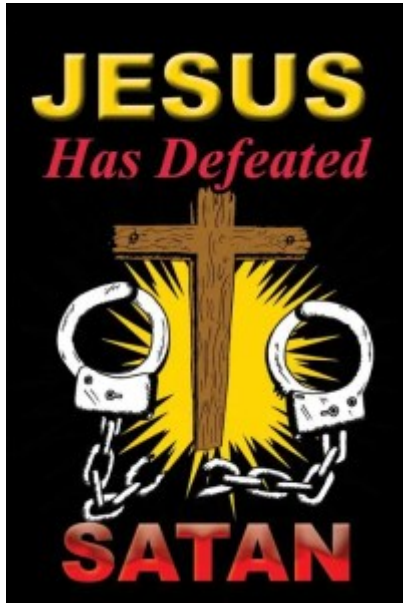


The Divine Programme of The World's History Chapter I. The Adamic Programme. – Part I



Continued from [The Divine Programme of The World's History By H. Grattan Guinness](#).

THE ADAMIC FOREVIEW OF HUMAN HISTORY.

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." – Genesis 3:15-19

THE brief revelation given to Adam in Eden immediately after the fall threw light upon the character and course of human history as a whole, and foretold its grand result as viewed from a moral standpoint. Brief and few as the predictions are, they are all-embracing in their compass, and profound in their depths of meaning. They are *multum in parvo* (Latin meaning much in little)—the entire history of mankind summed up in a few brief sentences. They differ widely from subsequent prophecy in character, as befits such primitive predictions. There is about them a combined simplicity and majesty, which stamp them as Divine. Their range is universal, so that all ages and all lands bear witness to their marvellous fulfilment.

They deal not with minor matters or temporary, passing experiences and changes, but with all the great permanent, essential facts and phenomena of human existence, including conception, birth, food, labour, the relation of the sexes, the conditions of agriculture, the existence and variety of suffering, the phenomena of conscience, and the relation of men to the evil one, as well as with the awful though universal fact of death.

Wonderfully condensed and pregnant with latent meaning as they thus are on their human side, they are not less marvellous on their Divine side; that is, in what they reveal of God, and of His character and His purposes, If His creative words and works had revealed His wisdom, power, and goodness, these utterances with their fulness of moral majesty reveal as clearly His righteousness, His justice, and His grace. That to Adam, in the hour of his utter ruin, should have been given the assurance of the redemption of his race, is in itself a proof of the Divine mercy. At the gloomy crisis when man fell under the power of moral evil, the promise revealed the glorious goal of human history—final and complete victory over this evil. Man was not left in his self-inflicted ruin without an intimation that God had toward him purposes of redeeming grace. He was made to feel himself the subject both of judgment and of mercy, and thus was laid the foundation of all true religion in sinful beings – a consciousness of unworthiness, a sense of guilt, helplessness, and utter dependence on God, mingled with a hope based on Divine promises, and a faith built upon Divine predictions. Despair was forbidden as much as pride and self-dependence. On this dark page of human history—the first after man had passed out of his Maker's hands into his own—there fell the light of foretold redemption, like a gleam of sunshine gilding even the storm-clouds of judgment with beauty and glory.

These primitive predictions, it should be noted, were not equivocal, oracular, or but dimly comprehensible. On the contrary, they were singularly definite and simple, so that no one can misunderstand their plain meaning. If they were in one point *mysterious*, the mystery lay not in what was revealed, but rather in that which was left unrevealed. The mode of redemption and restoration was not made plain; that was left a mystery which the fulfilment of the promise would alone entirely remove, but on which clearer and still clearer light was in subsequent ages to be granted. The glorious terminus only was revealed at first, not how or when it was to be reached. The scheme of Divine mercy was not fully explained, but it was made perfectly clear that such a scheme existed, and that the Almighty Creator and righteous Judge of man purposed to be also his Saviour and Redeemer.

The foreview of history given to the father of the human race after the fall consists of two contrasted portions.

