

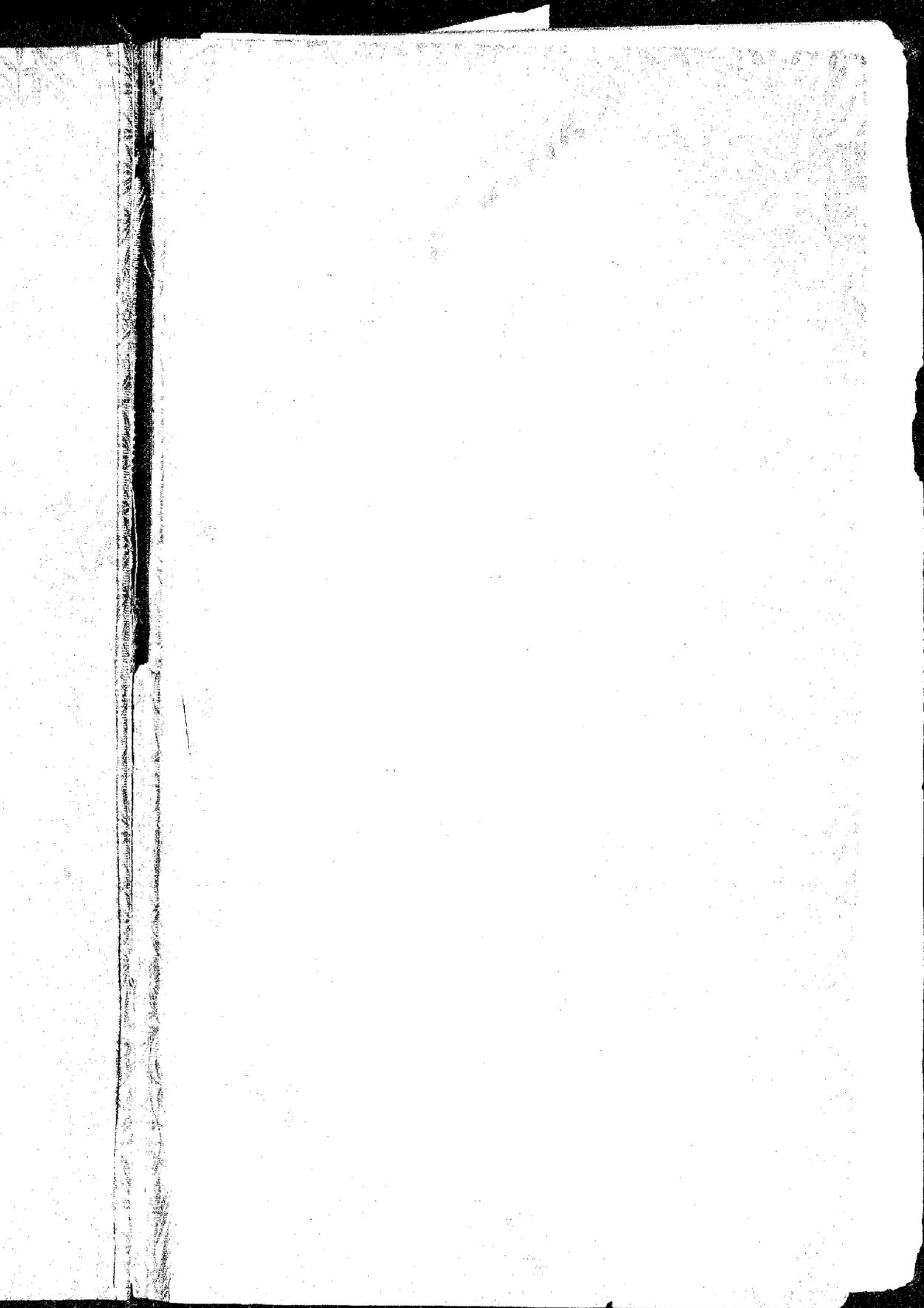


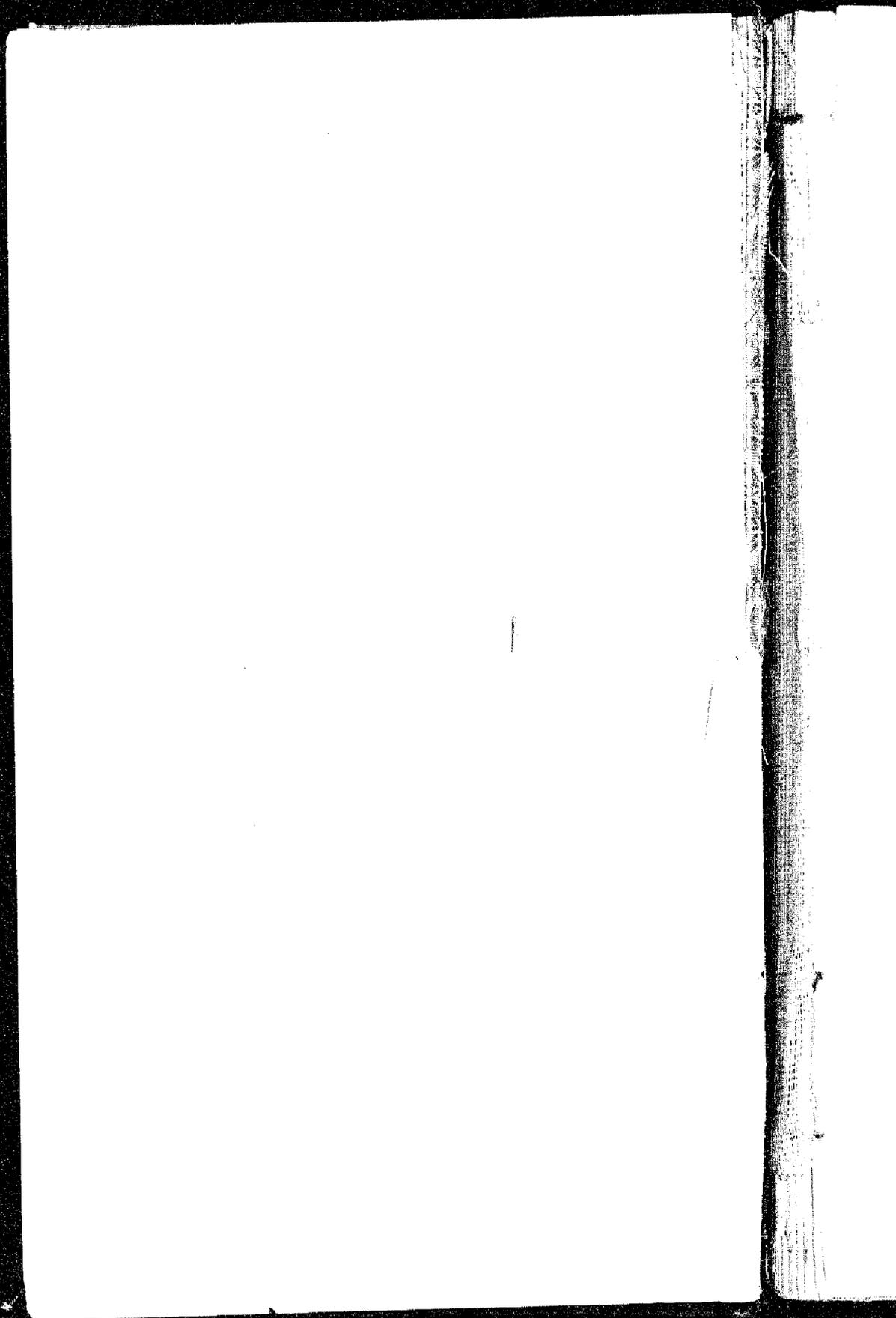
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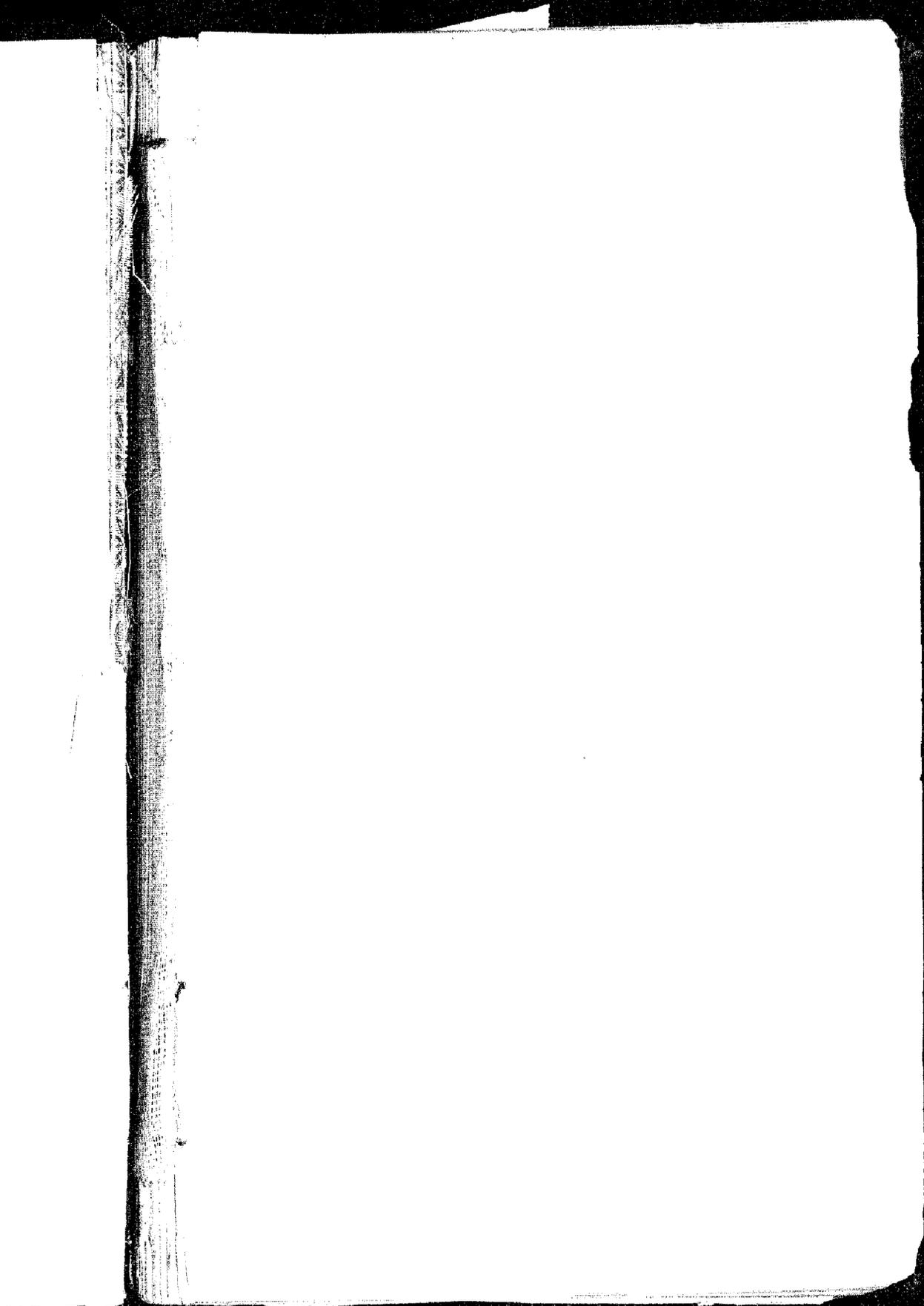
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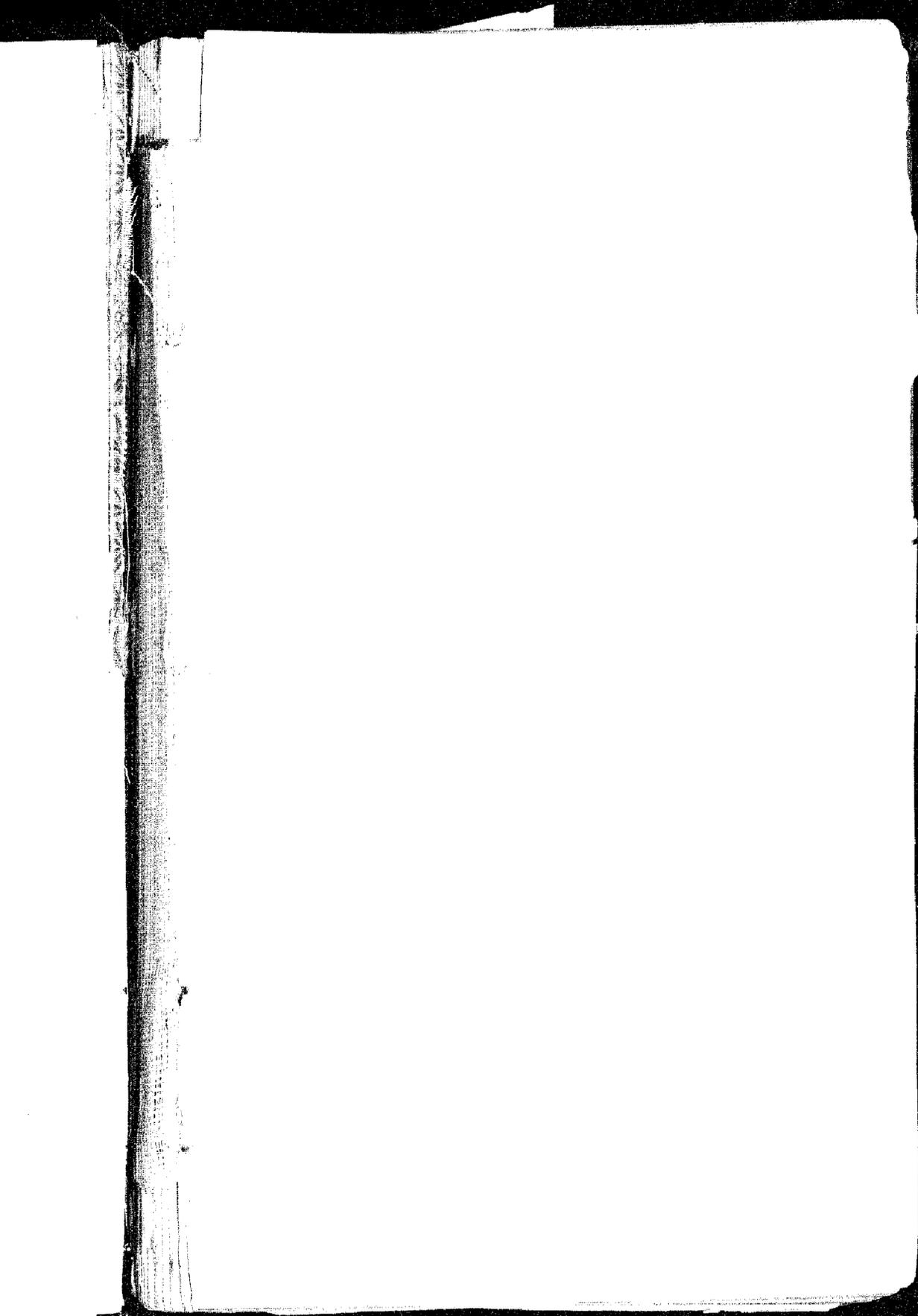


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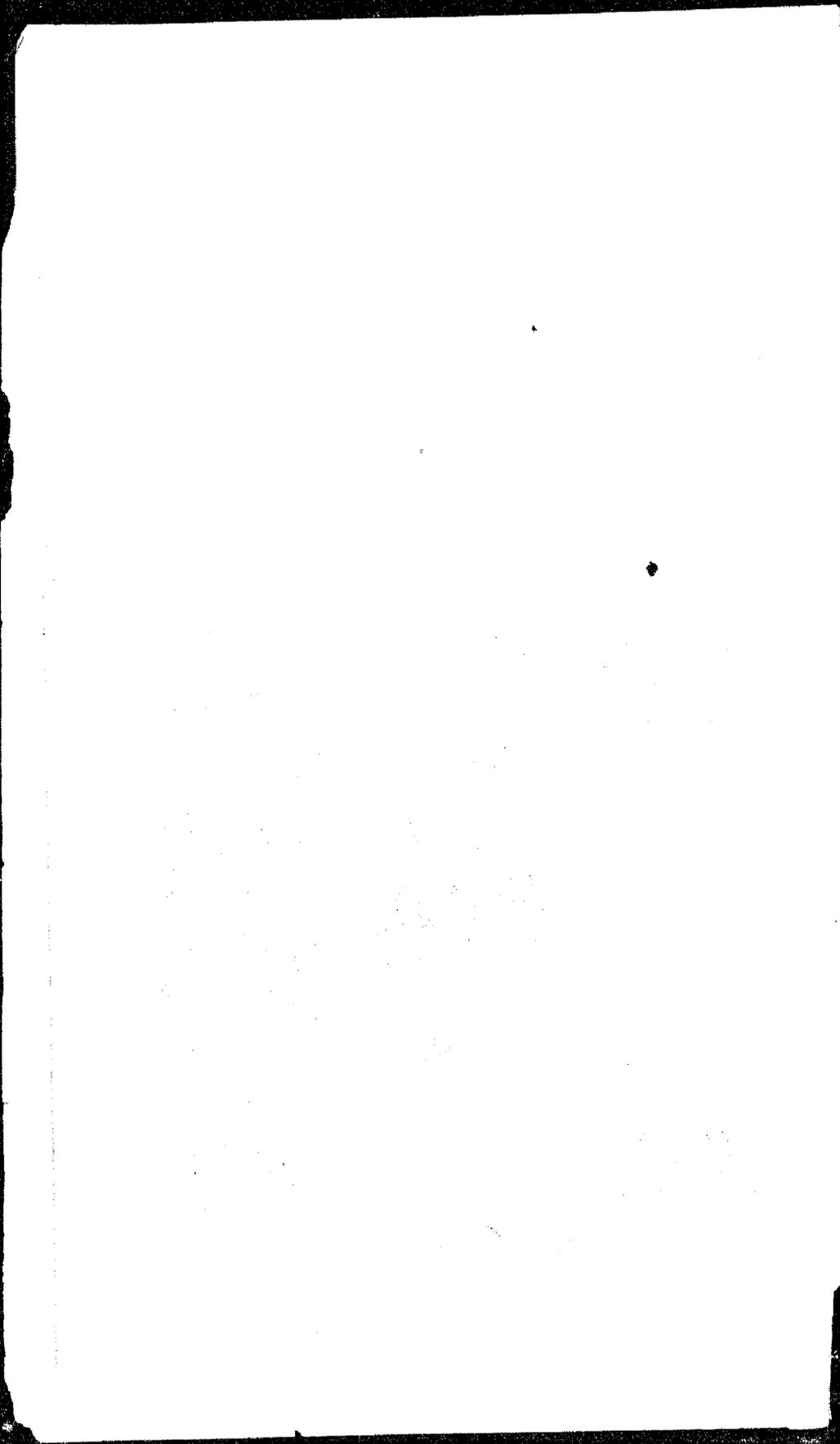




"Two files marched on the right and two on the left of the road."

(Page 1.)





MILITARY LIFE

IN ITALY

SKETCHES

BY

EDMONDO DE AMICIS

ARMY OFFICER

TRANSLATED BY

WILHELMINA W. CADY

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

NEW YORK

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

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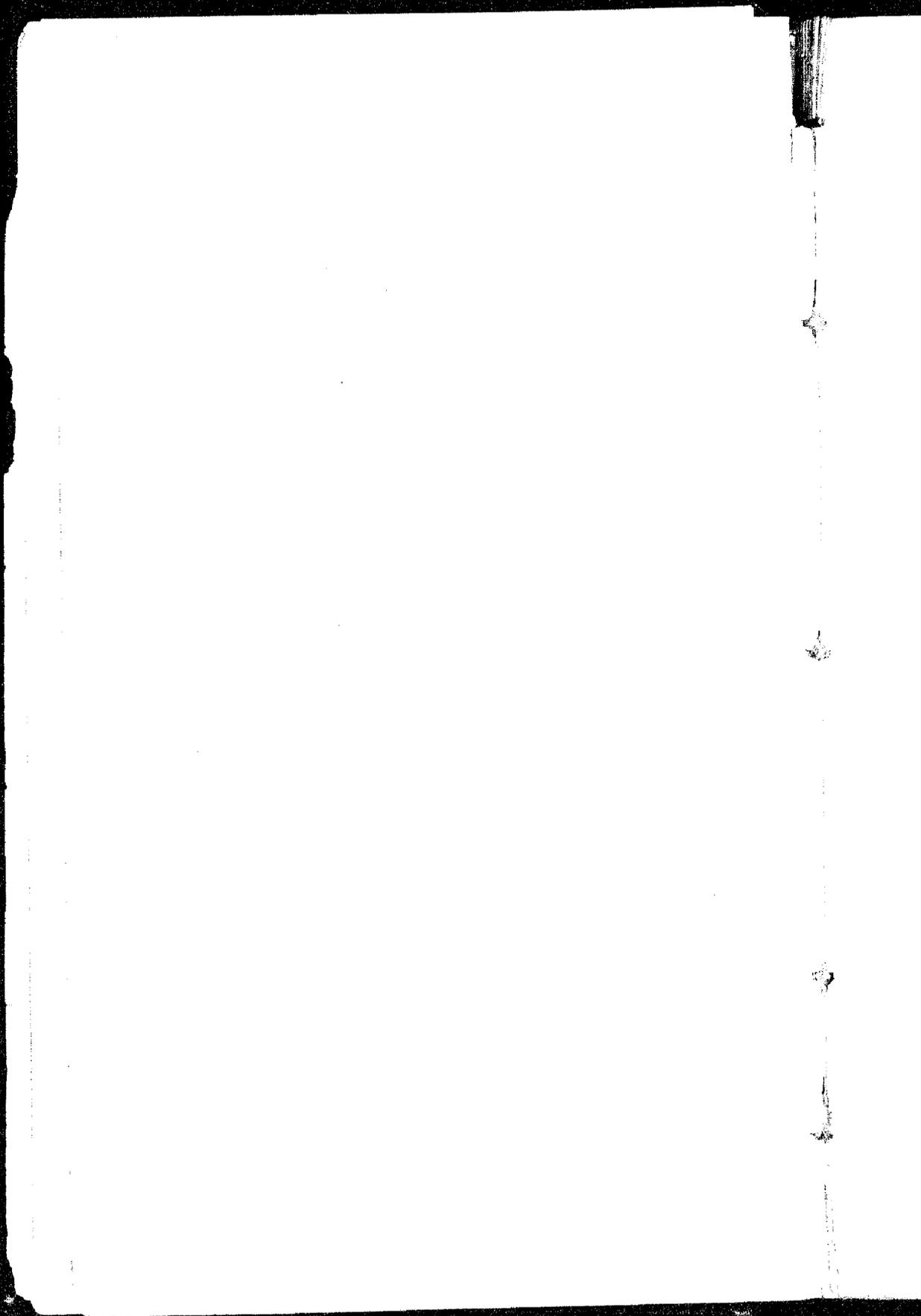
1882

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TO MY MOTHER,
THERESA BUSSETTI DE AMICIS,

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK,
REGRETTING THAT I CANNOT UNITE HER DEAR NAME WITH
A WORK LOVELY AS HER HEART, CHOICE AS HER
VIRTUES, AND HOLY AS HER LIFE,



AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

SOME time ago, in speaking of one of these sketches, two readers, who were exceedingly emotional, unwittingly revealed the double purpose I had in view when writing this book.

A working man said: "When I had finished reading it, I would have gladly pressed the hand of the first soldier whom I happened to meet."

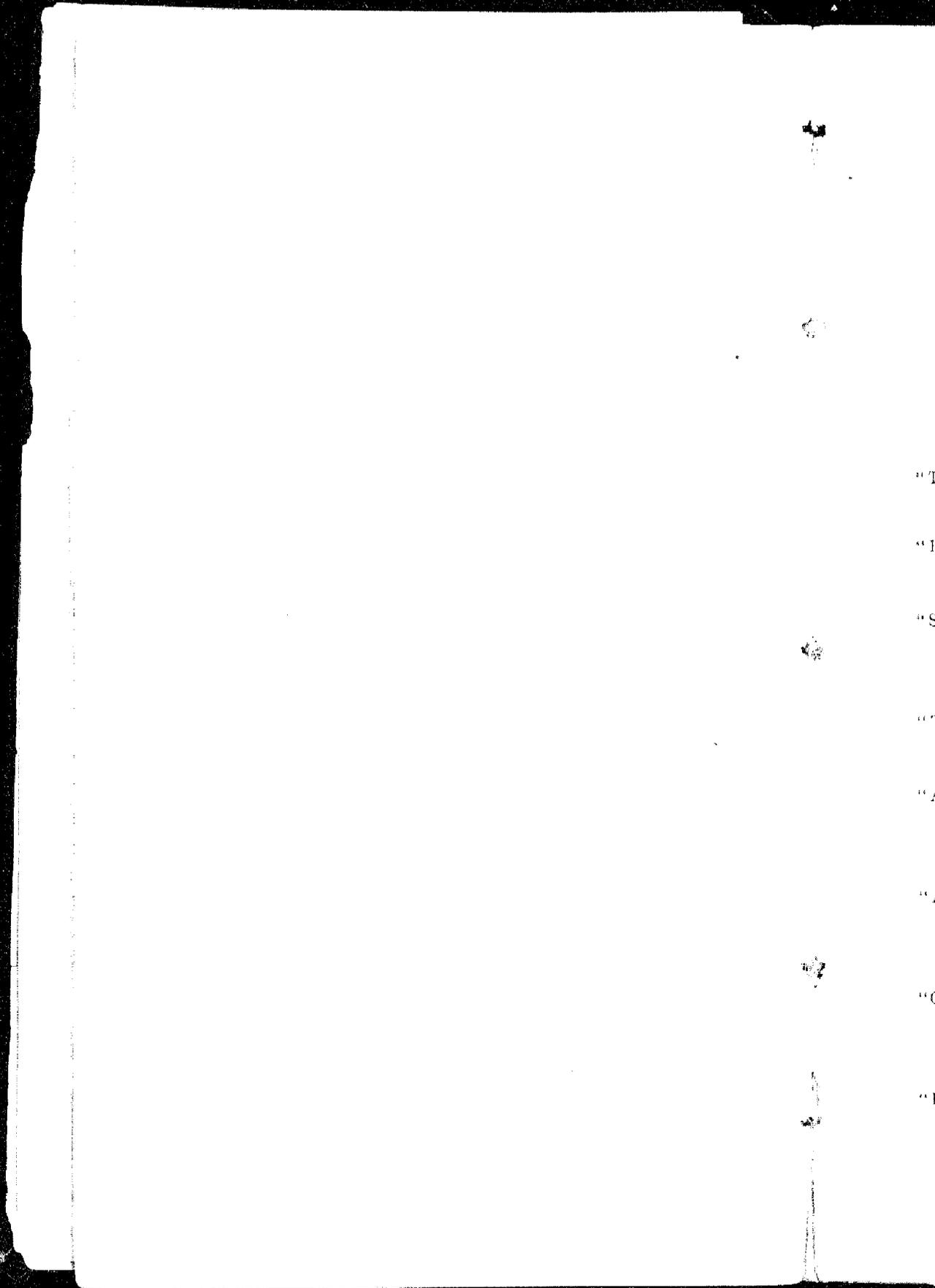
A soldier said: "It is a story full of consolation, which inspires a man with good-will for his duties."

