

THE CATHOLIC RECORD.

Beautiful Hand.

Three maidens by the wayside— To run an ancient story— From left to right, and last, began to sing, disparting, Whose hands were loveliest.

FRA DIAVOLO AND HIS BANDITTI.

AN ADVENTURE IN CALABRIA IN 1806

The condition of the French in Calabria, from 1804 to 1806, may be shown by the following extracts from a correspondence in our possession.

"Reggio, Calabria, April 15, 1805.

"Here we are at the very top of the boot, in the loveliest country that God ever made, with no drawbacks but the malarial fever and the temper of the inhabitants. Bands of mere peasants have the audacity to attack the conquerors of Europe."

"Dear Madame, would you like a sketch of our surroundings in Calabria? I imagine yourself watching a detachment of our troops—say about one hundred—slowly descending a hillside covered with rocks draped with the loveliest vines. Our men are marching carefully, not expecting any attack. Reactions are so little that they have ceased to take them. Besides for more than a week past none of our people have been murdered in this vicinity. At the foot of the hill flows a rapid torrent which must be crossed before ascending the hill on the other side. Part of our soldiers are waiting their turn to ford. All of a sudden a thousand men spring out from cover; a motley troop, peasants and banditti, equipped galley slaves and deserters—commanded by a chief who was once an assistant deacon—well armed and first-rate marksmen. The fire as they show them- selves. Our officers fall first, having been picked off by the enemy. Lucky for those who are killed upon the spot, those taken alive will find no mercy from their captors!"

"Mileco, Sept. 7, 1806.

"You will have learned before this that two months ago the English were a battle from us at Santa Eufemia, and that we have lost Calabria. Calabria was my tower, but the battle is lost forever."

"In one month, in Calabria alone, there have been 1,200 murders. Salicetti says so."

"It is harder to travel one hundred miles in Italy than a thousand in other parts of the world."

"The reader, after these extracts, will hardly believe that two young wives accompanied their husbands through this terrible campaign, exposed to dangers and fatigues to which the boldest men too frequently succumbed."

Lieutenant Colonel Clavel and Captain Snell, of the First Swiss Regiment in the army of France, were there several Swiss regiments in the service of the Republic and the Empire, had married two sisters, the Demoiselles Schwich. Their fathers lived at Berne, and was head of the Swiss Treasury; he had also a son in the same regiment as his sons-in-law. The two sisters were married the same day, and both left home together to accompany their husbands to Naples. They did not remain long in that city, and soon began to share the wandering life and perilous adventures of the troops employed in hunting bandits and breaking up bands of guerrillas.

Madame is Colonel's and his sister were the objects of almost superstitious veneration in the regiment, and when Madame Clavel, in Calabria, presented her Colonel with an infant, it became the perfect idol of the soldiers.

Madame Snell was a woman who accommodated herself easily to circumstances, while her sister, gifted with more natural energy, endeavored to make circumstances accommodate themselves to her.

They had many a long day's march. Often they had no sooner reached a halting place than they received news of the approach of the enemy. It was safer to keep with the regiment at all hazards than to be left behind. As to privations, the historian of that campaign says of Calabria: "Everything except those things that are necessary to life were to be found there; pineapples, orange flowers, perfumes, but neither bread nor water."

Months and years passed, till at last, in 1805, the situation of the French troops became more than ever intolerable. The

material fever of Calabria, too, seized upon Julie Clavel and her little Auguste. The Colonel and the Captain became convinced of the necessity of separation, and felt it would be madness to keep their wives with them any longer. Some officers who were going home to Switzerland for recruits, gave them an opportunity of travelling under a safe escort.

In their return home to their father's house the two adventurous sisters paid for the security and rest they found by incessant anxiety about their husbands. Madame Snell, especially, grew so uneasy that she was on the point of setting out to return to Calabria with the news of the defeat of the French in the battle of Santa Eufemia. According to the official returns Colonel Clavel was killed, and Captain Snell wounded, but a letter from young Schwich informed his sisters that their husbands had both been wounded, and were in hospital at Naples.

In such a military family compromise and enigma were never wanting. In a fact the young wives set out to join their husbands. They carried letters of recommendation to all the authorities who could be of use to them on their journey, and money, an article very scarce in Italy, where the military chest of the regiment was certain never to be by their side.

