

THE BATTLE OF SOLFERINO

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The French body which was first thus engaged was the *corps d'armes* of General Niel, which since the preceding evening was marching on the direction of Medale. The advanced guard of General Niel had met three divisions of Urban's corps at a farm house called the "Casa di Maioraislee," and was obliged to make in way amidst a tremendous fire of musketry and artillery.

As soon as Marshall Conrobert was aware of the enemy's attack, he ordered his troops to throw aside their knapsacks, and with all possible speed hastened to the scene of action. After an hour's fight the action became general all over the plain, and the arrival of the Emperor soon converted it into a regular pitched battle. Marshall MacMahon was soon engaged on the left, and the distant report of the artillery, which was carried by the wind blowing from the Lago di Garda, apprised us that the Piedmontese army was equally engaged somewhere near Rivoltella, succeeded in making their junction with the French army. The French centre had been compelled by the events of the day to concentrate the mass of its forces towards the hilly village of Solferino, where the Austrians were disputing the ground with an energy unprecedented in the present war.

The battle became then a tremendous one. The Piedmontese, fed by the King, really performed wonders. The 1st and 2nd regiments of the Guards emulated the zouaves to such a degree that a French officer told me it was impossible to imagine anything more grand and heroic. Generals Durando's and Frotils divisions took position after position at the point of the bayonet, till they succeeded in routing the enemy, which was obliged to fall back on Cavriana and Volta. This back movement was soon stopped by the enemy's reserve coming from Guidizzola, Ceriungo, and Goito, so that the conflict was renewed, and lasted till night. Of course it is impossible for me to send you a correct account of this great and bloody struggle, in which the Austrians mustered not less than 240,000 men, the allies had as many as that, though not until nearly the close of the day.

The losses on both sides have been tremendous. The Sindaco of Castiglione, a Doctor Poll, told me half-an-hour ago that he thought the two armies had not less than 40,000 hors de combat. Field-pieces, prisoners, flags, I hear, have also fallen into our hands, and I saw myself, batches of prisoners sent to Castiglione and to Brescia. At about eight o'clock in the evening the smoke which had enveloped, for more than ten hours, the hills which stretch away from Castiglione as far as Volta, was gradually dispersing, so it was clear that the great struggle was drawing to a close.

Brooklyn *Eagle* (13 July 1859), page 2.