

WASHBURNE'S RECOLLECTIONS.

Recollections of a Minister to France, 1869-1877. By E. B. Washburne, LL.D. With illustrations. Charles Scribner's Sons. 2 vols.

THE history of Mr. Washburne's mission in Paris during the Franco-German war forms one of the most honorable and instructive chapters in American diplomacy. Rarely have such demands been made upon an American minister, and rarely have demands of this kind been met with such skill and soundness of judgment. Appointed to what in ordinary times is a somewhat ornamental position, as a recognition of long and honorable service in the exacting business of home politics, Mr. Washburne found himself suddenly plunged into the maddest sort of political vortex, around which all the forces of European statecraft were surging tumultuously. That delicate equilibrium, the maintenance of which is the chief care of Continental diplomacy, was for the moment disturbed by a shock such as comes only once or twice in a century. The post of the American Minister happened to be at the point of collision, and circumstances connected him in a peculiar and almost unprecedented manner with both parties to the conflict.

When Mr. Washburne, after his first year of service in Paris, went off to Carlsbad in July, 1870, for a summer's recreation, everything in the diplomatic horizon was serene. Two weeks later came the news of the French declaration of war, and he was again at his legation. Here he remained for the next ten months. During this time Paris, as the final battle-ground of the war, and as the centre of revolutionary movement, was the theatre of events only paralleled by the great drama of 1789-1815. The actors were changed, the order of the scenes was inverted, but the incidents were largely the same: siege, capitulation, the fall of a Napoleonic empire, revolution, mob government, terror—each followed the other, on a miniature scale, perhaps, but with more breathless rapidity. In this succession of crises, the American Minister, remaining steadily at his post, was, if not an active participant, at least much more than a mere spectator, and his delicate and exacting duties were discharged with extraordinary courage, energy, and discretion.

Mr. Washburne found upon his arrival that the North German Confederation, on the point of withdrawing its embassy from Paris, had asked him to take charge of the interests of its subjects. Similar requests soon followed from Saxony, Hesse, and Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. The necessary authority was given by cable from Washington, the consent of the French Government was sought and obtained, and in less than a week after war had been declared, Mr. Washburne found himself the custodian of the German Embassy and its archives, and, what was much more serious and burdensome, the sole protector of German subjects in France. Of these there were estimated to be 50,000 in Paris alone. The news from the frontier served to inflame the bitter animosity with which they were regarded by the Parisians, and the duties of their guardian proved to be no sinecure. He was to stand between them and the mob on the one hand, and between them and the Government on the other.

The Government early found itself obliged to define its position. Notwithstanding the great importance of the question, there is no fixed principle in international law to govern the treatment of enemies found in the country on the outbreak of war. The ancient rule was, that they might be regarded as prisoners of

war and their property confiscated, but the harshness of the rule has led to its gradual disuse. The usual course is to permit the enemy's subjects to reside at large in the country and to engage in their ordinary pursuits, subjecting them only to a surveillance strict enough to prevent them from giving information or assistance to their own state; while those who desire it are allowed to return home within a reasonable time, unless, of course, they belong to the enemy's army. This is the most liberal policy that a belligerent can be expected to pursue. A third course is to require the departure of all subjects of the enemy; but this rule, like the first, being harsh in its operation, is only resorted to in cases of military necessity.

In 1870 the question was therefore to a great extent an open one, and the efforts of Mr. Washburne did much to bring about a humane and enlightened settlement of it. The cause of the friendless Germans was espoused as earnestly and as skilfully as if their advocate had been one of themselves. At the beginning of the war the French Government resolved to adopt the second of the courses described. By the proclamation of July 20, German citizens were left at liberty to continue their residence in France, and were to enjoy the protection of the laws as before the war, so long as their conduct gave no cause of complaint. A question arose, however, as to the departure of those who did not wish to stay. The American Minister was at once overwhelmed with applications for permission to return to Germany, and he promptly urged the claims of the applicants upon the Foreign Office.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Duc de Gramont, refused to grant the permission to males within the age of military service, that is, under forty years. In this decision the Government doubtless exercised its strict legal right. It is admitted that a belligerent may detain subjects of the enemy who actually form a part of his armed forces. Of the 100,000 or more Germans in France, a considerable number—enough, certainly, to add materially to the fighting strength of the German Army—were within the prescribed limits. It was evident that many of these were leaving France to take part in the war. Under the laws of their country they would be required to take part as soon as they found themselves within its borders. As far as increasing the numbers which Germany would bring into the field, and the numbers which France would be compelled to fight, it made no difference whether they were already enlisted or about to be enlisted. As the Duc de Gramont clearly put it in his letter to Mr. Washburne, "No rule of international law obliges a belligerent to allow the departure from his territory of enemy's subjects, who, from the day of their return to their own country, will be enrolled in the ranks to take part in hostilities."

