

**ADVENTURES
OF
AN AIDE-DE-CAMP:
OR,
A CAMPAIGN IN CALABRIA.**

BY

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Claud. I look'd upon her with a soldier's eye,
That liked, but had a rougher task in hand
Than to drive liking to the name of love:
But now I am returned, and that war thoughts
Have left their places vacant; in their rooms
Come thronging soft and delicate desires,
All prompting me how fair young Hero is,
Saying how I liked her ere I went to war.

SHAKSPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
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PREFACE.

The very favourable reception given by the Press and Public generally, to "The Romance of War," and its "Sequel," has encouraged the Author to resume his labours in another field.

Often as scenes of British valour and conquest have been described, the brief but brilliant campaign in the Calabrias (absorbed, and almost lost, amid the greater warlike operations in the Peninsula) has never, he believes, been touched upon: though a more romantic land for adventure and description cannot invite the pen of a novelist; more especially when the singular social and political ideas of those unruly provinces are remembered.

Indeed it is to be regretted that no narrative should have been published of Sir John Stuart's Neapolitan campaign. It was an expedition set on foot to drive the French from South Italy; and (but for the indecision which sometimes characterized the ministry of those days) that country might have become the scene of operations such as were carried on so successfully on the broader arena of the Spanish Peninsula.

Other campaigns and victories will succeed those of the great Duke, and the names of Vittoria and Waterloo will sound to future generations as those of Ramillies and Dettingen do to the present. Materials for martial stories will never be wanting: they are a branch of literature peculiarly British; and it is remarkable that, notwithstanding the love of peace, security and opulence, which appears to possess us now, the present age is one beyond all others fond of an exciting style of literature.

Military romances and narratives are the most stirring of all. There are no scenes so dashing, or so appalling, as those produced by a state of warfare, with its contingent woes and horrors; which excite the energies of both body and mind to the utmost pitch.

The author hopes, that, though containing less of war and more of love and romantic adventure than his former volumes, these now presented to the Reader will be found not the less acceptable on this account. They differ essentially from the novels usually termed military; most of the characters introduced being of another cast.

The last chapters are descriptive of the siege of Scylla; a passage of arms which, when the disparity of numbers between the beleaguered British and the besieging French is considered, must strike every reader as an affair of matchless bravery.

Several of the officers mentioned have attained high rank in their profession—others a grave on subsequent battle-fields: their names may be recognised by the military reader. Other characters belong to history.

The names of the famous brigand chiefs may be familiar to a few: especially Francatripa. He cost the French, under Massena, more lives than have been lost in the greatest pitched battle. All the attempts of Buonaparte to seduce him to his faction, or capture him by force, were fruitless; and at last, when his own followers revolted, and were about to deliver him up to the iron-hearted Prince of Essling, he had the address to escape into Sicily with all their treasure, the accumulated plunder of years. Being favoured by the Queen, he, no doubt, spent the close of his years in ease and opulence. Scarolla became a true patriot, and died "Chief of the Independents of Basilicata."

It is, perhaps, needless to observe, that many scenes purely fanciful are mingled with the real military details.

The story of the Countess of La Torre, however, is a fact: the shocking incidents narrated actually occurred in an Italian family of rank, many years ago. Strazzoldi's victim received no less than thirty-three wounds from his poniard. The author has given the real titles of the infamous parties, and only trusts he has not marred a very sad story by his mode of relating it. In atrocity, the tale has lately found a parallel in the Praslin tragedy: indeed, "truth is stranger than fiction." There is nothing so horrible

in a romance but may be surpassed by the occurrences contained in the columns of a newspaper; where we often find recorded outrages against humanity, greater by far than any conceived by the wildest imaginings of a French novelist.

Those feudal militia, or gens-d'armes, the *sbirri*, so often mentioned in these pages, were a force maintained by the landholders. The *sbirri* received a certain sum daily to support themselves, and provide their arms, clothing, and horses: they lived among the *paesani* in the villages, but were completely under the orders and at the disposal of their lord. The *sbirri* were the last relics of the feudal system.

