BELGIUM.

No. 6.

Mr. J. R. Jones to Mr. Fish.

No. 54.] LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,
Brussels, August 11, 1870. (Received August 24, 1870.)

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Mr. Motley telegraphed me yesterday, as follows:

Please inform Generals Sheridan and Forsythe that Count Bismarck informs Count Bernstorff that they will be welcome at headquarters.

J. R. JONES.

No. 7.

Mr. J. R. Jones to Mr. Fish.

No. 56.] LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,
Brussels, September 1, 1870. (Received Sept. 15, 1870.)

I have a letter from General Sheridan of the 24th August, saying, "I reached this place, (Point-à-Mousson,) the headquarters of the Prussian army, on the 17th, after much delay. On the 18th witnessed the battle of Gravelotte, just west of Metz. The battle was sanguinary, and resulted in favor of the Prussians, who forced the French army back on Metz and cut off all the roads leading to Paris. The loss of the Prussians was very great, perhaps double that of the French, as the latter held a very strong position and defended it with skill and tenacity. A battle took place also on the 16th for the possession of the Verdun road, at a little village called Reazonville, west of Metz, in which the losses were very heavy on both sides, the battle going in favor of the Prussians, and with fearful loss to the French."

There was very hard fighting yesterday and the day before near Beaumont, and McMahon was driven nearly to the Belgian frontier. The greater portion of the Belgian troops are stationed near the southeastern frontier, and there is a good deal of fear that the combatants may cross the line. The government has refused to allow the wounded of either side to pass through Belgium, and ordered that none of the wounded shall be carried on the Belgian railroads.

The chambers have done but little, except to vote the money required for war purposes. A proposition favoring a line of steamers between New York and Antwerp has been before the chambers, though I see no disposition on the part, either of the government or private individuals, to furnish any considerable sum of money for the purpose.

During the last few days a great many Americans have come to Brussels, mostly from Paris.

I can see no reason why the Crown Prince may not reach Paris within a very few days.

J. R. JONES.
Legation of the United States, Brussels, September 23, 1870. (Received Oct. 12, 1870.)

I have the honor to inform you that the chambers were convened on the 21st instant and adjourned yesterday. The only business transacted was the voting of ten millions francs for war purposes. It appears that the former estimate of the minister of war was found insufficient.

About one-third of the army has been dismissed and sent home, the supposition being that there will be no use for them.

The new French minister, M. Tachard, is here, having been received some five or six days since. There are a great many wounded French officers and soldiers here and throughout Belgium, though very few Germans. They are being carefully cared for, large contributions having been made by the citizens.

Communication by mail and telegraph between here and Paris has been suspended for several days. No one here thinks an agreement between Count Bismarck and M. Jules Favre possible.

I am credibly informed that the Prussian government is providing winter clothing for its soldiers, and that already some 200,000 fur suits have been prepared at Berlin.

General Burnside arrived here last evening and has gone to-day to Sedan. General Hazen left this morning for King William’s headquarters.

I understand that General Ewing is still here, though I have never seen him. I have your No. 35 of the 8th, inclosing circular in regard to passports.

J. R. JONES.

Legation of the United States, Brussels, October 14, 1870, (Received October 29, 1870.)

Doctor Evans, an American dentist of Paris, was in to see me two or three days since, and told me that on Sunday p. m., September 4, the Empress, accompanied by a Madame Bretton, left the Tuileries as the crowd was rushing in, took a little hack they found on the street, and drove to his house, on the avenue de l’Imperatrice, where they remained until five o’clock the next morning, when he took the ladies in his carriage, accompanied by a Dr. Crane, and drove fifty-six miles on their way to Trouville, just south of Havre, passing through Evreux and Lisieux. Near Trouville they took a little sail vessel, of 38 tons, going on board at 1 o’clock at night, and crossed over to the Isle of Wight, being twenty hours in crossing, the whole party being literally drenched from the washing of the waves over the little boat. From there they crossed over to Portsmouth, where they took the cars for Hastings, where they found the little Prince. Dr. Evans left the Empress and her son on Saturday last, at Shillingshurst, and was on his way to Wilhelmshoe, to see the Emperor, when I saw him.

