

THE WAR IN ITALY.

A BATTLE AT MONTABELLO.

The foreign news announces the first battle between the French and Austrians in Italy. It occurred on the 21st ultimo, at Montebello, the scene of one of the hard fought struggles of the Napoleon, and where his favorite Marshal, Lannes, won his title of Duke of Montebello. The number of troops on the side of the Austrians is said to have been 15,000, under General Stadion; and on the side of the French 6,000 or 7,000, besides a regiment of Sardinian cavalry. The French reported the Austrians as having lost from 1,000 to 2,000 men, and their own loss at six or seven hundred, many of whom were officers. Two hundred Austrian prisoners are reported, who were sent to Alexandria, and some of them had already arrived at Marseilles in France. Another affair of smaller moment had taken place on the 18th of the month, near the village of Gradi, which had forced the passage of the Sesia, and had enabled Gravianna, with the intention of carrying out revolutionary movements in Lombardy. The New York papers comment at length on this news. The Herald says: In this first fight we have some glimpse of the stamina of the respective combatants. On each side they were led by experienced officers of high standing. General Stadion is well known Austrian officer of merit, as is indicated also by his having been placed in command of the advanced guard of the army. General Forey, who commanded the French, obtained a high reputation in the Crimea. The Austrians made the first attack, and were driven back only after a hot fight of four hours, and were pursued for some distance by the number of troops engaged, the loss on both sides is large, and indicates the tenacity of both parties in the struggle. There is another incident in the reports that is worthy of notice, as it indicates the effect of the presence of the Emperor on the French troops. The number of French killed is reported to be large. Although Louis Napoleon was not on the battle field, he was at Alexandria, in the immediate vicinity, and besides being inspired by a feeling of emulation of the old Napoleonic glories, each one felt that he was fighting under the immediate eye of the Emperor, with them it was glory or the grave. The fountain of all honor was at hand to witness their heroism, or to save and soothe their wounds. When Francis Joseph reaches his camp—for which, at the latest accounts, he was preparing to leave Vienna—a similar inspiring effect will no doubt be felt in the Austrian ranks. Europe will witness one of the fiercest struggles for one of the fairest portions of the earth that history has ever recorded. The opening conflict was sanguinary, but who can foresee what rivers of blood will yet flow from the wounds now opened at Montebello. Montebello is on the extreme end of the French lines, close to Parma on the east, and not far from Lombardy to the north. It is nearly in the direction of Milan from Alexandria, and a little less than half way, the whole distance being only 65 miles. It would seem, therefore, as if the French were pushing on their right to strike at the capital of Lombardy. It is a curious historical coincidence that the battle of Montebello was the first fought by the troops of Napoleon I. after crossing the Great St. Bernard in 1800. It was one of the bloodiest and fiercest ever fought. In disparity of numbers the result is also remarkable. Napoleon I. had then only 16,000 men, two-thirds of whom were new soldiers, who had never seen a shot fired; and with these he was to arrest the desperate march of an army of 120,000 veterans. It was necessary for him to divide this little force into three parts, and to place before he could receive reinforcements. With characteristic rapidity he moved from point to point to Lombardy, with lightning glance his eagle eye perceived the movements and combinations of the enemy under Melas. He knew that a great Austrian battle would take place near Melas, and he rapidly concentrated his army from all points. To Lannes and Murat he issued the following brief but remarkable order: "Gather your forces at the river Stradella. On the 8th, or 9th at the latest, you will have on your hands 15,000 men. Assemble them, march them and cut them to pieces; it will be no many enemies less upon our hands on the day of the decisive battle or are to expect with the entire army of Melas." The prediction turned out true. An Austrian force of 18,000 strong advanced and crossed the river Stradella, on the heights of Montebello, with banners planted on the hill side which swept the plain. It was of the greatest moment that this body should be prevented from combining with the other vast forces of the Austrians, Lannes met them with only 8,000. Yet they rushed on the foe with the shout of "vive l'empereur," with blood, his face blackened with powder, and his uniform soiled and torn by the long strife. Napoleon smiled in silence, but did not forget the heroism of Lannes, whom he afterwards created, from this battle field. Duke of Montebello, and which he has descended to his family to this day. It was the same hero who had before saved the fight on the terrible bridge of Lodi, when the French were mowed down by the Austrian cannon like grass, and Napoleon's generals said it was impossible to advance. "Impossible is not French," said Napoleon, as he surveyed a standard and rushed forward shouting, "follow your general." Lannes, however, was the first to cross the bridge. He dashed past his leader, plunging his horse into the midst of the Austrian ranks, and grasped one of their banners. At that moment his horse fell, and he was hurled to the ground. He rose, and with his sword raised, he fought his way back to his fellow soldiers, having slain six of the Austrians with his own hand. The bridge and the battle were won. For this deed of terrible energy Napoleon promoted Lannes on the spot. The battle of Montebello was not without the influence of the immortal victory of Marengo, which was fought immediately after (June 14), and was closely connected with it. There 30,000 Frenchmen under Napoleon met 40,000 Austrians, including 7,000 cavalry and 200 pieces of cannon, which irresistibly swept Napoleon's forces before them till Marengo, he actually defeated with his rifle corps of 6,000 men arrived at the scene when the battle was deemed lost. The tide was turned. The Austrians were overthrown with terrible slaughter. Twenty thousand men of both sides lay dead on the field. Lannes, the greatest general Napoleon ever had, was among them. The first cannon was fired, and the battle was won by the French. No doubt another Marengo or an equally sanguinary and decisive battle of some other name will soon be fought, when we shall probably have something of the qualities of Napoleon III. as a general.

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