Since these volumes were written, the flames of civil war have passed over the romantic Calabrias: the government of Naples has received a severe, though perhaps wholesome, shock; and the brave Sicilians are wresting from their obstinate sovereign those beneficial concessions which he cannot safely withhold. A still greater crisis for Italy is, perhaps, impending: Lombardy is filled with the troops of Austria; and if the *absolute* policy of the veteran Metternich prevails, ere long those "millions of cannon-balls" (which were so lately ordered by his government) will be dealing death among the ranks of Italian patriots. Should that day ever arrive, surely the Hungarian, the Bohemian, and the brave Pole, will know the time has come to draw and to strike! The eyes of all Europe are at present turned upon the policy of Austria, and the fate of Italy; and should matters ever take the turn anticipated, the landing again of a British army on the Italian shores will prove a death-blow to the ambitious projects of the House of Hapsburg.

A long preface may be likened to a hard shell, which must be cracked ere one can arrive at the kernel. The Author has to ask pardon of his readers for trespassing so long on their patience; but he considered the foregoing explanations in some degree necessary, to illustrate the fortunes, mishaps, and adventures of the hero.

EDINBURGH, *February* 1848.

**ADVENTURES
OF AN
AIDE-DE-CAMP.**

CHAPTER I.

THE LANDING IN CALABRIA.

On the evening of the last day of June 1806, the transports which had brought our troops from Sicily anchored off the Italian coast, in the Bay of St. Eufemio, a little to the southward of a town of that name.

The British forces consisted of H. M. 27th, 58th, 78th, and 81st Regiments of the Line, the Provisional Light Infantry and Grenadier Battalions, the Corsican Rangers, Royal Sicilian Volunteers, and the Regiment of Sir Louis de Watteville, &c., the whole being commanded by Major-General Sir John Stuart, to whose personal staff I had the honour to be attached.

This small body of troops, which mustered in all only 4,795 rank and file, was destined by our ministry to support the Neapolitans, who in many places had taken up arms against the usurper, Joseph Buonaparte, and to assist in expelling from Italy the soldiers of his brother. Ferdinand, King of Naples, after being an abject vassal of Napoleon, had allowed a body of British and Russian soldiers to land on his territories without resistance. This expedition failed; he was deserted by the celebrated Cardinal Ruffo, who became a Buonapartist; and as the French emperor wanted a crown for his brother Joseph, he proclaimed that "the Neapolitan dynasty had ceased to reign"—that the race of Parma were no longer kings in Lower Italy—and in January 1806 his legions crossed the frontiers. The "lazzaroni king" fled instantly to Palermo; his spirited queen, Carolina (sister of the unfortunate Marie Antoinette), soon followed him; and the usurper, Joseph, after meeting with little or no resistance, was, in February, crowned king of Naples and Sicily, in the church of Sancto Januario, where Cardinal Ruffo of Scylla, performed solemn mass on the occasion. All Naples and its territories submitted to him, save the brave mountaineers of the Calabrias, who remained continually in arms, and with whom we were destined to co-operate.

When our anchors plunged into the shining sea, it was about the close of a beautiful evening—the hour of Ave Maria—and the lingering light of the Ausonian sun, setting in all his cloudless splendour, shed a crimson glow over the long line of rocky coast, burnishing the bright waves rolling on the sandy beach, and the wooded mountains of Calabria, the abode of the fiercest banditti in the world.

The tricolor flaunted over the towers of St. Amanthea, a little town to the northward of the bay, commanded by a castle on a steep rock, well garrisoned by the enemy; and the smoke of their evening gun curled away from the dark and distant bastions, as the last vessel of our armament came to anchor. The whole fleet, swinging round with the strong current which runs through the Strait of Messina, lay one moment with their sterns to the land and the next to the sparkling sea, which pours through between these rock-bound coasts with the speed of a mill-race.