1. THE PROMISE OF REDEMPTION.
2. THE PREDICTION OF THE PENAL CONSEQUENCES OF SIN.

We will consider them in this order, which is that in which Scripture presents them, and which is in itself an illustration of the truth that "mercy rejoices against judgment." The God against whom they had sinned hastened, if we may so say, to cheer and encourage the trembling criminals with the blessed hope of ultimate recovery and restoration, before He

proceeded to utter the sentence of punishment, and declare to them the inevitable results of their fall.

The Eden prophecy of redemption predicts, first, a perpetual enmity and conflict between the serpent's brood and the woman's seed; and, secondly, the ultimate destruction of the tempter and destroyer himself, by a suffering yet victorious deliverer, who is mentioned as "the seed of the woman." "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Not only would a fixed and inveterate enmity exist throughout the future history of the race between man and the serpent—this was but a figure of the truth—but a similar and deeper antagonism would exist between the tempter and mankind. "Thy seed," the seed or posterity of the serpent, must mean those among men who should imbibe the devil's spirit, and be partakers of his character, subjects of his "power of darkness," as contrasted with those who should be of an opposite character. (Matthew 23:33) Enmity would exist between good men and bad, the conflict then commenced between man and his tempter would be continued in the history of the human race. But further and mainly, a *special* "seed," a person, a great individual descendant of Eve should in due time arise in whom this conflict would culminate: "He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." The redemption of men should be accomplished through a man, and through a suffering man— one who would himself be bruised in the battle, not fatally crushed like his adversary, but yet not free from hurt. The serpent should in the end be completely destroyed, his *head* crushed by this "woman's seed."

Now we know who is styled by pre-eminence "the Seed," who because men are partakers of flesh and blood "Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." These words have always been held, and rightly held, to be the first promise and prophecy of the Redeemer of mankind—the Son of God, who by incarnation became "the woman's Seed." Nor can any question be fairly raised as to the fact that we have in these words the germ of the Messianic idea so largely unfolded subsequently in the Old Testament, and realized historically in the events of New Testament gospel story. What was that idea—interwoven with the histories, prophecies, laws, and ordinances of Israel, and pervading the Bible from beginning to end? Was it not that there should arise, as the Deliverer of sinning and suffering humanity, ONE who should Himself suffer before He triumphed, one who should be a bleeding Victor, a conquering Victim, a self-sacrificing Saviour?

The Anointed One, the Christ, was first "to suffer," and only then "to enter into His glory." The prophets testified beforehand "the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow." Nature itself taught that, "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." The martyred Abel, the offered Isaac, the outcast Joseph exalted to be lord of Egypt and saviour of his brethren, Moses rescued from a watery grave to be king in Jeshurun, David despised in his father's house, hated and hunted by Saul, yet father of the royal line of Judah and founder of the kingdom of Israel,—all these and similar incidents

presented continually the same ideal, each adding to it some new and special feature, until Isaiah was inspired to present the perfect portrait of the Divine yet human sufferer, who was to be the victorious Saviour of men. He was to be Jehovah's servant, humbled, marred in form and in visage, without beauty or comeliness, despised, rejected, sorrowful, burdened with grief, laden with transgressions not His own, wounded, bruised, stricken of God and afflicted, oppressed and ill-used, cut off prematurely and unjustly, numbered with transgressors, laid in a grave, made a sin-offering. And yet He was to be "exalted and extolled and very high," to have "a portion with the great" and to "divide the spoil with the strong," to justify many, to become an intercessor for transgressors, to sprinkle many nations, to be the arm or power of the Lord, and through Him all the ends of the earth should behold the salvation of God. He was to be "cut off" in the midst of His days, yet He was, as "Messiah the Prince," to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins; to make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness; to cause Jewish sacrifice and oblation to cease, and to confirm a covenant with many (Dan. 9:24-27) He was to be "a child born" to Israel, and yet "the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace."