J. R. JONES.
Mr. Jones to Mr. Fish.

No. 74.] LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,

Brussels, November 14, 1870.

Sir: I have the honor to enclose herewith circulars of Count Bismarck and M. Jules Favre, on the subject of the negotiations with M. Thiers for an armistice.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

Hon. HAMILTON FISH, Secretary of State.

[Translation.]

The following is the text of M. Jules Favre’s circular: Paris, November 7, 1870.

Sir: Prussia has just rejected the armistice proposed by the four great neutral powers—England, Russia, Austria, and Italy—having for its object the convocation of a national assembly. She has thus shown once more that she continued the war with a purely selfish purpose, without preoccupying herself with the true interest of her subjects, and, especially, that of the Germans, whom she leads on in her train. She pretends, it is true, to be constrained by our refusal to cede to her two of our provinces; but she occupies those provinces, which we neither wish nor are able to give up to her, and whose inhabitants energetically repel her, and it is not for the purpose of obtaining them that she lays waste our fields, drives before her armies our ruined families, and has held, for nearly fifty days, Paris shut in under the fire of the batteries behind which she intrenches herself. No! she wishes to destroy us to satisfy the ambition of the men who govern her. The sacrifice of the French nation is beneficial to the preservation of their power. They accomplish it coldly, being astonished that we are not their accomplices in giving ourselves up to the exhaustion to which their diplomacy advises us.

Being engaged in this course, Prussia shuts her ear to the opinion of the world. Knowing that she wounds all honest sensibilities, that she alarms all conservative interests, makes an isolated system and thus shrinks away from the condemnation which Europe would not fail to inflict upon her if it had been allowed to discuss her conduct. And yet, in spite of her refusals, four great neutral powers intervened and proposed to her a suspension of arms, with the definite purpose of permitting France to take the opinion of her people by calling together an assembly. What could be more reasonable, more equitable, more necessary? The imperial government has been overwhelmed by the exertions of Prussia. The following day the men whom necessity had clothed with power proposed a peace to her, and, in order to settle the conditions thereof, demanded a truce, as indispensable to the formation of a national representation.

Prussia repelled the idea of a truce by subordinating it to unacceptable exactions, and her armies surrounded Paris. An early surrender had been foretold to her. The siege has lasted fifty days; the people are not growing weaker. The promised sedition was expected for a long time; it came at a propitious moment for the Prussian negotiator, who announced it to ours as a foreseen auxiliary; but by breaking out, it permitted the people of Paris, by a commanding vote, to legitimatize the government of the national defense, which by this means obtained in the eyes of Europe a consecration of its right.

It behooved it then to conform with regard to the proposition for an armistice of the four powers; it could without temerity hope for its success. Being desirous above all to defer to the representatives of the country, and to come to an honorable peace through them, it accepted the negotiation and entered upon it in the ordinary terms of international law.

The armistice should admit of the election of deputies throughout the whole territory of the republic, even that which is invaded; a duration of twenty-five days; a revictualing proportional to this duration. Prussia did not contest the two first conditions. However, she made in relation to the vote of Alsace and Lorraine some reservations which we mention without giving them further examination, because her absolute refusal to permit the revictualing has
rendered all discussion useless. In fact, the revictualing is the necessary consequence of a suspension of arms with regard to an invested city. Provisions are an element of defense. The act of taking them from it without compensation is to create an inequality contrary to justice. Would Prussia dare to ask us to lay low a piece of our walls by means of her cannon, without allowing us to resist her? She would place us in a still worse situation, by compelling us to consume a month without fighting, while, she, living on our soil, would wait till we were harassed by famine to renew the war. Her armistice, without revictualing, would be a capitulation at a specified time without honor and without hope.

In refusing the revictualing, Prussia then refuses the armistice. And this time it is not the army only, it is the French nation which she pretends to annihilate by reducing Paris to the terrors of hunger. The question in point is to know whether France can assemble her deputies to deliberate with respect to peace. Europe demands this assembly. Prussia repels it by subjecting it to a condition which is inimical and contrary to common law. And yet, if one must believe a document, published and not contradicted, and which is said to have emanated from her chancellor's office, she dares to accuse the government of the national defense of giving up Paris to certain famine. She complains of being compelled by it to invest and to starve us.