Italy lay before us: the land of the fabled Hesperia—the country of the "eternal city;" and I thought of her as she was once: of "majestic Rome," in all her power, her glory, and her military supremacy; when nations bowed their heads before her banners, and her eagles spread their wings over half a world. But, alas! we find it difficult to recognise in the effeminate Venetian, the revengeful Neapolitan, or the ferocious Calabrian, the descendants of those matchless soldiers, whose pride, valour, and ambition few since have equalled, and none have yet surpassed. We viewed with the deepest interest that classic shore, which so many of us now beheld for the first time. To me, it was a country teeming with classic recollections—the sunny and beautiful land whose very history has been said to resemble a romance; but the mass of our soldiers were of course, strangers to all these sentiments: the grave and stern Ross-shireman, and the brave bog-trotters of the Inniskilling, regarded it only as a land of hard marches, short rations, and broken heads; as a hostile coast, where the first soldiers of the continent were to be encountered and overcome—for with us these terms are synonymous.

Barbarized by the wars and ravages which followed the French revolution and invasion,—swarming with disorderly soldiers, savage brigands, and starving peasantry writhing under the feudal system—the Naples of that time was very different from the Naples of to-day, through which so many tourists travel with luxurious safety: at least so far as the capital. Few, I believe, penetrate into that terra incognita, the realm of the bandit Francatripa.

Orders were despatched by the general from ship to ship, that the troops should be held in readiness to disembark by dawn next day. The quarter-guards and deck-watches were strengthened for the night, and strict orders given to sentries not to permit any communication with the shore, or with the numerous boats which paddled about among the fleet. Our ships were surrounded by craft of all shapes and sizes, filled with people from St. Eufemio, and other places adjacent: bright-eyed women, their dark hair braided beneath square linen head-dresses, with here and there a solitary "gentiluómo," muffled in his cloak, and ample hat, beneath which glowed the red spark of a cigar; meagre and grizzled priests; wild-looking peasantry, half naked, or half covered with rough skins; and conspicuous above all, many fierce-looking fellows, wearing the picturesque Calabrian garb, of whose occupation we had little doubt: the gaiety of their attire, the long dagger gleaming in their sashes, the powder-horn, and the well-oiled rifle slung across the back by a broad leather sling, proclaimed them brigands; who came crowding among their honester countrymen, to hail and bid us welcome as allies and friends.

An hour before daylight, next morning, we were all on deck and under arms. Our orders were, to land with the utmost silence and expedition, in order to avoid annoyance from the light guns of the French; who occupied the whole province from sea to sea, and whom we fully expected to find on the alert to oppose our disembarkation.

My first care was to get my horse, Cartouche, into one of the boats of the *Amphion* frigate. Aware that sharp work was before us, I personally superintended his harnessing; having previously given him a mash with a

dash of nitre in it, and had his fetlocks and hoofs well washed, and his eyes and nostrils sponged with vinegar, to freshen him up after the close confinement of the ship: he was then carefully slung over the side, by a "whip" from the yard-arm. The oars dipped noiselessly into the waves, and we glided away to the beach of St. Eufemio, the point marked out for our landing-place. I stood by Cartouche's head, holding the reins shortened in my hand, and stroking his neck to quiet him; for the fiery blood horse had shown so much impatience when the oars dipped into the water, or the boat heaved on the heavy ground-swell, that his hoofs threatened every instant to start a plank and swamp us.

All the boats of the fleet were now in requisition; and, being crowded to excess with soldiers accoutred with their knapsacks and arms, and freighted with baggage, cannon, and tumbrils, miners' tools, and military stores to arm and clothe the Calabrese, they were pulled but slowly towards the point of rendezvous. The last boat had no sooner landed its freight, than the ship of the admiral, Sir Sydney Smith, fired a gun, and the fleet of frigates and gunboats weighed anchor, and stood off northwards, to attack the Castle of St. Amanthea; against which, operations were forthwith commenced by the whole naval armament.