Mr. Washburne's rejoinder to the letter of the Foreign Office was a masterpiece of diplomatic correspondence, a model state paper. He did not deny the absolute legality of the Government's decision; on the contrary, he distinctly conceded it. But with a deferential courtesy that disarmed all criticism, and a simple dignity and grace of expression, he pleaded the alien cause which had been committed to him. The embarrassments of his anomalous position disappear in his firm but polished sentences. He could not win his case, but so strongly were the French authorities impressed by his tone and temper that, from this time on, he never failed to obtain a respectful and friendly hearing, and in all cases where it could possibly be done, his applications were granted. In this way it often fell to him to se-

cure that which no other man in Paris could have accomplished.

As the war went on, and it became evident that the army of invasion would penetrate to the heart of the country, the Government reversed its policy, and, on the 12th of August, adopting the third course of action in place of the second, decided on the expulsion of all the Germans in Paris. In view of the probability of a siege, hardly any other action would seem to have been possible. The measure was based partly on considerations of humanity; but, humanity apart, it was fully justified by the necessities of the situation. The removal began about the middle of August and terminated on the 3d of September, at which latter date the great body of Germans had received passports and been despatched to the frontier. All this was placed in Mr. Washburne's hands. The labor it entailed was enormous. Many of the cases presented required a hurried examination—there was no time for more than this—and arrangements for transportation were to be made with the railway companies. The setting-out of the parties at the railway station was superintended by a representative of the Legation, sometimes by the Minister himself. Untiring and in most cases successful efforts were made to secure the liberation of Germans arrested or detained by the police on suspicion, and the protection of the flag was given to those threatened with lawless violence. Through Mr. Washburne's earnest representations, the order for departure was modified, relieving the process of much unnecessary hardship. By an arrangement with the Government, the Legation was allowed to take entire charge of the removal, its visa on passports even being accepted in place of that of the police authorities; and, upon its application, permits to remain in Paris were granted by the Prefect of Police. The North German Government placed 50,000 thalers at Mr. Washburne's disposal to provide the expenses of removal, and to relieve the wants of the destitute, leaving the details of expenditure to his individual discretion. The apportionment of this fund was not among the least of his burdens and responsibilities. The extent of the work done by the United States Legation may be judged by the fact that by the 3d of September it had prepared, signed, and distributed 30,000 safe-conducts to the departing Germans, and had supplied 8,000 with railway tickets to the frontier, many of whom also received small amounts of money; while of those who remained during the siege, it provided in the closing month over 2,000 with the means of daily subsistence.

The fact that the American Minister occupied a close relation to each of the contending parties, and was equally trusted by both, pointed naturally to him as the most available intermediary, and led him into a direct and exceptional connection with their negotiations. It was an odd freak of destiny by which the veteran Illinois politician thus became a medium between Bismarck and Jules Favre—between the avengers of Jena and the men of the 4th of September. It was an even stranger train of circumstances that made him later the intercessor for the Archbishop of Paris with Raoul Rigault, and the instrument of securing the release of the imprisoned nuns of Picpus. Indeed, one is rather surprised to find that in that singular international episode, the rescue of the Empress Eugénie, which was begun by the Chevalier Nigra, continued by Dr. Evans, and completed by Sir John Burgoyne, the ubiquitous Minister had no part. He was, however, the means of saving the statue of the Prince Imperial from destruction in the Tuileries—a service for which the fugitive Empress sent