Let the one wish well to the soldier and the other be a soldier from the heart. Should I succeed in obtaining these two results in any of my readers, I should feel well repaid for my pains, and my liveliest and most earnest desire would be fulfilled.

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MILITARY LIFE.

A MIDSUMMER MARCH.

It was a beautiful day in August ; not a cloud was to be seen, nor was there a breath of wind stirring ; the air was still and burning. The road along which the regiment was marching was broad, straight, long, and seemingly endless, and covered with a very fine dust, which rose in clouds, forcing itself into the eyes, mouth, and under one's clothes, and whitening the beard and hair. On the right and left of the road were neither trees, bushes, not a palm's breadth of shade, nor a drop of water. The country was dry, bare, and deserted ; in the few houses scattered here and there, reigned such absolute silence that they seemed abandoned. We could not rest our eyes on the road, the walls, or on the fields, the sun beat so strongly on them all. We walked on with drooping head and half-closed eyes. In short, a beautiful August day, but a very terrible one for a march.

The regiment had been moving for more than an hour. Despite the dust and suffocating heat, the soldiers were still as fresh and gay as at the moment of their departure. Two files marched on the right and two on the left of the road, and from

one side to the other there was a continuous fire of jokes and bon-mots, with an unceasing interchange of coarse but witty remarks. From time to time there was a burst of laughter or a noisy clapping of hands, that was always followed by a "To your place, forward, order!" which instantly restored quiet and silence. Sometimes three, four, or five voices would break out at once into some gay Tuscan *stornello*; further on was heard a pathetic southern romance, or still beyond, the war song of the Alps; then some would leave off and others begin, and a thousand different accents and dialects would succeed and mingle with each other. The march continued according to regulations—the lines compact, the step free, the officers in their places; every thing in perfect order. On and on we went. . . .

But—oh, look there; the second man of the first line begins to lag! Now I will set him right. "Ho, there! Will you fall in or not?"—He falls in.

Another ten or twelve paces,—another. "Ho, there! Will you march in your place or not? Just look how that flank is moving! *Corpo di*— Courage, let 's fall in; quick step." A rapid run, a great bumping of canteens against the hips, a noisy dancing of cartridges in their boxes, a confusion, a cloud of dust which envelops and covers every thing. . . . The rear falls in now. We must take breath; there is no help for it. One would really need a pair of iron-bound lungs for this sort of thing. It is terrible marching to-day,—the sun burns the brain,—the dust stifles us,—this road will never end,—and these caps,—if there were only a tree, a palm's breadth of shade, a drop of water! But there is nothing. This is really a desert.

The songs we heard a little while ago have fallen off a

note; the dialogues are less vivacious; the lines a trifle less compact. The commander of the first battalion is already at the head of the second; the commander of the second is at the rear of the third. You can see now that the regiment has been marching for three hours.

The straight road comes to an end and begins to curve. The eye can no longer follow the road and comfort itself with the view of the roofs in a distant village, the bell-tower of a little church, or any thing, in fact, that gives indication of habitation and promises a halt, a short rest, a breathing-space—a moment of life. Heavens, what a road! We cannot see a hundred steps ahead. Courage—forward; five minutes more and we shall reach a turn. Who knows but, in turning, far away in the distance a little hamlet or clump of trees may appear, where we shall make a halt! Hope gives vigor; we steady our steps, have reached the turn, rush on to reach the new direction, stretch our necks, glance quickly ahead—houses? trees? villages? halts? Nothing! the road, and nothing but the road, to be seen! A feeling of desperation takes possession of all. The heads sink on the chest, the eyes seek the ground, the backs bend beneath the knapsacks; the lines, closed up from the momentary pressure, fall apart; the rear gives the step; the commander of the first battalion is already at the head of the second, the commander of the second at that of the company which follows; the captain—where can the captain be?

The songs we heard two hours since have fallen off two notes. The men sing because they began to do so: perhaps they would not begin again. The conversation is forced; the jokes have lost their sharpness. Ah! you can see that the regiment has been four hours on its march.

On—on—on we go. The foreheads, scorched by the sun, dripping with perspiration, are black, contracted, and disfigured; the breathing is labored; the lips hang down; the tongue has thickened; the hands are swollen and heavy; the soles very painful; there is a drowsiness and utter abandon throughout the entire body; the knapsacks have slipped over the loins, the cartridge-boxes on to the thigh, the cloaks up around the begrimed and soaking throats; the cravats become loosened; the caps are shoved over the nape of the neck or, if the head be bowed, on to the nose. The eyes, blinded by the strong light, are either fixed motionless upon the road-side, or wander here and there in search of a brook, a fountain, a—puddle even; so that the frightful heat which is burning up the body may be mitigated. Oh, what thirst! At this point varied and confused recollections of cafés formerly frequented (when we were happy) spring up before the excited imagination; we see the usual habitués of the place slowly sipping great mugs of frothy, iced beer; or springs of living water burst foaming from a rock. We hear its murmur and see it winding and losing itself in crystalline splendor amid the grass. Oh, to reach it!

“If I ever do reach a spout I will drink enough to kill me! I will fly to a café, empty a bottle in one breath, two, or if that be not enough—three.” . . .

On and on we go. The songs have ceased; conversation is dead. A forced joke falls occasionally from the lips of the most vigorous, but in vain; it is received with arid silence. Silently we march. Many who were at the head, now, limping, find themselves at the rear. The strongest who were at the rear, involuntarily take the lead. The

companies get mixed. "To your place, to your place! Is that the way to march?" . . . No one pays any attention; we might as well preach to stone walls. "Ho, there—why do you stop? Forward, courage." "Lieutenant, I cannot go another step." "It's nothing, nothing, rouse yourself, forward." . . . It's useless, he is already sleeping. "Close up there. Courage. There is only a short distance now."

"Ah, yes, only a little way! That's what they always say, but meantime we don't come to a halt,—and the soup this morning was water,—and they have n't given the loan yet. With such a sun they might have allowed us to start earlier. We don't halt at all,—and the broth,—and the loan"

"Make way there!" "What is it? Who is coming?" There is the mad dashing by of a horse, a cloud of dust,—he has passed. It was a staff-officer.

"Yes, here is one of the people who make us run. It is quite easy for him on horseback to shout out forward to us on foot! If he had the knapsack—Oh, ho, lift up those feet of yours; is n't there enough dust already?"

Many stop; many, slackening their pace, let their own company pass on in order to stop unseen. The voices of their superior officers sound more irritable than authoritative. The orders come more and more rarely. The commander of the first battalion—Where is the commander of the first battalion? Ah, you can easily see that the regiment has been marching for five hours!

"Hullo! what's this?" The blast of a trumpet is heard. A prolonged *oh!* resounds from one end of the column to the other. All halt, and then begins a confusion, a hurly-burly, a

tossing up of knapsacks, a falling of muskets, a rolling away of caps into the ditches by the way-side, a running to right and left. In two minutes the regiment has disappeared. In those ditches on either side of the road, there is a pushing, a shouting, a disputing with the elbows, and by well-aimed thrusts, for a palm's breadth of shade, or a bit of turf. Through the fields there is a coming and going of thirsty men in search of water. Some are looking, some run into each other, while others come to a standstill, like a procession of ants on the bark of a tree. There is a begging for a drink in lamentable tones of voice, refusals irritably uttered, or forced concessions, and pulling away of the canteens in jealous fury. Little by little the tumult subsides, the general movement diminishes, quiet returns; all, comfortably or uncomfortably, as the case may be, lie stretched out on the ground, close their eyes, and rest. One moment more, and the entire regiment will be sleeping.

"Make way, make way there, boys! A little room only—Heigh, there! lookout or the wheels will pass over you. Take up that knapsack from the middle of the road—A little more room, so—make way for me." "Ha, here's the bearer of life, here's the friend of brave men—here's Providence, the sutler!" The sleeping stir, rub their arms, rub their eyes, raise themselves on their elbows—up—up—here they all are on their feet. They rush and gather round the cart, and dash over it as waves do over a ship in a gale. Above that crowd there is a raising of hands, a stretching out of arms, a giving and receiving of money, angry complaints of having been there an hour without getting a thing, a persistency both threatening and supplicating. The poor man who is breathless, perspiring, and puffing, begs for a little space, a little breathing-room.

Another blast of the trumpet; it is the *Attention!* which is followed by a long murmur of surprise and discontent. "There is n't time to swallow a mouthful! It would have been better not to have stopped at all! They certainly want to kill us!" The crowd disperses slowly; those lying down sit up wearily; some rise to their feet slowly; others stand there and enjoy the last moment, the last instant; little by little all have sprung from the ditches on the way-side, the knapsacks are on their shoulders, the lines are formed. Another blast, the first company moves, the second, the third—the entire regiment is in motion. "Fall in there, eh! Don't let us have any repetition of the former confusion."

For a half hour things go a trifle less badly than before, though the entire body feels painfully the shortness of the rest, and not all the men were able to quench their thirst. "But look how that rear is marching! Will you close up there?" For a half hour, as I said, things go a trifle less badly than before; the lines are compact, the man who was behind has caught up with his company, the officers are back at their posts. "But how this sun burns! This is African heat! It's impossible to stand it!" The feet have no longer strength enough to raise themselves from the ground, they drag along; the arms hang at the side, the belt slides over the hips, the straps of the knapsacks clasp the shoulders, the cloak weighs heavily on the stomach. "And we don't reach our destination! Where are they taking us to?"

"A fountain! a fountain!" A cry of joy greets this news. The lines break up; all run forward, by fives, sixes, and tens, dashing breakneck fashion on the water; then follow blows, pushes, squabbles, shouts, and thrusts. "To your places, to

your places, for Heaven's sake!" shouts an indignant officer. The throng breaks up and spreads in all directions; many, whose stomachs are loaded down with water, try in vain to regain their places; others reach theirs after a breathless run, and are obliged to stop shortly thereafter; some stop for another moment, if only to give a last glance at the blessed water! Strength is failing, the vacant spaces grow larger, the ditches are filled with the exhausted; all are tottering and falling. Suddenly, at a turn of the road, a bell-tower and a village appear in sight. "It is the station! it is the station!" The cry spreads in an instant from head to the rear; the effect is miraculous; strength returns, the lines close up, the companies re-form, the stragglers run forward, and every thing is changed. The music starts up; we are at the village; we enter. The doors of the factories, the openings of the streets, the windows and balconies fill with inquisitive people; here and there little faces full of tender curiosity appear at the window-sills. "Poor fellows, how tired they must be!" Oh, the effect of those eyes! The man who was walking doubled up straightens himself, with a supreme effort, for the last time; he who was limping assumes a resolute gait; and he who was just ready to drop, utterly worn out, takes courage and pulls on. "Ho, there! where are you going?" "A swallow of water, lieutenant." "Not a bit of it! Back to your place!" "Oh, how cruel!" murmur the compassionate mammas who happen to be standing around; "how they do treat those poor boys! Not even a swallow of water!"

The regiment has passed, stacked arms, pitched the tents. Oh, what a gay and animated camp! And are the fatigues and trials of the marches remembered?

Ah, not even in their dreams!

THE ORDERLY.

They had been living together for four years; nor had either of them forgotten for a single moment that one was the officer, the other the soldier. The former was austere as a soldier, the latter correspondingly submissive. They loved each other; but with that hard, rough, silent affection, which never makes any display, nor reveals itself, and which conceals a demonstration of tenderness under a rude action; is eloquent when silent, embarrassed when speaking; inimical to blandishments, and accustomed, when feeling the desire to weep, to bite the lips and withhold the tears for fear of appearing weak and unmanly. They used a laconic language to one another; understood each other by monosyllables, glances, and signs. Their common interpreter was the watch, which regulated every thing, even their steps and words, with the strictest discipline. "Lieutenant, do you wish any thing more?" "Nothing." "May I go?" "Go." This was the daily form of dismissal. Not one word more. So days, months, and years had passed—four years in all—in quarters, at home, in camp, on the march, and in war, and little by little a deep, stern sort of affection, almost unknown to them, had grown up in their two hearts. There was in that invariable taciturnity, that soldierly way of speaking, the fugitive exchange of glances which meant on one side, "Do this," and on the

other, "I understand," for any one who knew the natures of these two, as much courtesy, kindness, and warm feeling as could be found in the most expansive interchange of tenderness.

They had stood side by side on the battle-field at solemn moments, within a few paces of the enemy's cannon, and at every whistle of the shot one had glanced quickly around in search of the other, and on finding him had heaved a sigh while thinking, "This, too, has passed." They had stood guard together on the outposts more than one cold and rainy night, with their feet in the mud, the wind blowing on their faces, and in the morning, when the relief arrived, had exchanged smiles, as if to say: "Now we are going back to camp; keep up your spirits, for you can rest." Many times, on a long summer's march, both had looked at the same moment to count the mile-stones on the way-side, and often found them to have numbered more than forty, exchanging, when they reached the last, a glance full of comfort and pleasure, which seemed to say: "There are two more—one more—here we are!" More than one evening in camp, when they were preparing their minds for the musket-shot that was to wake them before morning, after one was stretched out under the tent and the other had arranged his overcoat to protect him from the night air, the soldier said in moving off, "Good-night, lieutenant," and the officer, fancying that the voice trembled slightly, and that the last word had not come out in full force, returned the salute in the same tone. At other times, while one handed the other a letter, and the latter put out his hand impatiently to take it, a slight smile had passed over their two faces:—"It is a letter from home: I recognize

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the writing; it is from your mother." One meant to say, "Thanks"; the other had intended to reply, "You have anticipated my pleasure."

After which they both returned to their customary silent and severe modes of address. Not once, in presenting himself before, or upon leaving his superior, did the proud soldier forget to put his hand to his cap in a resolute manner, raising his head as he did so, and fixing his eyes upon his face, and when he went away, his right-about-face was always performed according to regulations.

They had only been living together for four years; but the soldier, who had been made an orderly after the first year of duty, was completing his term of service.

One day the commandant of the corps received orders to dismiss the class to which the orderly belonged.

That day, between the officer and the soldier, there passed few more words than usual, but their two hearts talked at length. "Do you require any thing more?" "Nothing." "The order to dismiss your class has arrived; you will leave in ten days."

A brief silence followed without their eyes meeting.

"May I go?" "Yes, certainly." This time a *certainly* was added, and this was a great step on the road to tenderness.

They were both sad at heart, but not to an equal degree. One lost his friend—in fact, more than a friend, a brother, who loved him with an almost religious devotion. The other, too, lost a friend, a brother; but the former remained, the latter returned to his home, and this was a great comfort. To return home! After so many years, so many perils; after having asked himself so often of an evening—when the long, sad

notes of the bugle give the signal for extinguishing lights, and under the tents they died out, and through the movable city of linen spreads a deep quiet—after having asked himself so often of an evening, while leaning his head on his hand in moments of melancholy, and, thinking of his mother: “What is the poor woman doing now?” After having heard so many times in camp, here and there in the groups of peasants, the notes of the rural *ritornelli*, the same that he had listened to at home, in summer, when watching in the fields where the bright moonlight fell, and among so many voices of friends and relations he heard distinctly, one, clear, silvery, and tremulous, which so well knew its way to his heart; to return! after having so often blessed those songs as a greeting from the absent mother. To return unexpectedly and see once more the country and houses, recognize from a distance the well-known roof, to hasten his steps, arrive breathless in that dear meadow, see the little sister now grown up, and the younger brother now quite a stripling, appear before his eyes. The others gather at their cry, and he dashes into their midst, then breaks away from all, runs to the house, calls the old mother, sees her come forward with outstretched arms and eyes filled with tears, throws himself on her neck, and feels the pressure of those beloved arms and experiences the most profound of human joy—these are things of which the thought alone suffices to sweeten any bitterness and heal any wound.

Yet the idea of being obliged to leave his officer cuts the poor fellow to the quick. Then, too, a true soldier never takes off the coat which has served so many years as a covering and a pillow, and upon which he has expended so much labor with

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soap and brush, without feeling a certain sinking at the heart, an anxious and scornful tenderness, like the separation from a friend who has often offended us, and with whom we should like to keep up the quarrel, but who has always been esteemed and loved. Those pockets at the back, where in prison he concealed his pipe at the appearance of the officer of the guard and for which (until he has overcome the old habit) he still searches with his hands. . . . What a nuisance not to find it any longer there!

The good officer had become pensive and had added not one word to his usual formula. So it was with the soldier too. But their glances were more frequent and longer, and they seemed to say: "You are suffering, I know." The soldier performed his duties more slowly, in order to remain longer in the house and compensate himself, during those last days, for the approaching separation. At first he proceeded with a certain slowness; then with a sluggishness, apparently studied; at last pretended to dust the tables and chairs; but more often absorbed in his sad thoughts, he moved his cloth quite blindly without touching anything. Meanwhile, the officer, erect and immovable, with arms crossed before the mirror, which reflected the figure of his soldier, followed his steps, the movements of the face, and avoided the other's glances by quickly raising his eyes to the ceiling in an abstracted manner. "Lieutenant, may I go?" "Yes, certainly." And the soldier took his departure. He had not gone down two steps when from within came a hurried: "Come here," and he returned. "Do you require any thing else?" "Nothing. I wished to tell you." . . . "Nothing—nothing; you can do it to-morrow—go now." Perhaps he had called him back to

see him, and, on his moving off again, he continued to fasten his eyes upon the door through which he had passed.

Finally, the day for departure came. The officer was at home seated at the table opposite the half-closed door. Half an hour later the soldier would be obliged to come, take leave, and go away. He was smoking, blowing the clouds of smoke into the air, and with his eye lazily followed its slow and tortuous course until it melted into the atmosphere. The smoke which got into his eyes made the tears gather, and he wiped them away from time to time with the back of his hand, wondering why such big tears should fall just as if he were crying. He attributed it all to the smoke, wished to delude himself as to his emotion, dissimulate to himself, and ascribe to the cigar that which really belonged to the heart. He thought: Yes—he might have expected it. So why should he take it so to heart? Did n't I know when I took him that I could not keep him always? Did I not know that the term of service was five years? And this man has a home, a family, where he was born and has grown up, which he left with sorrow, and to which he will return with joy? Could I expect that he would continue a soldier out of affection for me? I should be an egotist—in fact I am one. What tie of gratitude binds him to me? What have I done for him! What does he owe me? Oh, a great deal certainly. I have never been other than harsh to him. I have always been to him like a father of the inquisition. It 's my temperament, to be sure, what can I do? It is useless. I cannot find words with which to express certain thoughts. And, then, . . . they must not be uttered. But at least I can give a rather more human expression to my face. . . . Now he is going away, is going back to work in

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the fields, to take up his old life again, and little by little he will lose all his military habits and will forget everything, . . . his regiment, comrades, and officers. Never mind, so long as he is contented. But shall I be able to forget him? How much time will have to elapse before I become accustomed to a new face? Upon waking in the morning, shall I not seem to see him hard at his work in a corner of the room, but so quietly that he scarcely moves for fear of arousing me before the time? How many times, when half asleep, shall I not call him by name. So many years of companionship, devoted attachment, affectionate service, and then . . . To see him go away . . . from one day to another. Bah! it is our profession, and there is nothing to be said. We must be resigned. . . . What a good fellow! What a heart he has!

If sometimes when marching, overcome by fatigue, burned by the sun, choked with dust, I stopped a moment and glanced around as if in search of a little water, a canteen instantly appeared before me and a voice at my side said: "Do you wish a drink, lieutenant?" It was he. He had left the ranks, run to fetch water * * * at a distance perhaps, who knows where, had, in the twinkling of an eye, returned panting, dripping with perspiration and exhausted, and came behind me to wait until I had shown a desire to drink. In camp, if I fell asleep under the shade of a tree, and the sun gradually began to shine in my face, a careful hand raised a green bough at the side, or stretched a tent, or placed three or four knapsacks on top of one another, or spread a cloak over a stack of arms; whose hand was it? His always. Hardly had we arrived at a station, after six, seven, or eight hours' march, barely were the tents unfolded, when he disappeared; and I

began to look for and call him at the top of my voice all over the camp, then getting angry : where is he? who knows where he has hidden himself? What a scamp he is. Is this the way to do? Just wait till he comes and I 'll fix him, and so on in this tone. A moment later I saw him appear in the distance bent under a great load of straw, with uncertain steps and great bounds, shouting to right and left at the people who wished to carry off a handful, tripping over tent cords, leaping hedge and ditches, hitting the knapsacks and shirts stretched out in the sun, stumbling into those sleeping, and drawing down upon his devoted head a regular shower of oaths and imprecations. He reached my side, threw down the straw, heaved a great sigh, wiped his forehead and said : "Lieutenant, I have kept you waiting, haven't I? but you must excuse me for I had to go so far!" Then he would stretch the straw on the grass the length of my body, pile it up on one end, put his knapsack under it as a pillow, and turning to me, would say : "Will that do, lieutenant?" Good fellow, I thought, I was wrong to get angry with you. "Go," I said then, "go and rest, for you need it." "But is it all right?" he insisted ; "if not, I'll go and fetch some more." "Yes, yes ; it 's all right ; go and rest ; go ; do not lose any more time." And on a march at night, if I were seized by sleep and walked, as one is apt to do, staggering and tottering from one side of the road to the other, and in doing so came too near a ditch, a light hand was placed on my arm and pushed me gently toward the middle of the road, while a subdued and timid voice murmured : "Look out, lieutenant, there is the ditch." It was always he! What have I done to this man that he should overwhelm me with the care and tenderness of a mother?

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What am I that he should love me with so much devotion? What do I deserve that he should live only for me? and I am sure he would give his life for me. For what reason and in what way has this poor young fellow with his rough features, hands hardened by the spade, his frame toughened by discomforts and fatigue, without culture or education, born and brought up in a humble hut in the country, quite unused to all the ways of the city, become as bashful and gentle as a girl, so that he holds his breath for fear of disturbing my slumbers, and touches my clothes with his hand to ward off some danger from me, hands me a letter holding it with his finger tips, as if he feared to profane it, and feels happy at a kind smile, a polite word, a sign, or a look that says, "All right." How is this? Ah! one must confess that the human heart learns in these garments new throbs unknown to him who is not or has not been a soldier. People do not suppose that we are stirred by other sentiments than those which fill the soul in days of war. But people in truth know little of us. They do not understand that in being a soldier the heart never grows old, but is rejuvenated, and reopens to the lovely affections of early life, and lives and exults in them much more than in the stormy and terrible excitement of war. . . . Oh, no one who is not a soldier will ever comprehend what a feeling of affection binds me to this young fellow. It is impossible. You must have passed many nights in camp, have made long marches in the month of July, have been on picket duty in a pouring rain, have suffered hunger and thirst until ready to drop, and have had a friend at your side who has placed his cloak over you to protect you from the cold, has dried your clothes, has brought you a swallow of water, offered you a

piece of bread, depriving himself of that which he offered you. Servant, domestic,—could any one call him this? Oh, he exclaims (giving vent to a movement of scorn and repugnance), it is libel! Yes, . . . because when this man comes to the doorway and salutes me, and gives that look full of timid and affectionate submission, I feel that the sign I give in order that he drops his hand, is as full of respect as the act which he performs in raising it. . . . This man is going away from me—leaves me alone—and I shall see him no more. No, that can't be; I will go and look him up; I will go and find him when he is dismissed; I know the name of his town, I will ask that of his parish and little farra, and then I will surprise him at work in the fields and call him by name. "Don't you remember your officer?" "Whom do I see! lieutenant, you here!" he will say, overcome by emotion. "Yes, I wanted to see you. Come here my dear good soldier and embrace me!"

At this point he hears a light, slow, unequal step on the stairs, like that of a person who is lingering as if trying to delay his ascent. He listens attentively without turning his head; the step approaches; his heart strings tighten; he turns; here he is—it is he—the orderly.

His face wore a disturbed expression and his eyes were red; he saluted; took a step forward, and stood looking at the officer. The latter kept his face turned away.

"Lieutenant, I am going away."

"Good-by," replied the latter pressing his lips at every word, and continuing to look in the other direction. "Good-by. A pleasant journey . . . return home . . . work . . . continue to live like a good man, as you have lived up to this time. Good-by."

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"Lieutenant!" exclaimed the soldier in a trembling voice, taking a step toward him.

"Go, go, or you will be too late; go, it 's late already—hurry."

And he stretched out his hand--the soldier pressed it warmly.

"A pleasant journey to you, and remember me. Remember your officer sometimes."

The poor fellow wished to reply; tried to utter a word, and gave a groan; pressed the hand once more, turned, looked at the door, glanced again at the officer who continued to keep his head turned away, took a long step forward. "Ah, lieutenant!" he exclaimed with a sob, and fled.

The other left alone, looked around, remained for a short time gazing at the door, then placed his elbows on the little table, rested his head on his hands, and tears formed in the corners of his eyes; shone there for a moment, and then slipped quickly down his cheeks as if afraid of being seen. He passed his hand over his eyes, looked at his cigar; it had gone out; ah, this time they were real tears; he buried his face on one arm and let them flow, for he felt the need of them.

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THE OFFICER OF THE GUARD.

AFTER having had the tattoo beaten, the officer of the guard gave a glance at the court of the quarters; there was no one there; he went to the staircase leading to the dormitories,—no one; raised his eyes to the balconies; no one there; a look at the door; closed; a peep into the guard-room; all correct there; the lights on the landings and corridors were all right; every thing was in order; all was quiet, and the regiment asleep. What was left for the officer of the guard to do? Nothing but to sleep; and this he thought he would do. He glanced around once more, above and below, approached the cellar door, tried it with his hand; it was shut; he listened attentively; not a sound was to be heard. "Now I can go to sleep," he said to himself, as he moved off toward his room. He whispered a few words in the ear of the sergeant of the guard: "You understand, eh?" and having received in reply a respectful: "Trust me!" accompanied by the placing of the hand on his breast as an assurance of good faith, he entered, closed his door, took off his cap, sword, sash, approached the bed, arranged the sheet, carried his right hand to the first button of his jacket . . . "Bah, and the round?" he thought, making a slight motion of the head as if putting the question to some one else. Then taking the light in an impatient way, he went and planted himself as straight as a pole in front of

the orders for the day, fastened to the wall under the portrait of the king. He placed his forefinger at the bottom of the sheet and began to run it along under the lines, reading rapidly and masticating the words in an angry and inarticulate way, until he suddenly stopped and pronounced in a distinct voice: "Round in the interior of the quarters at eleven o'clock"—*Sacre* . . . !" he added, turning instantly toward the bed and setting down the candlestick with a bang on the little table, "I was sure of it!" And he stood there erect and immovable, with his eyes fastened on the pillow and his hands in the act of unbuttoning his jacket.

"The round! the round!" he began again, slipping the buttons one by one from the button-holes; "after having been on your feet all day, after having run here and there, up and down without a minute's rest, and being breathless from shouting from morning till night, finally the hour comes when you ought to rest your poor bones in bed, and enjoy a moment's peace; but, *no, sir!* there 's the round, the round at eleven o'clock. You ought to take your good lantern in hand and go around again, poking and screaming about to see if they are all in bed, that no one has slipped out of the window, and so on, as long as necessary. Finally . . . "

Meanwhile he had thrown his jacket over a chair near the bed.

