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Diary of the Besieged Resident in Paris

Henry Labouchère

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Many of my letters have been lost en route—some of them, which reached the Daily News Office too late for insertion, are now published for the first time. The reader will perceive that I pretend to no technical knowledge of military matters; I have only sought to convey a general notion of how the warlike operations round Paris appeared to a civilian spectator, and to give a fair and impartial account of the inner life of Paris, during its isolation from the rest of Europe. My bias—if I had any—was in favour of the Parisians, and I should have been heartily glad had they been successful in their resistance. There is, however, no getting over facts, and I could not long close my eyes to the most palpable fact—however I might wish it otherwise—that their leaders were men of little energy and small resource, and that they themselves seemed rather to depend for deliverance upon extraneous succour, than upon their own exertions. The women and the children undoubtedly suffered great hardships, which they bore with praiseworthy resignation. The sailors, the soldiers of the line, and levies of peasants which formed the Mobiles, fought with decent courage. But the male population of Paris, although they boasted greatly of their "sublimity," their "endurance," and their "valour," hardly appeared to me to come up to their own estimation of themselves, while many of them seemed to consider that heroism was a necessary consequence of the enunciation of advanced political opinions. My object in writing was to present a practical rather than a sentimental view of events, and to recount things as they were, not as I wished them to be, or as the Parisians, with perhaps excusable patriotism, wished them to appear.

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