris, to act as one of the watchers of the terrible drama which was being slowly but steadily played out with the beautiful metropolis as the centre of interest. The siege of Paris may be said to have commenced on the 21st of September, on which day the left flank of the 3rd army, and the right flank of the Maas army came together round Paris like the closing claws of a crab, and the grip was never relaxed till the preliminaries of peace were accepted at Bordeaux. The armies, divisions, brigades, and regiments dropped into their appointed places, as you may see the bolts of a strong safe-lock fall when the key is turned. The positions taken up on the opening days of the siege were not materially altered till the armistice. Temporarily and rarely an effort of the French caused a slight bulging out of the circle of

environment, but the lost ground was always recovered. During the two months that had elapsed before I found myself before Paris there had been many skirmishes; one important sortie in force, that of the 21st October; and the capture and recapture of Le Bourget, the former event, characterised by no great shedding of blood, occurring on the 28th October, the latter, a desperate and bloody affair, taking place on the 31st October. A detailed account of the recapture of Le Bourget, gathered from the leading participants who had been left alive, will be found in the course of this chapter.

Choosing the road I knew best, I left Sedan at ten o'clock on the night of the 13th of November in the company of a Prussian courier bound for the headquarters at Versailles, a favour for which I owe many acknowledgments to the distinguished personage through whose permission it was accorded. There was but very little interest attaching to a journey performed at full speed and without a halt, save for the purpose of changing horses at each stage. But one of its episodes may be worth narrating as an illustration of the watchful scrupulousness and sense of discipline animating German soldiers on sentry duty. My companion happened to be in civilian dress, not having expected to leave Belgium, and he therefore could not show the overt stamp of authenticity which the Feldjäger uniform confers. Thus at every turn he had laboriously to verify himself. Sedan was in a state of siege, the gates being shut at an early hour in the evening, and an order from the commandant had to be exhibited to the Landwehr under-officer at the gate before he would lower the drawbridge and make patent the way through the other defences. Just as we were outside, it occurred to my companion that he would not be likely to progress unless he had the watchword,