



WITH TEGETTHOFF AT LISSA: The Memoirs of an Austrian Naval Officer 1861-66

Maximilian Rottauscher

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The imperial Austrian navy which fought and won the signal victory of Lissa on 20 July 1866, during the so-called Seven Weeks' War of 1866, has in recent years been subjected to more detailed scrutiny than has hitherto been its lot, and it is with an eye to following this trend that we present the following translation of part of the memoirs of one of its officers.

Maximilian Rottauscher, the author of this account, was born in Vienna in 1844, the son of Karl Rottauscher (born 1812), an Austrian army officer who served in the Hungarian campaigns of 1848/49 and rose to the rank of major general before retiring. Max was destined for the fledgling navy, since after the lost 1859 war with France and Piedmont it was undergoing some expansion because of fears about designs in the Adriatic Sea by the new kingdom of Italy. In 1861, therefore, he was assigned to the frigate Novara as a cadet. After a brief instruction, he was transferred between a number of vessels and endured a period of enforced shore leave before being assigned to the schooner Saida, in which he made a voyage to Greece in 1863. Further service on training ships followed, before in 1864, as a midshipman, Rottauscher was sent to the North Sea as a replacement for a casualty on the frigate Radetzky. The Radetzky was one of a force of Austrian warships present during the Second Schleswig War, during which Austria and Prussia were allied against Denmark, and Max took part in the closing campaigns of this conflict, which he describes.

But the greatest adventure of Max's life was two years later, when as a brand-new sub lieutenant and stationed on the frigate Adria, he was at the battle of Lissa. His description of this action, where the Austrians under Wilhelm von Tegetthoff trounced the Italians under Carlo di Persano, is extremely valuable not only because of its immediacy but also because relatively few personal accounts of Lissa have been published.

Max's account is a very interesting picture of the Austrian navy in the early and mid-1860s, its comic and harrowing scenes and its depictions of foreign lands and the adventures he had there. As usual, the translator Stuart Sutherland has added explanatory notes to assist the reader. This is a fascinating and worthy contribution to 19th Century naval literature.

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