

# A Bell for Adano

By John Hersey

**THE STORY THUS FAR:** The American troops arrived at Adano, a seaport in Italy, with Major Victor Joppolo, the Amgot officer in charge. Sergeant Borth, an M.P., was in charge of security. The Major set out immediately to win the friendship and confidence of the citizens and vowed to replace the town bell, which the Germans had taken. Major Joppolo talked with Father Penovochio, local priest. He promised the priest to attend mass the following morning. When time for mass arrived, the Major was busy in his office and overlooked the appointment, until church bell awoke him to the fact that he was late. He arrived before mass was over, much to the relief of the priest.

### CHAPTER V

At this angry moment, Gargano, Chief of the Carabinieri, came up to the line. This man was called by the people The Man With Two Hands, because of his continuous and dramatic gesturing. He was, he seemed to think, an actor, and he could not say two words without gesturing with both hands. He possessed and exercised all the essentially Italian gestures: the two forefingers laid side by side, the circle of thumb and forefinger, the hands up in stop position, the salute to the forehead with palm forward, the fingertips of the two hands placed tip to tip, the fingers linked, the hands flat and downward as if patting sand, the hands up heel to heel and pulled toward the chest, the attitude of prayer, the pointing forefinger of accusation, the V as if for victory or smoking cigarettes, the forefinger on the chin, the rolling of the hands. All he used them all.

He did not make any arrests. He merely went up to Carmelina, wife of the lazy Fatta, and squeezed between her and the door of Zapulla's shop, and stood there. The people could see that he was merely taking his place at the head of the line to wait for bread.

Carmelina, who was annoyed by having had wood-coke thrown at her, said truculently: "Mister Gargano, you were Chief of the Carabinieri under the old regime, and that entitled you to stand at the head of the line. I am not sure that you are still Chief of the Carabinieri."

Gargano said: "I am the Chief," and he made a kind of Fascist salute with both hands.

Carmelina said: "I doubt it. Where is the proof?"

Gargano said: "See my uniform," and he ran his two forefingers from his shoulders to his knees.

Carmelina said: "That is no proof. The Americans do not care how we dress. I could dress as a rabbit and the Americans would not arrest me."

Gargano said: "Woman, stop your shouting, or I will arrest you," and he gripped his own left wrist with his own right hand, signifying arrest.

Carmelina said: "Where is your authority?"

Margherita the formidable wife of Craxi said: "I believe that this man is still Chief, since the Mister Major is keeping many Fascist scoundrels in office until they prove themselves bad. But I do not believe that under American law he has the right to go to the head of the line. That is where I think you are right, Carmelina."

Gargano stepped out of the line. "Who questions my right?" he roared, and he pounded one clenched fist on the other clenched fist.

Carmelina, wife of the lazy Fatta, standing right beside him, startled him by whispering in his ear: "I question it, Two-Hands."

Up to this time Zapulla the baker, standing in the front of his shop, had been torn between the two authorities, the old and the new. But he was so annoyed with Carmelina for having prodded him that he now said: "Arrest her, Mister Chief, if you have any courage."

Up to this time Gargano the Chief, somewhat unsure of his ground, had been trying to think of a way of retiring gracefully. But now his manhood, as well as his authority, was challenged. He moved toward Carmelina and said: "Woman, you are under arrest."

Carmelina shouted: "Keep your two active hands off me, Gargano!"

Zapulla said: "Will you let this woman shriek down your courage?"

Gargano clapped his hands on Carmelina. She screamed. All up and down the line women shouted: "Out with the Fascist Chief of Carabinieri. Out with Two-Hands. Out with men who push themselves to the head of a line ahead of women who have been waiting three hours."

Gargano dragged Carmelina off screaming and kicking, and the anti-Gargano, anti-Fascist screams in the line grew louder and louder. Even Mercurio Salvatore, although ascrier he was more or less an official and should have remained neutral or even taken the side of Gargano, raised his huge voice in a careful shout: "Down with injustice!"

