

**FIGHTING  
FRANCE**

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Fighting France by Stéphane Lauzanne & James M. Beck

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**STÉPHANE LAUZANNE & JAMES M. BECK**

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BY

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## FOREWORD

To be Editor-in-Chief of one of the greatest newspapers in the world at twenty-seven years of age is a distinction, which has been enjoyed by few other men, if any, in the whole history of journalism. There may have been exceptional instances, where young men by virtue of proprietary and inherited rights, have nominally, or even actually, succeeded to the editorial control of a great metropolitan newspaper. But in the case of M. Stéphane Lauzanne, his assumption of duty in 1901 as Editor-in-Chief of the Paris *Matin* was wholly the result of exceptional achievement in journalism. Merit and ability, and not merely friendly influences, gave him this position of unique power, for the *Matin* has a circulation in France of nearly two million copies a day, and its Editor-in-Chief thereby exerts a power which it would be difficult to over-estimate.

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M. Lauzanne was born in 1874 and is a graduate of the Faculty of Law of Paris. Believing that journalism opened to him a wider avenue of usefulness than the legal profession, he preferred—as the event showed most wisely—to follow a journalistic career. In this choice he may have been guided by the fact that he was the nephew of the most famous foreign correspondent in the history of journalism. I refer to M. de Blowitz, who was for many years the Paris correspondent of the *London Times*, and as such a very notable representative of the Fourth Estate. No one ever more fully illustrated the truth of the words which Thackeray, in *Pendennis*, puts into the mouth of his George Warrington, when he and Arthur Pendennis stand in Fleet Street and hear the rumble of the engines in the press-room. He likened the foreign correspondents of these newspapers to the ambassadors of a great State; and no one more fully justifies the analogy than M. de Blowitz, for it is profitable to recall that when in 1875 the military party of Germany secretly planned to strike down France, when the stricken

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gladiator was slowly but courageously struggling to its feet, it was de Blowitz, who in an article in the *London Times* let the light of day into the brutal and iniquitous scheme, and by mere publicity defeated for the time being this conspiracy against the honor of France and the peace of the world. Unfortunately the *coup* of the Prussian military clique was only postponed. Our generation was destined to sustain the unprecedented horrors of a base attempt to destroy France, that very glorious asset of all civilization.

De Blowitz took great interest in his brilliant nephew and at his suggestion Lauzanne became the London correspondent of the *Matin* in 1898, when he was only twenty-four years of age. This brought him into direct communication with the *London Times* which then as now exchanged cable news with the *Matin*, and it was the duty of the young journalist to take the cable news of the "Thunderer" and transmit such portions as would particularly interest France to the *Matin*, with such special comment as suggested itself.



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How well he did this work, requiring as it did the most accurate judgment and the nicest discrimination, was shown when he was made Editor-in-Chief of the *Matin* in 1901.

His tenure of office was destined to be short for, when the world war broke out, M. Lauzanne, as a First Lieutenant of the French Army, joined the colors in the first days of mobilization and surrendered the pen for the sword. His career as editor had been long enough, however, for him to impress upon the minds of the French public the imminency of the Prussian Peril. As to this he had no illusions and his powerful editorials had done much to combat the spirit of pacificism, which at that time was weakening the preparations of France for the inevitable conflict.

The obligation of universal service required him to exchange his position of great power and usefulness for a lesser position, but this spirit of common service in the ranks means much for France or for any nation. The democracy of the French Army could not be questioned, when the powerful Editor of the *Matin* became merely

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a lieutenant in the Territorial Infantry. As such, he served in the battle of the Marne and later before Verdun, and thus could say of the two most heroic chapters in French history, as Æneas said of the Siege of Troy, "Much of which I saw, and part of which I was."

Having fulfilled the obligation of universal service in the ranks, it is not strange that in 1916 he was recalled to serve the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For a time he rendered great service in Switzerland, where from the beginning of the war an acute but ever-lessening controversy has raged between the pro-German and the pro-Ally interests.

He was then chosen for a much more important mission. In October, 1916, he came to the United States as head of the "Official Bureau of French Information," and here he has remained until the present hour. As such, he has been an unofficial ambassador of France. His position has been not unlike that of Franklin at Passy in the period that preceded the formal recognition by France of the United States and the Treaty of Alliance

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of 1778. As with Franklin, his weapon has been the pen and the printing press, and the unfailing tact with which he has carried on his mission is not unworthy of comparison with that of Franklin. No one who has been privileged to meet and know M. Lauzanne can fail to be impressed with his fine urbanity, his *savoir faire* and his perfect tact. Without any attempt at propaganda, he has greatly impressed American public opinion by his contributions to our press and his many public addresses. In none of them has he ever made a false step or uttered a tactless note. His words have always been those of a sane moderation and the influence that he has wielded has been that of truth. Apart from the vigor and calm persuasiveness of his utterances, his winning personality has made a deep impression upon all Americans who have been privileged to come in contact with him. The highest praise that can be accorded to him is that he has been a true representative of his own noble, generous and chivalrous nation. Its sweetness and power have been exemplified by his charming personality.