"Anyhow, I am made of flesh and blood like the rest, and I do not intend killing myself in the service. No, not much! Really one cannot go on in this way, it 's out of the question. Joking aside, there really is n't time to eat, and that order for the day proves it too. There is nothing easier . . . "

And the trousers had gone to keep company with the jacket.

“Nothing easier than to arrange orders for the day, seated at table after an excellent dinner, with a seven centime cigar in the mouth ; nothing easier. The discomfort falls to the lot of the poor devils who have to keep to them. It is always low down in the ranks that the hard work falls. Can't a poor officer of the guard have time to digest his food? Oh, what difference does it make to certain fine gentlemen? Dig, dig ; and if a mistake is made the punishment follows. Well, in the end . . . ”

And the rest of his raiment was thrown down with his other garments.

“After all, who is likely to turn up here at ten o'clock? Who will take it into his head to come and see whether I am going the round or not? Outside it's bitterly cold ; there is a wind that fairly freezes the face ; then a road in which you could break your neck. The colonel lives at the end of the town, and then he is not in the habit of giving surprises. The major . . . Oh, he's married, and there is no danger of his making his appearance. The officer of the day is at this hour taking a hand at *Tarocchi*,¹ and he certainly won't be seized by a caprice to drag himself over here. Then, if he did come,— he will have . . . ”

Meantime he had dashed into bed, trembling with the cold, and nestling and rolling himself up softly under the comfortable, gave a little smile of indolent content.

“He will have to rap in order to be admitted ; and before the corporal of the guard has heard him, stirred, found the key-hole, and opened the door, five minutes will have elapsed, and I'll have had time to dress myself in some sort of fashion,

¹ A sort of chequered cards.

fly to the door, open it, seize the lantern in the guard-room, and away through the dormitories to play my part”

Here he blew out the candle, drew the counterpane over his head, turned on to his side, sought a comfortable position, and closed his eyes, thinking :—“ And away through the dormitories to play my part.”

“ Oh, it is a luxury to dash into bed after working all day ! What a profession ! And to think that with all my efforts I can never satisfy that old dotard of a captain. ‘ The meat is underdone ! Whose fault is it ? Mine. ‘ The stairs are dirty ! Who is to blame for it ? I ; the devil ! ‘ The dormitories are in disorder ! Who gets hauled over the coals for it ? I, I, always I. No one but me. Whew ! What a good bed ! And to hear certain people say that we have nothing to do but fill the cafés with smoke and run after the girls. Let them try for themselves, now that the whole world is looking on with expectancy . . . with that magnificent pay . . . and the taxes”

Little by little, wandering along in this defence of himself, his thoughts and ideas grew confused ; the captain, the major, the wife, the expectation, the taxes, grew into a curious muddle, which ended finally in profound slumber.

But he had not fallen asleep without a little anxiety and remorse. Every time the idea of the round came to his mind he felt a slight twinge of conscience. The same thing happens to the truant from school who goes off to make snow-balls with his companions ; the image of his master and his mother assail him from time to time, and the more he attempts to drive them away the more they return to torment and bite him like a fly.

He dreamed. One after the other the ten or twelve most wretched, undisciplined soldiers in the whole regiment, who are noted for the nocturnal escapades, revelling in taverns, and rascally adventures, which always end successfully, passed before his mind; some noted for getting off scot-free; others famous, on the other hand, for assignments, imprisonment, and so forth, to *number eighteen*; and it seemed as if each one in passing whispered just above his breath: "Sleep, sleep, and I'll play you a trick." Then these melted away, and all the most elegant and bedecked subalterns of the regiment, with cigar in mouth and a bunch of flowers in the hand, those who carry the cap-band under the lip, wear small high-heeled shoes, have lady-loves in town, and when they can escape in the moonlight do not wait for a second inspiration, seemed to pass before him murmuring softly: "Sleep, sleep, and we will get the better of you." The sergeant of the guard, who a short time before had given him that respectful "trust to me!" that reassuring sign, now, in recollecting it, seemed to have eyes gleaming with malice, and to have curled his lips under his moustache, as much as to say: "Go to sleep, do, and I'll play you a trick!"

Then came something else. He seemed to lie in the middle of a road, back of the barracks, and to be looking around to see if the sentinels were awake and at their posts. They were all there. In fact, he discovered one not unknown to him, a soldier belonging to his company, the roundest, laziest conscript of all, and, to make matters worse, short-sighted and deaf. "Just see," he thought, "does n't it look as if they had put that stupid there just out of disrespect to me? He is not good for any thing!" And he watched him. The sentinel

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stretched his neck outside his box, looked to the right and left to see if any one were coming, placed his musket in a corner, wrapped himself in his cloak, sat down, put his head on his knees, and went to sleep. The poor dreamer grew enraged at the rascal, seized him by the shoulder, shook him, and opened his mouth to utter some imprecation.

At that point he thought he heard a slight noise above his head; he raised his eyes to the windows. From one of the sills there projects and moves with uncertainty something black, which stretches out, descends very slowly, and reaches the ground; it is a rope. After having followed it with his eyes to the ground, he raises them to the window, sees a head project, two shoulders, and an entire body turn warily around, seize the rope, descend, and disappear. He instantly dashes after him, is close to him, comes up with him, stretches out his hand to catch hold of him by his clothes . . .

At that moment he seems to be before a door,—the door of the cellar. He tries it lightly with his hand; it gives. Whew! What an uproar! Clattering of dishes, a clinking of glasses, a shouting of hoarse and discordant voices, a confused sound of oaths and songs, and an odor of pipes that drives one backward. He stopped an instant, pushed the door again, and threw it wide open. What a spectacle! The room was crowded with soldiers, some dressed, some in doublets, some with the cape over the shoulders like a Spanish mantle, and the cap thrown back, bravado fashion; others seated on the tables, some astride, others on their faces, some stretched indecently on the floor, their eyes shining glassy and stupefied, their faces heated; others tipsy, others still more intoxicated; some dozing, the rest sleeping soundly. A few tried to rise

to their feet and fell back heavily on to their seats ; some, who had succeeded in getting up, staggered shouting around the room and making the tables shake and the bottles and glasses tremble. On every side there were piles of cards and money, and a cutting of the air with hands in cabalistic signs, shouts, laughter, and every thing was enveloped in a dense cloud of smoke, enough to suffocate one in ten minutes. "Out of this ! out of this !" the poor dreamer seemed to shout ; "sergeant, sergeant, take all their names, put them all in the guard-house, in irons, all . . ."

Now he seemed to hear behind him a creaking like a large door moving slowly on its hinges ; he turned, looked around, and discovered that he was in the hall, near the door of the quarters. A black shadow advanced suspiciously close to the wall, like the figure of a perambulating *bass-relief* ; it moved two steps, paused, gazed about, began moving on again, stopped once more, as if it were afraid ; reached the door, laughed, dragged its feet, and behold ! on the sill of the guard-room door another figure like the first, cautious and quiet as possible. They exchanged a few words in an undertone, the door opened, and one of them slowly disappeared. "Ah, I recognized him !" thought the dreamer ; "he is the sergeant of the eighth." And he turned and saw another, behind this one a third, then a fourth, the sergeant of the fifth, the commissary of the sixth, the commissary of the third. "Ah, traitors !" he dreams that he cries, "to the hall all of you ! to the hall all of you ! sergeant of the guard ! sergeant . . ."

At this moment he seemed to strike his hand against something soft and woolly. He turns, it is a bed. Behind this another, then another, another still,—a long row of beds. He

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looks around and discovers that he is in a dormitory, a little light at the end of the room dimly illumines all the objects therein ; all are silent, one could hear a fly stirring. Suddenly one of the sleepers begins to snore, lightly at first, then more heavily, finally so as to be heard in the street. Some one wakes. A man near by stretches his arms, yawns, rubs his eyes, and exclaims : "Oh, there, could n't you sleep a little more like a christian ?" No change, he does not seem to have understood. "Do you understand ? You are to sleep more like a christian," the man shouts louder still. It had no effect, one might as well talk to a stone wall. "Body of a bomb shell !" cries the infuriated man springing out of bed. "I'll fix you now !" He approaches, seizes him by both his arms, gives him such a vigorous shake that he makes his bed and all those around about tremble. The snorer stirs, wakes, half sees and understands, gives a kick to the counterpane, a shout, a spring, is on his feet in a moment with a pillow in his hand, and down it comes on the neck of the unfortunate aggressor with a blinding blow. The latter gives as good as he takes ; the first one pursues him, a third rushes to the assistance of the weaker ; a fourth to the defense of the first, a regular scuffle ensues, all dash from their beds, the uproar increases ; the light goes out ; the men get mixed up ; a window pane is broken, another too, the knapsacks come down from the shelves, the sheets from the beds, the muskets from the racks. . . . The poor dreamer dazed, trembling, hardened by rage, is just about to give a loud shout that will be heard above that infernal racket, and bands himself in order to dash into the thick of the fight. . . .

At that point he heard some one knocking vigorously at the door, and it seemed as if a voice called his name. Trembling,

terrified, bathed with perspiration, he rose wearily to a sitting posture, listened attentively, and held his breath. "Lieutenant! lieutenant! the officer of the day," said the voice again.

"Heavens! quick, my stockings, my stockings; where are those stockings? Well, no matter. My trowsers . . . where are they? Ah, here they are! . . . Quick, my jacket! one arm, the other . . . the jacket is on. My sword! where in heaven's name is my sword? The scarf, now, the scarf! . . . Ah, here it is! At last. . ."

And dressed thus carelessly, his jacket unbuttoned, without stockings, cravat, or drawers, he rushed breathless to the door, opened it, looked around, and saw . . . the officer of the day, erect, immovable, and rigid, with his hands crossed on his breast, and the visor of his cap over his eyes, and his eyes flashing under his knitted brows like two burning coals.

"Have you gone the rounds?"

For a moment the lieutenant hesitates, then says boldly, "I have done them."

"I understand," mutters the captain to himself, "you have *done me*."

Now I ask you: is it worse to have a dream of this kind, or to catch an attack of pleurisy, or bark your shins against some bed in the dark? I go in for the bruised shins and influenza, and I fancy the majority of my readers would do the same.

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THE WOUNDED SENTINEL.

It was growing dark. The streets of the city were full of people. Those shops which are generally open during the evening were in great part closed, and the remainder were being shut one by one. Here and there, at the corners, on the squares, in front of the cafés, on the steps of the churches, were groups of men and boys, who were talking in low and excited voices, turning from time to time to look around them in order to see that no suspicious person was listening. There was a continuous descent of people from the houses to the street; they stopped a moment on the door-way, looked to the right and left as if uncertain which way to go, and then mingled in the crowd. In the whispering of the crowd, although it was much denser and more noisy than usual, there was perceptible a suppressed and almost timid tone. Now and then a knot of people crossed the street hurriedly, and behind them a long train of gamins who made way for themselves between the legs of the people with their elbows and shoulders, whistling and shrieking as they did so. At the sound of any voice which made itself heard above the general murmur, many stopped and turned back to ask what was the matter. It was only some one who had made use of an expression a little stronger than the others—that was all. After the people had looked at him a moment and he at the people, every one went

on his way. A moment later a great blow was heard on one side of the street; every one turned in the direction of the sound. Who is it? What is it? What's happened? It was a shopkeeper who had closed and barred his door. The carriages passed slowly, and the coachmen begged the crowd to make way, with an unusually polite smile, and a motion of the whip that was excessively courteous. On the corners, by the light of the lamps, were seen those poor newspaper venders assailed by ten people at a time, who, holding out the sou with one hand, seized the desired sheet with the other, drew to one side, then unfolded it in haste, and searched with avidity for some important news. Some of the passers-by stopped, formed a circle around the possessor of the journal, and the latter read in a low voice while the others listened attentively.

Suddenly all the people are seen running toward the end of a street; there is instantly a great press, a loud shout, a tremendous confusion; above the heads can be seen four or five muskets knocked here and there; a clapping of hands is heard; the crowd vacillates, falls back, opens on one side; four or five dark figures appear with muskets in their hands, give a glance about them with an air of triumph, turn into an alley, and off they dash; a troop of boys, howling and whistling, follow them. What was it? What's happened? Nothing, nothing. A patrol of the national guard has been disarmed. A moment later, the crowd opens on another side and four or five unfortunate fellows appear, with pale faces, bare heads, disbevelled hair, and clothes torn and disordered. Round about them there rises a murmur of compassion; some sympathetic person takes them by the arm, leads them out of the throng,

and accompanies them home, exhorting them by word and gesture to be courageous.

Meanwhile confusion, great excitement, and deafening noises have sprung up in the multitude. "Give way there! Make way there!" is suddenly shouted on one side of the street. All turn in that direction. Who is it? What is it? What's happened? "Make way there! Make way there!" The crowd divides, falls back rapidly, forms a hedge on the sides of the street, and a company of sharpshooters traverse it on a run. A dirty, noisy troop of gamins follow them. The crowd closes up again.

Suddenly a confused sound of angry menacing voices breaks out on another side; the crowd gathers and forms at this point; above the heads two or three carabineers' hats appear and disappear, then a burst of applause, the crowd opens, a man breathless and disfigured runs out and disappears. "They wanted to put handcuffs on him," some one remarks in a tone of satisfaction, "but they did not succeed in doing so; there were some strong people who took his part. We should like to see them!"

The crowd proceeds slowly in one direction, and reaches the corner of a street. Suddenly the people in front stop and those behind press on to them; the former recede a few steps, the latter are violently forced back, then begin to push forward again, and then recede once more; all of which gives rise to indescribable disorder. "What is the matter? Who is preventing our going on? Forward, forward!" "Oh, yes, it is very fine to say forward! There is a company of soldiers with bayonets fixed who are barring the passage." Then follow shouts, hisses, oaths, and imprecations. "Down with the

oppressors! We don't want oppression, down with those muskets, give us a free passage—out of the way!" All at once the crowd turn their backs on the soldiers and take flight, leaving the pavement strewn with the fallen and invade in less than a moment the side streets, cafés, vestibules, and courts of the neighboring houses. The soldiers have lowered their bayonets.

"Make way there! Make way there!" they shriek, on one side. From one of the side alleys comes the sound of horses' tramp and the clinking of swords; it is a squad of cavalry that is advancing; the gleam of the first helmets is seen; a troop of horses break through the crowd, which spring to the right and left against the walls of the houses; the squad passes in the midst of profound silence: when it is almost by, a voice or a hiss is heard here and there; it has passed—then follow shouts, whistles, reproaches, and a shower of cabbage-heads and lemon-peel on to the last horses. The squad stops, the last horses back a few paces, the crowd turns and clears the street for a hundred steps.

In the nearest group is heard from time to time a furious outburst of oaths, a beating of sticks, a sharp cry, a feeble moan, and then a long whisper followed by a timid silence. "What has happened? What was it? Nothing, nothing; they have driven a few inches of steel into the back of a public guard." The crowds draw back on the right and left, and a carabineer, with bare head and both hands buried in his hair, crosses the street tottering and staggering like a drunken man. "What is the matter? What have they done?" "They have given him a blow on the head." "To the square! To the square!" suddenly shouts a powerful voice. "To the

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square!" comes the unanimous response from all sides. And the multitude burst tumultuously into the nearest street and start toward the square.

All this occurred not many years since in one of the principal cities of Italy, while in a neighboring street in the midst of the tumult a band of eight soldiers passed with a corporal and sergeant, to relieve another body standing guard at a public building in a little square near by. The squad moved slowly, and the soldiers looked curiously on this side and that. Just in this street the excitement seemed greatest and the conduct of the people most resolute.

The patrol passed near a large group of those people who are only seen on certain evenings, and who with surly and heated faces hold forth loudly in the midst of roughs, around whom there is always a group of gamins. One of the group sees the patrol, turns, and pointing his finger at the soldiers, exclaims, *sotto voce*: "Look at them!" The whole circle turns in that direction, and one after the other, gradually raising his voice, begins to say: "Yes, look at the men who never fail to come out when the people wish to make their rights felt. They reason with the butt-end of their muskets; the bayonets are made to drive holes in the bodies of those who are hungry. They don't lack bread, you understand, but others starve; what does it matter to them? Powder and lead for those who are hungry!"

The soldiers went on without turning back. The group moved forward, and, preceded by an advance guard of gamins, followed them. In a moment they caught up with them and accompanied them for a few paces. The soldiers continued to march without turning their heads.

One of the group begins to cough; another sneezes; a third coughs harder; a fourth makes ready to expectorate, and, turning toward the band, spits with a rattling sound, which ends in a burst of incontrollable laughter; all the others clap their hands. The small boys whistle, scream, and, instigated by the larger ones, slowly approach the soldiers. The latter continue to march without giving any sign of having noticed any thing. The former approach nearer and walk beside the soldiers, looking them in the face with an expression intended to say: "I defy you." One of them begins to imitate quite grotesquely their regular step, crying in a nasal tone, as he does: "One, two! one, two!" Another mimics the gait of the soldiers bent and limping under the weight of the knapsacks. A third, urged on by one of those at the rear, seizes the hem of the corporal's cloak, gives a tug, and runs off. The corporal turns and raises his hand as if to give him a box on the ear.

"Eh! eh!" they shout all around. "Now we 'll see. Give a blow to a boy! Shame! The time of the Croats has passed! You must try other methods now! A blow to a boy! Try again!"

One of the soldiers, on hearing these words, bites his finger, planting his teeth well in, and uttering a groan of rage. At that point he feels his canteen struck a hard blow; the blood rushes to his head; he turns and gives a hit on the shoulder of the gamins who had struck him, throwing him back several paces.

"Here! Here!" breaks out menacingly from the crowd. "Here are the ruffians! Worse than the Croats! Worse than the bailiffs. Now we 'll give them a lesson; we 'll make you pay,

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The boys, emboldened by the anger of the mob and the surety of impunity, went and stuck their heads between the soldiers, whispering in a hoarse and aggravating voice: "Ugly soldier! Ugly hangman! Traitorous, bread-eater! Convict officer! Burst, you face of a dog!"

And the throng all around: "Shame! To beat an unarmed boy!"

"You cowards!" said the poor soldier to himself, biting, meanwhile his lips until he drew blood. "Cowards! An unarmed boy! Don't you know that there are words which kill? Hangman! Croat! To me! To me! Oh!"—And he bit his hand again, shaking his head in a desperate way.

After a few moments, followed always by the people, the squad arrived at the square and entered the guard-house, which was a little, low, squalid room, lighted by one lantern. The sentinel at the door of the palace was instantly changed twenty or thirty feet from the guard, the squad who had been there first went off, and those newly arrived began arranging their knapsacks on the racks, and hanging their haversacks and canteens on the hooks.

On arriving within fifty paces of the guard-room, the people who had followed the squad stopped, and from there began provoking the soldiers by words and deeds, but the latter paid no attention to them. Seeing that there was no way of exciting a riot, they were on the point of moving off, when one of them observed that the soldier in the sentinel-box was the one who a short time before had given the boy a blow on the shoulder. "Is it really he?" "Yes." "Really?" "Yes, I tell you it is that rascal," "You wretch. Now we'll fix you. Just wait!"

And they all moved toward the sentinel. At the distance of about thirty paces they stopped, drew up in line, and began to look at him out of the corner of their eyes. The soldier stood there, near his box, motionless and firmly, with his head erect and his eyes fixed on those provoking faces which were ranged before him. Suddenly, out of the group steps a ragged youth, with a hat crushed over one ear, the stump of a cigar in his mouth, moves forward with his hands in his pockets, humming in a mocking way, and comes and plants himself within fifteen paces of the sentinel, looking insolently into his face, crossing his arms and assuming an attitude of defiant impertinence.

The soldier looked at him.

Then the man whirled suddenly on his heel, turned his back, bursting into a concerted laugh with the others, who stood watching him and urging him on by signs.

The soldier shook his head two or three times, bit his lips, uttered a sigh, tapping the ground impatiently with his foot as if to say: "Ah, patience! patience! it is hard to bear!"

The rough turned, facing the soldier once more, and, after a moment's hesitation, took from his mouth the cigar stump and threw it at his feet, retreating eight or ten paces to place himself beyond the reach of a sudden assault.

The soldier turned pale, raised his eyes to heaven, clinched his fists, and ground his teeth; his mind was growing confused. "Why do you do this to me?" he then said sadly to himself, turning his eyes and face toward those people as if he were really speaking to them. "What have you against me? Have I done any thing to you? I have done nothing. Why did I give that boy a blow? But why did he come and insult me? Who had provoked him? Who was annoying you? What do

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you wish of me? I have offended no one, I do not know you even; I am a poor soldier and am doing my duty, and stand here because I am ordered to do so. Yes, ridicule and hiss at me, you do yourselves honor to treat your soldiers in such a way . . . just as if they were brigands!"

At that point, a stump of cabbage thrown with great force grazed the ground, and bouncing and whistling fell at his feet. "God! God!" he murmured in a desperate tone of voice, covering his face with one hand and resting his forehead on the other which was leaning on the mouth of his gun. "I shall lose my head! I cannot control myself much longer. The blood is rushing to my head! . . ."

"But it is quite useless," he added a moment latter in a trembling and stifled voice; "it is useless to make us wear these" . . . and he gave a hard blow on the two medals that he wore on his breast, making them hit each other and resound; "it is useless for them to give us medals because we have fought for our country, if afterward they are to throw cigar stumps and cabbage heads in our faces! Oh, you wish to make me abandon my post, do you? You wish me to betray my trust. If you were fifty, or even a hundred, you could not force me to move from here; if you should all spring upon me at once, I would sooner be torn to pieces like a dog. Come on, you cowards! Don't insult me from a distance. Yes, yes, I understand, it is useless for you to make signs at me; I know that you have knives in your pockets; but you won't quite dare to plant them in my stomach in broad daylight. You would prefer sticking them into my back at night . . . when . . ."

Suddenly he uttered a sharp cry, let his musket fall, covered

his face with his hands, tottered, and fell at the foot of his sentry box : a stone had hit him on the forehead.

All the soldiers rushed forward, the crowd dispersed and disappeared ; the wounded man was carried into the guard-room with his face and chest bleeding ; the wound was instantly washed, his head bound up, he was given something to drink, and a bed was prepared for him on the table with the camp blankets of the other soldiers. While they were all gathering around him, and overwhelming him with questions and words of comfort, and the sergeant was scolding him for not having asked assistance at the first insult of those people, an officer suddenly entered, and behind him the first file of a squad of soldiers. At the same moment, plunged forward by a vigorous push, there dashed into the middle of the room a man with distorted face, hair hanging over his forehead, and clothes in rags. He had been arrested on that same little square by the soldiers of a squad who were passing, and to whom he had offered a violent resistance.

At the first appearance of the prisoner the wounded soldier sprang up from the table, made a dash at him, placed himself face to face with him, looked at him a moment with flashing eyes, uttered a cry, which came broken and hoarse from between his clinched teeth, took a step backward, and resting proudly on his right foot, and raising his left hand, with the first finger pointing to the face of the man, who was watching him with fear : " Ah, you are the one ! he shrieked in a tone that froze one's blood ; " I recognize you ! You called me hangman in the street and have broken my head with a stone on the square ; now it's your turn ! " Saying which, he sprang at him, seized him by the collar of his jacket and shirt, pinned him with one

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"Saying which, he sprang at him, seized him by the collar of his jacket and shirt, pinned him with one dash against the wall, raised his clenched and trembling fist," etc.

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dash against the wall, raised his clinched and trembling fist, and aimed at his head with angry, bloodshot eyes. . . . All this took place in an instant, those present interfered, separated them, held the wounded man by the arm, a corporal supported the other who was ready to drop, and both stood for a moment looking into each other's eyes, panting and gasping; the one white from fear, his arms hanging and his head bowed; the other with his face flaming and haughty, his fists clinched, and his whole body shaken by a violent tremor. Meanwhile a crowd of inquisitive people had gathered before the guard-room door.

The officer looked from one to the other, and asked the sergeant the cause of the trouble. The latter related all that he knew. The officer then turned toward the prisoner, who held his chin down on his chest, and in the midst of a profound silence, said in an extraordinarily quiet tone :

"I can understand that, from a barricade, a man may cast things at a battalion, with some end or aim in view, but this useless and stupid insult to an inoffensive soldier, who has neither the responsibility or right to defend himself, is one of the most disgusting pieces of cowardice that can stain a citizen."

A murmur of approbation was heard among the crowd at the door.

"Take that man away!" added the officer, lighting the end of a cigar in the flame of the lantern.

"And you," he said, turning toward the wounded soldier, while the patrol lead the prisoner off, "forgive . . . and forget."

The soldier gave a nod in the affirmative.

"And keep up your spirits," concluded the officer, putting the cigar in his mouth.

"As for me," . . . replied the soldier, closing his teeth on the cigar and taking it between his forefinger and thumb, "I am always in good spirits; but you must understand, lieutenant, that these are things that try one."

So the drama ended with a laugh.

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THE MOTHER.

WHEN the winter sinks gradually into spring, on the evenings of those clear, quiet days without any wind, in which we keep the doors and windows open for the first time, stretch out of the window sill summer clothing, and carry the flower-pots on to the terraces; on those beautiful clear, starry nights, even the cities (not alone that everlasting country of the poets) offer a lovely spectacle full of gaiety and poetry. In walking through the streets we feel from time to time a soft, fragrant breath, from what? what flowers or grass? who knows? they are perfumes quite vague and unknown, filled with the freshness of youth and life. We inhale the air with delight, opening wide our mouths and dilating our nostrils, and it seems to refresh body and soul. "Oh, what a fine air!" we exclaim from time to time, as almost involuntarily, almost without being aware of it, from corner to corner, street to street, on we go until we find ourselves outside the walls, on the boulevards surrounding the city, in the gardens, and we bare and raise our heads in order to feel that soft air blowing over our faces and playing with our hair.

On these evenings it is impossible to stay at home, or if one is obliged to do so, they will be spent in leaning out of the window, looking down into the unusual crowd, and feeling annoyed that it is impossible to mingle with the people below; for to go to bed betimes, and not enjoy even from the window so beautiful an evening, would seem a shame.