When Gargano pulled Carmelina into Major Joppolo's office, she was still screaming. But the Major jumped to his feet and said sharply: "Silence, shrew," and she fell quiet at once.

"What is this all about?" the Major asked.

Gargano said: "This woman questioned my authority," and he pointed at her with both forefingers.

Carmelina said: "There is more to it than that."

Major Joppolo said: "Your authority to do what, Gargano?" Carmelina shouted: "To push his way to the head of the line in front of Zapulla's bread shop."

Gargano said: "It is a privilege the officials of the town have always enjoyed."

Major Joppolo said: "Is that so?"

Gargano said: "I charge this woman with disturbing the peace and questioning authority." Gargano was shrewd in saying this, for he saw that things were going against him, and now he had put the matter on an official rather than a personal basis. The Major would have to decide the case officially.

The Major decided with a speed which dazzled Gargano. He decided that the woman was right but that he could not say so, because if he did the Chief would never regain his authority, and the Major wanted to keep him in office. Therefore he said: "I sentence this woman to one day in jail, suspended sentence. Let her go, Gargano, and gather all the officials of Adano for me at once."

When Carmelina got outside, she ran straight back to the bread shop. The bread was not ready yet, and the people gave her back her place at the head of the line and shouted to her: "What happened, Carmelina? What did they do to you?"

Carmelina told what had happened and she said: "Did you ever hear of such a light sentence in Adano? I believe in my heart that the Mister Major thought I was right. And what



"Get off the road."

was the meaning of assembling the officials? I believe that he was for me."

In the Major's office, the officials gradually assembled. Some were held-over Fascists, some were new appointments to take the place of Fascists who had fled to the hills. In whispers, and with ample gestures, Gargano described to them the humiliation he had suffered, until Major Joppolo said: "Silence, please."

The officials drew up in a circle around the Major's desk. The Major stood up.

"I want you to be my friends," he said. "As my friends, I will consider it my duty to tell you everything I think, for we do not want Adano to be a town of mysteries and a place of suspicion."

"Adano has been a Fascist town. That is natural, because the country was Fascist, therefore the town was also. But now that the Americans have come, we are going to run the town as a democracy."

"Perhaps you do not know what a democracy is. I will tell you."

"Democracy is this: democracy is that the men of the government are no longer the masters of the people. They are the servants of the people. What makes a man master of another man? It is that he pays him for his work. Who pays the men in the government? The people do, for they pay the taxes out of which you are paid."

"Therefore you are now the servants of the people of Adano. I want to buy their servant. When I go to buy bread, I shall take my place at the end of the line, and I will wait my turn. You too must behave now as servants, not as masters. You must behave as the servant of the man without shoes just as much as of the baron. If I find that any of you are not giving the type of service that I desire, I shall have to remove you from office."

"Remember: you are servants now. You are servants of the people of Adano. And watch: this thing will make you happier than you have ever been in your lives."

On the ninth morning, General Marvin was driving along the road toward Vicinamare and came to the town of Adano. From time to time along the road his driver had to slow down behind the little Italian

two-wheeled carts of the countryside until traffic from the opposite direction had gone by. Then he passed the carts.

As they passed each cart, General Marvin waved his riding crop in such a way as to indicate that the cart should move over. Since there was nothing to move over into except the ditch, which at intervals along the road expanded into tank traps, the carts never did move over. The General grew angrier and angrier.

Now it happened that just as he came to the Fiume Rosso, or Red River, just before Adano, the General's armored car was obliged to slow down for a cart which meandered along right in the center of the road.

The General stood up in his car and shouted in his deep bass voice (you've read about that voice in the supplements; it's famous; one writer said it was like "a fohorn gone articulate"): "Get off the road!"