Now though in the light of its own fulfilment and realization in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, this MESSIANIC IDEAL has become familiar to the mind of Christendom, what mystery must have overshadowed it, and what perplexities must have attended any attempt to give it even in imagination a definite embodiment *previously to the event*! How impossible therefore that it could have been a mere human invention, whether of Moses or of Adam or of any one else! Here, in the earliest prophecy of Scripture, a document dating back at least to the days of Moses, and possibly much further, we meet with the distinct germ and embryo of this strange, mysterious, peculiar Messianic ideal, predictions which subsequently shaped for ages *the expectations of a nation*, and the fulfilment of which in history has since shaped for ages more *the experience of a world*.

It is true that the Jews lost sight of one half of the ideal—the foretold sufferings of Messiah—and dwelt only in anticipation on His glories; but this makes it only the more remarkable that the Scriptures of the prophets, which they read continually in their synagogues, should present so fully and so frequently a feature as to which the people were blinded. Whence did they get this ideal? Whence did Moses get it? Or if, as some think, Moses embodied in Genesis documents which even in his day belonged to a primitive antiquity, whence did the writers of those documents get this notion of the double bruising, the suffering Victor, the tried but triumphant Redeemer of mankind? Place the date of the birth of this ideal where we will, it must have been in existence before the death of Moses, else we could not meet it in the Pentateuch. Now whether Moses found it in some ancient document or received it through Noahic tradition, or more directly by Divine inspiration, little matters to our present argument. The point of that argument lies in the fact that *fifteen centuries at any rate before the strange Messianic ideal was realised in an actual character, the essential features of it were foreseen, foreshadowed, and foretold*.

Who foresaw them? Certainly not Moses or the prophets by mere human intelligence, for they understood not their own predictions, but searched "what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when It testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow." There is but one rational explanation of the early existence and long continuance of this Messianic ideal. It was the hope set before the lost and ruined human family, by their compassionate and omniscient Creator; holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." This primitive germ of a prophetic character, which afterwards occupied so ruling a position in the hearts and minds of men for ages before it was realized in history, and the actual appearance of which on the stage of human life, not only forms the greatest and most widely spread era of mundane chronology, but has proved by far the most influential event that ever happened in human experience—this first Messianic prediction must have come "by inspiration of God."

From this first prophecy of the Redeemer right on to the last prediction of Christ prior to His advent, this leading feature of *triumph preceded by defeat*, glory introduced by suffering, redemption for man secured by self-sacrifice, is uniformly kept in view and gradually developed. So markedly is this the case, that after His resurrection Christ could reproach His incredulous disciples with being "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken," and "beginning at Moses and all the prophets" He could expound to them "in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself," putting to them the unanswerable question, "Ought not the Christ (or the Messiah) to have *suffered* these things, and to enter into *His glory*?" He reminded them that not only had He Himself told them that suffering and death were to befall Him, but that it was predicted in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, adding, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved the Christ to *suffer*, and to *rise from the dead* the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations." The oak tree of Messianic prediction lies latent in the acorn of this Eden prophecy. Judaism and Christianity alike are the outcome of this ideal, —the one of the mere prediction of it, the other of the fulfilment of the prediction, These are facts that cannot be gainsaid. How are they to be explained? *Whence came the embryo if not from God?*

The only alternatives seem to be either frankly to admit the inspiration of the Eden promise, or else to deny, not only that it has ever been fulfilled, but that Messianic predictions as a whole have been so. This would be to assert that they were one and all—though so exactly answering to notorious and universally influential facts—unmeaning Jewish speculations; and even then there would remain to be explained the difficulty that the Jews who wrote and treasured these predictions did not understand them, had not the true ideal before their minds, and when it was realized in history actually failed to perceive that a suffering Saviour was a fulfilment of their own prophecies, or a realization of their long-cherished hopes.