In the principal streets there is a regular hive. The houses are quite empty. The large families, even the most domestic, decide to creep out of their shell; the "papa" goes to the window, looks down and then up at the sky, and exclaims: "Fine weather!" then turning to the family, who are behind him, and only waiting a sign from him, he says gaily: "Let us go out"; so after much shouting and running about hither and yon from room to room, clapping their hands and turning the house upside down, in search of wraps and hats in the dark, the boys are ready, and the troop puts itself in motion. Even the grandmamma, poor old lady, feels several years slip off from her shoulders, and, despite her habitual complaints, goes out too, leaning on the arm of her best-behaved grandson. The party stretches along the street, two by two, the boys in front, jumping and singing among themselves, and knocking with heads and hands into the legs of the passers-by. The old people behind, limping and coughing, try to keep out of the way of the carriages and not lose sight of the children. The newly married pairs and the betrothed couples wander about the quietest streets and garden paths arm in arm, their heads nearly touching, their fingers giving a furtive squeeze now and then, close together, and talking, talking, talking, and exchanging fond glances and long pressures of the hand, as they exclaim from time to time, their eyes turned heavenward: "How beautiful the moon is to-night!" The little dressmaker is returning home from the shop, swinging her small self along, close by the walls, and pretending not to see the high hat which is keeping pace with her behind, and will appear at the turning of a certain dark corner in such a pleasant way. The poorest girls, who have worked at home from sunrise to sunset, come dashing

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down the stairs, meet at the door-way their neighbors who were waiting for them, form a little circle, begin a vivacious conversation, and grouping their heads together, like flowers in a bouquet, and swinging around their forefingers the ribbon which fastens the scissors to their belt, reply to the words whispered by the young fellows who pass: Charming! in their hearts, and with their mouths: Impudence! then turn their backs in a scornful manner, not so fully, however, that they are unable to measure them from head to foot out of the corners of their eyes, to see who they are and what they are like. Others, drawn up in fours and fives, all arm-in-arm, bareheaded, arrive at the end of the street, hitting each other with their elbows as they pass, whispering in their ears, laughing aloud, and turning now and then to chide with a maternal air the younger ones who are rambling about. Meanwhile the young men are leaving the factories and workshops with their hats pushed down over their ears, their jackets slung carelessly over their shoulder, the stump of a cigar in their mouths and twisted and turned indifferently between their black lips. They come down the street in shoals, moving their shoulders in a rough fashion, shouting the latest *stornello*, meet the girls, approach them, hit them with their elbows and knees, puffing a mouthful of smoke into their faces; and the latter scatter with a shriek, coughing, and passing their hands over their tear-filled eyes. The gamins loosen the theatre placards with their nails and then tear them down from the walls; the small children play in the squares; and the mothers, standing in groups at the door-ways, their babies in their arms, delay giving the usual cry: "To bed!" thanks to the softness of the air and the clearness of the sky. Along the streets, from the shops on

either side of the way, comes the continuous sound of the closing of shutters, the loud noise of the bars, and a slipping of bolts into rings, and the interchange of good-nights among the clerks who are going home. The finest shops, gleaming and well-lighted, remain open still, their door-ways filled with curious people; as do the book-stores, with their tobacco-smelling literary habitués, who sport long, untidy locks and who gather in a corner at the back to grumble over old politics and disinterred parchments; and the cafés crowded with customers enveloped in a cloud of smoke, from which, at every opening of the door, there sweeps into the street in waves a deep, full clamor of voices.

It was upon such an evening as this that my regiment, which had arrived that morning in one of the largest cities of Italy, was scattered through the streets waiting for the barracks we were to occupy to be emptied and for the *retreat* to sound.

The soldiers were still in full marching equipment, the gaiters buttoned over the trousers, the cartridge-box at the belt, the flasks and knapsacks on the shoulder-straps. Weary from the march, their clothes and hair white with dust, they stood still in groups on the corners, their backs against the walls, their arms crossed on the breast, one leg resting over the other, or motionless before the jewellers' establishments, contemplating, open-mouthed, those show-windows filled with medals and crosses of every form and color, at which old employés and well-advanced majors cast longing glances and sighs as they pass. Many of them were seated in the hostelries reviving themselves with a swallow of wine; others, less exhausted, wandered through the streets. All, or nearly all, however,

had serious faces, and a little effort; a little little from that for the first time.

In the midst of soldiers who barracks, was incessant chatter build, with blue eyes, which about like another, and from the hem of another's fatigue hands over the "Guess who silver. In stopped on at him for reason of such of that soldier.

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had serious faces, were silent, or talked in a low tone with an effort; a little from their extreme fatigue and sleepiness, and a little from that confusion one generally feels in finding himself for the first time in an unknown and noisy city.

In the midst of the grave silence reigning in a small group of soldiers who were seated on the steps of a church near the barracks, was all the more noticeable the restless gaiety and incessant chatter of one of them, short of stature, of slender build, with beardless face, made most attractive by two great blue eyes, who continually ran up and down the steps, jumping about like a boy. Now he would stop near one, now beside another, and fill their ears with gossip. Then he would pull the hem of this one's coat, now take off the tassel from another's fatigue cap and place it on his knee, or pass his hands over the eyes of a third, crying out as he did so: "Guess who it is!" It seemed as if he were made of quicksilver. In passing before the church I noticed him; I stopped on the other side of the street and stood looking at him for some moments, wondering what could be the reason of such strange gaiety. The frank and pleasing face of that soldier was fixed upon my mind. I moved off.

The following day I learned, by the merest chance, what I had asked myself the evening before. That soldier had been four years in the service, and by a series of accidents which it is not necessary to relate, from the day of his departure until that time he had never been able to obtain leave, not even for the shortest time, in order to return home and see his family. Four years! To a soldier, as I knew him to be, full of heart, much attached to his relatives and the place where he had been born and brought up, of a mild, gentle disposition,

knowing nothing of the revels which dull the liveliest affections and clearest memories ; to a soldier like this, four years passed without seeing his family and his home must have seemed long indeed ! And so they had been ; he had always appeared a little melancholy and taciturn in the barracks, and always alone when outside. In his hours of freedom, while his comrades lounged around in the public gardens to bestow hairy caresses on the children under the care of pretty girls, he used to pace the parade ground in its length and breadth, his chin resting on his chest ; or was seated on a stone bench at the end of a solitary avenue, drawing puppets in the sand with the end of his foot. He was always thinking of his relatives, friends, and the places that he had not seen for four years, and above all of his mother, who was a poor old, infirm peasant, but with a genial and true-loving nature and the heart of an angel. Of all her children, the one whom she loved with the greatest tenderness, and also with a particular feeling of solicitude and pity, was the soldier son ; which was also natural. He wrote, or had some one write frequently ; and his letters, read and re-read, kissed and re-kissed, then placed in her bosom like the relic of a saint, mitigated much of the bitterness of their separation. And such was the case with the son and his mother's letters ? Yes, indeed. Paper, in the end, is paper, and loving mothers wish to see them (their children), wish to have them under their eyes, to touch them with their hands, and kiss them on the forehead, twice, ten times in one breath ; and the children are not satisfied with the knowledge that that dear head with its white hair is at home and thinks of them ; they wish to take that head in their arms, and place their lips on those white locks. Yet the good old woman, like her dear soldier boy had

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lived through those four years a life of continual hope and deluded expectations, melancholy, anxiety, and heart-beats. The son, who left a little district in northern Italy, had been taken, with his regiment, to Sicily, and detained there two years (in Sicily, poor woman, with all that water between them); from Sicily he had passed into Calabria, and spent a year there, and then a year in central Italy. Finally, one fine day, the rumor of departure spread through the regiment. "Where are we going?" asked our soldier of the sergeant of the squad, and he waited with bated breath for the reply. "Into northern Italy," was the answer. His heart gave a bound. "Where?" he asked again, growing pale; the sergeant named the city; it was the one nearest his home. "Ah!" he cried, and a little more and he would have kissed the sergeant and been put into prison. That same night, when he found time to do so, he wrote home.

This was the reason of his gaiety that evening; that city was within a few miles of his native village.

Now, with what I afterward learned, with what I saw, and with what I could not help imagining, but which must have taken place, I will tell you a story that may perhaps rouse in you the desire to kiss your own mother more fervently.

Two days had elapsed since the return. Our soldier was still talking about asking a few days' leave in order to fly home, when, one fair evening, the quarter-master looks him up in the dormitory of the company, and on finding him, says, while handing him a letter: "Come nearer." He had hardly taken it before its seal was broken, and it was unfolded in the light of a lantern in a corner of the room, by two trembling hands, and under two dilated eyes, which were glistening with two big

tears. He read the letter very rapidly, accompanying the movements of his eyes with a motion of his head, and muttering the words quite hastily. When it was read he pressed it in his hands, and let his arms drop, raising his great eyes to heaven; and the two drops, after trembling uncertain on the lids, fell, ran down his cheeks without breaking, and dropped quite warm upon his hands. The letter was from his mother, and said: "To-morrow I shall come to town on foot. It is four years since I have seen you. Oh, my son, I can contain myself no longer, and I must throw my arms around your neck!"

That night he could not close his eyes. He dashed about restlessly under the counterpane, and found no peace; and therefore nothing but twist and turn, now upon one side, now upon the other, now on his back, now on his face; always quite in vain, for the coverlid seemed so heavy, and he felt in such a feverish state,—a great weight on his chest, a restlessness, a desire for motion, and a tormenting desire for fresh air. Every moment he seized the hem of the coverlid and pushed it down to his knees, sighing and gasping as if he had been in front of a furnace. From time to time he sat up in bed and looked around at his comrades who were all sleeping quietly and soundly as one is accustomed to sleep in spring. Then he looked at the bit of starry sky, which appeared through the small window on the other side, and thought: "Oh if I were in the country to breathe that air!" He glanced at the lantern placed in a distant corner, which gave a tremulous light that appeared and disappeared in turn, and it seemed to him that that light increased his anxiety and made time longer. Then he stretched himself out in bed again, and began thinking of the

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morrow, shutting his eyes and remaining immovable to try and fall asleep with that sweet thought, but always in vain. Still that sweet thought did not bring him peace; his body was motionless, his eyes closed, but his heart kept on beating as if to say: "You shall not sleep; you shall not sleep!" so that after a short time he was obliged to open his eyes and look around again. So many long hours passed. Finally weariness conquered; the heart was silent, and the busy fancy still. He slept; dreamed of the morrow; dreamed of his mother. He seemed to see her there, erect and smiling beside his pillow; he seemed to feel her pass her hand over his brow, and he dreamed that he seized and placed his lips upon it. Then, suddenly, he felt that he had become a child again, at home; and, one by one, there came to his mind a hundred little scenes from his early life, and in those scenes his mother was always comforting him when weeping, or defending him when threatened by his father, or nursing him if hurt by a fall, taking care of him when ill; and always full of pity and solicitude, always loving, always the mother! Then he dreamed he was grown up; recalled the day of his departure; his mother's tears, the long embraces, words of farewell, and comfort given and received; and he felt his heart-strings tighten just as they did that day; he felt around his waist the arms of his mother who would not let him go; tried to free himself, could not do so, uttered a groan, and awoke. He looked around, thought, came to himself, and that was a moment of joy which can be better imagined than expressed.

Down in the court-yard of the barracks a noisy sound of drums broke out. All dashed from their beds. He dressed in haste, and with the others performed all the duties of the morning

cheerfully and with a calm face, but with a burning fever and agitated heart. He tapped the pavement with his feet, bit his lips, passed and repassed his hand over his heated brow, asked all around what the hour was, looked from his head to his feet every moment to see if he was neat and had every thing in order. Finally the desired mid-day arrived. Desired, because his mother, in leaving home at nine o'clock as she had said in her letter, ought to arrive in the city between noon and one o'clock, taking into account the distance that she had to come and the slowness with which, poor woman, she could accomplish it. Just at that hour the soldiers had to leave their quarters and go to the single-stick school.¹ Our good young fellow, by using his mother's letter, obtained a release from that exercise. The soldiers went out, the dormitories were deserted, he ran up the stairs, flew to his bed, placed his hand upon it, stood still for a moment, for he felt as if his legs refused to hold him, and panted.

A little while thereafter he seated himself on the bed; planted his elbows on his knees, rested his face on his hands, fixed his eyes on the floor, and thought: "She is coming; she is coming here to the barracks!" And laughing hysterically he rubbed his forehead with both hands. "It is four years since I have seen her! Four years!" Then he counted four on his fingers. "How long they have been!" And then he went over in his mind all his fits of melancholy, discouragement, and past sufferings. "Oh!" he exclaimed in a low tone full of loving pity, clasping his hands, shaking his head gently, with his eyes fixed upon a point on the wall, as if to say: "Poor

¹A species of fencing with sticks instead of foils, now no longer in vogue in the Italian army.

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mother!" and "Poor mother!" he did say in fact. "So you are coming from such a distance to see me, quite alone too and on foot; you have to walk so many miles in the sun; you will arrive in this great city, among all these people, without knowing where I am; and you will have to ask where my barracks are; then be on your feet for so long a time, alone, old, ill, and exhausted; and perhaps you will lose your way and wander about, worrying that you cannot find me. . . . Ah, poor old woman!" He kept his hands clasped and his eyes fixed upon the wall, biting one lip and then the other, and closing his eyelids to keep back the tears which were ready to fall. Then repeated from time to time: "Poor old woman!"

After which he passed both hands over his face, shook his head, gave a sigh, sprang to his feet, and paced the room with the hurried steps of a traveller. After a little he suddenly stopped. "It must be time for her now!" He ran to the window on the street, leaned out, looked to the right and left, once, twice, thrice, but no one was to be seen. The blood rushed to his head. "Let me think of something else!" he said to himself; and so tried to drive the image of his mother from his mind in order to pass this season of anxious expectation. Drive away that image! Poor fellow! It was out of the question, so he abandoned the idea.

"Look, mother," he said aloud, shaking his two open hands before his face, "I love you so well, so well!" . . . He looked around; there was no one; he continued: "More than any thing else in the world!" And letting his clasped hands fall upon the bed, he continued to shake his head gently as if to signify more clearly by act the meaning of his last words. "More than any thing in the world." Then suddenly he

roused himself : "It must be time now!" he said, and again he went to the window, then stopped suddenly, and turned his back : "No," saying to himself as he did so, "you must not look." He tapped the floor with his foot as if to repeat, No. But smiled, and the smile meant : "Ah, I cannot help it!" and in fact, a moment later he again went to the window and looked out. Still no one in sight.

He returned to the bedside and tried to invent some method for passing time. He bent one arm with his forefinger against his chin, raised the elbow of that arm with the palm of the other, and, fastening his eyes upon the bed while resting a knee on the edge, he ran homeward in his mind, saw his mother make up a bundle of shirts and handkerchiefs to bring him, saw her take leave of the family and start, then accompanied her along the road in his mind's eye, that long, long road! under the burning sun, in the midst of clouds of dust raised by carts and carriages which were passing rapidly. He saw those carts graze the poor woman's skirts, touch her, shake her, She, so old, tired, and infirm had not the time to avoid them, when another one rushes on, is near her, is about to hit her. "Ah, move out of the way!" the son exclaims above his breath; making, without being aware of it, a motion with his hand as if to seize her by the arm and drag her to one side. He pointed out the curbs she was to avoid, and the bits of the road filled with stones, and the edges of the ditches. After much walking he seemed to see the poor old woman totter, bent under the weight of her bundle, quite exhausted, thirsty, and he was worried, groaned, and said to himself : "Oh, poor woman, give me that bundle; let me carry it for you; take my arm." He moved his right elbow and seemed to feel between

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his arm and body a trembling arm, and with his left hand, keeping his eyes quite motionless all the time, he felt the air to the right, as high as his side, in search of his mother's hand.

Then he came to himself; the thought that within a few moments he would embrace his mother returned clearly to his mind, and he felt, as at first, all its sweetness; his eyes brightened, his lips trembled, all his features gleamed with joy. A slight smile, then a broad one, then came a convulsive laugh; his chest and shoulders rose and fell as after a breathless race; and finally he threw himself upon the bed with his face in his hands and gave way to a mixture of tears and laughter, still shaking his head as if to say: "Poor mother!"

"Are you going mad?" shouted the corporal while crossing the dormitory and stopping at the door-way through which he was to pass out.

The soldier started, rose to his feet, turned, and looked at him with his eyes full of tears, his lips parted with a smile; he had not understood him. The corporal disappeared murmuring: "He is mad; he is mad!"

When left alone, he stood meditatively for a moment; then, struck by a sudden thought, seized his knapsack leaning against the bread-shelf, drew it down on to the bed, opened it after having played for a time with the buckles of the straps, dove into it with both hands, and drew out hurriedly brushes, combs, boxes, and rags; placed them all on the coverlid, seized a brush, put his foot on the edge of one of the bed slats, leaned over, and began to polish his boots with all his might, stopping from time to time to see if they were shining well.

"I must be clean," he said to himself with a serious face, continuing his work with the brush; "I wish to shine like a

mirror ; I wish to make a fair soldier of myself, for I want to please her." When the boots were polished he seized his clothes brush, then the comb, then dove into the knapsack again, drew out a little round glass, opened it, and looked at himself. . . . When the soul is deeply moved by a strong and lovely affection, and the mind quite full of sunny thoughts and fancies, the eyes and smile assume such an impress of the sweetness of that affection and the serenity of those thoughts, that even the plainest face, at such a moment, is lighted up by a ray of beauty ; so the good soldier, in looking in the glass and seeing his soul shining on his face, smiled with satisfaction.

At that instant he heard a quick step on the stairs ; listened attentively ; the sound was approaching ; it was the corporal of the guard ; he entered, looked about, saw our young man. "See here," he exclaimed, in catching sight of him, and calling him by name, "there is a woman at the door who is looking for you !"

"My mother !" shouted the son, running rapidly through the dormitories ; he dashed down the stairs, across the court, into the vestibule ; caught a glimpse of the woman, sprang toward her. She opened her arms, he fell on her breast, and both of them uttered a cry. The son placed his hands on his mother's temples, passed them through her gray hair, bent back her head, looked into her eyes, then pressed that dear head against his shoulder, covered it with his arms, and fastened his lips upon her hair, from which the handkerchief had fallen. The good woman stilled her sobs against the shoulder of her son, and seizing him around the waist, passed her thin hands over the rough jacket, which for her, at that moment, was worth a

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"Come, compose yourself, mother; be brave; don't cry so. My God! why should you weep?" the son kept saying in a caressing tone, as he pushed back behind her ears with both hands the hair which had been scattered over the forehead in the impulse of the first embrace. The old woman continued to sob hard, without weeping or without words; until, in raising her eyes to her son's face, she smiled, drew a long breath, as if lifting a weight from her heart, and murmuring, "My son!" embraced him again. "Are you tired?" asked the soldier anxiously, tearing himself from her arms. "A little," replied the woman, smiling. She glanced around in search of a place where she could lay down the great bundle which she had brought with her. "Come in here," I said, throwing open the door of my room. "Oh, the officer!" she said, turning toward me, and making a courtesy; "thank you, sir." The soldier was a trifle confused. "Come in," I repeated; "come in." They both entered timidly, and approached the little table; the old woman laid her bundle on it, and I moved to one side.

"Let me see you, my son; turn around; let me look at you," the woman began to say. The soldier, smiling, turned to show himself on every side. And the mother drawing back, glancing at him from head to foot, and clasping her hands, exclaimed affectionately: "How handsome you are, dressed like this!" And the poor old woman felt herself re-

juvenated, and was almost seized with the desire to dance around him. She approached him, then moved off, returned to his side, and devoured him with her eyes. She placed her hands on his shoulders, and let them fall down the arm until they reached his hands; put her face close to his breast in order to see the buttons; then noticing that she had dulled the cross on his belt with her breath, she rubbed it with the hem of her apron; finally, after having looked and looked again at him for some time, she threw her arms around him once more, calling him lovingly by name as she did so. Then she suddenly let go of him, and asked anxiously: "And the war?" The son smiled. She repeated: "And the war? Tell me, my son, when are you going to war?" "Oh, heavens! who has been talking to you about the war, good woman that you are?" "Oh, there is n't any war, then?" she asked, quite content. "You will never go to war, will you? Never again?" "I can't say never again, my dear." "Oh, then, you are going! tell me the truth, my son." "My good mother, what do you suppose we soldiers know about it?" "But if you who go don't know," the mother replied in that tone of profound persuasion, "who can, then?"

Having said which, she stood still awaiting his reply with such a curious expression of face and form, with such a charmingly pleasing smile on her lips, and a certain ineffable light in her eyes, that her son, smiling too, was almost entranced in looking at her; and she pleased him so much at that moment, he felt such a new and strong impulse drawing him to her in his heart, that he sprang toward her with one bound, pressed her head between his hands, kissed her, shook her playfully as they do children, and placing his

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lips on her forehead, murmured smiling: "My poor, dear old mother!"

And I, standing there with my back against the wall and my arms crossed on my breast, thought:

"Here is a man who adores his mother! He cannot help being a good, respectful, well-disciplined soldier, full of *amour propre* and courage. Yes, courage too, because the souls which feel deeply and strongly can never be cowardly. That soldier there, taken on to the battle-field, would allow himself to be killed without fear, and he would die with the name of his mother upon his lips. Teach him what his country is; make him understand that the country is a hundred thousand mothers and a hundred thousand families like his own, and he will love his country with enthusiasm. But one must begin with the mother. Oh! if we could discover the germ of all the lovely affections and all the honest and generous actions of which we are proud, we should almost always discover them in the heart of our mothers. How many medals of military valor ought to gleam on the breasts of the mothers instead of the sons! and how many wreaths of laurel ought to rest upon an old, bald head instead of upon the brown one of youth! Oh, mothers, you should never die! You should remain at the side of your sons, and accompany them to the end of the journey of life. Before you, even when we are old, we would always be children, and love you ever with the same love. Instead, you leave us alone . . . oh no! no! not alone; your sweet memory remains with us, your dear image is always before our eyes, your loving counsels are ever present to the spirit, and this is enough. Every time that a weariness of life assails us, and some hard disillusion raises in our hearts a feeling of hatred and aversion

for men, we will call up your holy, benign, and peace-giving image; we shall feel that we hear your dear voice, which chided us when children, calling us by name; and we will bend our knees irresistibly and clasp our hands before your image, asking your pardon!"

At that moment the major comes grumbling into the barracks: "Where is the officer of the guard?" he asks of some one outside the door. I here started to go out, and planting myself pale before him, with my hand at my cap, and cry: "Present!"

He looks at me fixedly and makes a sort of face, as if to say: "What the devil is the matter with you?"

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THE SON OF THE REGIMENT.

I.

CHILDREN of the two sexes, until a decided difference in form begins to become apparent, may have their playthings and amusements in common : but when, while the softness and gentleness of outline remain in the girl, in the boy the characteristics of the man begin to show themselves, the resemblance changes little by little, and one sex turns and attaches itself definitely to dolls, the other to guns, trumpets, and drums. Together with the fancy for arms, there usually awakes in boys a passion for soldiers : in some temperaments it is only passing ; in others violent, irresistible, and lasting. And it is exactly in this that the difference in the two natures manifests itself first and most noticeably ; for while the woman seeks and loves that which signifies peace, weakness, and love, the man dashes with ardor toward that which represents strength, power, and glory.

After the members of the family and household, our first affection, our first outburst of enthusiasm is for the soldier. Soldiers are the first figures which we draw on the school-room walls and the book covers ; soldiers the first persons whom we turn back to look after in the street, stopping and obliging the person who is holding our hand to do the same. The first

cent we receive is spent at a bookseller's for a sheet of colored soldiers; and all that which belongs to soldiers,—weapons, uniforms, galloons, feathers, trinkets, and sash,—becomes the object of our most ardent desires and our dearest hopes; so much so that we feel that, despite any sacrifice or any opposition, we shall enlist as soldiers when the proper time arrives; yes, soldiers, soldiers, even if the world falls; mamma will cry, papa growl out in that deep voice which he reserves for the most daring escapades: no matter; the matter is decided, we will be soldiers.

Here the mania for arms begins, and we search, prowl about, dive into every thing to see if there is not even a cane, stick, or leg of a broken table in the house, which, having been shaped by the blade of our penknife, may not serve, for a longer or shorter length of time, as a rapier, dagger, or gun. Who of us has not passed long hours astride a chair, with his breast against the back, working his legs as if spurring on a horse, waving aloft the handle of a broom, and holding forth in a certain slow, deep, solemn tone, like a general who is commanding a division? Who does not remember the first sword which he received from an uncle, godfather, or some retired officer, an old friend of the family, on his birthday, or as a reward for good conduct at school? But let it be understood, not one of those ordinary wooden swords, bound in silver paper, mere playthings for children, which do not even frighten flies; but a real sword, a genuine blade, such as they use in war. . . .

Oh! the first sword is a great source of delight!

Then those beautiful spring mornings (which take away the desire for books, and put a fever into one's legs, as Giusti says) when, seated at the table, yawning and dozing over a fable of

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Fedro to be turned into Italian, we suddenly hear a great outburst of trumpets and drums down in the street. To the devil with books and copy-books, and down the stairs, at a break-neck pace, behind the soldiers, until we reach the parade ground, and can contemplate with ecstasy that bright gleaming of bayonets, appearing and disappearing like a flash above the heads of the battalions, and hear that noisy and prolonged hurrah of the besieged, which stirs our blood, and makes us feel our strength doubled as we involuntarily clench our little fists;—who does not remember those beautiful mornings? It is true that on returning home, we have to confront the angry look of papa, or something worse; but that being able to say: “I have been on the parade ground,”—ah! it is a great relief to the conscience, an excuse which one can adduce, and which in fact one does adduce without humility or fear.

How well, also, do we remember the first soldier with whom, after a little persistency, we succeeded in making friends? And again, the first time that, on the parade ground, or at target-shooting, we have had the honor of going to fetch a little water from a neighboring spring in our own broken bowl? We brought it so full that it would have overflowed at the slightest movement; yet not one drop was spilled, so careful were we with eyes and arms, making every possible effort of body and soul to discharge our honorable task worthily! Then to be seen on the promenade with a corporal of the sharp-shooters, for instance! It is one of those pleasures in thinking of which I wish to be a boy again, in order to experience it once more, or to experience it as a man, even at the cost of appearing childish. Then in the evening, at the hour of retreat, when we accompanied our young corporal to the door of the barracks

and said good-night, or secured the promise of a meeting for the following day in a loud voice, so that all the boys round about might hear it; and the next day we took a charming walk together outside the city, and on reaching a solitary spot, begged our friend to let us see his poniard; to which he replied that it was forbidden, and we continued teasing him; he refusing, and we saying: "Do me the favor for a moment only, only just one moment"; until the poor corporal, after glancing around, drew out the dagger from its sheath with a certain air of mystery, and the sight of that beautiful, bare, gleaming blade sent a shudder through our veins. Then we touched it lightly with our finger, asking if it were sharp, and if one blow would kill a man . . . Oh, the friendship of a corporal is a great thing for you! That, among others, of always having in your pocket some beautiful new cartridges, sometimes powder too, and, perhaps, even a beautiful cross of an old plate, or bruised metal buttons, and even—but these are fortunes which rarely fall to one's lot. You may become the possessor of a couple of bits of gold lace, a trifle worn perhaps, but always in such a condition as to cut a stupendous figure on the sleeves of your house-jacket. And all the boys in the neighborhood will respect you.