Unfortunately the driver of the cart was one Errante Gaetano, who earlier that morning had sold three dozen eggs to American soldiers at fourteen times the proper price, had immediately sunk most of his profits in the wine of his friend Mattaliano, and was now sleeping a deep and happy sleep on the seat of his cart. At this particular moment, he was dreaming about eating the nicer parts of a fish nine feet long. Naturally he did not pay much attention to the voice of General Marvin, no matter how famous the voice, because he could not hear it.

General Marvin roared at his driver: "Blow your horn. Blow him off the road."

The driver, a nice boy from Massachusetts, put the heel of his hand on the horn button against his own wish. He was in no hurry, and knew that no matter how fast they went, he would only have to wait when they got wherever they were going.

The mind of Errante did not react to the horn, even though the horn was something urgent called a klaxon. The cart kept right down the middle of the road, inasmuch as Errante's mule was a cautious creature, just as wary of ditches on the right as of ditches on the left. This was a quality in his mule of which Errante Gaetano often boasted to his friends. "Give me none of your lop-sided mules," he would say, "give me a mule with a sense of the middle."

This sense was going to be the undoing of his mule just now, because General Marvin's face was beginning to grow dark, and some veins which have never been described in the supplements began to wriggle and pound on his forehead.

"I've had enough of these carts," the General shouted. He was standing up in the car, waving his riding crop around. "Do they think they're going to stop the invasion with carts?"

Errante slept beautifully. He was coming to the gray part of the fish just under the ribs. It melted in the mouth of his dream. There was, however, a sound of thunder in the distance which made him think perhaps he had better cover the fish and finish eating the nice parts after the rain.

General Marvin roared: "Do these Italians think they're going to stop a bunch of tanks with a bunch of wooden carts?"

Colonel Middleton, the General's Chief of Staff, and Lieutenant Byrd, his aide, could see the violence coming. Lieutenant Byrd looked back along the road, but he couldn't see any bunch of tanks. The only thing he could see that was being held up besides the General's armored car was one sheep, or amphibious jeep, which did not seem to be in a hurry.

Here it came. General Marvin shouted: "Throw that cart off the road."

Errante stirred in his sleep. The thunder of his dream was the most beautiful and most continuous thunder he had ever heard.

The six men surrounded the cart. Colonel Middleton reached up to waken Errante, but the General's roars grew louder. "What are you doing?" he bellowed. "I told you to throw the thing off the road."

"We were just going to wake this fellow up and get him off first," Colonel Middleton shouted back, but the shout was weak because he knew what the answer would be.

"Serve him right. Throw him too. Just turn the whole thing over."

There was no protest from any of the six men. The only thing which was said was muttered by Lieutenant Byrd: "The old man hasn't been getting enough sleep lately."

Colonel Middleton went to the head of the mule and guided it to the side of the road. He directed the other five men to take positions on the left side of the cart and to lift together when he gave the signal.

General Marvin roared: "Come on, get it over with. What a bunch of softies. Get it over with."

Colonel Middleton gave the signal. The five men lifted.

In his dream, Errante rose up above the nine-foot fish and soared off into space. The sensation was extremely pleasant.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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  4. Who, according to legend, helped the Swiss gain their independence by killing Gessler, the tyrant?
  5. How many sins are named as "deadly sins"?
  6. What does the abbreviation "ign" mean?

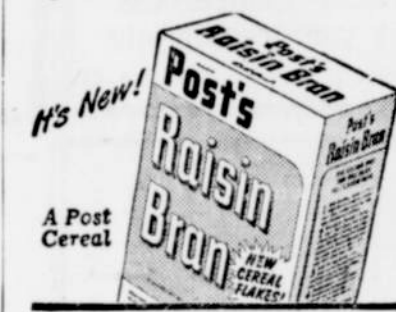
- The Answers**
1. Richard and Francis Lee of Virginia.
  2. Seventeen years.
  3. The French started the construction of the canal in 1879.
  4. William Tell.
  5. Seven — pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy and sloth.
  6. Unknown (ignotus).

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