

**AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF
GIUSEPPE GARIBALDI.
IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. II. 1849-1872**

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GIUSEPPE GARIBALDI & A. WERNER & JESSIE WHITE MARIO

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AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION

BY


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WITH A SUPPLEMENT BY
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AUTOBIOGRAPHY
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GIUSEPPE GARIBALDI.

SECOND PERIOD.

(Continued.)

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DEFENCE OF ROME.

THE legion's stay at San Silvestro was of short duration, as on the following day we received orders to encamp on the square of the Vatican, and then to garrison the walls from Porta San Pancrazio to Porta Portese. The approach of the French being imminent, it was necessary to prepare at once for their reception. The sun of April 30, 1849, was to shine upon the glory of the young and inexperienced defenders of Rome, and the shameful flight of the clerical and reactionary forces. General Avezzana's system of defence was quite worthy of that veteran of liberty, who, with unwearied activity, had provided for everything, and was to be found at all points where his presence was likely to be required.

Being charged with the defence between Porta San

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Pancrazio and Porta Portese, I had established strong advanced posts outside these two gates, utilizing for this purpose the commanding situation of the palaces of Villa Corsini (Quattro Venti), Vascelli, and other points suitable for defence.

Observing the dominant position of these buildings, it was easy to conclude that they must not be allowed to fall into the enemy's hands, as, once lost, the defence of Rome would be difficult or impossible. During the night preceding the 30th, besides the scouts sent along the two roads leading to the gates guarded by us, two small detachments had orders to ambuscade themselves by the side of the road, at such a distance as to be able to pick up at least a few of the enemy's scouts.

At break of day I had a French cavalry-soldier on his knees before me, asking for his life. However insignificant this acquisition of a prisoner might be, I confess that it rejoiced me; and I drew from it a happy augury for the day. It was France on her knees, making the *amende honorable* for the disgraceful and unworthy conduct of her rulers.

This prisoner was captured by the detachment under young Ricchieri, of Nice, with great courage and coolness. A squadron of French scouts was put to flight by our own, and the fugitives, though superior in numbers, even abandoned some of their weapons.

When one knows of the approach of an enemy, it is always a good thing to place some ambuscades on the roads he will have to pass over. Two advantages are in this case almost certain—that of knowing how far the

head of the enemy's column has advanced, and that of making some prisoners.

Meanwhile, from the highest points in Rome, the hostile army was seen advancing slowly and with precaution, marching in column along the road from Civita Vecchia to Porta Cavalleggieri. Having come within cannon-shot, they placed some of their artillery in commanding positions, and deployed several corps, which resolutely marched up to attack the walls.

The French general's mode of attack showed an utter scorn of us; it was a case of Don Quixote and the windmills. He attacked us just as if we had had no ramparts, or as if our walls had been garrisoned with children. In truth, General Oudinot, the son of a marshal of the First Empire, had not thought it necessary, in order to crush "four *brigands d'Italiens*," to provide himself with a map of Rome.

He soon perceived that we were men defending our city against hirelings who were republicans in name only. Those gallant sons of Italy, after having calmly allowed the enemy to approach, poured into them a volley of cannon and musket-shots, which killed a great many of the most advanced.

From the height of Quattro Venti, I had seen the attack of the enemy, and the reception he met with from our men at Porta Cavalleggieri and the wall on either side. An attack on the enemy's right flank seemed to me a thing not to be despised; and I pushed forward two companies, who threw the French into great confusion. Being, however, greatly outnumbered

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by the enemy, they were obliged to fall back on their base of operations—that is, on the small houses outside the walls in that part of Rome.

In the first encounter, we had to deplore the loss of the gallant Captain Montaldi. Any one who knew Goffredo Mameli and Captain De Cristoforis can form an idea of Montaldi; he resembled them physically and morally. Montaldi in a battle, at the head of his men, was as cool and calm as when on the parade-ground, or conversing with a group of his friends. He had not, perhaps, as much education as the two brave champions of Italian liberty mentioned above, but the same intrepidity, the same courage, and the same genius. What a general he would have made! Italy has not lost the pattern of such men as he, and to such she ought to entrust her sons in the day of judgment for the tyrants, when all stains of outrage are to be washed away.

Montaldi had joined the Italian legion at Montevideo when it was first raised, and, though then very young, took part with his usual courage in innumerable engagements; and his was one of the earliest names entered on the roll of those about to cross the sea from Montevideo to serve their country's cause. Genoa may with pride carve Luigi Montaldi's name beside that of her warrior-poet, Goffredo Mameli.

The French, reaching our positions in the suburban houses, were received with a cross-fire from our posts, and halted, sheltering themselves behind the inequalities of the ground and the walls of the numerous villas in the neighbourhood, and firing thence as fast as they

could load. In this way the fight lasted for some time; but when we received reinforcements from within, we charged the enemy with so much vigour that they gradually lost ground, and were at last driven into a precipitate retreat, while the cannon from the walls and a sally from Porta Cavalleggieri completed the victory. The French had a few men killed, and retired in confusion, leaving in our hands several hundred prisoners, and never stopping till they reached Castel Guido.

The principal honour of the day is due to the gallant General Avezzana, who had organized the defence. He showed himself indefatigable during the fight, wherever it raged most fiercely, and cheered on our young soldiers with his voice and his manly presence. General Bartolommeo Galletti, with his Roman legion, accompanied us during the action, and contributed greatly to the victory. So also General Arcioni, with the corps under his command, who, though he arrived late, had a hand in the enemy's discomfiture, and also made a large number of prisoners.

A battalion of young students at the university, and other fractional corps associated with the legion during the battle, also behaved exceedingly well. A Prussian colonel, Haug—the same who was general with us in 1866—served under me as staff-officer, through the whole action, with great courage and coolness.

Marrocchetti, Ramorino, Franchi, Coccelli, Brusco (Minuto), Peralta, and all my Montevideo comrades, maintained their just reputation for bravery. Masina,

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Daverio, Nino Bonnet, and other gallant fellows whose names I wish I could remember, also behaved brilliantly.

This first engagement with regular troops greatly raised the *morale* of our legion, as they subsequently proved.

The day following the attack, I had orders to reconnoitre the enemy, and marched with the legion and a small number of cavalry towards Castel Guido, where we remained part of the day in sight of them. Towards afternoon, a French surgeon came to open a parley, and I sent him to the Government. General Oudinot, feeling himself too weak to attack Rome, was trying to temporize by means of negotiations, while waiting for reinforcements from France. We could easily have taken advantage of his weakness and his fears to drive him back into the sea; we might have settled accounts afterwards.

In May took place the two affairs at Palestrina and Velletri, in both of which the legion covered itself with glory. Arrived at Palestrina, the Neapolitan troops of the Bourbon, who some time before had invaded the Roman territory in conjunction with French, Austrians, and Spaniards, attacked us, and were completely repulsed. Among those who distinguished themselves then were Manara with his gallant Bersaglieri, Zambianchi, Marrocchetti, Masina, Bixio, Daverio, Sacchi, Coccelli, and others. At Velletri, where Rosselli, the general-in-chief, was in command, the fighting was the more serious that the King of Naples