The idea which one has, as a child, of the superiority of soldiers over other citizens, is something really marvellous. There can be no soldiers who are not prodigies of courage. There are absolutely no soldiers who are weaker than the strongest civilian. No one in the world can run like a sharp-shooter; the handsomest beards in town belong to the sappers; there is nothing more terrible on earth than an officer with an unsheathed sword—especially if it has just come from the hands

of a knife-grinder dancing, and the struggle on the might be even with their swordiers with mus wooden heads havior, and s fatigue caps. in the street, l angry and thr crying of wom we could see t a fight betwe pray that the l beaten? And

This intense with an affecti Conscripts wh soldiers who where do they of gamins wh ment goes to smiles, the fr the first genia walks in the all-powerful s discipline, and solation. Th home, and re

of a knife-grinder. And in fact, when we set the marionettes dancing, and improvised comedies, there might be a fierce struggle on the stage between ten armed characters, or there might be even princes and kings to make a great deal of racket with their swords in hand; but at the appearance of two soldiers with muskets slung across their shoulders, all the other wooden heads suddenly were quiet, and on their good behavior, and sometimes even the crowns bowed before the fatigue caps. When late at evening, suddenly hearing down in the street, before the door of a tavern, a confused sound of angry and threatening voices, oaths, blows, and cudgels, and a crying of women and children, and on going to the window we could see the daggers gleam, we understood that there was a fight between the soldiers and workmen, did n't we always pray that the former should do all the killing, and the latter be beaten? And if the contrary occurred, how provoked were we!

This intense affection of children is returned by the soldiers with an affection naturally less enthusiastic, but not less strong. Conscripts who have just come into the regiment, or even old soldiers who have barely arrived from an unknown city, pray, where do they seek and find their first friends? In that crowd of gamins who hang around the drummers when the regiment goes to the parade ground. From them come the first smiles, the first hand-shakings; with them the first meetings, the first genial and confidential conversations, the first solitary walks in the country, the first outbursts of rage against their all-powerful superiors, the first laments over the severity of the discipline, and from them the first words of comfort and consolation. They let them write and read their letters from home, and relate all the most insignificant particulars of their

family life, and listen with pleasure, and sometimes with a certain tender melancholy, because, far as they are from their own relatives, these conversations revive in their hearts that affectionate feeling for home which one never experiences in the noisy rooms of the barracks. By means of these children, they form, little by little, a friendship with the porter; and through the latter succeed in a short time in enlarging the circle of their friendly relations, so that, in case of need, they know to whom they can have recourse, and, in any case, with whom they can exchange a little gossip, all the more if among their friends there be some good woman who has a soldier son. Thus, to the sympathy and affection in their hearts for these children is added a feeling of gratitude; and by means of them their little friends, too, form new friendships; little by little, in such and such a company, in such and such a battalion, there is no unknown or indifferent face, and their affection, the first burst of enthusiasm past, takes deeper and more lasting root. When the regiment goes away. . . . I have experienced it, we seek our mother, go and sit down beside her, and remain there with a serious face in order to be asked some question that will provoke an outburst of our grief.—“What is the matter, child?” And we do not reply. “Don’t keep me in suspense; what has happened to you? what has occurred?” Then we throw ourselves into her arms and tell her what it is; and our mother, quite moved, passes her hand over our forehead, exclaiming as she does so: “Oh, poor boy! Be comforted, others will come.” Then we return comforted to our swords and drums.

O mothers, let your boys come with us; we will love them like brothers, like sons; and on leaving us they will return to

your bosom so that one learns to love both heart and

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your bosom stronger and more loving, because among soldiers one learns to love, and with a depth of affection that softens both heart and soul.

In proof of which I will relate an incident that took place some years ago in a regiment of our army, and which was told me by a friend who played an important part in it. I will try to recall to mind his own words.

II.

Upon one of the last evenings of 1866, our division, which in the afternoon had left Battaglia (a large place on the eastern slopes of the Euganean Hills), entered the city of Padua by the Porta Santa Croce, as they were to pass through it *en route* to Venice. Although many other corps had passed through the town, and the streets we crossed were farthest from the centre and the least frequented, yet the welcome accorded us by the people was very warm. I, however, only remember it as I would a dream; I retain a faint recollection of it, as one does of the first conversation with his innamorata, when he trembles all over, becomes white in the face, and every thing grows black around him. Yes, in approaching Padua, the first great city in the Venetian district that we reached, my heart beat wildly and my thoughts grew confused. When we entered later, and an immense multitude, breaking out into a loud cry, dashed into our ranks, broke them, surrounded and scattered as in a few moments on every side, so that there was no trace of order in the columns, then my sight as well as my mind became clouded. I remember feeling myself squeezed around the throat and waist several times by two convulsive arms, and tapped on the shoulder and arms by two trembling

hands; of feeling myself kissed in the face by burning mouths, with the same fury with which a mother would kiss her son on first seeing him after a long absence; of having felt the contact of many gloves wet with tears; of having stopped several times to disengage my sword from the hands of some boy who was shaking it violently in order to make me turn around and take notice of his small "*corbina*"; then of having walked quite a distance with half a dozen bunches of flowers in my jacket, so that I looked like a country bridegroom; and, finally, of hearing resound about me a continuous and very loud hurrah. . . . But nonsense, they were not hurrahs, but inarticulate cries, broken by sobs, stifled by embraces; they were groans coming from chests oppressed and exhausted by the depth of joy; voices with a tone that my ear had never heard before, but which had sounded many times in my mind, when imagining the expression of a joy greater than human strength. The crowd mingled with a dizzy rapidity, and, flowing along, bore the soldiers here and there, always, however, advancing in the direction that the column had taken on its entrance; and above the heads of the multitude could be seen a great waving of arms, muskets, and banners, and this one and that one rushing violently together and instantly separating, according to the impetuosity of the embrace and the rapid separation of the civilians and soldiers. The boys seized the soldiers by the hems of their coats or by the sheath of the bayonet, and jealously disputed their hands in order to press their lips on them; and the women, too, young, old, of the people, or of rank, pressed the hands of the soldiers and put flowers in the button-holes of their coats, asking them gently if they had come from far and felt tired. They handed them fruit and cigars, offered

their table and refusals, and was not one of emotion,—eyes stained, lips every cry, son blood and in you were te tions of those houses were a group of pe chairs with th former so pu Some were v way of a gre their necks c the birds in a children hck toward us, at the noise of door-ways of saw many of of one of t ward him. out to the of brace were a pressing the ing them fas midst of so r and affection:

their table and house, scorning with amiable affectation their refusals, and warmly renewing invitations and prayers. There was not one face in that multitude that was not transfigured by emotion,—eyes dilated and flaming, cheeks pale and tear-stained, lips trembling; and in every attitude, every gesture, every cry, something feverish and convulsive, which stirred your blood and made you tremble in every fibre, so much so that you were tempted to reply to the salutations and benedictions of those people, and yet could not utter one word. The houses were covered with flags: at every window there was a group of persons, one above the other; the last erect on chairs with their hands on the shoulders of the foremost, the former so pressed against the sill as to be almost crushed. Some were waving handkerchiefs, others their hands in the way of a greeting, and some throwing down flowers; all with their necks outstretched and their mouths wide open like little birds in a nest at the appearance of the mother. Some children held in their mothers' arms waved their wee hands toward us, and uttered a small cry which was lost mid-air in the noise of the crowd. The openings of the streets, the door-ways of the workshops and stores were full of people. I saw many of those good operatives place a cigar in the hands of one of the boys, point out a soldier, and push him toward him. I saw some excellent women put their children out to the officers so that they might kiss them, as if that embrace were a benediction from heaven. I saw tottering old men pressing the heads of the soldiers against their breasts, and holding them fast as if they could never let them go. . . . In the midst of so many and such forcible demonstrations of gratitude and affection, the soldiers, poor fellows, were quite stupefied,

and laughed and cried at once, not being able to find words with which to return thanks, or if they found them they could not utter them, but tried by signs to say: "It is too much, too much! We do not deserve all this! Our hearts cannot bear it!"

As we approached the gate by which we were to go out, the crowd began to thin and the soldiers fell slowly into line.

The gate through which we were to pass is called by the people of Padua the *Portello*. We were accompanied to the limit by many citizens, the majority, gentlemen, mixed with the soldiers, arm in arm with them, and all engaged in a lively, noisy, rapid, and broken conversation; for after the first outburst of enthusiasm, which had only found vent in tears and cries, there had followed a great desire for words, a thousand questions and protestations, they interrupting themselves from time to time to look well in each other's faces, with a smile that meant: "Is this really an Italian soldier whom I have on my arm!" "Are we really here in the midst of the blessed Paduans!" And here a long pressure of the hand and a reciprocal shake of the arm, which signified: "You are here; I feel you; I shall not let you escape." In that half hour which was employed in crossing the city, many friendships were made, many promises to write were exchanged, many propositions to meet on the return were made, and meetings arranged and noted down in the pocket-books with names and addresses. "You will write me first!" "I the first. As soon as we arrive in camp." "You promise me?" "Yes, I promise you." Then another warm pressure of the hand, another shake of the arm, and the regiment approaches the gate, the dialogues become warmer and noisier, the gestures more ex-

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cited, and the expression of the faces more animated; then they repeat the cries and hurrahs which had ceased for a short time, and the soldiers begin to get into disorder again, until on arriving at the gate the greater portion of the crowd stop. There, again, you can imagine a confusion and shouting that is indescribable; an embracing and kissing; a loosening of the arms from one in order to throw themselves into the arms of another; and so on, hurriedly exchanging good wishes, salutations, and benedictions. Finally, the regiment was outside of the gate and ranged in marching order, two files to the right and two files to the left of the road. For a short time the soldiers turned now and then toward the gate, where the crowd, still stationary, went on waving handkerchiefs and uttering cries of farewell; but little by little, as it grew dark, the crowd could no longer be seen, the cries ceased, the soldiers began marching in order, and the officers, who at first had been walking in groups, fell into their proper places.

We had been on the march for many hours; before arriving at Padua we were tired and had already begun to move slowly and in disorder; yet on coming out of the city we marched as if we had just then started from the camp after a long rest. The soldiers walked erect, separate, and quickly; the lines were closed up, and a chit-chat was heard on every side. There were so many things to be said.

III.

Now that night had fallen the lanterns were lighted. The appearance of the light brought me to myself, and showed me that we had not even left Padua; then looking here and there with dilated eyes, as we do when we wake in the room of a

hotel and do not understand for a moment where we are or why we are there, I saw by the light of a lantern two small boys whom the soldiers were leading by the hand. I turned in the opposite direction, and saw another; looked farther away, and saw two more: in fact, there were any number of them. They were all led by hand by the soldiers, and were talking in a low voice, hiding themselves as much as possible in the shade, so as not to be seen by the officers, who, perhaps, might send them home, as that was not the hour to leave the city and keep their families in suspense. The majority of the boys, one could see from their clothes, were poor; but there were not a few who were in comfortable circumstances, as their faces, timid manners, and clean clothing showed. At every ten or twelve paces one stopped, and after shaking hands and exchanging some affectionate salutation, turned back. It is impossible to tell what an amount of sweetness, heartiness, and delicate feeling of sadness lay in those leave-takings. Then, the peculiar accent of the Paduan dialect which lends itself so fully to the expression of warm affection, and the profound emotion, and the night, and the silence that began to spread through the ranks; in fact, every word of those boys touched me deeply. I shall always remember one of them who, in taking leave and saying good-by to all the soldiers, exclaimed in a sweet, trembling voice, in which one could hear the soul: "God protect you all!"

"Thanks, dear boy," I said to myself; "may God bless you with every good thing, may your mother never die, may you enjoy every day of your life some happiness like that which touches my soul this evening. Farewell, farewell!"

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est and most timid, then the largest; and over the regiment fell a deep silence, broken only by the sound of weary, dragging steps and the monotonous tic-tac of the points of the bayonets against the ends of the poniards. We began to doze and staggered here and there like drunken men who are walking arm in arm, I dozing and staggering more than all the rest.

Suddenly I felt some one touch my arm; I turned; it was a boy. "Who are you?" I asked, stopping, in a very sleepy voice. He hesitated to reply, because he was dozing too. "Carluccio," he then said, in a low and trembling voice. "Where do you come from?" "From Padua." "Where do you want to go?" "With the soldiers." "With the soldiers! And do you know where the soldiers are going?"

He did not reply; so I began again: "Return home, go home, you have got too far away. Who knows how anxious your father and mother may be about you at this hour. Take my advice and go home." He neither replied nor moved. "Won't you go back?" "No." "Why not?" He did not answer. "Are you sleepy?" "A little." . . . "Here, give me your hand, then."

I took him by the hand, rejoined my company, which had got quite a distance ahead, and, thinking that to send him back to his home and make him go all the way alone at night would expose him to some great fright, I decided to take him with me to the station. When we reached the station I knew I could find some means of sending him back.

"We have a recruit," I said to one of my comrades, as I passed him. He approached me, and after him several others who had heard my words, and while they all were gathering about the boy, and asking me who he was and where I had

found him, we heard a blast of the trumpet and the regiment stopped. While the ranks broke up and the soldiers threw themselves down, I, dragging behind me the little fugitive, entered a field on the right of the road, and the others followed me. About ten paces from the ditch we stopped; a soldier with a lantern came up; we gathered around the boy, and throwing the light on to his face, bent down to look at him. He was beautiful, but pale and exhausted, and had in his eyes—two beautiful, great dark eyes—a very strange expression of sadness for a child of his age, as he could not be more than twelve. His old, worn, and ill-fitting garments were a strong contrast to his delicate and gentle appearance. He wore an old straw hat to which a great portion of the brim was lacking, a blue handkerchief around his neck, a fustian jacket large enough for a man, a pair of trousers that only reached his ankles, and two old shoes laced with twine. But he was neat and not ragged; he had his handkerchief knotted with a certain grace; his hair arranged; and face, hands, and shirt quite clean. He looked first in the face of one and the other with wide-stretched, motionless eyes.

“But don’t you know that you are alone?” I asked.

He looked at me fixedly without replying.

“All the other boys have gone back,” said one of my friends, “and why did n’t you go back with them?”

Then another: “What do you wish to do here with us? Where do you wish to go?”

He looked first at one and then at the other, with his eyes always wide-stretched; then dropped them and was silent.

“Speak up, now; say something,” said one of us, shaking him lightly by the shoulder; “have you lost your tongue?”

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But he never opened his mouth, and kept his eyes fastened on the ground, so obstinate and immovable that it was really provoking. I made another attempt: I took his chin between my forefinger and thumb, and, raising his head gently, asked:

"What will your mother say when she sees that you do not return?"

He raised his eyes and looked at me, no longer with that astonished, almost stupid expression that he had worn before, but with brows knitted and his mouth open, as if only at this point he had begun to understand our words, and were waiting for us to interrogate him and make him tell what he had not had the courage to say.

"Why did you run away from home?"

He was silent a moment after that question, and then burst out crying, and between his sobs he murmured:

"They—beat me!"

"Oh, poor boy!" we all exclaimed, putting our hands on his head and shoulders, and patting his cheeks and chin. "And who is it that beats you?"

"My—mother."

"Your mother?" we all asked at once, with astonishment. "How's that?"

"But—she is not—my own mother." Here the poor boy, after being urged, told us that his father had been dead for some time; that he had no one left but his step-mother, who only loved her own children and could not bear him; and that as he had been suffering for some time, he had run away from home with us. He had not finished speaking, when we began to pet and comfort him. "You shall come with us, good boy; don't worry about any thing. You will have as many fathers

as there are officers, and as many brothers as there are soldiers. Don't be anxious." Then wishing to quiet him and make him smile, I said: "And if any one asks you whose son you are and where you have come from, you must answer that you are the son of the regiment, and that we found you in the folds of our flag; do you understand?"

He smiled slightly, and made a sign in the affirmative.

"And meanwhile," I continued, "as soon as we start, you shall come with me or with some one of us, and keep beside us, and walk as long as your legs will permit; then when you are tired, you are to say so, do you understand? and we will put you in a wagon."

Poor Carluccio, who could not comprehend so many demonstrations of kindness and feared he was dreaming, made a sign in the affirmative by bowing and raising his head and looking at us with his eyes full of surprise.

"How do you feel now? Are you tired? Are you thirsty? Do you want something to eat? Do you wish a little coffee, or a little *rosolio*?"

"No, thank you, I am not thirsty"; and he tried to push back the flask of *rosolio* which an officer held out to him.

"Drink, drink, it will do you good and make you strong; drink."

"Do you want something to eat? There is nothing but bread just now.—Oh! lantern there, give us a piece of bread!"

The soldier holding the lantern drew quickly from his pocket a bit of bread and handed it to him.

"No, thank you, I am not hungry."

"Eat, eat; you have been walking for a long time, and ought to refresh your stomach."

He held his hands, and

At that moment I put ourselves in a wagon, and led by a few men. I am not slumbering, he wishes again for when the wagon. He continued bread, "What? How stretch his finger and sleep! surround instant "Well Carl my admiration."

He hesitated a moment, then seized the bread with both hands, and bit into it with the avidity of a hungry animal.

At that moment we heard the sound of the trumpet, and put ourselves *en route*. After a little more than a half hour Carluccio was overcome with sleep. I took him by the hand and led him to the rear of the column, where, after exchanging a few words with the commissary, I had him placed in the wagon, while he kept saying: "I am not really sleepy. . . . I am not really sleepy." And off he dropped into a sound slumber, murmuring that he did not need any sleep, and that he wished to march. An hour afterward the regiment stopped again for some moments. Hardly had the trumpet sounded, when the soldiers of the last company, who had seen me take Carluccio to the commissary, ran and gathered about the wagon. One of them took the lantern from his musket and put it at the boy's face, then they all bent over to look at him. He continued to sleep peacefully, his head resting on a bag of bread, and his eyes still red, and his cheeks wet with tears. "What a beautiful little rascal!" said a soldier, *sotto voce*. "How well he is sleeping!" murmured another. A third stretched out his hand and pinched his cheek with two of his fingers. "Down with that hand!" shouted the corporal, and all the others cried out: "Leave him alone! Let him sleep!" Carluccio waked at that moment, and seeing himself surrounded by the soldiers, was a trifle frightened, but was instantly reassured and smiled.

"Whose son are you?" asked one of the soldiers.

Carluccio hesitated for a moment and then, remembering my advice, he replied seriously: "I am the son of the regiment."

All the soldiers began to laugh. "Who brought you to us? Where did they find you?"

The boy replied with the greatest gravity: "They found me in the folds of the flag!"

The soldiers burst out laughing again. "Your hand here, comrade!" shouted the corporal, extending his hand. Carluccio put out his and clasped it. "Give it to me too," said another soldier, and Carluccio pressed his also. Then every one followed suit, and the boy shook hands with them all. The last one said aloud: "We are firm friends, are we not, child?" and he replied: "Yes, firm friends." At that moment the trumpet sounded, and the soldiers moved off laughing, and I, appearing suddenly before Carluccio, asked him: "Well, what have you to tell me?" He looked at me, and replied smilingly, in a tone of perfect content: "The soldiers like me."

IV.

We arrived in camp about midnight; I do not remember how many miles we made from Padua up, nor at what point we pitched the tents. There must have been some village near the camp; but there was not the top of a steeple to be seen in any direction. The sky, which had been dark and cloudy so that we could not see the stars, had become clear. The field where the regiment was to encamp was all lighted by the moon, and surrounded by great thick trees, which cast a dense shade all around. It was a spot full of dark, gloomy beauty, and in it reigned a profound quiet; so struck were we by it, that we all entered the camp without speaking, and drew up in line in silence, looking with amazement here and there, as if we were in an enchanted garden.

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In a short time the camp was in order, the wagons were taken to their places, the sentinels given their posts; the companies were re-arranged without arms, among their own tents; and the sixteen orderly-sergeants began the roll call, each one standing in front of his company, with the officers on one side, and a soldier with a lantern on the other to light up the record book. Meanwhile Carluccio, led back to me by the commissary, had run to hide himself between two tents, and stood there frightened and astonished, contemplating the beautiful spectacle of the camp lighted up by the moon. That multitude of tents gleaming in long rows until they were lost to sight among the trees; those five hundred stacks of glistening bayonets; all those people; and the intense quiet, the monotonous voices of the orderly-sergeants growing gradually fainter, from the company near by to the one farthest away, where the lantern hardly appeared as large as a fire-fly; and then the gradual cessation of those voices, and the mysterious silence; and, at a stroke of the drum, the sudden breaking up of the lines and the noisy scattering; and under the tents, in the darkness, that confused shouting and hurried preparation of the beds with cloaks, covers, and knapsacks, until little by little, throughout that immense camp quiet is re-established, and an unseen bugle imposes silence with its lamenting blasts . . . it is a spectacle that moves one. And it would have been much more impressive if any one could have seen inside those tents. How many tapers were secretly lighted between two knapsacks, beside a piece of crushed letter-paper, before a face in which appear from time to time the fatigue of the long march and the fear of the officer of the guard—

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to our faces for a moment when he was questioned. His eyes were still swollen and red from his severe fit of weeping; his voice trembled; and he did not know how to move or where to hold his hands, so embarrassed and confused was he. By dint of questioning him and urging him to talk, we succeeded in loosening his tongue and drawing from him some more particulars about his family. Then little by little he took courage and warmed in his narration, comforted by the signs of assent and compassion that we constantly gave to his words.

"She is not my true mother," he said; "that is why she does not love me. The other was my true mother, and is dead, but she loved me very much; the one I have now . . . is the same as if I were not in the house; she gives me food to eat and a place to sleep, but never looks at me—as if I had done something wrong; and I don't do any one any harm; every one can say that. . . . The neighbors in the house all like me better than she. . . . The other two boys are smaller than I, and there is no danger of her making them cry! Then she never took me to walk with the other two. They are always well dressed, while I seem like a beggar.

. . . . Sometimes she left me shut up in the house, all alone, those Sunday evenings when you see so many people pass in the street, and I stayed at the window waiting for them to return, but they never came back, and I used to go to sleep with my head on the window. Then when they did return she scolded me; I had been shut up alone in the house, and they had gone to the theatre or café, and the other two boys came and whispered in my ear: 'We went, and you did not'; then they made gestures to provoke me, and if I cried, they laughed at me, and mother never said

any thing. These things made me unhappy, because I had never done any thing to them, and every time either of them teased me, and I wanted to do something, I always controlled myself and had patience. There were times when they had finished eating, that mother made me carry away the dishes, and while I carried them the boys said: 'Scullion!' Oh, heavens! if they had given me a blow on the head I should not have felt it as much as I did those words. . . . Once, the evening of a fête day, she returned home late, and her face was all red, her eyes shining; she talked and laughed loudly with the other two, and they all began supper, and mother drank an entire bottle of wine. After they had finished she called me, put all the dishes in my hands, and said: 'Here, carry these away; that's your duty'; she gave me a kick, and all three began to laugh. I said nothing; but when I was in the kitchen I put down the dishes, threw myself on a chair, and began weeping bitterly in the dark until they went to bed. If it had not been for Giovannina, a young dressmaker who lived near us and was kind to me, I should have always been entirely in rags. . . . "

I then asked how he came to think of running away.

"At the beginning," he replied, "I wanted to go off with a company of jugglers, those who play tricks, and when they find boys whom no one wants, they take them with them; but then I was told that there were tricks for which, if they wished to become jugglers, they must have their bones dislocated at the shoulders, and this must be done when they are small, so as I was big, I did not run away. Mother continued to ill-treat me, and gave me little to eat. But one fine day the Italian soldiers began to pass, and all the people welcomed them warmly, and

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the boys accompanied them outside the city, and there were some who went many miles with them. In fact, I heard that two or three had run away from home, and then came back saying they had eaten the soldiers' bread and slept under their tents. I instantly thought I would run away. I tried two or three times; but when it began to grow dark, I got frightened and went home. But yesterday morning my mother beat me with a stick and hurt me very much; here are the marks on my hands, and then she struck me in the face, and all because I had said: 'May you burst!' to one of the boys who was making fun of my boots, saying they looked like boats. They did not even give me a piece of bread, and then in the evening they left me alone in the house. I stood at the window with tears in my eyes, and was really desperate, when suddenly I heard the band play; I instantly left the house, and as soon as I saw that they were the soldiers of the king who has come to liberate us, I threw myself into their midst, and I have not left them. . . . Then you spoke to me (and he looked at me). Then they told me not to be afraid; they gave me something to eat—I was so hungry!—and told me they would keep me with them. . . . But I don't wish to stay here and eat my bread like a beggar. I want to work. . . . I will brush your clothes (and he touched my jacket). I will bring water to drink and get straw for the officers to sleep on. . . ."

At this point one of my friends cut him short by taking his head between his two hands, and pressing it to his breast with all the pity and love of a father.

V.

Toward daybreak, before the bugle sounded the reveille, we were waked by the sound of a heavy rain and a violent clap of thunder. I was the first to put my head out of the tent. Not a soul was to be seen in the camp, except the sentinels; but almost all the soldiers were awake. In fact, at every flash there came from all sides of the encampment a sharp b-r-r-r, such as the puppet-man makes to announce the appearance or disappearance of the devil; and at every clap of thunder there was a noisy and prolonged shout in imitation of the burst. A short time thereafter the reveille was sounded, and the captain of the guard called the officer of the week to announce that we were to continue our march in three hours. The announcement set me instantly thinking of Carluccio. I had not yet asked myself what was to become of the boy in the end. The son of the regiment! Beautiful words, quickly said; but had we the right to keep him from home? Who would shoulder this responsibility? I spoke of this to my friends, and they all agreed that it was necessary to provide for the return of Carluccio, by writing to the Syndic of Padua and having recourse to the authorities of the neighboring village. It was a most displeasing decision, but there was nothing else to be done. The duty of writing to Padua I assumed myself, and I did so; but the other duty of taking Carluccio to the village and giving him into the care of the authorities I would not undertake. "Let the others think of that," I said to myself. "I have done my part," and I begged one of my friends to assume the rest of the responsibility. "What have I to do with it?" one after the other replied. "And I?" I asked in my turn.

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"Well, neither of us have any thing to do with it," and the dialogue ended thus. I returned to the tent quite annoyed, called Carluccio, and said to him:

"You must come as far as the village with me, it is only a few steps away."

A suspicion crossed his mind; he became serious and looked fixedly at me. I had not known how to dissimulate my design by voice or face; I turned the other way, and pretended to look for something in my travelling-case.

"You want to send me home!" he cried suddenly; then broke out into a violent fit of weeping, threw himself on his knees at my feet, and now clasping his hands, now seizing my jacket, began to say, with all his strength: "Oh, no--no, Mr. Officer, don't send me home, for pity sake, for pity sake. I cannot go home, I would rather die first; keep me here, to do any thing you wish. I'll do every thing, and look after my own food. . . . For mercy sake, Mr. Officer, don't make me go home!"

I felt my heart breaking. I controlled myself for a moment, and then said: "No, don't worry, Carluccio; don't cry or be afraid. We won't send you home; you shall always stay with us. We will always love you. . . . I promise you that, rest assured of it; dry your eyes and we won't say any thing more about it."

Then Carluccio grew quiet.

"I was not born for great undertakings," I said to myself as I left the tent; "there is nothing else to do but wait for the reply from Padua--and then . . . then we will see what is to be done."

VI.

Two days later we encamped in the neighborhood of Mestre, where we remained for nearly a month, until the termination of the last armistice, that is to say, until we returned back toward Ferrara.

No reply came at any time from Padua, and Carluccio remained on with the regiment.

