

"I think it is better not to say it," replied the Italian, in a firm, resolute voice. "You *shall* say it," cried the Captain, stamping the floor with his foot; "speak, I command you!"

"Beg your pardon, Captain," answered the Italian. "You know that I have always tried punctually to obey your orders. But I am sorry I cannot please you in this respect. Thoughts are free, and there is no article in our martial laws by which a soldier is bound to say what he is thinking."

"I order you to say it!" shouted the Captain, grasping him in his bosom and shaking him to and fro.—The Italian was silent.

"Will you say it, yes or no? Speak!"—"No."

"Corporal and four men!" shouted the Captain.—The corporal appeared.

"Take that fellow to the prison, Marche!"

That same evening the Major von Benedeck received the weekly report of service. He glanced it over and having arrived at the last page he frowned. "What!" said he to himself, "Bianchi three days imprisonment because of insubordination! Has he turned to the wrong way again? That would be a pity indeed. I cannot believe it. I am afraid there is foul play in the matter."

"Serjeant!" The serjeant came in.

"Go to the prison and bring Bianchi up."

Half an hour elapsed, and the Italian stood before the Major.

"Why are you imprisoned?" asked the Major. The Italian told his story.

"Has nothing else happened between you and the Captain?" "Nothing Major."

"Would you have any objection to tell me what it was you were thinking?"

"Not at all, Major. I was just going to say to the Captain, that I was sorry to find that he was so well acquainted with the evil one, so as to be able to give me his address; and I purposed to express my hope that he would give up that companionship soon, and betake himself to a better friend."

"Do you really believe that there is such a being as a devil?" asked the Major.

"Yes I do," replied the Italian. "The Word of God tells us most explicitly that there are fallen angels as well as fallen men, and that their chief captain, Satan, walketh about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

"If that is true," replied the Major, "we are all of us undone; for I see a chance of putting to flight an army of a hundred thousand Austrians, but what are we to undertake against invisible spirits?"

"Certainly very little with lead and powder," answered the Italian; "spirits only can be fought with spiritual weapons. But, praised be the Lord, we are provided with an excellent panoply of that kind. Therefore the apostle says: 'Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil,' and he describes this armour as follows: 'Have your loins girt about with truth, and have on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; and above all, take the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is God's Word.' So you see, Major, that we are not left destitute in this important warfare; and it is on account of this powerful armament put in our possession, and to our use, that we are assured that the devil will 'flee from us if we resist him.'"

The Major was silent. He seriously mused over the words which the soldier had spoken.

"I believe," he said, "that I also have to suffer many a malicious attack from that arch-fiend. At least I should not know how otherwise to account for so many wicked and blasphemous thoughts as often on a sudden rise in my mind, and for so many failures of my best purposes, and for so many sinful lusts and passions, and moods, as continually put me out of the straight line I desire to follow. And I tell you, I a thousand times have tried to resist, but all in vain. He won't flee from me, Bianchi."

"Permit me to ask," replied the Italian, "have you put on the armour of God I was describing just now?"