Julie's energy and perseverance gave her the power of surmounting many difficulties and persuading many persons to lend them sympathy and aid. But after leaving Bellinzona she had to deal with a class of men who were not easily convinced that it was right to permit women to expose themselves to peril. These were the French officers who commanded in every town and village. Here they had to wait for an escort, there they could hire no cart nor even a mule.

Sometimes there was fighting going on ahead, or fighting was expected. Every body was, however, very kind to them, and at last they arrived at Terracina.

This town, which is only a day's journey from Naples, was by turns occupied by the French and insurgents, pillaged and relieved by either party. It was nearly empty when the ladies reached it at a late hour of the night, and made their way to the quarters of the Commissary, the sole representative of French authority. He broke out into assurances that it would be wholly impossible they should go on the next morning. There was not a man in the place who could be trusted to furnish them with provisions had been captured in the hills only a few hours before. The Commissary all round Terracina warned with banditti commanded by Fra Diavolo. They must wait forty-eight hours for a detachment that was expected.

Very much disheartened by these difficulties, Julie Clavel and Madame Snell were induced to submit to circumstances, and to dine next day with the Commissary, who seemed very anxious to be kind to them. They were to bring their little boy with them.

The Commissary and two of his friends were doing the honors of the feast to the two ladies, when all of a sudden a cry was heard from the courtyard. "Run! Run!" The serjeant flung open the door crying, "Run! Run!" This piece of advice was so rapidly complied with by the three civilians that, before they could well understand what had taken place, the two sisters found themselves alone.

Outside they heard a noise of many feet, and in another moment the banditti swarmed into the dining room. The one who seemed the chief said, "You are Madame Clavel and Madame Snell?" The two women were surrounded by the band and borne rapidly from the Commissary's house and Terracina.

They were dressed in thin muslin, and wore thin shoes, wholly unsuitable for such a march, so that the sandals of two young boys were given them. Little Auguste was carried by one of the band and there was no sign of any intention to treat them rudely. But the march itself was very severe, especially when coupled with their apprehensions for the future.

After proceeding for three hours over rocks and stones, along rough paths and steep ascents, a halt was called and food was offered them. Two of the band assured them that everything might turn out all right, but that their chief was very gloomy; something had gone wrong with him.

That chief was the famous Fra Diavolo, who had very little in common with the hero of the opera. A circle was formed round him, a council was being held, and there seemed to be a good deal of loud talking and quarrelling. At length Fra Diavolo came up to Madame Clavel, and explained to her in very energetic words that his secretary had been captured—the one well educated man in the whole band—his friend and favourite. He had been taken prisoner some days before, and had been carried from post to post, in spite of the efforts to recapture him. They had obtained certain information that he had now been taken to Naples to undergo an examination, and having also heard that the wives of two Swiss officers were on the road to join their husbands, he had resolved to capture them as hostages for the life of his secretary. He knew that Terracina was undefended by troops. His sole object had been to get possession of the ladies.

And now, he said, "you understand that I do not intend to harm you till I hear that harm has befallen that young man. Your lives depend on his. You, Madame Clavel, will leave at once for Naples, and if Jacopo is still alive you will negotiate his release. Your sister and your child will remain in my hands."

"And suppose Jacopo is dead?" said Julie calmly.

"Then—then—Come, set out at once. You have no time to lose."

"We will all go or we will all stay. But I will not go alone."

"If you like I will go to Naples," proposed Marie.

"No, no," replied Fra Diavolo. "It must be Madame Clavel."

Julie repeated—"I will not go alone."

At this moment one of the band ran up, exclaiming that there were uniforms in sight. The whole party at once continued their ascent up the mountain, and at last came upon the ruins of a convent recently burnt, but well situated for purposes of defence. It was one of the lairs of Fra Diavolo.

During their ascent Julie had been persuading her sister that under no circumstances must they separate from one another. She hoped that if the banditti would suffer them to go together.

However, after a fresh consultation, it was decided that one of the band should set out for Naples. He was to find out the band was never lack of information whether Jacopo was alive still. In a case he was so, he was to contrive to send Colonel Clavel a letter, which his wife and her child's depended upon that of the Secretary, and that an exchange might take place at a point to be named by the bearer of the message. "Say," said Fra Diavolo, "we are treated with respect, and have nothing to complain of."