From the very first day we thought of renewing his wardrobe, because his clothes, already worn out, had been so spoiled during the first march that they were literally falling in pieces. We gave him a straw hat, a jacket, a pair of linen trousers, a beautiful red cravat, and two little shoes that fitted his small feet. Oh, how contented the poor boy was! When we presented him with all these things, he did not seem able to believe his eyes; he turned red, twisted his head the other way, almost fancied they were playing a joke on him, tried to push back the un hoped-for gift with his elbows several times, and kept his chin down on his breast. But when he saw that we began to grow angry at his obstinate incredulity, and pretended to move off, saying: "We 'll dress another boy," he took a step toward us, made a motion with his hand for us to stop, and exclaimed in a tear-choked voice: "No! no!" but he was instantly ashamed of that prayer, bowed his head again, and stood motionless with his eyes lowered and full of tears. When he had his clothes on, he was so much embarrassed that he did not know how to walk, act, or speak.

"*Cospetto*, Carluccio!" the soldiers said to him as they made way for him to pass furtively into their midst: "*cospetto*! what luxury!" and he blushed and ran away.

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But at the end of little more than a week he became as quick and full of life as a drummer; he was the friend of all the soldiers in our company, of a great portion of the soldiers in the others, and of all the officers in the regiment. Then he began to lead a life both busy and useful to himself and others. He slept in our tent. In the morning at the first roll of the drum he was on his feet and disappeared. We were not well awake when he had returned from the kitchen of our battalion with coffee, rum, or *rosolio*, and "Mr. Officer," he said in a respectful voice, "it is time . . ." "Time for what?" we muttered in a sharp, rough voice, rubbing our eyes. "Time for you to get up." "Ah! it's you, is it, Carluccio? Give your hand," and we gave him a squeeze of the hand that put him in good-humor for the rest of the day.

He disputed the work with our orderlies; wished to brush our clothes; polish our buttons, swords, and boots; wash shirts and handkerchiefs; he wished to do every thing himself, and he humbly begged first one soldier and then the other to give him something to do, that he would do it so gladly, and try his utmost to do it well, and that it was necessary for him to learn it at any cost. Sometimes we were obliged to take things out of his hands, and say to him with some severity: "Do what I tell you to do, and nothing more." And really we were forced to be very severe, because we could not allow him to play the servant to us. Why, poor boy? Had we brought him with us for this sole purpose? He was afraid that gradually we should grow tired of him, although we did nothing but overwhelm him with caresses, and surround him with care and courtesy. It seemed to him that if he did not work we should think him a useless appendage in the end, and for this reason

he tried to show us that he was good for something, or that, if for nothing else, good-will was not lacking on his part. He was even assailed and worried by the fear that he should seem to us importunate. From time to time, while eating with us, seated on the ground around a tablecloth stretched on the grass, becoming suddenly aware that he was being watched, he was ashamed to eat, turned scarlet, dropped his eyes, took small mouthfuls, and if we did not fill his glass he would not dare do it, remaining with his mouth quite dry during the entire meal. Sometimes, in the tent, while we were dropping asleep, he would suddenly be ashamed that he occupied so much space, and would sit up and spread the straw here and there toward our places, reserving only a small portion for himself, then lie down all curled up in a bunch against the linen of the tent, at the risk of catching some severe cold on account of the draught. Not one of his acts escaped me, not one of his thoughts either, and I always tried to dispel his shame, either by addressing him gaily: "Well, Carluccio?" or by pinching his cheeks in a way that signifies: "Have no fear, I am protecting you," and he instantly became reassured. Oh, what a tender pity his delicate sense of shame aroused within me! "Poor Carluccio," I thought, when, the light still burning in the tent, I saw him quietly sleeping, all wrapped up in my cloak, and his face half-hidden under a soldier's cap; "poor Carluccio! why have you no longer a mother? You thought yourself alone on earth, and did not imagine that any one could care for you! No, Carluccio, for boys without father and mother there are the soldiers; they have only a piece of bread in their pockets; but as an offset they have plenty of affection in their hearts, and dispense both freely to

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any one in need. Sleep quietly, Carluccio, and dream of your mother; be assured that she is looking down upon you, and is content that you are among us, because she knows that under our rough cloaks beat hearts that resemble her own."

He was always busy during the day. He went out of the camp to fetch water for the soldiers when they were prohibited from leaving; and one could see him moving around among the tents laden with flasks and bowls, quite red in the face and dripping with perspiration, accompanied by a crowd of thirsty men who pressed around him, importuning him in this wise: "Carluccio, my canteen"; "my flask, Carluccio!" "I want mine first"; "no, mine"; "I gave you mine before he did," etc., etc. And making signs for them to keep quiet, or pushing them back: "One at a time, like good fellows." "Be kind enough to move off a little, and let me breathe." Then he would wipe his brow and take breath, for he was really so exhausted that he could do nothing more. From time to time some soldier hunted him up to have a letter written home, or to have him read and explain one received. He always did this favor with much gravity. He would be quite pensive for a moment, and then say, gravely: "Let us see." They seated themselves in the tent, and with the forefinger stretched toward the sheet already written, or to be written; finally, Carluccio, turning up his jacket sleeves, knitting his brows, would set to work, pursing up his lips, and uttering an inarticulate sound that signified: "It is a serious affair, but I will do what I can."

He would assist first one and then the other in arranging the tents, and he had such taste in drawing the cords and fastening the poles in the ground that one would have fancied he had done nothing else all his life.

When the men were drilling he would withdraw to a corner of the camp, and from thence would watch in ecstasy all the time the drill lasted. When all the regiment was drawn up and handling their arms, the poor boy was greatly excited. That striking on the ground of one thousand five hundred muskets, in one blow, like a single musket; that long and sharp rattle of the thousand five hundred fixed bayonets, removed, replaced, and sheathed in a moment; that powerful tone of command, and the profound silence of the lines, and all those faces motionless and intent as statues; the sight of those new things fired his enthusiasm, filled him with restlessness, a desire to shout, run, and jump; but he never did this until after the regiment had broken ranks, out of respect for it. At first he contented himself with assuming heroic attitudes, and looking at us with his head raised and a proud glance, without being aware of it; reproducing unconsciously the emotions of his soul, like some one who, in relating us a story, so impresses us that we show by the movements of our intent faces the sense and effect of his words.

When he heard the band he seemed quite crazy. The evenings when some one of us had to go to the outposts he was less gay than usual. "Good-night, Mr. Officer!" he would say, with a long look, when we left, and outside the tent he would watch us until we were lost to sight.

He had this gentle, affectionate way with all, officers and soldiers; and thus all loved him. When he passed among the tents of any company, he was called on all sides; arms were stretched out to detain him; there was a jumping up and running after him by soldiers with letters in their hands: "Carluccio, a moment, a word, only a word." He gave the officers

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the military salute, and with an expression of more or less respect, according to their grade, which he had learned to distinguish from the very first day. He held the colonel in great fear. When he saw him in the distance he took to his heels or hid behind a tent; and even he himself could give no reason for this. But one day, while he was standing chatting with two or three soldiers near the tent of an adjutant, behold the colonel suddenly appeared. He trembled from head to foot; there was no time to hide himself; he was obliged to look at and salute him; he raised his eyes timidly, and put his hand to his hat. The colonel looked at him, placed his hand under his chin, and said: "Good-by, my good boy." Carluccio went nearly crazy; flew instantly to us, and breathless and stammering related this great adventure.

A strange thing in a boy of his age was that he never took advantage in the slightest degree of the familiarity with which we treated him. He was always docile, humble, and respectful, as on the first day when we picked him up on the road. Of that fortunate day he spoke often, and always with tears in his eyes. He had his melancholy hours, too, especially on rainy days, when all the soldiers were gathered under the tents, and the camp was as silent as a desert. At those times he seated himself under the tent with his face toward the opening, and his eyes fastened motionless on the ground as if he were counting the drops that fell inside. "Carluccio, of what are you thinking?" I asked. "I?—Nothing." "That is not true," I said. "Come here, poor Carluccio, come here beside me; I am only one of the many who are fond of you; but I love you for them all. Come and sit here and we will talk together, and away with all melancholy." He

began to cry. Yet they were attacks of melancholy that vanished quickly.

VII.

In a corner of the camp there were two small houses, inhabited by an excellent family of peasants, in which were established the general quarters of the kitchens of all the officers of the four battalions. Fancy the confusion! There were six or eight soldiers, between cooks and scullions, for every kitchen; and consequently a continual squabbling between the former who did not know how to do any thing and wished to teach each other how to do every thing; a continuous conflict between the others who were vying with each other in order to become cooks; an incessant coming and going of orderlies to carry the dinner to the officers on the outposts; and peasants, vendors, and stupefied gamins of the neighborhood.

In one of the empty rooms of one of those houses Carluccio was placed when seized by the fever, which had raged for many days in the regiment to such a degree, that every day from three to five and seven soldiers were taken down in every company. Carluccio had it so badly that it was feared he would die. The surgeon of the regiment took care of him, and all the rest of us lent our assistance.

Between the curtains and door of his room was a constant coming and going of soldiers. They entered on tiptoe; approached his bed quite slowly; looked into his eyes, which he moved slowly around and half closed, or kept motionless for a long time on the face of the persons without giving sign of recognition. They called him by name, placed their hands on his forehead, made signs to one another in order to express

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their opinion on the subject of the little invalid ; then went off in silence, stopped in the door-way to look back again, and went out shaking their heads as if to say : " Poor creature ! "

" Carluccio, how are you ? " I asked one day when he began to improve.

" I am sorry . . ." he replied, but he left his reply unfinished.

" What are you sorry about ? "

" I cannot . . . "

" What can't you do ? "

" Do something," and he lowered his eyes and looked at my shoes and trousers, and added : " The others do every thing . . . "

He wished to say that the orderlies cleaned all our clothes alone, without his being able to help them.

" And I am here," he said, in a voice full of tears ; " I am here and do nothing—am a burden—I wish . . ." Then he made an effort to sit up, but did not succeed, and his head sank back on his pillow, and he began to cry, murmuring : " If I could only black yours . . . but I cannot. It would really be better if I were dead." And it took all our efforts to comfort him.

VIII.

Several of us officers used to gather at evening, seating ourselves near Carluccio's bed, and we chatted on sometimes until midnight. There often came to us the communal counsellor of a neighboring village, and the owner of the land which our regiment was occupying. They were two little men of middle age, very jovial, very corpulent, and very passionate, be it un-

derstood, about the Italian cause, and quite anxious to make friends with the "*brave*" officers of the Italian army,—excellent sort of people, whose goodness of heart showed in their faces, and who every day, before taking leave, never neglected to repeat most emphatically that with soldiers like ours the fortress of Malghera could be taken with an assault of bayonets. "But believe us," we said, "the thing is not as easy as it seems to you!" "Oh," they replied, smiling with much dignity, "the dash of the Italian soldier . . ." And they finished the phrase with a gesture which signified: they could perform many other miracles.

The conversation ended unfortunately by always falling upon the battle of Custoza, regarding which these two gentlemen had a most pitiless amount of curiosity.

"When you think of it, a retreat must be a very sad sight!" the counsellor was wont to remark, in a melancholy tone.

"Listen," my good friend Albert replied to him one evening (this Albert was one of the most impetuous and dramatic talkers in the regiment); "it is a trial in comparison with which the loss of our fondest hopes and the greatest disappointments of our life are as nothing, and this is the sorrow that filled our souls that evening. . . . In the morning we were happy, wild with joy, filled with an enthusiasm that brought tears to our eyes and made us break out into the maddest shouts, so impatient were we for the battle, so sure of conquering; and a few hours later—behold the army so full of youth, life, and daring, that army idolized by the country, the fruit of so many sacrifices, the object of so much care, the subject of so much trepidation and so many hopes; a few hours later, conquered, disordered, and wandering over the country like a dis-

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banded herd! Ah, it is a spectacle that rends the soul, and which no words can describe! 'Who will give us back the hearts we had in the morning?' one of us asked; 'our pride, faith, strength? Who will call back to our eyes those tears of enthusiasm? Who will raise the edifice on these ruins? And what will the country say?' Heavenly Father, the country! The mere thought fled back astonished; we seemed to hear once more the cries and applause with which the population of the cities had accompanied us to the gates, that applause which went to our hearts and filled them completely. 'Oh, be silent!' we said to ourselves; 'we are soldiers, and our poor hearts are breaking.'"

There followed a moment's silence.

"What a rout there must have been that evening!" said the counsellor.

"And your division?" asked the owner of the house with much sweetness; "about what time did you begin to retreat?"

The tone in which the question was asked expressed the strong desire to know how things really went, and not as they were reported to have done by people and newspapers. The officer understood, and replied:

"As far as I can remember, my division began to retire from the field shortly after sunset. The different corps arrived at quick step from the different parts of the country at the road leading to Villefranche; here the ranks were broken, the regiments mingled, every appearance of order was lost, and a tumultuous crowd rushed into the city, spreading rapidly through the principal streets, squares, alleys, and court-yards of the houses. Burning with thirst, a great portion of the soldiers

rushed at the wells with tremendous avidity and a cry of savage joy that was absolutely startling. Ten, twenty, thirty, the first on their faces, the others with their chests on the backs of the first, hung over the mouth of a well, their feet in the air, at the risk of falling headlong into the water, and disputed with trembling hands the rope, the bucket, the pole, pushing each other back with their elbows and by shoves and kicks, threatening to use their bayonets, and shrieking oaths and imprecations into each other's ears; until the bucket, drawn up by ten vigorous arms, came in sight. Then the cries; blows were redoubled, all the arms were bent downward to seize it first; when it appeared, twenty arms caught hold of it, ten burning mouths were nailed to its edges, drawn here and there, the water spilled over their faces, clothes, and the ground. . . . Who has drunk? No one; and so it was everywhere. The majority of the soldiers had scattered over the country; some battalions, but half comprehending the orders received, had not even entered Villefranche, and had taken the road in the direction of Goito by paths through the fields; so that only the nucleus of the different corps remained, one may say—the colonel, flag-bearer, the majority of the officers, and a few soldiers; not one of the band. The crowd which filled the street uttered deafening shouts; there was a calling in a loud voice, a breaking through the crowd by means of pushes, a running hither and thither of officers to seize soldiers by the arm and try and collect them around the flag, a coming and going of aides-de-camp and couriers on horseback; in the middle of the square a hurried grouping of colonels and staff-officers, an anxious questioning, a giving and revoking of orders; all panting, and their faces flaming, wearied, contorted, and full of

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consternation. Finally, as good fortune willed it, followed by about thirty soldiers, who had to file one by one among a row of carts and the last houses of the place, I got out into the open country, on the road leading to Goito. I found my battalion again, reduced to a little more than two hundred soldiers, and with these I resumed my march. Little by little it grew very dark; we could not see before or around us; half of the road was filled with artillery and provender wagons, which stopped every now and then, so that it was all one could do to avoid breaking his head against points of the bars, and to keep his feet from under the wheels. There were ditches on the right and the left of the road; mile-stones and heaps of stones at every step; from time to time carts overturned in the middle of the road, bags opened, and every kind of provision spread about; within short distances of each other the commissary cart at a standstill, on it a small light, and around it a crowd of soldiers who blocked the way of the persons coming up. From time to time there was some major or staff-officer who came upon us when we least expected it, and ill-luck to him who was not quick in getting out of the way. On all sides there were groups of soldiers who obliged the others to walk zigzag; at every moment gunstocks which came within an ace of putting out our eyes, and great knocks from those who had fallen asleep. There was a dense and continuous cloud of dust, which filled our eyes and mouths; a continuous shouting of artillerymen against the civilian wagoners, who, quite dazed in the midst of that confusion, unluckily filled up the road; an angry screaming of the officers, who were trying in vain to get together the remains of their own squads; soldiers who continually crossed from the fields to the road and from the road to

the fields, falling and rolling down the banks of the ditches ; in fact, a confusion, a racket, a tumult that is indescribable ; it was, in fact, an infernal night. Ah ! a retreat is indeed a sad, sad sight !

“The exertions of the day and, more than all, the violent emotions which we had experienced in so short a time, had completely exhausted me. I was dead tired ; I caught sight of an artillery wagon where there was an empty place ; I took advantage of the moment when it stopped, jumped up on to it ; the men made room for me ; I seated myself, leaned over, and went to sleep. When I opened my eyes the day was beginning to break. We were within a few steps of the bridge of Goito. It rained ; I touched my clothes, and they were wet. I looked up ; the sky was covered by a great dark, massive cloud that promised rain for the entire day. I looked around through the fields ; there were quantities of soldiers walking slowly along, with their heads lowered and their eyes on the ground. Many of them had taken the linen of the tents and had put it over their shoulders like a shawl, to protect themselves from the water ; many others who had lost their knapsacks and linen took refuge under that of a comrade, and so they walked two by two, arm in arm, with their heads completely enveloped ; others who had lost their caps had put on their handkerchiefs ; others who had thrown away their knapsacks carried their things in a bundle on the end of their bayonets ; and all of them dragged themselves along with the greatest difficulty, limping and stumbling at every moment. Some stopped every now and then to lean against a tree or throw themselves on the ground ; then rose with difficulty, after a little, to resume their weary way. I passed over the bridge ; that

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bridge upon which, a few hours before, an Austrian and an Italian sentinel stood drawn up, looking doggedly at each other. I entered Goito; turned to the right on the principal street. What a spectacle met my eyes! On the right and left of the street, at the corners, against the walls, under the eaves, in the door-ways of shops and houses,—everywhere, in fact, were soldiers utterly exhausted from their march and fast; some standing with their shoulders leaning against the wall; some sitting all doubled up, with their hands on their knees and their chins in their hands and their eyes wandering here and there with a tired, sleepy look; others were stretched out and fast asleep with their heads on their knapsacks; others who nibbled a piece of bread, holding it tightly in their two hands and glancing around suspiciously, as if some one were threatening to come and drag it away from their very teeth; others re-arranged the things in their knapsacks, or slowly and listlessly dried their arms on the folds of the cloaks. Meanwhile the street swarmed with soldiers who were going toward Cerlungo. Many, glancing here and there with a half-astonished, half-frightened face, passed on; others stopped beside the wall, threw their knapsacks carelessly down, and let themselves down on to them like bundles of rags. From time to time one of those lying down, raising himself on his elbows, rose to his feet with a great effort, and joined and continued his way with the first soldier of his regiment whom he saw pass by. At the doors of the few shops which were open, there was a continual appearance of soldiers by threes, fours, and ten at a time, and a persistent demand for something to eat, for which they would gladly pay, and they stretched out their hands to show the money. 'There is nothing more,' re-

plied a compassionate voice at the end of the shop; 'I am sorry, boys, but there is nothing.' To another shop, then; nothing here either; nothing anywhere, in fact. In passing before certain dens of cafés, they saw the officers sleeping with their arms crossed on the table and their heads resting on their arms; there were three or four heads on every table, and in the centre glasses, bottles, and bits of nibbled bread. Some with their heads on their hands looked out into the street with their eyes fixed and staring: they were all sad, pallid, distorted faces like those of people after an illness; and the waiters, erect at the end of the establishment, their arms crossed over their breasts, stood looking at the scene with an air of sadness. The openings of the side streets were filled with carts and horses, around which people were silently employed, the soldiers of the train and the common wagoners. Meanwhile several batteries of artillery passed through the principal street, and that grave and slow passage, the dull, monotonous noise of the wagons which made the window panes rattle, those robust artillery men so pensive, and serious, enveloped in their great gray cloaks, filled one's heart with a profound sadness. Many carriages containing wounded officers, came slowly behind the artillery, stopping every time the column did. . . . But aside from the noise of the wagons and carriages, over all Goito reigned a mortal silence like that of an uninhabited city.

"The corps of my division had encamped on the left of the road leading from Goito to Cerlungo, and which goes on along the right bank of the Mincio. The camp had a melancholy air. Nothing was to be seen but a few groups of soldiers scattered here and there, who were unfolding their

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wet tents and cleaning their clothes and arms. All the others were under the tents ; at every moment fresh bands of soldiers arrived and wandered uncertainly around the camp in search of their company ; and as the majority had lost their knapsacks, sticks, and tent, they stood there near the tents of the companies, their hands folded, mortified and annoyed, looking around with the air of lost travellers. No sound of a drum, trumpet, or voice, was heard, nor any noise ; in shutting your eyes you would have fancied the whole army was sleeping.

"Having reached the camp of my regiment, I went into my tent and threw myself down (without saying one word), beside my comrades, who had been there for more than an hour. We did not salute each other, nor speak, nor even look one another in the face ; we were as mute and motionless as people who have lost their memory.

"Suddenly, we heard a sharp cry a few steps from the tent ; another cry farther away ; a third nearer still ; ten, one hundred, a thousand voices broke out in concert on all sides of the camp, and we could hear the noise of hurrying steps. What could it be ? We dashed out of the tent. Oh, what a magnificent spectacle ! The whole regiment was running rapidly toward the road leading to Goito, and not only ours, but those on the right and left of us, and the others farthest away, precipitated themselves toward the road as if for the assault of an entrenchment. I looked in the soldiers' faces ; they were changed, trembling, radiant, and they were all uttering loud cries of joy, and prolonged noisy bursts of applause broke out on all sides of the camp. We flew toward the road ; two carabineers on horseback with bare swords passed ; a carriage appeared ; every head was bared, all arms raised, one

powerful shout burst from the thousand mouths of the multitude ; the carriage passed, and the soldiers turned back. . . . But the entire aspect of the camp was instantly changed ; faith and hope seemed revived ; no one entered the tents ; on all sides there rose and lasted until evening a tumult full of gaiety and life. The bands played marches again ; the dear old friends of our enthusiasms and our hearts experienced for a moment the sublime intoxication of the days before. 'Oh we will fight still !' we said ; 'we will fight still !'

"Who was in that carriage ?" asked Carluccio, with intense curiosity.

"The king."

IX.

Finally Carluccio got up, and the same day the physician held the following conversation with us :

"My dear gentlemen, I feel bound to tell you that this boy ought to return home. He is cured ; but the slightest over-exertion may prove fatal. Perhaps if peace is declared within a few days, we shall turn our backs on Venice, go to Ferrara, from Ferrara, heaven only knows where ; we shall be obliged to accept the trifle of a fifteen or twenty days' march, and even more, and it is impossible that this boy should follow us ; he needs quiet and repose, and not to march seven hours a day, and sleep on the ground. This is not the life for a boy who is convalescent ; therefore. . . . You must provide something else."

And he left us. We thought the subject over for some time, but no matter how much we tried to get away from what the physician had said, we could find no good reason for oppos-

ing him. There was no return home, but I thought home was he to return of a broken he where then could consultation about coming to any deficit on the point of pay when an officer fr heart to give a po sufficient for himse

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ing him. There was an indisputable necessity for the boy to return home, but how was it to be managed? But to what home was he to return, poor fellow? In his home he would die of a broken heart. No, that was not to be thought of, but where then could we send him? We thought it over, held a consultation about it, discussed it, and did not succeed in coming to any definite conclusion about the matter, and we were on the point of paying no attention to the advice of the doctor, when an officer from Padua, a young fellow who had enough heart to give a portion to the entire regiment and still retain sufficient for himself, came out with the following:

"I will attend to the matter, but I must know his family name and where he lives. I will put him under the protection of my family; I will write home to-day on the subject. If he were protected by my friends he could return to his step-mother, and if there were any need of it, we would take him into the house and keep him as long as necessary; I give you my word; will that do?"

The proposal was received with a general "Very good, indeed," and a great slapping on the back of the proposer, which took off all the dust that had gathered on his jacket during the manoeuvres.

"But now the difficult part comes," he added, disengaging himself from us with a couple of well-bestowed pinches.

"What is it?" we asked.

"To persuade him."

I resolved to assume the responsibility, and we separated.

That evening, before sunset, while ten or twelve of us stood chatting about trifles near the commissary's booth, the Paduan officer raised his voice above the racket of the group, and exclaimed:

"A new armistice has been concluded; we can leave the camp; who is coming to see Venice?"

"I!" we all replied in one voice.

"Shall we go immediately?"

"Yes, immediately."

And all moved.

"Carluccio, come with us; we are going to see Venice."

From our camp, situated in the neighborhood of Mestre, Venice could not be seen; but in much less than an hour we reached a point from which it was clearly visible; that point, at which you turn from the highway leading from Padua to Mestre, toward Venice, into a little road which, on a high embankment, goes as far as Fusina on the banks of the lagoon. At that point there is a group of country houses, and an inn well known and dear for the sake of two of the prettiest little faces that I have ever seen since I possessed this pair of eyes. We took the road to Padua, and started in the direction of those houses. We had scarcely passed the inn, which was the last of the houses, when Venice suddenly presented itself to view. The majority of us had never seen it; and, therefore, when we approached the hamlet, our hearts began to beat furiously. We shall see it at last, we thought,—this blessed city, about which we have so often dreamed, which we have often sighed for and invoked! We counted our steps, and the minutes and seconds, looking at one another and smiling. Finally some one shouted:

"There it is!" All stopped; a shiver ran from head to foot, and my blood was in a tumult. No one opened his mouth.

Before us was stretched an immense tract of barren, uncultivated land, scattered here and there with fords and large

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swamps, beyond which we could see gleaming in the distance a bit of the lagoon, and beyond the lagoon, Venice. It appeared to us, as if through a thick mist, pale blue in color, which gave it a delicate and mysterious appearance. To the left, that light, enormous bridge; to the right, away in the dim distance, the fort of San Giorgio; and farther still, other forts scattered along the lagoons, which looked like black specks. It was an enchanting spectacle! The place all around was deserted; and a light breeze that was blowing, rustling strongly through the neighboring trees, was the only sound to be heard.

No one spoke; all were absorbed in the contemplation of Venice.

"Come, now!" suddenly shouted one of my companions, a jolly good fellow, rather too much given to the bottle and to spree, if you will, but as nice as possible. "Come, now, don't let 's stop here and get sentimental. Who will have a drop of wine?"

Some one shouted "I," and the others assented with their heads. Carluccio ran to the inn, and we seated ourselves on the edge of the dyke turned toward Venice.

"Here is the consoler of the afflicted!" exclaimed my friend, pointing to the wine which arrived at that moment. "Take hold of the bottle and up with the glasses!" It is well known that we military men do not mind a drop more or less when we are in company; we tittle with our eyes shut; so it is not to be wondered at if after a few moments some felt in the mood for singing.

"I say, Paduan, teach us a beautiful barcarolle, you who know so many and shriek them into our ears from morning until night, whether we wish to hear them or not."

And all the others joined in : " Yes, teach us a beautiful barcarolle."

" Oh, apply to him," replied the Paduan, pointing to one of his neighbors, who was something of a tenor and a poet. " Make him improvise a romance, that 's his profession."

They all approved in chorus : " Courage, Mr. Poet, out with the romance, out with the music, out with the voice, or out with—some banter."

I think my friend, to whom these words were addressed, had a poem all composed in his head, because he accepted the invitation too promptly and with too manifest pleasure, but at all events he did not bring out any thing but very ordinary verses, camp verses, which means rather labored stuff.

" We want a guitar . . ."

" But where can we get a guitar? Do guitars grow here?"

" Wait—wait," shouted a third, starting off on a run for the inn. A short time after, he returned, guitar in hand. " It is all very well to talk about not finding a guitar here within a few miles of the city of gondolas and love."