him a pretty note of thanks. The extraordinary fact throughout is, that in the successive upheavals of social and political forces that were taking place around him, Mr. Washburne should have continued, as he did, to command the unbounded confidence of all parties alike, so that each vied with the other in asking his services, and in acceding to his requests—Germans and Frenchmen, clericals and communards, Imperialists and Republicans. Pursuing calmly the even tenor of his way, his services to one side, whichever it might be, never cost him the friendship of the other. His legation was besieged alternately by multitudes of Germans whom he was passing to the frontier, and by deputations of Parisians thanking him for his prompt recognition of the Republic. Through him the protests of Count Bismarck in reference to alleged violations of the laws of war were transmitted to the Government of National Defence. During the siege he was the only man who received news from the outside world; and when Versailles and Paris became hostile French camps, the *laissez-passer* of Marshal Macmahon, and that of Rigault, both of which he held, enabled him to circulate freely in the lines of both armies.

Mr. Washburne's labors in behalf of foreign subjects did not lead him to forget the interests of his country or his countrymen. Great numbers of the latter had departed in haste, leaving their apartments, with all that they contained, to his protection. A proposition to quarter the Garde Mobile in the vacant apartments was checked by an order from Gambetta, issued at the instance of the envoy. Later, he induced Jules Favre to suspend the enforcement of a tax upon the dwellings of absentees decreed by the city of Paris. It was next proposed to use the apartments for the inhabitants of the surrounding villages who had taken refuge in Paris, then for those rendered homeless by the bombardment, and finally for the troops again. In obstructing all these attempts, Mr. Washburne's vigorous protests were successful, and the apartments were spared. He even found it necessary, notwithstanding his championship of distressed Germans, to cross swords on one or two occasions with Bismarck, and he stood his ground manfully in defence of his diplomatic rights, against the imperious Chancellor. The principal controversy arose in reference to the passage of diplomatic despatches to and from Paris, past the military lines of the besiegers. It was a serious question, involving the broad principle of the right of a neutral envoy to uninterrupted communication with his Government. At the beginning of the siege, Count Bismarck refused to allow the passage of the despatches of the diplomatic corps, except upon the condition that they should be unsealed. This impossible condition Mr. Washburne, and those of his colleagues who remained in Paris, absolutely refused to accept. Their protest was not successful in inducing Bismarck to recede from his position as to the diplomatic corps generally, but he made an exception in favor of the United States Legation, and thereafter once a week its sealed despatch bags were forwarded to and from London through the lines, under a flag of truce.

So matters remained until January, when, on the strength of certain passages in captured balloon correspondence, the German authorities formed a hasty and unwarrantable assumption that the privilege of communication had been abused in the interest of private parties. Bismarck thereupon addressed to Mr. Washburne a letter of complaint, and even went so far as to suggest that the despatch bags should be sent, not to London, but directly to Wash-

ington, and that the return bag of despatches should be sealed at Washington. To this most unjustifiable attack, Mr. Washburne immediately made a spirited reply, repelling warmly the imputation of bad faith, pointing out that most of the letters he had delivered to private persons had come from Bismarck himself, and adding:

"In this connection, permit me to observe that you will find enclosed herewith an envelope, containing certain letters addressed to persons in Paris, and which you sent to me by the last *parlementaire*. I know nothing of these persons, and I know no reason why I should deliver the letters. I therefore have the honor to return them to you."

In reference to the proposition to transfer his correspondence from London to Washington, Mr. Washburne said:

"With a knowledge of the views of my Government on this subject, and its opinion that it has a right to promptly communicate with me as its representative near the Government of France, it is impossible for me to acquiesce in the arrangement which you have done me the honor to recommend. I have concluded, therefore, to send you, by the *parlementaire* which I hope to obtain for Tuesday next, my despatch-bag addressed in the usual way to the United States despatch agent in London. If you should feel constrained to decline sending it forward without an unreasonable delay, I shall thank you to return it to me here by the first *parlementaire*. And, also, if you should feel constrained to retain my bag sent to you from London to Versailles beyond a reasonable time, I shall thank you to return it to London."

The letter produced an immediate disclaimer from Bismarck, and nothing more was heard of the proposition.

