

**THE ORIGIN OF THE RED  
CROSS "UN SOUVENIR  
DE SOLFERINO"**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9781760570606

The origin of the Red cross "Un souvenir de Solferino" by Henry Dunant & Anna B. Wright

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

## THE ORIGIN OF THE RED CROSS

The bloody victory of Magenta opened the gates of Milan to the French Army, which the towns of Pavia, Lodi and Cremona welcomed enthusiastically.

The Austrians, abandoning the lines of the Adda, the Oglio, and the Chiese, gathered their forces on the bank of the River Mincio, at whose head the young and courageous Emperor Joseph placed himself.

The King of Sardinia, Victor Emmanuel, arrived on the seventeenth of June, 1859, at Brescia, where, with great joy, the inhabitants welcomed him, seeing in the son of Charles Albert a saviour and a hero. During the next day the French Emperor entered the same town amid the enthusiastic cries of the people, happy to show their gratitude to the monarch who came to help them gain their independence.

On the twenty-first of June, Napoleon III and Victor Emmanuel II left Brescia, from which place their armies had departed during the previous day. On the twenty-second they occupied Lonato, Castenedolo and Mon-

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techiaro. On the evening of the twenty-third Napoleon, who was commander-in-chief, published strict orders for the army of the King of Sardinia, encamped at Desenzano, and forming the left flank of the allied armies, to proceed early the following day to Pozzuelengo.

Marshal Baraguey d' Hilliers was ordered to march on Solferino; Marshal MacMahon, Duke de Magenta, on Cavriana; General Neil was to proceed to Guidizzolo; Marshal Canrobert to Medole; Marshal Regnaud de Saint-Jean d' Angley, with the Imperial Guard, to Castiglione.

These united forces amounted to 150,000 men, with 400 cannon.

The Austrian Emperor had at his disposition, in the Lombardo-Venetian kingdom, nine army corps, amounting in all to 250,000 men, comprising the garrison of Verona and Mantua. The effective force prepared to enter the line of battle consisted of seven corps, some 170,000 men, supported by 500 cannon.

The headquarters of the Emperor Francis Joseph had been moved from Verona to Villafranca, then to Valeggio. On the evening of the twenty-third the Austrian troops received the order to recross the River Mincio

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during the night to Peschiera, Salionze, Valeggio, Ferri, Goito and Mantua. The main part of the army took up its position from Pozzolengo to Guidizzolo, in order to attack the enemy between the Rivers Mincio and Chiese.

The Austrian forces formed two armies. The first having as Commander-in-chief Count Wimpffen, under whose orders were the corps commanded by Field Marshals Prince Edmund Schwarzenberg, Count Schaffgotsche and Baron Veigl, also the cavalry division of Count Zeidewitz. This composed the left flank. It was stationed in the neighborhood of Volta, Guidizzolo, Medole and Castel-Gioffredo.

The second army was commanded by Count Schlick, having under his orders the Field Marshals Count Clam-Gallas, Count Stadion, Baron Zobel and Cavalier Benedek, as well as the cavalry division of Count Mensdorf. This composed the right flank. It occupied Cavriana, Pozzolengo and San Martino.

Thus, on the morning of the twenty-fourth, the Austrians occupied all the heights between Pozzolengo, Solferino, Cavriana and Guidizzolo. They ranged their artillery in series of breastworks, forming the center of

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the attacking line, which permitted their right and left flanks to fall back upon these fortified heights which they believed to be unconquerable.

The two belligerent armies, although marching one against the other, did not expect such a sudden meeting. Austria, misinformed, supposed that only a part of the allied army had crossed the Chiese River. On their side the confederates did not expect this attack in return, and did not believe that they would find themselves so soon before the army of the Austrian Emperor. The reconnoitering, the observations and the reports of the scouts, and those made from the fire balloons during the day of the twenty-third showed no signs of such an imminent encounter.

The collision of the armies of Austria and Franco-Sardinia on Friday, the twenty-fourth of June, 1859, was, therefore, unexpected, although the combatants on both sides conjectured that a great battle was near.

The Austrian army, already fatigued by the difficult march during the night of the twenty-third and twenty-fourth, had to support from the earliest dawn the attack of the enemies' armies and to suffer from the



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intensely hot weather as well as from hunger and thirst, for, except a double ration of brandy, the greater number of the Austrians were unable to take any food.

The French troops already in movement before daybreak had had nothing but coffee. Therefore, this exhaustion of the soldiers, and above all, of the unfortunate wounded, was extreme at the end of this very bloody battle, which lasted more than fifteen hours.

Both armies are awake.

Three hundred thousand men are standing face to face. The line of battle is ten miles long.

Already at three o'clock in the morning, corps commanded by Marshals Baraguey d' Hilliers and MacMahon are commencing to move on Solferino and Cavriana.

Hardly have the advance columns passed Castiglione when they themselves are in the presence of the first posts of the Austrians, who dispute the ground.

On all sides bugles are playing the charges and the drums are sounding.

The Emperor Napoleon who passed the night at Montechiaro hastens rapidly to Castiglione.

By six o'clock a furious fire has commenced.

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The Austrians march in a compact mass in perfect order along the open roads. In the air are flying their black and yellow standards, on which are embroidered the ancient Imperial arms.

The day is very clear. The Italian sun makes the brilliant equipments of the dragoons, the lancers and the cuirassiers of the French army glitter brightly.

At the commencement of the engagement the Emperor Francis Joseph, together with his entire staff, leaves headquarters in order to go to Volta. He is accompanied by the Archdukes of the House of Lorraine, among whom are the Grand Duke of Tuscany and the Duke of Modena.

In the midst of the difficulties of a field unknown to the French army the first meeting takes place. It has to make its way through plantations of mulberry trees, interlaced by climbing vines, which form almost impassable barriers.

The earth is cut by great dried up trenches which the horses have to leap, and by long walls with broad foundations which they have to climb.

From the hills the Austrians pour on the enemy a constant hail of shot and shell. With the smoke of the cannon's continual dis-

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charge the rain of bullets is ploughing up the earth and dust into thousands of missiles.

The French hurl themselves upon these strongly fortified places in spite of the firing of the batteries which falls upon the earth with redoubled force.

During the burning heat of noon the battle everywhere becomes more and more furious.

Column after column throw themselves one against the other with the force of a devastating torrent.

A number of French regiments surround masses of Austrian troops, but, like iron walls, these resist and at first remain unshaken.

Entire divisions throw their knapsacks to the earth in order to rush at the enemy with fixed bayonets.

If a battalion is driven away another replaces it; each hill, each height, each rocky eminence becomes a theatre for an obstinate struggle.

On the heights, as well as in the ravines, the dead lie piled up. The Austrians and the allied armies march one against the other, killing each other above the blood-covered corpses, butchering with gunshots, crushing each other's skulls or disemboweling with the sword or bayonet. No cessation in the