The lofty coast loomed darkly through a veil of haze; the morning air was chill, and a cold sea-breeze swept over the black billows of the Straits; against the effects of which, I fortified myself with my comfortable, double-caped cloak, a cigar, and a mouthful from a certain convenient flask, which experience had taught me to carry always in my sabretache. The time was one of keen excitement; even to me, who had served at the siege of Valetta, and in other parts of the Mediterranean, and shared in many a memorable enterprise which has added to our empire the valuable posts and possessions we hold in that part of Europe. As the daylight increased, and the sun rose above the mountains, pouring a flood of lustre over the straits of the Faro, the scene appeared of surpassing beauty. Afar off, in the direction of the Lipari, the sea assumed its deepest tint of blue; while the whole Bay of St. Eufemio seemed filled with liquid gold, and the

white waves, weltering round the base of each distant promontory, were dashed from the volcanic rocks in showers of sparkling silver: all the varied hues which ocean assumes under an Italian sky were seen in their gayest splendour. The picturesque aspect of this romantic shore was heightened by the appearance of our armament: as the debarking corps formed open column of companies on the bright yellow beach, their lively uniforms of scarlet, green, and white, the standards waving, and lines of burnished bayonets glistening in the sun—which seemed to impart a peculiarly joyous lustre to all it shone upon—the scene was spirit-stirring.

The white walls and church tower of the little town, the foliage of the surrounding forest, backed by the lofty peaks of the Calabrian Apennines—the winding strip of golden sand fringing the fertile coast, and encircling the wave-beaten rocks, where a fisherman sat mending his nets and singing, perhaps, of Thomas Aniello—the remote Sicilian shore, and the wide expanse of sea and sky were all glowing in one glorious blaze of light—the light of an Italian sunrise, beneath whose effulgence the face of nature beams bright with sparkling freshness and roseate beauty.

Our nine battalions of infantry now formed close column; while the Royal Artillery, under Major Lemoine, got their eleven field-pieces and two howitzers into service order, the tumbrils hooked to the guns, and the horses traced to the carriages. During these preparations the general kept me galloping about between the different commanding officers with additional instructions and orders; for we expected to be attacked every moment by the enemy, of whose arrangements we had received a very confused account from the peasantry.

As the sun was now up, the rare beauty of the country was displayed to the utmost advantage: but we scanned the lofty mountains, the romantic gorges, the grim volcanic cliffs and bosky thickets, only to watch for the glitter of French steel; for the flutter of those standards unfurled so victoriously at Arcole, Lodi, and Rivoli; or for the puff of white smoke which announces the discharge of a distant field-piece. Strange to say, not the slightest opposition was made to our landing; although there were many

commanding points from which a few light guns would have mauled our boats and battalions severely.

The troops remained quietly in close column at quarter distance, with their arms ordered, until command was given to unfurl all colours, and examine flints and priming. A reconnoitring party was then pushed forward to "feel the ground," and our little army got into marching order, and advanced to discover what the distance of a few miles would bring forth. The Corsican Rangers were the skirmishers.

"Sir John," said I, cantering up to the general, "permit me to join the light troops that I may see what goes on in front?"

"You may go, Dundas," he replied; "but remember, they are under the command of Major Kraünz, who, I believe, is no friend of yours."

"No, truly; there is no man I would like better to see knocked on the head; and so, *allons!* Sir John."

"Be attentive to his orders, however," said he, with a grave nod, as I bowed and dashed off.

