

snow-white hair and the loving eyes was no other than their beloved Father Radetzky, who had ousted the Piedmontese out of one position after another, had now returned to the plains of Lombardy—flushed with victory,—and at whose coming Milan trembled, remembering how he had seen her weakness during one terrible night of this year.

The officers belonging to the field-marshal's staff stood in various groups; some watched the opposite shore through their field-glasses, others leaned against their horses and discussed the past campaign or the welcome which was awaiting them on their entry into Milan.

About four in the afternoon, loud and prolonged cheering announced the completion of the bridge. The field-marshal mounted his horse and then gave the signal for a general move. Regiments, battalions, companies, drew quickly into line, aides flew in every direction, and each division, on receiving the command, marched in the direction of the bridge. It was a grand, an inspiring pageant; the bands thundered forth in unison the National Anthem, and the chaos of brilliant hues gradually formed into masses of superb colour—infantry, cavalry, artillery followed each other in quick succession.

Like a skein of many-coloured silks, gorgeous, fantastic, mixed with threads of bronze and gold and silver, the long line of troops wound over the bridge and through the fields on the other side of the Adda, singing, shouting, trampling, rushing—in short, a hubbub that could be heard a league away. At last their skein grew smaller and less brilliant, and finally ended in a long line of waggons. After them came the field-marshal and his staff, and now nothing remained on this side of the river but a few battalions, left as rear guard, a few squadrons of cavalry and some artillery.

On the river-bank, quite close to these troops, stood a small house—that of the ferryman—who in former days was innkeeper as well. To escape the overflow of the Adda, which sometimes rose somewhat alarmingly, the house had been built on a terrace, a simple cottage, containing one room for mine host, a dining-room, rather larger, opening on to a terrace overlooking the river and shaded with an awning of rustic wood and lattice, which, like similar ones everywhere in Italy, owe their picturesqueness to an arbitrary fancy. Luxurious grape vines covered this unique frame work, and hanging from the corners swayed lightly to and fro on every passing breeze. Under this natural roof two young officers sat at a wooden table and filled their glasses from a straw-bound foghitta. Their orderlies waited just below the terrace with their horses. At a little distance, a dragoon was tightening the girdle of his saddle, and a guardsman, both hands crossed on the back of his horse and holding a wine glass in one hand, stood waiting to give his comrade the remaining half of its contents. On the other side of the balcony, infantry and cavalry marched up and down *à deux* exchanging opinions as to whether they had better follow their brother officers or bivouac here. Soldiers sat on the ground, their muskets between their knees, grenadiers took off their heavy bear-skin caps, and groups of sharpshooters lay at full length, their arms crossed under their heads. A drummer, evidently "gone back in fancy" to the last engagement, softly played an advance march as he sat on an overturned barrel.

A little farther on were groups of Piedmontese prisoners guarded by grenadiers, the soldiers lying exhausted on the grass, while their officers stood about and gazed gloomily after the departing forces. This lively *ensemble* was completed by herds of cattle which were driven after the battalions, and by heavy carts drawn by oxen and holding huge wine-casks. From the opposite side of the river could be heard, now and then, the beat of a drum and high single notes from the band; behind one, a horn signal, a gay *soldaten-lied*, and loud laughter, mingled with them all the deep lowing of the cattle.

The officers on the terrace belonged to various corps; one was a captain in the hussars, the other a guardsman. The latter was just in the act of opening a small letter-case, which he usually carried fastened to his saddle and which contained his cigars. Both men were covered with dust, their heavy swords, cartouches, and shakoes lay on the table near.

"Thus far have we come," said the hussar, casting a satisfied glance beyond the river; "safely arrived at the threshold of our possessions, and they will hear the heavy knock of our fine old general at the portal, before ten of the night is past."

"I hear that Carl Albert will retire to Milan," answered the other, as he lit his cigar, "and I for one should rejoice were we to have one good, decisive fight with him."

"Bah!" exclaimed the guardsman, "they will never come to blows. At the most they will put up a couple of batteries, issue proclamations, urge the people to a little furious and fruitless demonstration, *et voilà tout*. I am convinced that in two or three days we shall march over the Cathedral square. I already see the faces of the people as they hear our bands playing 'God save the Emperor.'"

"All that is very fine; but what I am thinking of is the destruction in our quarters in Milan. Oh, my magnificent arms! and all my silver!"

"Well, as for the last, that can be mended," laughed the hussar; what grieves me most is the probable loss of that portrait of Juliet which hangs over my divan. If only they have not stolen the original from me! But I fear the poor girl has suffered for her devotion to the Austrian cause."

"I doubt it," smiled the other; "I hear many fled from the town during those five terrible days; one of the scouts told me that streams of people, chiefly women and weeping maidens, and carriages of every sort and description, trunks and bundles, passed out of the town gates."

A loud call from the foot of the terrace interrupted the conversation; both men sprang from their seats and hurried to meet a young officer, who, in a low cap covered with green plumes, was pushing his way on horseback through the crowd.