Mr. Washburne's narrative of his mission in Paris is marked by the same modesty, dignity, and justness that distinguished him in his public career. Although written somewhat stiffly, it gives a graphic picture from the standpoint of a close observer of the most striking episode in recent European history. It is disappointing only in its characterizations of the extraordinary men who figure on its pages, of whom Mr. Washburne gives rather superficial sketches, lacking in that subtlety and keenness of penetration which might be expected in one whose career had given him a sharp insight into human character. Notwithstanding this defect, the book deserves the high place which it will doubtless take among contemporary memoirs.

A DORSETSHIRE POET.

The Life of William Barnes, Poet and Philologist. By his daughter, Lucy Baxter ("Leader Scott"). Macmillan & Co. 1887.

WILLIAM BARNES, whose pleasing pastoral poems in the Dorset dialect are not unknown in this country, belongs to a most interesting class of self-made men, who, with exceptional faculties, make themselves marked persons, but yet rise little, if at all, from their original place among the people. Such a one was our Elihu Burritt, whom Barnes recalls by his special aptitude for languages; such are those workmen of whom we hear from time to time by the report of some Ruskin who has discovered them, who have a native taste for botany or geology, or it may be poetry. They are distinguished rather in their class than among the intellectual group with which, had they been more fortunately born and placed, they would have been naturally associated. Barnes was an unusual example of the type. He met with more success, and actually rose in social station; but he had the stamp of his country origin strongly impressed on him, and he never ceased to be thoroughly a man of the people from whom he sprang. He is of interest, also,

as an excellent specimen of the sort of "original" which we appropriate too exclusively to our own nation; he possessed the versatility, the knack, the tool-using faculty, and the mental curiosity that we associate with the Yankee character, and his biography has the double worth of a life active in mind and in work.

Curiously enough, we are not told in this volume when Barnes was born, but from the chapter-heading it must have been in 1801. He came of farmer stock in Dorset, but in his babyhood he had not the physical vigor and frame that ought to be the birthright of one destined to be a farm-hand. It is related that some wise old woman comforted his mother with the remark, "Never you mind what he looks like, he'll get his living by learning-books and such like." He had some schooling, and was early put at a clerk's desk in solicitors' offices, where his good penmanship saved him from holding a plough, and, as he spent his leisure in acquiring knowledge from books, he early set up a school, and throve so well that he married in 1827 and took a larger house for himself and his pupils. He had the success he deserved, and, eight years later, finally settled in Dorchester, with which place his name and labors were closely associated during his active years. He had already shown the variety of his tastes by engraving wood-blocks, not with much talent, but for publication, nevertheless, and he had written verses in the newspapers. He made himself acquainted with many languages—Welsh and Hindustanee among the rest—and had begun his philological studies. Being discontented with the text-books used in his school, he wrote an arithmetic, a geography, and a grammar for the use of his pupils, upon what he thought better principles. He became a principal founder of the Dorset Museum, and took his boys out on scientific walks as a part of their education, and also to get specimens in the newly opened railway cuttings. He was an antiquarian, too, and took a leading part in the Society which examined and speculated about British and Roman remains; and, to mention a few other of his multifarious employments, he painted doors "artistically," as well as drew in water-color, made boxes, invented a pair of swimming-shoes which would not work, turned his own chessmen on a lathe, produced a quadrant and an instrument to describe ellipses, and played the flute, violin, and piano. He had the fixed habit of bringing his notions to practical forms, and we find him regulating the binding of his books and the margin and frames of his water-colors by "harmonic proportions"; and, to give one capital instance which does as well as any to put this aspect of his character before us, he adopted the theory that Nature never makes mistakes in colors, and that her juxtapositions must be the true harmonies, acting on which, he studied mosses, leaves, and fruits, and used the tints as arranged in them in his own sketching and decoration. Thus, on purchasing two old high-backed chairs, he chose for their covering "a certain gray-green damask, with a yellow-brown binding, the tints found on the upper and under side of a beautiful lichen."

He had determined in the midst of all this on entering the church; and in 1837 put himself down on the books of St. John's College, Cambridge, as a ten years' man. At the end of that time, having meanwhile been a prolific author in the magazines and in books, he received a small cure of £13 value, three miles from his school, and held it for five years, walking out and back every Sunday. His life went on in this way with teaching and preaching, philology, antiquities, lectures in the country, a diary in all languages, and poems in dialect, which