Now it must be freely granted that Messianic prophecy as a whole has not yet received its full accomplishment,—that only a part of it has done so, "The woman's seed" has not yet completely crushed the serpent's head, as is

evident from his present tremendous and universal activity in our world, where the tempter is undeniably still alive and at large! He is still in our day what our Saviour called him in His day, "the prince of this world," (John 14:30) and what Paul called him, "the god of this world," (2 Corinthians 4:4) "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." (Ephesians 2:2) Sin still reigns unto death. No one contends that the work of human redemption is as yet complete. It stands indeed to reason that it could no more be accomplished in a few centuries than was the work of creation. This Christian age, though fast nearing its close, has not yet run its course; and according to Scripture, *another age*—the millennial—is to succeed the one in which we live before the old serpent will be fully destroyed, before redeemed humanity will rest and rejoice in the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

But it may nevertheless be boldly asserted that the prophetic programme presented by inspiration at the beginning of the Adamic age has, even in this its first point, the promise of redemption, been *largely* fulfilled, and that the unfulfilled portion is so closely linked and indissolubly connected with the fulfilled, as to warrant the confident expectation that it also will in due season become matter of history instead of prophecy. In order to show this, we must consider a little more fully each of its three points: the COMING, SUFFERINGS, and TRIUMPHS of the woman's "Seed."

1. THE COMING OF THE SEED. It cannot be questioned that among all those born of woman *one individual* stands out solitary, supreme, pre-eminent; that though there have been many heroes among men, He rises above them all high as the vault of heaven above the hills of earth. Rightly or wrongly He is this day believed in and beloved, esteemed to be Divine as well as human, obeyed as Lord, worshipped as God, and trusted as Saviour, by *over four hundred millions of mankind*—that is, by a third of the entire human family; that He holds this place, not among the more ignorant, superstitious, and degraded nations of the earth, but on the contrary among the most advanced, intelligent, and highly cultured.

And why? He holds it because He is believed to have sacrificed Himself for the salvation of men, to have died and to have risen from the dead, to be evermore the living, loving, almighty Saviour of the human race, who will yet return to earth and finish the work He has begun. Let all this be truth or error, it matters not to our present argument. We are not now defending the faith of Christians, but calling attention to the *fact of its existence* as a proof of the fulfilment of the Adamic programme. We point to the fact that a great Deliverer has, in the judgment of the most enlightened part of mankind, appeared among men in the person of one who was emphatically the woman's Seed—"born of a virgin"—one who Himself professed that He came into the world to save it, who engaged in a personal struggle with the tempter and defeated him, whose mission it was to destroy him and his works, who resisted his temptations, delivered his victims, exposed his delusions, endured his malice, and who finally yielded to his power of death that He might—by rising again—destroy both it and him.

"He hell in hell laid low,
made sin, He sin o'erthrew;

bowed to the grave, destroyed it so,
and death, by dying, slew."

It is over one thousand eight hundred years since this great Deliverer appeared, and each generation as it passes beholds name becoming a greater and greater power in the earth. The influence of His life and death, of His words and example, increases year by year continually, and at the present rate of progress will soon fill the world.

The greatest intellects of all ages have owned the unique excellence and felt the unequalled power of the character and teaching of Christ. Kepler, Bacon, Newton, Milton, Shakespeare, in our own land; Goethe, Schelling, Hegel, Kant, in Germany, even the infidel Jew Spinoza, have left on record their hearty recognition of His matchless personality. Jean Paul Richter speaks of Him as "the holiest among the mighty, and the mightiest among the holy, who lifted with His pierced hand empires off their hinges, turned the stream of centuries out of its channel, and still governs the ages."

In a word, we may say that all men, no matter what their faith or what their indifference and unbelief, who have considered carefully this subject, admit that the man Christ Jesus stands high above all. Napoleon's well-known testimony shows how profoundly the character and worth of Jesus of Nazareth impressed a leader among men, though himself the very opposite of Christlike, a destroyer and not a saviour of his fellows.

"No man will accuse the first Napoleon of being either a pietist or weak-minded. He strode the world in his day like a colossus, a man of gigantic intellect, however worthless and depraved in moral sense. Conversing one day at St. Helena, as his custom was, about the great men of antiquity, and comparing himself with them, he suddenly turned round to one of his suite and asked him, 'Can you tell me who Jesus Christ was?' The officer owned that he had not yet taken much thought of such things. 'Well, then,' said Napoleon, 'I will tell you.' He then compared Christ with himself and with the heroes of antiquity, and showed how Jesus far surpassed them. 'I think I understand somewhat of human nature,' he continued, 'and I tell you all these were men, and I am a man; but not one is like Him: Jesus Christ was more than man. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and myself founded great empires; but upon what did the creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded His empire upon love, and to this very day millions would die for Him.'