Europe will judge what such imputations are worth. They are the last stroke of that policy which begins by pledging the word of the sovereign in behalf of the French nation, and ends by the systematic rejection of all combinations which allow France to express her will. We do not know what the four great neutral powers, whose propositions are put aside with so much haughtiness, will think; perhaps they finally will conjecture what Prussia, having become by victory mistress able to accomplish all her designs, would lay in store for them.

As regards us, we obey an imperious and simple duty in persisting to maintain their proposition of an armistice as the only means of solving, by an assembly, the formidable questions which the crimes of the imperial government have allowed the enemy to impose upon us. Prussia, who feels the odium of her refusal, dissimulates it under a disguise which can deceive no one. She asks us provisions for a month; it is asking us for our arms. We hold them with a resolute hand, and we will not lay them down without fighting. We have done all that men of honor could do to put a stop to the contest. The outlet is closed to us; we have only hereafter to consult our courage and putting back the responsibility of the bloodshed on those who systematically repel every transaction.

It is through their personal ambition that thousands of men may yet be sacrificed. And when Europe, aroused, wishes to stop the combatants on the border of this field of carnage, in order to call the representatives of the nation and to attempt peace, "Yes," they say, "but on the condition that that suffering population—those women, those children, those old men, who are the innocent victims of the war—shall receive no succor; that when the truth shall have expired, it shall be no longer possible for their defenders to fight us without causing them to die of hunger." That is what the Prussian leaders do not fear to answer to the proposition of the four powers. We call to witness against them right and justice, and we are convinced that if, like ours, their nation and their army could vote, they would condemn this inhuman policy. It would at least be established that, to the last hour, the government of the national defense, preoccupied with the vast and precious interests which are confided to it, has done everything to make possible an honorable peace. They refuse it the means of consulting France. It questions Paris, and the whole of Paris takes up arms to show the country and the world what a great people is able to do when it defends its honor, its fireside, and the independence of the land.

You will have no difficulty, sir, in making truths so simple understood, and in making them the subject of observations, which you will have to offer, whenever the opportunity shall be given you.

Accept, &c.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs,

J. FAVRE.

The Staatsanzeiger brings us the text of the circular of Count Bismarck, dated November 8, addressed to the representatives of the North German Confederation, and giving an account of the negotiations held at Versailles with M. Thiers. The document is as follows:

"VERSAILLES, November 8, 1870.

"Your excellency is aware that M. Thiers had expressed a desire to repair to headquarters in order to commence negotiations, after having conferred with the different members of the government of the national defense at Tours and at Paris. By order of his Majesty I declared my readiness to accept these conferences, and M. Thiers was
yesterday authorized to go to Paris on the 30th of October, whence he returned, on the 31st, to headquarters.

"The fact that a statesman so eminent and so experienced as M. Thiers had accepted the powers of the Paris government gave me reason to hope that propositions would be made to us, whose acceptance would be possible, favoring the reestablishment of peace. I received M. Thiers with very respectful attention, to which his distinguished personal qualities, laying aside the consideration of his former relations, gave him a perfect right. M. Thiers declared that, at the request of the neutral powers, France was ready to conclude an armistice. His Majesty the King, in view of this declaration, had to consider that an armistice, by itself, brought with it, for Germany, all the disadvantages which any prolongation of the campaign must bring to an army whose provisioning is rendered more difficult by the distance from which it is obliged to draw its supplies. Moreover, with the armistice we assumed the obligation of stopping the forces rendered disposable by the capitulation of Metz, in the positions which they should occupy on the day of the signing, and to renounce, in consequence, the occupation of vast hostile territories which we could to-day seize without striking a blow, or in spite of an unimportant resistance. In the space of a few weeks the German armies will not be able to effect any large reinforcements. On the other hand, the armistice would have rendered it possible for France to develop her own resources, to complete the organization of her forces, and, in case of a recommencement of hostilities at the expiration of the armistice, to array large military forces against us which do not now exist.