The prisoners were led apart into a ruined chamber, in which there were some straw and blankets. As soon as the little boy was asleep his aunt and mother began talking to each other.

"Indeed, Marie," said Madame Clavel, "we ought to thank God that we have not believed in our deliverance. It is not probable they have spared the Secretary in order to get some information out of him. If they did not shoot him on the spot, but have sent him to Naples, the chances are that he is not yet executed."

Madame Snell, while her sister was speaking, was leaning against the open window crying. Suddenly she gave a start.

"Look there," she whispered, "look down on the bench in the moonlight. There is a monk."

"Some monk who has joined the banditti."

"He is not a monk. No, I think he is a man. I believe he is the man whom they were whispering about, and whom they called the Padre. Stay, don't leave the window."

She left the room; several men were in the passage, who left her pass when she pointed backwards to her sister and her child.

The monk was indeed a true priest, but like themselves, a captive. When the other monks made their escape he had been too infirm to leave the convent. The band had treated him with great respect. Many came to him for absolution. This too was Madame Clavel's first sight of him. He then assured her that if Jacopo were alive, might trust to the promise of Fra Diavolo.

"But suppose he is dead?"

"I will induce them to kill you and your sister on the spot," said the Padre, with emotion, "and I will save the child."

The weeping mother then begged him to reassure and comfort as much as possible her young sister, whom she would now send to him.

When Marie came back again, a little comforted, her sister said to her: "Now we must sleep; we have need of all our strength."

"Sleep! how can we with those dreadful men on the watch and no lock to the door!"

"There is a broken bolt upon the door and a big nail in the wall. Let me tie them together with my garters. If any one tries to come in, I shall hear him."

Protected by this singular device, the sisters passed the night separated only by a few rough boards from the banditti.

Their anxiety the next day was very great. Called out by a distant signal, the sisters passed the night separated only by a few rough boards from the banditti. They cast angry looks at their prisoners, who heard them muttering curses on the red coats. The Swiss regiments wore scarlet uniforms turned up with black. Fra Diavolo's scouts had been fired upon by the absent monks of a detachment commanded by Lieut. Schwich, who, strangely enough, was in command of an expedition against the very band by which his sisters were held prisoners.

The band grew more and more uneasy. Murmurs and threats were heard. Not a word was lost on Madame Clavel, who spoke German and Italian as did the banditti, who were gathered out of all manner of nations.

About dusk a shout announced the return of the messenger. Some of his comrades ran to meet him. At this crisis of their fate the sisters had neither strength to stir, nor voice to ask a question. But an exclamation of satisfaction reached them, and they clasped each other's hands for they knew they were saved. Fra Diavolo came up to them and proposed that they start at break of day.

"No—no, at once," they cried.

"As you will, I will give you a guide. Julie, who had money left, gave several gold pieces to those who had carried her and the boy. The messenger who had just got back from Naples, was appointed to accompany them. Fra Diavolo's last words were, 'I expect Jacopo, and as long as you live you must bear testimony to the respect with which I have treated you.'"

Indeed, when he was taken and tried the following year, he frequently alluded to this circumstance, saying—"Ask Madame Clavel and Madame Snell if I was not kind to them."

At the bottom of a sharp descent was a little inn where they found a small carriage. The bandit who escorted them with feverish eagerness put in the horse, and, lashing him with all his might, urged him to break-neck speed, looking behind him constantly. The moon shone down upon the dusty road over which they passed at full gallop. At last their Jehu paused, and turning round, said in German:—"I believe we are safe! Don't you remember me, Colonel? I belonged to the First Swiss Regiment. I used to carry the little boy, like the rest of my comrades, when we were scouring Calabria."

"Hail! You deserted?"

"I could not do otherwise. I got tipsy once and beat my sergeant so that they thought I had killed him. I should have been court-martialled and shot, but I made my escape. Now you will get me my pardon, ma Colonel. Had it not been for me, Ludwig, you would all have been shot."

"How so?"

"Because Jacopo had been hanged a few hours before I reached Naples. I hurried back to the convent with false news before any one else should bring word to our chief that they had hung him. The chief has spies everywhere. He will hear of it before long. What might he not do to us if we fell into his hands?"