'The gospel is no mere book,' said he at another time, 'but a living creature, with a vigour, a power, which conquers all that opposes it' Here lies the Book of books upon the table (touching it reverently); I do not tire of reading it; and do so daily with equal pleasure. The soul, charmed with the beauty of the gospel, is no longer its own; God possesses it entirely: He directs its thoughts and faculties; it is His, What a proof of the divinity of Jesus Christ!

Yet in this absolute sovereignty He has but one aim—the spiritual perfection of the individual, the purification of his conscience, his union with what is true, the salvation of his soul. Men wonder at the

conquests of Alexander: but here is a conqueror who draws men to Himself for their highest good; who unites to Himself, incorporates into Himself, not a nation, but the whole human race.'

On another occasion Napoleon said: 'From first to last Jesus is the same; always the same—majestic and simple, infinitely severe and infinitely gentle. Throughout a life passed under the public eye, He never gives occasion to find fault. The prudence of His conduct compels our admiration by its union of force and gentleness, Alike in speech and action, He is enlightened, consistent, and calm. Sublimity is said to be an attribute of divinity; what name then shall we give Him in whose character were united every element of the sublime? I know men; and I tell you that *Jesus is not a man*. Everything in Him amazes me. His spirit outreaches mine, and His will confounds me. Comparison is impossible between Him and any other being in the world. He is truly a *being by Himself*. His ideas and His sentiments, the truth that He announces, His manner of convincing, are all beyond humanity and the natural order of things. His birth, and the story of His life; the profoundness of His doctrine, which overturns all difficulties, and is their most complete solution; His gospel; the singularity of His mysterious being, His appearance, His empire, His progress through all centuries and kingdoms: all this is to me a prodigy, an unfathomable mystery. I see nothing here of man. Near as I may approach, closely as I may examine, all remains above my comprehension—great with the greatness that crushes me. It is in vain that I reflect—all remains unaccountable. I defy you to cite another life like that of Christ.'"

Account for the strange coincidence as we will, there is no denying either that the Divine programme foretold long before Mosaic times of the advent of a great Deliverer who should be the woman's seed, or that one answering to the prediction did actually appear in our world 1,800 years ago; nor that this individual is now more widely regarded than ever before as the Saviour of mankind. His coming is admitted to have introduced into the world a new moral force, a force which is opposed to evil in all its forms. He appeared as the great antagonist of moral evil, and of its author. It is asserted of Him that "He was manifested to take away our sins," that He came "to destroy the works of the devil," and, more, to destroy him himself. (1 John 3:5,8) No candid mind can fail to see in *the advent* of Jesus Christ of Nazareth an *apparent* fulfilment of the promise given in Eden.

2. THE SUFFERINGS OF THE SEED. These were dimly intimated in the original prediction, but largely described, as we have seen, in later Messianic prophecies; and we ask, Was *suffering* a conspicuous feature in the history of Jesus Christ of Nazareth? The question scarcely needs a reply, for it is universally recognised that He was the Prince of sufferers. To no form of human suffering was the "Man of sorrows" a stranger, and all His sufferings came upon Him because He willed to be the Saviour of men. It was in His struggle with the serpent that He was bruised and crushed—His heel or human nature bruised even to death! "He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost." His incarnation itself involved the suffering of supremest self-denial. He emptied Himself of His Divine glory and became an "obedient servant." He

suffered being tempted; He had not where to lay His head. He was misunderstood and reproached, doubted and disbelieved, provoked and insulted, stricken, smitten, and afflicted. For His love He had hatred, from His friends faithless desertion, from His foes relentless malice. No sorrow was ever like His sorrow; He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, He hid not His face from shame and spitting. Reproach broke His heart and filled Him with bitterness, and when He voluntarily assumed all the guilt of sinners and tasted death for every man, He had to endure the deepest of all sufferings, the sense of being forsaken of God. The woman's Seed was beyond all question the great sufferer. And He Himself spoke of His dying sufferings as inflicted by the great enemy of man; "the prince of this world cometh," He said on the last night of His life, "and hath nothing in Me." "Now is your hour and the power of darkness," He said to His captors in Gethsemane. He recognised too that His own death was the destruction of His foe, that the two bruising synchronised, "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out"; (John 12:31) and again He said in connexion with His own death, "the prince of this world is judged." (John 16:11)