The poet (pray pardon him) took the guitar, struck an attitude; all gathered around him, were silent and expectant.

" Listen; first I will recite the verses and refrain; then I will sing the verse and you others the refrain."

" All right," they all replied; " start off with the left foot."

And the poet began :

Pur ti saluto anch' io,
O Venezia immortale !
Che infinito desio,
Cura, ion' avea nel cor !
Che divino m' assale
Entr-in amo d' amor !

"What nonsense friend, who had made We don't want any a barcarolle; go al tal," that you are i we look sentimental

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The sentimental the revellers insist the party was divid lighted cigars, and the world; the ot

"We will sing shouted one of th laughed.

"Sing, do," rep And the poet (

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“What nonsense! what nonsense!” interrupted our jovial friend, who had made the proposal to drink; “what’s this stuff? We don’t want any melancholy, we want to be gay; give us a barcarolle; go along with your “desire” and your “immortal,” that you are improvising, my dear poet! Do you think we look sentimental?”

All those who had taken a little more than was good for them approved his sentiments loudly.

“Fine taste,” I observed, “to wish to make clowns of yourselves! There is really a chance of it, with this probability in the air of being obliged to sheathe our swords and take once more the road to Ferrara, and return who knows whither to lead the poppy-like sort of life of a garrison! We ought to turn clowns!”

The sentimental part of the company were of my opinion; the revellers insisted on their rights, the poet held firm, and the party was divided. Half moved off a few steps from us, lighted cigars, and continued to tipple with the best grace in the world; the others took up the interrupted song.

“We will sing you a refrain too, Messrs. Snivelling Poets!” shouted one of the merry-makers, raising his glass: the rest all laughed.

“Sing, do,” replied our party.

And the poet (pray pardon him) resumed:

*Che divino m' assale
Entusiasmo d' amor!*

And the chorus:

*Si, Venezia immortale,
T'abbiam tutti nel cor.*

And the revellers :

Che poeta bestiale !
Che cane di tenor !

And then a laugh—Carluccio's small voice, tremulous and harmonious, was distinctly heard among all the others.

Then the song began again :

Ma pur mentr' io ti miro
E canto e ti sorrido,
Perchè un lievo sospiro
Come di mesto amor,
E non di giola un grido
Prorompe dal mio cor ?

Then the chorus :

Ti guardo, ti sorrido,
Ma non ho lieto il cor.

The tipplers :

Invece io me la rido,
E il partito miglior.

At this point there was a great clinking of glasses, and another loud outburst of laughter ; the sun had disappeared, and the breeze blew more freshly than ever.

Ah ! da questa contrada
Che in noi si affida e spera
Ah ! non la nostra spada,
Non l'italo valor,
Ma una virtù straniera
Cacciera l'oppressor !

Then the chorus :

Quanto è mesta la sera
Con tal presagio in cor !

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These two last verses were sung with less vivacity than the others ; it seemed as if the solitude of the place, and the dying day, and the sight of Venice, which began to be peopled with lights, filled even the hearts of the most thoughtless ones with a little melancholy.

O madre, sul tuo seno
Vorrei chinare la testa
E sciorre al pianto il freno,
E infonder nel tuo cor
Questa dolcezza mesta
Che mi sembra dolor.

And the chorus :

Vorrei chinare la testa
Di mia madre sul cor.

Then two voices of the other group :

Non mi romper la testa,
Fammi questo favor.

The others no longer laughed. The last verse was repeated twice. The revellers improvised no more words, and all turned toward Venice. We sang the fourth verse a fourth time ; but Carluccio was singing no longer ; he understood the meaning of it, poor boy, and it had touched his heart. The hour, the place, and that slow and melancholy music had filled his soul with a sudden sadness.

“ What 's the matter, Carluccio ? What do you keep your face hidden in your hands for ? ” I whispered in his ear.

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"Listen. . . . Suppose we should give you another mamma, who would really love you?"

He looked at me with wide-stretched eyes. I talked to him for a long time in a low voice, and he listened quietly to me. "Well?" I asked when I had finished. He made no reply, but went on plucking at the grass about him. "Well?"

He sprang up, ran to the bank, and hid on the other side of it. A moment later we heard a burst of weeping so violent, so despairing, that it made our hearts tremble.

"What is the matter?" asked the others.

"Just what was to have been expected." They were all silent, and Carluccio's sobs were distinctly heard.

"He must cry himself out," said one; "it's better for him, poor fellow; it will do him good."

They took up the song again:

O madre, sul tuo seno
Vorrei chinare la testa
E sciorre al pianto il freno,
E infonder nel tuo cor
Questa dolcezza mesta
Che mi sembra dolor.

Between every verse we could hear the mournful, tired sobs of the poor child.

The spectacle of Venice at that moment was divine.

"Silence!" said one of our number suddenly. All stopped and strained their ears; the wind brought us now and then the feeble sound of drums.

"It's the fanfara of the Croats of Malghera," exclaimed the Paduan.

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We were all motionless for a long time, without exchanging one word, our hearts oppressed at the sound of that sad and inimical music, which seemed to relate to us, derisively, the sorrows of the saddened city, for which we had offered up our lives in vain.

It would be quite useless to try and tell of the weeping fits of despair and prayers of Carluccio; suffice it to say that more than once our pity was so aroused that we were on the point of abandoning our project. But it was a question of his health, and we did not yield. The idea, however, of a good family that would protect him, put him to school, and send him out every day to walk with the small brothers of the officer, and which, if necessary, would take him into the house like a son, and already looked upon him as such, mitigated his grief, especially after we had read to him an affectionate letter from the mother of his host, in which there were a thousand promises and assurances that Carluccio would be the dearest object of her care and affection, and which produced such an effect upon him, that after having tried again and again to turn us from our resolution, he resigned himself to the bitter necessity, sighing: "Well! . . . then, I will return home!"

After a few days we broke up camp and set out *en route* for Padua. We arrived there one beautiful morning at sunrise. We entered by the Portello and passed through nearly the same streets we had traversed the first time. Upon reaching a certain point we saw the Paduan officer leave the ranks and start in the direction of the entrance of a fine house, holding by the hand Carluccio, who was pressing his handkerchief to his eyes. When they were at the door the boy stopped, turned toward us

his face streaked with tears, and raising one hand with a convulsive gesture, he shouted between his sobs :

“Good-by, regiment ! good-by, Mr. Officers and soldiers ! Good-by, all ! All so good ! I shall always, always remember you ! Good-by ! good-by !”

“Good-by, Carluccio !” the officers and soldiers replied in passing. “Good-by to the son of the regiment ! Good-luck to you, little one. Do not forget us ! *Au revoir*. Good-by ! good-by !”

The poor boy, not being able to say another word, continued to salute the officers, soldiers, and flag, waving his arm ; and then disappeared suddenly, covering his face with his hands.

We never saw him again from that day forth ; but the regiment preserved for a long time the recollections of the little adopted son, and every soldier bore in his heart, from garrison to garrison, the memory of that lovely affection, just as he had carried the roses from the gardens of Padua on the point of his bayonet.

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THE CONSCRIPT.

It was a Sunday, toward five o'clock in the evening, and the weather was very beautiful. The barracks were nearly empty. Almost all the soldiers had gone to walk about the city ; the few who remained, part in the dormitories dressing themselves, part down in the court-yard waiting, were about to start off too : those down below crying from time to time, "Make haste," and those above replying, "In a moment," while perhaps they were trying to buckle on their belts so tightly as to give them a slender waist. Even the conscripts, who had only joined the regiment two days before, had gone out in part, while the rest were on the point of leaving in sixes, eights, and tens together, pale and serious, their caps on crookedly, their cloaks all bunched up, their hands wide-stretched and stuck into a pair of big white gloves that looked like those the boxers wear ; and the soldiers of the guard, seated on a bench at the door of the barracks went on making remarks about them as they passed, although the sergeant grumbled from time to time : "Leave those poor fellows in peace !" The officer of the guard, stretched on the bed in a room on the first floor, was glancing over a newspaper.

In the farthest corner of the court there was a conscript all alone, seated on the steps of a door, with his elbows on his knees and his chin on his hands. He followed his comrades

one by one with his eyes as they went out, and when no one was passing he looked steadfastly on the ground. He had the air of one of those good fellows who leave with much pain the family and village where they were born, but come to act as soldiers full of resignation and good-will.—The concise law which enforces this duty, the fact that their names had been placed on the conscript list, the examples of their fathers and their comrades, afford them justification for such a course; and, in fact, as their king calls them, there is nothing to be said, and no one is permitted to make any further investigations on the subject.—But on his face there was something more of that expression, half pensive, half astonished, which is peculiar to conscripts during the first few days; there was melancholy. Perhaps he was repenting not having wished to go out with the others. It is always rather sad to stop at home on Sunday when the weather is fine.

Gradually the quarters were deserted, and an absolute silence reigned.

A corporal in fatigue dress, hastily crossing the court, sees the conscript, stops, and asks him brusquely:

“What are you doing there with your hands folded?”

——“I?” replies the conscript.

“I?” repeats the corporal, drawling, and assuming a stupid expression of face. “This is curious! To whom are you speaking now? the moon? Yes, you. And rise to your feet when you speak to your superiors.”

The conscript rose to his feet.

“Who are you? and what company do you belong to?”

——“Company?”

“Company?” asked the corporal in his turn, in a mocking tone. “Do you know that you are a great blockhead, you?”

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He approaches, seizes him by the edge of his jacket, and, giving it a great pull which makes him tremble, says: "Look! look how you have spoiled your coat by sitting on the ground like a beggar."

The conscript begins to clean his jacket with his hand.

"Look what a state your shoes are in!" and he gives him a kick on the top of his toes.

The soldier draws out his handkerchief and bends to dust his boots.

"Arrange that cravat, it is going over your ears." And, seizing him by the cravat, he gives him a shake that nearly throws him to the ground.

The conscript raises his hand to his cravat.

"Put that cap on better."

And he carries his hand to his cap.

"And draw up those trowsers if you don't wish to spoil them in a week, straighten the buttons of your coat, take out those earrings which are ridiculous, and don't stand there with your chin on your chest so that you look like a monk, and don't stare at people with that idiotic face. . . ."

The poor young fellow went on touching with trembling hands now his cravat, now his trowsers, now the buttons, now his cap; and he did not succeed in doing any thing, for the more he worked the less he accomplished. At that moment the vivandière, who was young and pretty, passed, and she stopped, heartless woman, to look at him. To appear ridiculous in the eyes of a beautiful woman! Ah, it is the most tormenting of all shames! The poor conscript lost his head completely, trifled a little longer with his cravat and buttons, and then felt his arms drop, his chin sink on his breast, and

his eyes drop to his feet, and he stood motionless as a statue, utterly annihilated.

The vivandière smiled and went away. The corporal, looking at him and shaking his head with an air of scornful commiseration, went on repeating: "You ape! You ape!"

Then raising his voice: "You must wake up, my dear fellow, and quickly too, or else we shall wake you, I assure you; and how we will do it! Imprisonment and bread and water, bread and water and imprisonment, alternating, just so as not to tire you. Remember that. Now go to your bed and clean your clothes—*march!*"

He reinforced the command by raising his arm with the forefinger pointing toward the window of the dormitory.

"But I . . ."

"Silence!"

"I have not . . ."

"Hold your tongue, I tell you, when you are speaking to your superiors; or the prison is there; do you see it?"

And he moved off mumbling: "Oh, what people! oh, what people! Poor army! Poor Italy!"

"Mr. Corporal!" timidly exclaimed the conscript.

The corporal turned and pointed to the prison again with a pair of terrible eyes.

"I wanted to ask something."

The tone was so quiet and respectful that he could not do less than allow him to speak.

"What do you want?"

"I wished to ask if you knew that there was here in this regiment an officer from my home; there must be, but I do not know if there. . . ."

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"From your home? If people from your place are all of your stamp, it is to be hoped that you are the only one in the regiment."

And shrugging his shoulders he moved off.

"What manners!" the conscript murmured sadly, looking at him as he went away. "Yet they certainly told me that he is here," he added, seating himself again. "But why do they treat us so? What are we? Are we dogs? And we have to lead five years of this life! Oh, . . . it is too much! too much!" and he covered his face with his hands and thought of his distant family. "If they could see me in this state!" he said to himself; "poor people!"

He was startled by a burst of laughter at the end of the court; raised his eyes and saw three soldiers of the guard who were looking at him and laughing and talking.

"Oh, what a great blockhead!" the three began saying. "He is in love. He is thinking of his sweetheart. Where have you left her? tell us. Poor thing, she has certainly found some way of consoling herself by this time. Look, look, what eyes you are making!" And then all three exclaimed in one voice, in the tone of a priest who is saying mass: "Oh, what a blockhead!"

The poor young fellow turned pale; they had touched him to the quick; he could not control himself any longer; he rose. . . .

"Who is this man in love?" the officer of the guard said to himself, going to the window with his newspaper in his hand. The soldiers saw him and fled; the conscript raised his anxious face to the window and looked at him. The officer looked at the soldier too, and seeing him give a sign of attention, then

one of surprise and contentment without even taking his eyes from him: "Who can this original be?" he thought, as he went down into the court and walked up to him.

"Why are you laughing and twisting your hands about?" he asked in a severe tone.

And the soldier, although a trifle embarrassed, continued to smile.

"But do you know you are an idiot? I ask you what you are laughing at?"

"Well," replied the conscript, dropping his eyes and pulling at his coat with both his hands; "I knew that you were in this regiment, and they have sent me here too. You won't remember me, of course; but I recollect you; it is three years since you went away; I knew you, and your family too; but you did n't know us, though we lived near you, and in the morning I always saw you pass when you went hunting, and . . . we came from the same place, you see."

"Ah! now I understand," replied the officer, looking at him attentively to see who he could be.

"I knew that you had gone to be an officer when you went away, and that you had entered the college, and then you did not come back. . . . Since then they have made over the façade of the dome, and opened a café in the square, almost as large as this court, and it is always full of people."

"Wait, wait; now I remember. Is n't your name Renzo?"

"Yes!"

"You lived in that little house next the church outside the town, I think."

"Exactly! In the little house outside the town, opposite the mill."

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And he could hardly contain himself for joy.

"I remember very well. And . . . tell me, how do you like being a soldier?"

The conscript's face changed instantly; he dropped his eyes and was silent.

"Why did n't you go out to walk with the others?"

He made no reply, and looked at his nails as if thinking what he should say; but one could read his thoughts on his face.

The officer understood, and in an affable voice, which went straight to his heart, asked:

"What is the matter?"

This loosened his tongue, and growing more and more animated, he began in a trembling voice: "I . . . ; listen, Mr. Officer; I . . . I don't know what is the matter, but they treat us in a way that hurts us; that 's the trouble. If you ask any thing, they do not reply; and then they say things to us that offend us, and we have to keep quiet or else there is the prison there (and he imitated the voice of the corporal). I understand perfectly that we don't know how to dress, and that we cannot be good soldiers yet; but we have only been here two days, and is it our fault? Can we help it? You know we came on purpose to learn, and they ought to have a little more patience with us, I think. Then they make fun of us before people, put their hands on us, and give us blows, and we have to bear it all, and they laugh. . . . I do not see why they ill-treat us so. I came willingly to be a soldier, and said to myself: I will do my duty, and my superiors will like me; but now that I see . . . Perhaps when we get accustomed to it, we shall not notice it, but it hurts us to be so maltreated. We have been accustomed to home, and

our family; every one liked us, and here, instead . . . It hurts us; it does hurt us!"

These last words were uttered in a really disconsolate tone; and then he stopped and dropped his eyes, continuing to mutter to himself.

The officer allowed some moments to pass in silence, lighted a cigar, and then, in a careless way, as if he had not understood or did not wish to understand any thing, he said:

"Draw up your cravat a little (and he helped him to do so); so; that's right. Turn around."

The soldier turned; the officer seized and drew down the end of his coat. "Your coat must have no wrinkles; it must be as smooth as a corset. Turn."

He turned; the officer arranged his cap. "This way—a little sideways, for it looks better."

The conscript smiled.

"And stand erect, hold up your head, and when you walk, step off freely and easily, as you did when you played at bowls in our court, do you remember?"

He smiled, and nodded in the affirmative.

"Well, then," continued the officer, leaning against the wall and putting one leg over the other; "look every one in the face, because you need not fear any one, or be ashamed of yourself. Do you understand? Even if the king passed, you are to raise your head and look him full in the eyes, as if to say: 'It is I.' It is self-respect, and we soldiers must always show it in this way, remember."

The soldier nodded in the affirmative and began to grow composed.

"And remember, too, that as soon as you enter the barracks,

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you must change your way of speaking ; few words, but frank, loud, and sonorous, with any one who addresses you—yes and no, and no and yes—and if you have nothing else to say, so much the better. When you are in the ranks it is exactly as if you were in church, be silent ; when the ranks are broken, you are at home, and if the others joke, you must do so too, and not merely stand and look on, because this makes you sad ; dash right into whatever is going on. Then you must like your comrades, for you will find warm friends among them, I assure you ; you will find young fellows who will love you like a brother. You will see ; there may be a great lack of everything, but of heart never. . . . Have you a pipe ?”

“ No, sir.”

“ If so, you could smoke. And when a superior scolds—if he is right, listen and take heed ; if he is wrong, listen just the same, and don't take it to heart, because in this world we all have our defects, and may all do wrong ; we make a mistake in scolding sometimes ; but always if we disobey. And you must not think that all the officers who scold have bad hearts, are angry with you, and wish to harm you. There is nothing more untrue. These rough people have better hearts than the others, and like you, and if they were taken away from you, you would all die of melancholy in fifteen days. They shout, scold ; it is a habit, an affair of the lungs ; nothing more, believe me. You will end by liking them better than the others. You will see, when you go away they will weep. I have seen so many. I saw them at Custoza . . .”

“ That battle that went so badly ?”

“ Yes ; I saw a captain who was the terror of his company, and no one could bear him, but they were all wrong ; not one

man fell that he did not run to help him, look at his wound, and cheer him; he was always in motion though tired to death. 'O captain! captain! don't leave me, captain!' the sufferers shouted, as they seized him by his arm and by the end of his coat. 'No, my boy,' he replied; 'I will stay here with you until you are cured; courage, courage, boy, your captain will not leave you.' Do you understand what a man that was? And there are many like him; you must not judge from appearances; and pity those who seem bad, and be grateful to the good, and above every thing respect all, because they are soldiers, and any day we may see them die under our eyes like valiant men. When we love any one we gladly bear any kind of life, remember that. Ask, look about you, and make your comrades tell you this; you will see that the best soldiers always loved their superiors. Take, for instance, the soldier—what was his name?—the soldier, Perrier, in '48, who threw himself between his officer and the enemy, and fell to the ground with three balls in his breast, shouting: 'Remember me, my good officer; I die happy in having saved your life!' And that other grenadier, I do not recall his name, who, rather than abandon his wounded captain, allowed himself to be beaten to death with bayonets, shouting: 'If you do not kill me, I will not leave him to you.' Then the other eight or ten who, under a shower of bullets, at the battle of Rivoli, went and dragged from the hands of the Germans the body of their officer, as they wished to bury him with their own hands, and give him the last honors in their own camp. Then so many others, whose names and deeds are printed in a hundred books, and remember them all and love them as if they were living. . . . Have you a match?"

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The conscript, who up to that point had seemed to be in a state of gaping, wondering ecstasy, hurriedly drew out a match and handed it to him.

"When one thinks of these things and has any heart, certain little troubles, and certain scantiness in the living of the soldiers are quite forgotten; so you must think of these things and they will teach you; and you, who are a good sort of fellow, will keep them in mind, won't you?"

The conscript made a sign in the affirmative, as he could not speak for a moment.

"Certainly," continued the officer, "in order to be a good soldier, one must look above the barracks and the parade ground. Then, there is every thing in habit. The knapsack is so heavy at first, and such a torment; they all say so; but little by little it becomes a trifle. And the food? You certainly don't live like princes, that is well known; but you must have patience, patience, patience, which is the great virtue of a soldier, and not complain and whimper, as some do, with and without reason, of all and every thing; but eat what there is and be content with little. Then the appetite is never lacking when a man works, does his duty, and has a contented spirit; appetite is a great cook. They are only the listless and indolent who find fault with every thing, and are never contented. I see that good fellows always make good soldiers, because their superiors like them, their comrades esteem them, their towns-people respect them, and there are some of them who in five years have never been but one day under arrest, and have left their *numero diciotto* white and clean as a handkerchief; and you will be one of these, won't you?"

The soldier assented quickly.

“Bravo! Now don't think our profession is all thorns; there are flowers for those who know where to look for them, and good soldiers find them. Learn to do your duty well, always be clean, respectful, and willing, and from your captain and officers you will hear certain ‘bravos!’ that will go to your heart, and increase your appetite and good spirits. The days will pass quickly. Then, in five years, no one knows what may happen; they might make you change garrison ten times, and then time flies, and the months seem days. You will see new places: cities, the country, mountains, seas, a new and varied world, all our beautiful country—Italy—which you now only know by name; statues, churches, palaces, gardens; and in your leisure hours you will go to see every thing, in order to tell every thing to your family and friends when you return home. In the summer we go into camp, eight, ten, twenty regiments, cavalry and artillery, and you will see what a beautiful sight a camp is; what a noise, what gaiety, and how much life there will be every day, and the great manoeuvres, and the fêtes they have before breaking camp, with music and dancing, *tombolas*, races; and all the officers and generals join in the fun and amuse themselves with the soldiers, and all the people in the country round about come to see the sight and clap their hands. Then you will know all the soldiers of the corps, you will have a quantity of friends; the regiment will seem like one great family to you. And all the honors bestowed upon the regiment will seem to belong to you, and you will be as proud of your old colonel as you would be of a father. When you see the flag appear in front of the battalion drawn up in line, and the bands begin to play the march of the corps, and all present arms, you will feel your heart beat with joy and pride, and you will tremble with

emotion. Little of your arms, staircase, these have already regiments, and ad you ‘good-by,’ throb as it did in the street, ; dows of the b ‘Farewell! C so many frien with a clear c sighed so ofte farewell! my What is the n

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emotion. Little by little you will become fond of every thing : of your arms, your uniform, your trencher, of this court, this staircase, these walls. When you are ready to go away, and have already been to take leave of your captain, officers, sergeants, and all the other soldiers that treat you kindly say to you 'good-by, a fine journey, remember us,' your heart will throb as it did when you left home ; then when you are down in the street, you will turn to look for the last time at the windows of the barracks, and you will stop and say once more : 'Farewell ! O my second paternal home, where I have loved so many friends, where I have passed so many beautiful days with a clear conscience, where I have thought so much of, and sighed so often for, my dear ones ; farewell ! my poor little bed ; farewell ! my good serjeant of the guard ; farewell ! . . . ' What is the matter with you ?"

The conscript was motionless, astounded, his face contorted, his breathing labored, and his eyes moist and smiling.

"What is the matter with you ?"

He made an effort to control his voice by dropping his head and stretching out his neck, as if to swallow a great mouthful ; but he only succeeded in replying hastily in a *mezza voce* :

"Nothing."

The officer smiled.

"Do you know how to write ?"

"A little," replied the conscript, thickly.

"Well, then, come with me."

He moved off toward his room, and the conscript followed him. When they had entered, the officer made his young townsman sit down at the table, put a pen in his hand, a sheet of paper in front of him, and said : "Write to your father."

The conscript looked at him, open-mouthed.

"Write to your father."

"What shall I say?"

"Tell him what you have seen, what you think, what you feel; in fact, whatever you choose."

"But . . ."

"Keep quiet; until you have finished I shall not permit you to say one word."

And he resumed his newspaper near the window. The conscript continued to look at him with an air of surprise, then bent his head, thought for some moments, and began to write very slowly.

After a quarter of an hour, the officer asked: "Have you nearly finished?"

"It is finished," replied the soldier, quite content.

"Read it, then."

"Read it?"

"Yes."

He was ashamed to do so.

"Read it, I tell you."

The man prepared to obey.

"But tell me first, have you written the truth? Have you been quite sincere? Have you really said what you think and feel?"

The soldier placed his hand on his breast.

"Read, then."

He began to read with difficulty.

MY DEAR FATHER:

I reached the regiment, and they instantly made me cut off my hair, and then they dressed me. That officer of our town whose name you know, I saw

in the court to-day don't have the beard and then the apprentices scold; but the soldiers who have the hands of the energetic and I hope this year shall travel, and then the camp and have *tombola* and to find friends his sons. Mean

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in the court to-day, and we talked together for more than an hour. We don't have the best food, you know; but it is so hard to cook for so many; and then the appetite is never lacking, if a man does his duty. The superiors scold; but they are not so overbearing as many say; for there are soldiers who have died to save them, and would not leave them dead in the hands of the enemy. There are also soldiers who have never been punished, and I hope this will be the case with me. Time passes quickly, because we shall travel, and there are many places to see, and then the manoeuvres, then the camp too, and the generals amuse themselves with the soldiers and have *tombola*. Then it is a pleasure to see the flag and hear the music, and to find friends; and the old colonel is like our second father, and we are his sons. Meanwhile I greet you, and I hope you will keep well, etc.

Your most affectionate son.

"Bravo!" said the officer. "And now do me the favor to go and drink a half glass of wine to the health of all conscripts. Take this," handing him a ticket.

"Mr. Officer!" exclaimed the soldier, quite embarrassed, trying to refuse it.

"Eh!" shouted the officer, in a menacing tone.

The conscript took the ticket, and preparing to go out, stammered some words of thanks: "Mr. Officer, . . . I don't know really . . ."

"Silence!"

He left hastily, went down the staircase three steps at a time; gave two or three jumps in the court, rubbing his hands, laughing and muttering to himself as he did so; entered the wine cellar; the vivandière gave him his glass with a lovely smile and manner that made him forget the scene of a short time before; he drank, went out.

Hardly was he outside when he met the corporal, who approached with a more agreeable expression of face and in a more courteous way.

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"No."

"But you knew him?"

"Very well indeed."

"Is that the officer from your town for whom you were looking?"

"The same."

"I did not understand, you see, when you asked me . . ."

"That makes no difference."

"If I had understood I should have answered."

"Thanks."

The corporal moved off; the conscript, left alone, said to himself: "Well—in the end, he is n't a bad fellow—this corporal!"

Just at that moment the soldiers began to return in groups to the barracks, talking and singing loudly among themselves. Among the others was a band of conscripts, a trifle intoxicated, who were making a tremendous racket.

"When the others make a noise, you dash into their midst, and do the same"; the conscript remembered these words. "I must make a racket too," he thought; "what shall I cry? . . . Ah!" he shouted at the top of his lungs: "Long live the soldier Perrier!"

And the rest, perhaps without understanding what he meant, replied in a loud voice: "Viva!"

Our soldier dashed into their midst, and singing and shouting they went up in confusion to the dormitory.

The officer, who had watched him from the window, said to himself: "That fellow will be a fine soldier."

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When it was dark, and the stars were all out, and one could hear in the court-yard that gay noise, and in the street sounded the bugle-call for the retreat, he was filled with an indefinable mixture of generous and noble sentiments, so much so that almost without being aware of it, without knowing the reason, he raised his eyes to heaven and exclaimed affectionately: "Perrier!"