And so, thanks to the choice having fallen on this deserter, Fra Diavolo's messengers the women and the child were saved. Of course Ludwig got his pardon.

The two sisters found their husbands still living. Captain Snell never got over his wound, but his wife managed to transport him to Switzerland, where he lived for a good while.

Julie was less fortunate. Her Colonel died by slow degrees, and, unhappily, for six months before his death, endeavored to forget his suffering in the excitement of gambling. He lost all his fortune. After his death Captain Schwich took his poor sister and her child to Berne, where her father received them gladly.

Young Clavel became the pet of his grandparents. He was a general favourite and an excellent scholar. When he was 15 the young Prince of Hohenzollern Hechingen came to Berne to finish his education. He and Clavel became fast friends.

Seeing this, a rich uncle of Auguste began to hector him about a nephew. He made him a handsome allowance, but him in the way of completing his education under the best masters, and was well pleased he should become the travelling companion of Charles of Hohenzollern.

The friends did not separate even when the tour of Europe being over, Prince Charles went to live at Hechingen, where he married a daughter of the Duke de Lauchenberg (Prince Eugene Beauharnais). This Princess shared her husband's great regard for Auguste Clavel. His talents, his acquirements, his amiability, made him the life of their Court, where everybody loved him. But his nature was very tender and emotional, and the success of his first love was a great blow to him. The lady whom he loved was the brilliant Countess Clotilde de L., who encouraged his attentions, and whom he hoped would marry him. When that hope proved false he was very unhappy.

The Princess, seeing his condition, persuaded him to try a change of scene. She knew that steady occupation would do good to a man, for such a wound, and induced him to accept an important professorship in the Polytechnic School at Stuttgart. He had not been there very long when he was attacked by fatal illness.

In 1842, when thirty-six years old, the child born in Calabria, the prisoner of Fra Diavolo, the friend of the Princess of Hohenzollern, died at Berne, in his mother's arms. She lived many years after him.

At Hechingen there is a little boudoir hung with drawings by Clavel, and a large picture represents him on horseback beside the woman he loved him.

At Berne there is a drawing-room full of the same kind of portraits, and her portrait hangs there beside that of Auguste.

This story is entirely true—even the names of those who figure in it have not been altered.

PROTESTANT PREJUDICE AGAINST PURGATORY.

Catholic Review.

There is, perhaps, no word in the Catholic vocabulary more offensive to Protestant ears than that of purgatory. Yet, when you come to think of it seriously and dispassionately, the subject thoughtfully, you will be surprised that it should ever have come to be so. For what is there in the idea of purgatory that is at all repugnant to either reason, philosophy, good sense, or the highest and purest religious sentiment? As for the reason of the thing, we have always thought there was great wisdom and pertinence in the reply which Dr. Samuel Johnson gave to Boswell when he asked him what he thought of the Catholic doctrine of purgatory. "Why," said the Doctor, "if I understand the Catholic doctrine of purgatory, it amounts to this: they believe that the great mass of mankind are neither so good as to deserve to go to hell, nor so bad as to deserve to go straight to heaven; therefore the goodness of God has provided a middle state where the imperfect may be purified and fitted for the enjoyment of the beatific vision. I do not see that there is anything objectionable in that." Undoubtedly there is reason and good sense in that view of the case. The great mass of professing Christians are extremely imperfect. Some give serious scandal, others manifest peculiarities of habit and disposition that are so unattractive that we do not wonder at the child who asked his mother with great seriousness if his grandfather would go to heaven, and on being asked why he asked the question replied, "Because he does not want to go there." Have we not all an instinctive feeling that such a man (and examples abound in the experience of every one; perhaps we ourselves are included in the same category) is hardly fit for the enjoyment of the inheritance of the saints in that view of the case. The great mass of professing Christians are extremely imperfect. Some give serious scandal, others manifest peculiarities of habit and disposition that are so unattractive that we do not wonder at the child who asked his mother with great seriousness if his grandfather would go to heaven, and on being asked why he asked the question replied, "Because he does not want to go there." Have we not all an instinctive feeling that such a man (and examples abound in the experience of every one; perhaps we ourselves are included in the same category) is hardly fit for the enjoyment of the inheritance of the saints in that view of the case. The great mass of professing Christians are extremely imperfect. 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