The intensity of suffering can be estimated only in relation to the character of the sufferer; for that which is acute suffering to one is none at all to others. We must not judge of the sufferings of Christ by our own standard, but learn from Himself what the experiences through which He passed when He became "the woman's Seed" cost Him. The Gospels give us the story of His outward life and of His teachings, but they say little of His feelings: It is from the prophetic book of Psalms mainly that we learn something of *them*. Who can study the 22nd, 40th, 69th, or similar psalms without feeling that *the depths of mental and spiritual anguish* were sounded by the Son of man. Sorely was He bruised by the serpent and his seed—scribes and Pharisees, Jews and Romans, traitors, executioners, and revilers! Moreover, the hand of God was laid heavily on the willing Substitute; as it is written, "the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" If the advent of Christ answer to the first point of the Adamic prediction, assuredly His experiences in life and in death answer to the second, But it remains to consider—

3. THE TRIUMPHS OF THE SEED. The work of redemption being still in progress and avowedly incomplete, it is impossible to indicate under this last point anything more than *the incipient fulfilment* of the prophecy as to the destruction of the tempter of mankind by the woman's seed. Four thousand years rolled by before the great Deliverer appeared, eighteen hundred only have passed since His advent. Sufficient time has not elapsed to show the full results of His work. But the interval has been long enough for great effects to have resulted already, and above all for the general *tendency* of the results to have become apparent. Can we then point to any tangible, unquestionable victories won for mankind over moral evil and its author by "the seed of the woman"? Its main results are spiritual ones, and these are, of course, not cognisable by human sense—intangible, invisible. The cleansing of human consciences, the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation between God and men, the Justification of sinners, the bestowal of eternal life—all these great and supremely important changes are not of a kind to be adduced in evidence of the bruising of the serpent's head, because they are not evident,

they cannot be seen or heard or handled by men; and while they may serve as evidence to those who are themselves conscious of being delivered from the kingdom of Satan and translated into the kingdom of Christ, yet they cannot be adduced in argument with unbelievers,

But if spiritual changes such as these take place in considerable numbers and over any large sphere, they must needs produce other changes in the world which *will be* of a visible, tangible nature, and which may consequently be cited as evidence of the ever-increasing victories of Christianity. For it must be borne in mind that just as it was through his “seed,” or human agents that the serpent bruised the heel of the Saviour, so it is *through His people* that Christ is at present triumphing over Satan.

The first fatal blow He Himself delivered by His spotless life, atoning death, and glorious resurrection; and He will Himself give the last blow also, at His coming again in glory. Indeed, as Scripture puts it, He *has already* in a sense destroyed, not only the works of the devil, but their author. It is written, “He hath destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil,” as well as delivered many of his captives.

The crisis of the long conflict is past, the victory has been won, though much of the fruits have yet to be reaped. So it may be said the power of France was crushed at Sedan, though a long period elapsed ere the full fruits of the conquest were enjoyed by Germany. Her hosts could not all at once close the campaign and rest on their laurels. Many a strong fortress still held out, many a weary siege had yet to be laid, many a soldier had yet to fall, and many a million had yet to be expended before France, disarmed and helpless, acknowledged her defeat and submitted to the conqueror’s terms. No one questions that Sedan practically settled the ultimate result of the war, sending the discrowned monarch and his hosts into captivity, though it was some time before the transferred imperial crown was placed on the victor’s brow at Versailles, and before the treasures of France were poured into the lap of Germany.

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