A short time after: "Oh, good Perrier! . . . Where are you? Do you hear your name?"

Because in looking at a beautiful sky at night, the dearest and most revered names spring to our lips.

A BUNCH OF FLOWERS.

"CURED, yes, entirely cured, and there is not even a scar ; look and see if you can find one." Thus said a very young officer (whom I had not seen for fifteen days when we met last year, at the end of February, in the house of a lady friend), as he put out his hand for me to look at. I glanced at it : and there was not a trace of a scar. "And the other man?" I asked. "Oh, he is better," was the reply. "Who? Who is better? Who has been ill?" broke in the lady of the house, coming up to us. My friend and I exchanged smiles. "Shall I tell her?" asked he. "Yes, I would do so, if I were you."

"Well, listen then," began my friend, turning to the lady. "Three days before the end of carnival, one evening about five o'clock, I was standing in front of a café watching the *corso*. I was alone, in no very good humor, squeezed into the crowd, quite white with flour, cursing the moment when I had been seized with the idea of leaving the house and dashing into the midst of all this confusion. From time to time a cavalry soldier passed with unsheathed sword, made a motion to the people to keep back in order not break up the *corso*, and accompanied his gesture with some respectful and courteous words. In front of me were four or five gamins, who, as soon as the soldiers passed, dashed into the middle of the street, between the carriages, and fought with their fists for the com-

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fits and flowers which were scattered over the pavement, at the risk of being crushed by the horses, and to the great annoyance of the coachmen, who, in order to get on, were obliged to shout themselves hoarse in telling them to be careful and get out of the way. One of the soldiers who was on duty, after having warned and scolded them five or six times, seeing that they were behaving worse and worse, lost his patience, put spurs to his horse, and raised his sword, as if to give them a blow on the head, which he certainly never had any real idea of doing. A gentleman who was near me, seeing this, exclaimed: 'Ah!' and when the soldier drew his sabre back to his shoulder, added: 'I should like to have seen him do it!' Then, turning to his neighbor, said: 'This is the result of his education—oppression and brutality.' My blood boiled, I raised one hand, drew it back and thrust it into my pocket, and with all the calmness of which I was capable, and in the most courteous tone, I whispered in that gentleman's ear: 'What education?' The gentleman turned, gave a start of surprise, paled; but instantly recovered himself, and answered with insolent nonchalance: 'The military education.' I neither saw him, the crowd, nor the *corso*, and I do not recollect what I said or he replied; I only remember that the following morning I returned home with a wounded hand, and my friends said that that gentleman had his left cheek laid open. That is all. I was just saying that my hand bore no sign of the scratch, and that the other man is better."

The lady, who up to that time had been listening very gravely, raising her eyes from time to time, and exclaiming: "Heavens! heavens!" grew more cheerful on learning of the fortunate ending of the duel, and then suddenly broke out with

a genuine woman's question : "But why did you provoke him ? Would it not have been better to have pretended not to hear ?" My friend and I looked at each other, and both burst out laughing.

"Why are you laughing ?"

"Listen, my dear lady," my friend replied. "Supposing (which could not be the case) that I ought to have pretended that I did not hear, how could I have done so when my blood was boiling and my head in a ferment ? Do you suppose I knew what I was doing at that moment ?"

The lady did not appear at all convinced.

"The people all around had heard," continued the officer ; "the insult was one that touched the whole army, and those words were a lie ; then, just on that occasion the lie was a calumny, the tone of voice in which the calumny had been uttered sounded like a provocation ; then that man, as I afterward learned (and it could not have been otherwise, because these are words which reveal a man's soul), was nothing but a . . ."

"Silence ! It is not necessary that I should know."

"Then there was another reason still why these words offended me more than they might have another person. And the reason is this. Listen. Fourteen years ago . . ."

"No less than that !"

"Listen ; I was at Turin with my family ; and only seven years old. The last day but one of the carnival my mother dressed me in a pretty costume of blue and white striped silk, with a red sash, a blonde curly wig, and a green velvet cap, and took me to the *corso* in a carriage. My father and a friend of his, a major in the artillery, were with us. We

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had a number of bouquets and a large basket of *confetti*. The streets were crowded with people, and there were innumerable carriages, elegant maskers, a great confusion and noise, and a very beautiful *course*. My mother, according to her custom, took no part in the gaiety of the fête, and rarely spoke. From time to time, when the carriage of some friend passed, she put a bunch of flowers into my hand and had me throw them, holding me by my sash so that I should not fall head first in flinging them. My little friends threw me flowers too, and greeted me with shouts, laughing heartily at my grotesque costume. I laughed at them, and we enjoyed ourselves to our hearts' content. Much more than now,—between ourselves,—for then our glances, thoughts, and desires were not attracted by a beautiful masker stretched comfortably out in a carriage, with a small, shapely foot swinging cunningly out of one door and a *debardeur's* shirt falling on one side."

"That has nothing to do with it."

"We enjoyed ourselves hugely. At a certain point, however, weary with shouting and swinging my arms about, I sat down to take breath. At the entrance of Via Po and Piazza Castello there was a file of cavalry soldiers and carabinciers, as grave and motionless as if they were at a funeral. They looked now at the carriages, now at the people, without saying a word, exchanging a smile, or giving the slightest sign of curiosity, pleasure, regret, or enmity; they seemed like automata. The crowd pressed forward on every side, undulating, mingling, and making a great noise; from the windows of the neighboring houses, which were filled with ladies and maskers, fell showers of confetti, from the carriages a shower up at the windows, and from the street another into the carriages. It was a fierce

battle, with great clouds of flour which veiled every thing, and a little farther on the band was playing, almost drowned by the racket of the drums and trumpets that fairly deafened one.

“‘Poor people!’ said my mother to the major, as she pointed to the soldiers. ‘They never fail; they are everywhere. It is not enough that they defend us from our enemies, put out fires, quiet riots, and protect our lives and our property; they protect our fêtes too, and secure us our pleasures; they who have neither joys nor fêtes, and suffer so much and make so many sacrifices without ever gaining any thing or obtaining any recompense, not even any consolation, a word of acknowledgment, or a thank you. The people do not as much as look at them; we are every thing for them, they nothing for us—absolutely nothing.’

“The major, solemn as a judge, replied quite gravely, without even looking at the soldiers: ‘That is true!’

“‘If it is true!’ added my mother quickly.—‘Look, major; look at the soldier there, the first one on this side, what a melancholy air he has! Can there be something troubling him? Does he feel ill?’

“‘Who knows?’ replied the major, smiling slightly.

“‘Who knows what is the matter with him?’ repeated my mother, looking at him pensively. That good woman is so constituted that in the midst of all the racket and gaiety of a fête, a trifle will take her mind from all that surrounds her, and from thought to thought she falls into a state of sadness. The carriage went on and my mother continued talking of that soldier; then she fell to thinking again, and suddenly said: ‘If some one at home were ill? That might be the case too.

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They do not allow him to go home when one of his family is ill, do they, major ?'

" 'It is rather rare !' replied the latter.

" 'Look !' exclaimed my mother. 'I am willing to wager that that is what makes him sad. And meanwhile he is condemned to stand there in the midst of all those people who are amusing themselves by singing and shouting . . . I cannot get him out of my mind.'

"The major smiled.

" 'How can I help it ?' replied my mother ; 'I was born so.'

"When the circuit was ended, the carriage was about to pass by the soldier again. My mother, seizing the moment when the major and my father were not looking, handed me a bunch of flowers, pointed quickly to the soldier, and whispered in my ear : 'Throw it to him.' I rose to my feet, and, held as usual by my sash, prepared to fling the flowers. 'You said that one there, did you not ?' I asked once more. 'Yes, yes, quick !' We were seven or eight steps away ; the carriage stopped, went on, here we are. 'Courage !' said my mother. 'There he is !' I replied proudly. The bouquet had described a beautiful curve in the air, and fallen right on the breast of the soldier, between the buckle of his belt and the hand which held the reins. He started as if in a dream, seized the bouquet almost involuntarily, raised his eyes with surprise, saw me ; I made him a sign with both hands ; he smiled and looked fixedly at me until the carriage disappeared. My little heart beat furiously ; my mother had become calm ; the major and my father had not seen any thing. Before making another circuit we left the *corso* and went home.

"I saw the soldier again, ten or twelve days later, in the pub-

lic gardens. He was with a number of his comrades, and was talking and laughing heartily. 'Look, there is the soldier to whom I threw the bouquet!' I said to my mother, pulling her by the dress. 'Be quiet,' she replied. 'Do not take any notice of him.' I could not understand the reason for this command; I looked at him; he looked fixedly at me, and recognized me, started with surprise, and said, 'Oh!' My mother seized me by the arm and dragged me on. After that day I did not see him for more than a year. The following year, on one of the last nights of carnival, on returning from the theatre with the family, I went to the window a few moments before going to bed, and stood a short time looking out into the street through the glass. The street was dark and it was snowing. From time to time maskers kept coming out of the opposite house, which was a café and hostelry; they scattered, followed each other, disappeared; new ones arrived, and meeting and recognizing each other crowded together, making a terrible racket with their shouts in the falsetto, and confusedly exchanging invitations and salutations. A band of cavalry appeared at that point. The maskers began to dance around them, shouting and clapping their hands as they did so. The soldiers, enveloped in their mantles, passed on without giving any sign of having seen them; but one of them turned toward our house, and seemed to be looking at my window. 'Can it be he?' I thought, as I opened it. At the same moment the soldier put one hand out from under his mantle, gave a salute, and passed. The following morning I learned from the portress that some days before a cavalry soldier had entered our portico, glanced at the stairs as if uncertain whether he would go up or not, and had then gone away. A few

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months later I heard that a regiment of cavalry had left Turin, and I did not see my soldier again, nor did I think of him. Many years passed; '59 arrived. I became infatuated with the army, and manifested to my father my intention of embracing a military career. My father was uncertain. 'Finish your studies,' he said, 'and we will see about it.' In August of '59 I ended them, and from that time forward I had a discussion every day with my father on the subject of my career. As time went on he seemed less disposed to second my desires. But an unforeseen incident settled the question. It was in the beginning of January, '60. One morning I sat writing at a table. There was a rap at the door, and a servant came to say that some one wished to see me. 'Who can it be?' I said to my mother. I rose, she followed me, and we went into the hall-way. There was a man in workman's clothes at the door, wearing a large cloak, a fur cap on his head, and looking pale, thin, with a saddened and weary air. 'He does not even raise his cap,' muttered the servant as we entered. The unknown visitor looked smilingly at me, and said: 'Is it you?' giving my Christian and surname.

"'Yes,' I replied.

"'I am a poor young fellow who is left without work; I have been a soldier, and if you could help me in some way. . . .'

"My mother and I consulted each other with a glance.

"'Give me something,' added the man in a tone of supplication.

"I took and handed him in spite of myself a couple of francs, saying as I did so: 'Take this.'

"'Will you put it into my pocket?'

"'Into your pocket!' I exclaimed, half surprised, half of-

fended. But his glance produced a strange effect upon me ; I looked at him for a few moments, and then placed the money in the pocket of his cloak.

“‘Thanks,’ he replied in a voice full of emotion. ‘And now, as I am going home, I beg you to accept a memento of me.’

“My mother and I turned to each other in astonishment.

“‘Will you accept it, sir?’ he asked timidly, in an affectionate tone.

“‘Let us see it,’ I replied.

“‘Here it is,’ he said, and opening his cloak with his elbows, he showed me with his eyes a bunch of flowers that were fastened into a button-hole of his vest.

“‘Ah, it is the soldier in the *corso*!’ cried my mother.

“‘He!’ I exclaimed impetuously, and I dashed forward to embrace him ; the cloak fell ; my mother uttered a cry of terror : ‘My God!’

“‘What is the matter?’ I asked, turning around. At the same time I saw that the poor fellow had no hands.

“He had lost them at San Martino.

“I do not know how it happened ; but from that day forward my desire to be a soldier changed into a firm resolution to do so. It seemed almost like an act of homage to that poor young fellow to don the military uniform. And behold me a soldier. This is the reason why every time I see a soldier of the cavalry at the *corso* I feel my heart beat as if for a friend, and I wish to be a child in order to throw him a bunch of flowers.”

“And that soldier?” asked the lady quickly.

“He died.”

“Where?”

“At our house, in my arms, in the presence of my mother, with a little bunch of flowers at his pillow.”

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A NOCTURNAL MARCH.

WHAT a night ! No moon, no stars, pitch darkness. There never was such utter gloom seen before. Though it was only the first of October, a fresh autumn breeze was blowing, which whipped sharply across the face, under the clothes, and shrivelled the skin. It was about nine o'clock in the evening ; the regiment had folded the tents and was drawn up across the field, their arms at their feet, awaiting the orders for departure. The soldiers, just awakened from a short and uncomfortable sleep, all stood there, doubled up, bent over, shivering, with a bitter, discontented expression of face, their hands in their pockets, the muskets leaning against their arms ; and instead of the usual chatting, so lively and gay, nothing was to be heard but an occasional subdued and listless whisper. The darkness was so great that, in looking at the camp from the road, nothing was to be seen but the long line of lanterns hung from the end of the muskets, each one of which lighted up three or four sleepy faces. Over there, in the corner of the field, beyond the extreme flank of the regiment, many little lights were to be seen moving about in a small space, and these served to illumine dimly a confused bustle of people (differently dressed) around certain carts and boxes--the baggage of the sutler. Here and there through the field a few little flames still gleamed ; they were the last sparks of the fire which the soldiers had

lighted with the straw of the tents, to take off the dampness contracted in sleeping on the ground. Every thing else was in darkness.

Suddenly a loud beating of drums is heard ; then silence follows. The companies face about, each in turn ; the first lines move, and the regiment starts. After passing a narrow little bridge over the ditch which separates the field from the road, the lines close up, and a mass of lights are seen moving now forward, now backward, according to the motion of the crowd, and start up two by two, extend on the sides of the straight road in a double line, and little by little sink in the distance into two luminous streaks which wind and undulate like two great reins of fire shaken at the end of the column.

On they march, and for a short time is heard a subdued chatting, which gradually dies away into profound silence, broken only by the rough voices of the officers who grumble, "Order!" every time that, casting their sleepy eyes on the soldiers nearest the lanterns, they discover a little falling apart or crowding in the lines. All the others are silent. Nothing is audible but the dragging noise of the foot-falls, and the monotonous clinking of the tin boxes, which keep time to the measured tread.

As the silence increases, sleep (that tormenting and terrible companion of nocturnal marches) begins to take possession of all. Unfortunate he who is seized by it ! No former rest, nor chat with friend, nor strong liquor, nor effort of will can conquer it ; he must give up to it entirely.

Look at that officer in the middle of the road. He has been struggling with sleep for more than an hour ; but now his eyelids, trembling and heavy, are closing irresistibly ; his knees are

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bending under him ; his head, raised by force, falls again heavily on his chest, and his arms hang inert and powerless. His mind, little by little, wanders ; ideas grow confused, and melt curiously into one another. To his eyes veiled by sleep, the soldiers who are walking before and beside him stagger confusedly along ; and the trees and houses on either side of the way, (whose dark outlines are scarcely discernible) present strange, shapeless, wonderful aspects to him. Sometimes he still follows with his eyes the walls of a house when they have already been left behind, or he seems to see a house or clump of trees where there are none. At another moment, there suddenly appears before him, right in the middle of the road, directly in his path, a great obstacle, a large black thing, which he cannot make out, but he sees it ; there it is, right there, and he is just about to hit it with his head ; he stops, stretches out his arm, shakes it—nothing—there was nothing ; so on he goes. Thirty, fifty, a hundred steps, then he begins to doze again. This time he dreams. He seems to be walking alone, in some unknown direction, or to be in another place, far from there, perhaps at home, among other people, in the daytime. . . . Suddenly, the sound of the foot-falls of those around him strikes his ear ; he becomes aware of the clinking of the canteens ; wakes, glances around, comes to himself, yawns, falls into step, and, shortly afterward,—the whole thing begins again. With his head on his chest, one hand in his pocket, the other on the handle of his sword, he goes on, leaning on it, in unequal paces and springs, tottering, winding along, three steps here, four there,—five,—six,—a stumble into the knapsack of a soldier. He starts, wakes, looks around with staring eyes, comes to himself again, is ashamed of himself, shakes his head as if out of pity

for his sufferings, and then resumes his way with a free and hurried gait. After a hundred more paces, the same thing occurs again. He dashes into a person who is walking in front of him, wakes, looks: "Oh! excuse me, captain."—"Don't mention it, pray! These are things that happen to all."

A companion comes close to you. You walk for a short time, without being conscious of it, side by side. Then: "Are you there?" A grunt is your reply. "Are you sleepy?" "A little. Give me your arm." The arm is given. Shoulder to shoulder, hip to hip, and forward you go as best you can, staggering and stumbling. Eight, ten, twenty paces, sleep seizes you both, and your heavy heads fall on the same side and come into contact with each other. "Ahi!" Then you separate.

All round about is quiet; the pitch darkness continues, the two long lines of light keep waving along the sides of the road, and there is always the same monotonous clinking of the canteens.

Suddenly, an irritable voice bursts out in the middle of the line: "Up with that light there!" and the soldier who is carrying the lantern, and who, overcome by sleep, had slackened his arm and let the musket fall on the head of the man behind him, wakes, draws up his arm, and raises the light.

A few steps more, and a long and sonorous yawn, like the braying of an ass, breaks the silence. Two or three voices try to imitate it; there is a laugh, and all are silent.

A few steps more, and a shrill voice attempts a song. An outburst of protests and disapprobation rises from the lines. "Leave that alone!" At another moment: "Sleep in peace." And the unfortunately inspired singer drives back into his throat the rest of the song, and is silent.

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Twenty paces more, and one hears a sharp cry, followed by a raging outburst of oaths. "What 's the matter?" "Who is it?" It is a soldier who, overcome by sleep, has dashed violently against a mile-stone with his shin. And on all sides: "Look out where you are going." "I should think so; he is walking with his eyes shut." "You caught it, eh? Keep it!"

A little later, a great laugh breaks out at the end of the column, and an "Uh!" prolonged into a tone of mockery. "What 's happened?" "What has happened?" "Who is it?" "It 's only a poor devil of a soldier who was walking along the edge of the road, dozing and staggering, and so ended by tumbling into the ditch." "Is it deep?" "Who can see?" "Let 's look." "Courage, courage (an officer); what are you doing there? Go on. He 'll get up himself. And will *you* hold that light up?"

Then silence, and forward, and increasing darkness, and freezing, biting wind, which scourges one's face and sets one shivering, continue.

"Oh, this drowsiness!" "What time can it be?" "Ten, perhaps, may be later." "What a night!" "One can't see a thing." "Oh! I say, friend, how long have we been marching? . . . Speak. How long?" "He 's asleep and does not hear any thing; he 'll break his neck in a minute more." . . . "I 'm sleepy too. Ah, to be able to sleep." "Well, time is passing with him! What a nuisance not to be able to see any thing! If I could only sleep on foot. . . . I might try, do you say? Phew! how sleepy I am, how sleepy I am, great heavens! . . . the night is dark. . . . dark . . . and the wind . . . to sleep . . ."

A moment more and he will fall into the ditch. A blast of the trumpet, "Halt!" He's escaped it. Down they all go like so many dead bodies; they fall where they can, on to stones, among thorns, into the mud, wherever it may happen to be; every thing is comfortable, every thing clean, soft, delicious! There, on a pile of stones, on one side of the road, an entire squad has pitched itself down in a heap, one on top or across the other, just as it happens; the barrel of the guns under the neck, the leather bottle of a comrade under the head, a corporal's foot in the face, the knapsack of another man against the hip; and the hand, sometimes, in the grass, in something damp and soft. . . . But what a heap! The luxury of sleep is so great, so sweet, and powerful, that one cannot pay any attention to any thing, but the utter enjoyment and abandonment of soul and body to it. Oh, the sweetness of the final gratification of a long and harrassing desire! A sense of languid pleasure and gentle exhaustion steals over the frame. . . . "Oh, what bliss! We sleep."

If a ray of moonlight could fall for a moment on to that point of the road, what a strange spectacle would greet our eyes! It looks like a heap of bodies thrown carelessly down: some face upward, others face downward, some stretched out, others doubled up, and here and there arms, legs, feet, and muskets, which protrude between the legs and arms of others still; a muddle, in fact, in which it would be difficult to discover to whom the different members belong. At first, there is a slight movement, a little struggling in that mass of human bodies; each one is seeking, quite gently, the most comfortable position, and this gives rise to a little squabbling: "Get over there! Blood of Bacchus!" "Out of the way with that foot!"

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"Draw in that leg; don't you see you are sticking it into my face?" But it is only the affair of a moment, and then all are quiet. A deep, full sleep takes possession of each. At first a quick, heavy breathing is heard; then a feeble, broken sighing; then a dull, rattling moaning; and, finally, a general snoring in every key, bass, baritone, soprano, harmonious and dissonant, shrill and sonorous—an infernal style of music, in fact.

A blast of the trumpet; it is the *Attention!*

In that group no one hears it; no one stirs; all are quiet and motionless as dead bodies. Another blast; which has no effect; all as motionless as before. "I'll make them get up, now!" says a menacing voice above the sleepers. At that voice, behold a leg is straightened there, an arm outstretched here, farther on a head moves more this way, a body writhes, as is the case when a group of snakes turn slowly in the heat of the sun. "Shall we get up or not?" the first voice repeats more angrily than before. One of the sleepers rises to a sitting posture, another rubs his eyes with the back of his hand, another feels around for his cap, a fourth is already on his feet, and a fifth and a sixth . . . all are up: "Oh, at last!" "What misery, what a torment to be waked so roughly, and to be obliged to get up just when one was beginning to enjoy the sleep!" "Where's my cap?" "And my musket?" "Say, give me my cap." "This is mine." "No, it is n't; that other one's yours." "Whose musket is this?" "Mine, give it me." "Go and find the little tassel, now!" and they search, scrape, and poke here and there among the stones on the road, down in the ditch, in the grass and bushes, breathless, puffing, swearing. . . . The trumpet sounds again and the regiment starts.

It is dark still, and the same chilly wind which freezes the

face and shrivels the skin keeps on blowing. "Heavens! how cold it is when one stands still! it makes one shiver." The lanterns are all extinguished; an Egyptian darkness reigns. Who knows in what confusion these rascals may be marching! It's lucky for them that they cannot be seen."

After a half hour's silent march, some man begins to distinguish far, far away, a little trembling light, which disappears now and then and reappears like a fire-fly. "What can it be? Let's go on, on, a little farther, another bit." The small light disappears no longer; it seems larger and burns more brightly. "Do you see it?" "It's the lantern at the head of the regiment." "No, no, it's a town." "But what place!" "On, on, on, we go. "Ah! . . . You are right, it is a place." The rumor spreads; those dozing rouse themselves; the sleepers wake; a little whisper starts up. "Heaven be praised; here are the houses, the principal street, and we have entered."

The hour is late; the streets are almost deserted, the tread of the regiment resounds distinctly in that solitude, and a whispering is heard on the right and left in those dark and crooked streets. Small ugly houses here and there, all closed and barred, as if it were an abandoned village. But as we proceed, to the left and right, on the ground-floor some little doors half open so that we see the hearths gleaming inside, or the head of some half-dressed woman stuck timidly out; the children run to the threshold, and in the upper stories now and then a curtain is raised, a light shines through, and behind the window-panes appears a dark figure which looks down to see what this unusual commotion means. . . . Ah! that black figure may have just sprung from the bed, where it was sleeping, and it will soon go back to resume delightfully its quiet, gentle

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"That was a large café, lighted and gleaming with mirrors, full of staff-officers, aides-de-camp," etc.

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slumbers. Oh, that bed! We can almost see it; it seems as if the fold of the sheet stretched over the bolster was before our eyes, and that we could pass our hands over it, and perceive the fragrant freshness of the linen just from the wash. Oh, fortunate person who sleeps in there! When shall we too have our beds! Happy and blessed are they who have one!

The street, narrow and tortuous at first, becomes straighter little by little, broadens, widens, and comes out on a square. The beautiful square. Two lines to the right, two to the left; all look around them. Here and there are groups of curious people, some shops open, there a church, here the house of the Syndic, a fountain, an arcade, and over yonder . . . oh, . . . how tantalizing, a café!

A strange but veritable emotion! Cross a village in the night, after a long and painful march; pass, weary, exhausted, thirsty, covered with dust and dirt, unaccustomed for some time to any pleasant habit or amusement of city life,—pass before a café, and your heart will beat with a certain tenderness, a certain melancholy longing, almost with a sad pity for yourself, and you will cast into that café an eager, envious, bitter look of passionate love, as children do; and you will retain for a long time in your mind the image of the place, objects, and persons seen.

That was a large café, lighted and gleaming with mirrors, full of staff-officers, aides-de-camps, covered with gold and silver medals, plumes, trinkets, and crosses; some inside, some at the door, others out on the square, all gesticulating continuously with arms and legs, and noisily trailing their swords along. A dense cloud of smoke enveloped every thing; we could see and hear a great drawing of beer-corks, a running

hither and thither of waiters, red in the face, utterly breathless and confused by the unusual splendor and invasion of customers; a wild coming and going from the interior to the outside, from the exterior to the interior, calling to one another, and vying with each other, until they had completely lost their heads. Before the door was a crowd of people with wide-stretched eyes and mouth, gazing at the broadest galloons and breasts most covered with medals. At the back of the café, quite at the end, in a corner behind a table, surrounded by a younger set of officers, on a raised seat, in a species of niche or temple, was the beautiful little face of a girl, over which modesty and coquetry were amicably disputing the space, amid so many unusual compliments, so many gentlemanly courtesies, passionate protests, audacious petitions, and such a twisting and turning of slender waists and legs incased in buckskin.

All eyes are fastened upon that lovely figure, beautiful face, and there they rest until she disappears from view. They are no sensuous thoughts, images, or desires which she awakens at that moment; oh, no, although she arouses in our hearts (like a weary desire for peace and affection) a vague melancholy, and we suddenly feel ourselves alone, abandoned and discouraged. The woman recalls to our memory the gentle, quiet pleasures of domestic life, which, in comparison with our hard life as soldiers, especially at those hours and moments in which we only experience the discomforts and bitterness, not the consolations nor the proud satisfactions, of such an existence make us seem almost unhappy. That woman's face arouses in our minds the image of our mother, sister, or some one dearer still; and, when it flees from our sight, we bow

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our heads, think, grow sad; those shadows seem to weigh on our chests, cut off our breath; we look and look again at the sky to see if it is growing light; and in that melancholy wandering of the fancy, it seems as if we would gladly go to sleep for ever, could we only see once more our mother or the sun. . . .

The regiment is outside the village. The same darkness and wind continue. Nothing more is said of the lights, all of which have been extinguished for some time. Well then? Shall we follow the regiment to the station in this cold and gloom, to witness the repetition of the scenes that we have already described? Any one may follow who pleases. I'll let him take his way, hoping that he may find a good camp, and eat a luscious orange, enjoy a long and quiet sleep, because, to tell the truth, these poor soldiers need and deserve it well.