"Notwithstanding these considerations, his Majesty manifested the desire to take the first step in favor of peace, and I was authorized to anticipate the wishes of M. Thiers in granting an armistice of twenty-five days, or even of twenty-eight days, just as he has expressed the desire in the course, upon the base of a simple military status quo, from the day of the signature. I proposed to him to determine by the line of demarcation the position of the respective troops, such as it would be on the day of the signature, to suspend hostilities during four weeks, and to proceed, during this time, to the election and constitution of a national assembly. For France this armistice would not have had other consequences than to renounce of these little sorties, each time unlucky, and to avoid the unnecessary and incomprehensible waste of her munitions kept for the defense of the fortifications. With regard to the election of Alsace I was unable to declare that we would not insist on any stipulations which may put in question the dependence of the German departments of France, before the conclusion of peace, and that we would not hold any inhabitant of these provinces responsible for having taken their seats in a national assembly as a representative of their countrymen.

"I was much astonished by the opinion and the representative of the provisional government decline the propositions, all advantages of which were for the French, and declare himself unable to accept any armistice unless it stipulated for the revocation of Paris in proportion to its duration. I answered that an article of this nature disagreed infinitely from the military status quo, and surpassed greatly all concessions which might reasonably be contended for. I asked him, nevertheless, if he had any equivalent to offer in exchange, and, in this case, what would be this equivalent. M. Thiers declared to me that he was not authorized to offer us in exchange any military concession of any kind whatever, but that he was charged by his government to put the question of revictualing, affirming to us in compensation the good will with which the government would take the test of the reunion of an assembly chosen freely by the French nation and with which it undoubtedly would be possible to open negotiations for peace. These declarations being given it was my duty to refer them to the King and his council of war. His Majesty was rightly very much surprised at demands disagreeing in so unusual a manner from military usages, and deceived in the hope which he had founded on the negotiations with M. Thiers. The scarcely credible pretension, to make us lose the fruits of two months of exertion, with the advantages which they had brought us, and to lead us back to the point where we were at the commencement of the investment of the capital, proved again that they were seeking at Paris merely a pretext to prevent the elections and not an opportunity to let the nation manifest its will without obstacle.

"Upon the desire expressed by me to try once more to make an arrangement upon new foundations before recommencing hostilities, M. Thiers had, upon the 5th of this month, on the line of our outposts, a last interview with the members of the provisional government, in which he proposed to them either a shorter armistice with the military status quo, or the convocation of the elections without special stipulations concerning an armistice, in which case I was ready to concede all the measures compatible with our military security.

"M. Thiers has not made me acquainted with the details of his interview with MM. Trochu and Jules Favre; he could only communicate the result to me, which was the injunction received by him to break off negotiations and to leave Versailles, because they could not result in an armistice with revictualing. His departure for Tours took place on the morning of the 7th. The progress of negotiations
has convinced me that from the beginning the men who are actually at the head of the French government did not seriously desire to let the voice of the French nation make itself heard in a representative assembly; that they have proposed a condition which they knew to be perfectly unacceptable, only in order not to avoid giving a negative response to the neutral powers from whom they expect support.

"I invite your excellency to express yourself according to the tenor of the present dispatch; and I authorize you to read it.

"BISMARCK."

No. 11.

*Mr. Jones to Mr. Fish.*

No. 76.] LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,

Brussels, November 15, 1870. (Received December 1.)

SIR: I have the honor to inclose herewith a circular of Count Bismarck, of the 10th October, in regard to the demand of the members of the diplomatic corps remaining in Paris for permission to continue their correspondence with their governments, which, I believe, has not been made public until now.

J. R. JONES.

VERSAILLES, October 10, 1870.

SIR: I have had the honor to receive the letter of the 6th October, by which the members of the diplomatic corps who still reside in Paris wished to inform me that it would be impossible for them to entertain official relations with their governments, if the condition was to be insisted on that only open dispatches could be addressed to them. When the refusal of an armistice by the French government rendered the continuation of the siege of Paris inevitable, the government of the King, at his own instance, notified the agents of the neutral powers accredited to Berlin, by a circular note of the 26th September, from the Secretary of State, Mr. Von Thiele, that liberty of relations with Paris existed only so far as permitted by military events.