Kraünz! yes, I had good reason to hate the name, and curse its owner. I had a brother who belonged to a battalion of these Rangers. He was a brave fellow, Frank; and had served with distinction at Malta, and under Charles Stewart at the siege of Calvi; and, after Sir John Moore, was the first man over the wall at the storming of the Mozello fort. But his career was a short one. Between Frank and Kraünz there arose a dispute, a petty jealousy about some pretty girl at Palermo; a challenge ensued, and Frank was put under arrest for insubordination. From that moment, he was a marked man by the brutal German, who was resolutely bent upon his ruin—and a military man alone can know what the unhappy officer endures, who is at strife with an uncompromising, vindictive, and perhaps vulgar, commanding-officer. Thank God! there are few such in our service. Frank's proud spirit could ill brook the slights and insults to which Kraünz subjected him; and being one day "rowed" publicly for coming five minutes

late to parade, in the height of his exasperation he struck down the German with the sword he was lowering in salute, and was, in consequence, placed instantly under close arrest. A court-martial dismissed him from that service in which he had gained so many scars. His heart was broken: the disgrace stung him to the soul. He disappeared from Sicily, and from the hour he left his regiment could never be discovered by our family. Therefore, it cannot be wondered at that I cared but little about the safety of his German enemy.

The advanced party, under the command of Kraünz, consisted of three companies of Corsican Rangers; these moved in double quick time along the narrow highway towards the mountains, from which the hardy peasantry soon came pouring down, greeting us with cries of "Long live Ferdinand of Bourbon! long live our holy faith!" I galloped after the Corsicans, in high spirits at the prospect of seeing something more exciting than was usually afforded by the lounging life I had spent in the garrisons of Sicily—dangling about the royal palace, or the quarter-general, drinking deep and late in our mess-room at Syracuse, or smoking cigars among the promenaders on the Marina of "Palermo the Happy." My brave Cartouche appeared to rejoice that he trod once more on firm earth; curveting, neighing, and tossing his proud head and flowing mane, while he snuffed the pure breeze from the green hills with dilated and quivering nostrils.

It was a soft and balmy morning: the vast blue vault above was free from the faintest fleece of cloud, and pervaded by the deep cerulean hue so peculiar to this enchanting climate. At that early hour, not a sound stirred the stillness of the pure atmosphere, save the twittering of the merry birds as they fluttered from spray to spray, or the measured tramp of feet and clanking of accoutrements, as the smart light troops in their green uniform moved rapidly forward—the glazed tops of their caps, their tin canteens and bright muskets barrels, flashing in the light of the morning sun.

As we advanced into the open country, the scenery rapidly changed: the sandy beach, the bold promontory, and sea-beaten rock, gave place to the

vine-clad cottage and the wooded hill. Some antique tomb, a rustic fountain, or a time-worn cross, half sunk in earth, often adorned the way-side; the white walls of a convent, embosomed among luxuriant orange trees, or an ancient oratory, with its carved pilasters and gray arches, occasionally met the eye; while the dark arcades of a vast and ruined aqueduct stretched across the valley, and the ramparts of a feudal castello frowned from the mountains above—the ruddy hue of its time-worn brick, or ferruginous rock, harmoniously contrasting with the bronzed foliage of dense forests, forming the background of the view. The air was redolent with the perfume of roses, and myriads of other flowers, which flourished in the wildest luxuriance on every side; while the gigantic laurel, the vine, with its purple fruitage, the graceful acacia, and the glossy ilex, alternately cast their shadows across our line of march.

All this was delightful enough, no doubt: but a rattling volley of musketry, which flashed upon us from amid the dark masses of a wood we were approaching, brought a dozen of our party to the ground, and the whole to a sudden halt.

"Live Joseph, King of Naples!" cried the French commanding officer, brandishing his sabre. "Another volley, my braves!"

But before his last order could be obeyed, our own fire was poured upon his light troops, whose pale green uniform could scarcely be distinguished from the foliage, among which they had concealed themselves in such a manner as completely to enfilade the highway. Shot dead by the first fire, Kraünz rolled from his saddle beneath the hoofs of my horse, and his glazing eyes glared upwards on me for a second. Perhaps I answered by a scowl: for I thought of my brother Frank.

Disconcerted by his sudden fall, and staggered by the unexpected fire in front and flank, the Corsicans would have shown the white feather—in other words, fled—had I not set a proper example to their officers, by leaping from Cartouche and putting myself at their head.

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