"Grüss Gott," shouted the hussar as he recognized the rider, "where do you come from? O, you are going to headquarters. Well, make this a relief-station for a few moments; come up here."

The officer dismounted, and throwing the reins to a dragoon ascended the terrace steps.

"What an age since we have met! Not since the old Verona days, I think. How are affairs progressing with you, and what are you doing?"

"As you see, waiting patiently here for permission to cross the river, confound it!" answered the guardsman. "Perhaps you have brought us orders!"

"Something of the kind," laughed the new-comer; "but there will be no crossing to-night, however. You will have to remain here till the morning; but with such a lovely night as it promises to be, and with such good wine, I don't think you are much to be commiserated."

"Diable!" grumbled the hussar; "for the last four days we have been kept in the rear, have not seen as much as the tail of an enemy's horse; as for real fighting, that is a dream that is past."

"Those ahead," laughed the other, "are not much to be envied; horses' tails are plentiful enough, also cannon-mouths, but at an immeasurable distance."

"And we must really wait here till to-morrow?" asked the guardsman.

"In all probability. But I am expecting every moment an adjutant from headquarters; fancy I see something moving on the bridge now." He sighted his glass for the river, and continued, "right, it is a hussar, he has the orders, and if I am not greatly mistaken it is our friend Count S. see how carefully he keeps to the regulation pace over the bridge. Yes, yes, it is he! Now he is over and gives the horse his head."

The horseman—it was in truth Count S.—flew up the hill to the house. "Elschen!" he called joyously, as he recognized the three on the terrace. "More than happy to see you all again! Can you tell me where to find the field-marshal's lieutenant? But pour me out a glass of wine, I shall be back directly."

"Ride a few yards around to the right," answered the hussar, as he heartily returned the other's greeting. "You will find him in the first farm-house, if he has not already ridden back to San Basano. Come back as quickly as you can. By-the-bye, must we remain on this side?" and he shouted after the vanishing rider; the latter nodded a "yes," and presently disappeared behind the hill. The others returned to the table, ordered a fresh *foghitta* and took up the broken thread of their late adventures. In less than a quarter of an hour Count S. joined them. "Grüss Gott again," he called, gaily, both hands out stretched. "What a pleasure! But alas! I am off again in a moment; have orders to return immediately to headquarters. But what about yourselves? All safe and sound?" "All right again," laughed the other hussar. "I was slightly wounded at Curtatone, nothing serious, was soon up again; and you—it seems a century since we have met. Do you remember when we last saw each other?" "If I remember aright, it was in Milan, at our farewell dinner, the night I left for Rome and Naples. Don't you remember, too, how ardently we wished for war, and now we meet again in the very midst of it, all the old clique, almost."

"True," and the guardsman lifted his glass; "but two are missing from your regiment, poor M.—lying sorely wounded in Mantua, and our merry dragoon."

"Well, the latter is advancing rapidly now to the heights of fame. But how is M.—? Is he mortally wounded?"

"He has a heavy wound in his side, but they hope to bring him through; let us drink to the poor fellow's health."

All lifted their glasses and drank to their comrade's speedy recovery.

"Then and now!" exclaimed Count S., as he poured out another glass; "since that time only four years have passed and yet how much they have taken away, how much they have brought! Then how pleasantly the days flew by; so, although the wine here is not bad, and the salmi not to be despised, I prefer a dinner of the old times; we certainly have not fared sumptuously during the last few days. Then, a comfortable travelling carriage before the door and the drive through the exquisite night—now, the saddle of my tired horse, and the prospect of tearing about the country till the small hours. There has been a perfect rain of despatches lately; and always at night it seems to me. One would imagine that it was merely to please the adjutants that questions to headquarters pour in about sundown, and have to be answered before the morning."

"And yet you have the best of it. Where you bivouac there is always shelter, or rather you only bivouac where there is shelter; you have a roof over your heads, and either hay or straw for a couch, and not the bare ground."

"No doubt" replied the staff-officer, "but we pay for our lodging with constant duty. No sooner do I present myself to headquarters than—you have the second, or third, circuit to-night; perhaps something unforeseen calls one of the adjutants away, and I have a ride of from six to eight hours before me. But after all" he ended, laughing, holding his glass towards the sunlight—"I would not give to-day for an old yesterday, and the god of battles grant we may have a long campaign!"

"No use hoping this, the comedy is over to-morrow, or at furthest the day after. Milan is a brilliant spectacle at the end of the play, then the curtain falls upon Carl Albert and his army."

"Well, *mes amis*," interrupted Count S., "we must say farewell for the present; I must return to headquarters and that at all speed, for I see suspicious-looking clouds over there on the horizon."

"Sapristi!" exclaimed the others as they looked at the rising clouds,—they were obliged to camp in the open; "we shall have a regular down-pour. Perhaps a bloody one to boot: General Barca has advanced with a