

# BATTLE OF SOLFERINO

## *Paris Patrie*

29 June 1859

CAVRIANA, Sunday.—A private despatch brings fresh and important details of the battle of Solferino. The Emperor having arrived at Castiglione at seven AM, on the 24<sup>th</sup> proceeded to a hill which commands the town, and which forms an excellent point of observation. His Majesty immediately discovered that the enemy was engaging a general action. In fact, considerable masses of Austrians occupied on all the heights formidable positions, and the battle was raging over an extent of five leagues—from the lake of Garda to Guidizzola. The Emperor immediately mounted, and proceeded to Solferino with all his staff; there the fighting was going on with greatest fierceness.

It was this point that was most strenuously contested at the time of the first battle won by Augereau in 1796. There was this important position taken and retaken; it was at last taken by the point of the bayonet, under the eyes of the Emperor, by the division of General Forey. The Piedmontese, who formed the left wing, behaved admirably. The Austrians, who had put their best troops forward, began to give way about two o'clock. The battle had commenced between three and four in the morning. The Austrians had displayed great energy; their positions were skillfully selected. The Emperor Francis Joseph commanded in person, and his presence still further inflamed the ardor of his troops. Driven out of Solferino, the Austrians concentrated their efforts against our right wing, where the cavalry had occasion to charge with irresistible elan; our infantry and artillery were admirable as usual.

In the night of the 23–24<sup>th</sup> we learned that the Austrians had recrossed the Mincio to attack us. A battle was imminent. Solferino, San Cassiano, Cavriano, formidable positions, were occupied by the Austrians, who supported by a numerous artillery, crowned the heights as far as Volta. On the left, in the plain below Volta, Guidizzolo, and Medole, numerous columns advanced with artillery to attack and turn our right. The enemy had besides between Solferino and Peschiera, considerable forces, which were to be opposed to the King of Piedmont's army, marching from Desento Pozzolengo.

The armies occupied these positions when at 5 AM, the first corps (Marshal Baraguay d'Hilliers) begun the engagement before Solferino. The heights and villages were carried and occupied by our troops after a sanguinary combat. During this time the 2<sup>d</sup> corps (Marshal de Mac Mahon's) which was on the right of the 1<sup>st</sup> on the plain, extended itself to the right to join with the column of General Neil, marching upon Medole.

The Emperor's courage amounted to the verge of rashness, electrifying the soldiers by the coolness he always displayed in the thickest of the contest, and merely walking his horse when he shifted his position, in the midst of a shower of shells and bullets. Every one shuddered on beholding the Emperor thus exposing himself, and the soldiers, full of admiration for this boldness nevertheless regretted it aloud. His Majesty is established since yesterday in the house which the Emperor of Austria had selected for his residence. The losses of the enemy must have been immense. Particulars are yet wanting of our own losses, which, though greatly inferior to those of the Austrians are yet heavy. Gen. Auger is the only one of our generals seriously wounded. The Emperor named him lieutenant-general on the field of battle. It is said that the Austrians are completely demoralised.