The same day I received, at Ferrières, the communication of the minister of foreign affairs of the government of the national defense, informing me of the desire expressed by the diplomatic corps to send a courier each week with the dispatches for their governments. I did not hesitate, in accordance with the rules established by international law, to give the answer dictated to me by the exigencies of the military situation. It has seemed proper to the men actually in power to establish the seat of their government in the interior of the fortifications of Paris, and to choose this city and its environs for the scene of war. If the members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the preceding government have decided to share with the government of national defense, inconveniences inseparable from a stay in a besieged fortress, the responsibility for it does not rest with the government of the King.

Whatever may be our confidence that the subscribers to the letter of the 6th October will submit personally, in the communications addressed to their governments, to the obligations which their presence in a strongly besieged place may impose on diplomatic agents, in accordance with the rules of war, we must not the less take into consideration the fact that the importance of certain facts in a military point of view might escape them. It is evident, beside, that they could not offer to us the same guarantee for the messages whom they are to employ and whom we shall be obliged to allow to pass our lines. A state of things has been produced in Paris no analogous precedent to which is offered by modern history, viewed from the standpoint of international law.

A government at war with a power which has not yet recognized it, is shut up in a besieged fortress, and sees itself surrounded by a party of diplomatists, who had been accredited to a government for which the government of the national defense has been substituted. In presence of so irregular a situation, it will be difficult to establish, on the basis of the law of nations, rules which would be incontestable from all points of view.

I believe myself entitled to hope that your excellency will comprehend the justice of these observations, and will appreciate the considerations which, to my lively regret, prevent me from giving assent to the desire expressed in your letter of the 6th October. Beside, if the subscribers cannot admit the justice of this denial, the governments which they have represented at Paris, and whom I shall, without delay, make
acquainted with the correspondence exchanged between us, will put themselves in communication with the government of the King, in order to examine the questions of the laws of nations, which are attached to the abnormal condition which events and the measures of the government of the national defense have created in Paris.

I have the honor, &c.,

BISMARCK.

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DENMARK.

No. 12.

Mr. Geo. H. Yeaman to Mr. Fish.

No. 250.]

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,
Copenhagen, July 26, 1870.

SIR: I herewith inclose the Danish and French texts of the proclamation of neutrality, published by this government yesterday. There seems to be a very general doubt felt and expressed here, as to whether this position can be maintained. The diplomatic opinion is, that decided French pressure upon this government would at once carry it into war, but that, at present, that pressure is not applied, and that, on the contrary, the influence of the cabinets of London and St. Petersburg, necessarily very considerable here, is exercised to keep Denmark neutral.

Into any estimate of the probabilities of this government remaining neutral must enter a consideration of the following counter-influences: In proportion as France may succeed in the field, the willingness and the inclination here to engage in the war would be increased; but, at the same time, the desire of France for allies, in such a contingency, might be wholly extinguished, and she might, for many reasons, prefer the advantage, the credit, and the satisfaction of a single-handed success. And in proportion as Prussia may succeed in the field, and as France may, for this reason, be anxious for allies, and seek to drag them into the war, Denmark would, for the same reasons, be more cautious in committing her destiny, for it would be no less, to the doubtful issue of the war.

It was stated and extensively believed here, soon after war was declared, that Prussia, with the view of keeping Denmark quiet, had offered to restore entire the Duchy of Schleswig; and more recently it has been stated both here and at Paris that the offers embraced all of the disputed portion, or North Schleswig, excepting the Island of Als and the fortress of Dybbøl.

I am able to state to you, without qualification, that these reports have no foundation whatever in fact, and that since March 1868, Prussia has not, directly or indirectly, made any proposition, suggestion, or intimation—has not said, or caused to be said, a word to Denmark upon the Schleswig question.

GEO. H. YEAMAN.

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Lettre patente concernant la remise en vigueur de l'ordonnance du 4 Mai 1803 qui a pour but de régler la conduite des commerçants et gens de mer en temps de guerre entre puissances maritimes étrangères.

Suivant une autorisation de Sa Majesté en date de ce jour, le ministère des affaires étrangères porte à la connaissance du public que, par suite de la guerre qui vient d'éclater entre la France et la Prusse, l'ordonnance du 4 Mai 1803 entre de nouveau en vigueur, toutefois avec les changements et dispositions nouvelles qui suivent:

§ 1. D'après la loi du 13 Mars 1867, le passeport royal en langue latine prescrit par