

A Bell for Adano

By John Hersey

THE STORY THUS FAR: The American troops arrived at Adano, with Major Joppolo, the Amgot officer in charge. Sergeant Borth was in charge of security. It was the hope of the Major to build confidence and replace the town bell stolen by the Nazis. He arranged with the navy to permit the fishermen to return to the waters. Despite orders issued by General Marvin, barring carts from the city, Major Joppolo recalled the order to permit food and water to enter the town. Nasta, former mayor of Adano, returned from hiding, but was placed under arrest by the Major to save him from an organized mob. He was ordered to report daily and repent his sins.

CHAPTER XI

One morning Tomasino the fisherman called on Major Joppolo at the Palazzo. As he entered the building, and even as he walked into the Major's office, he looked like an American sight-seer. His neck bent back on itself and his eyes wandered around in dull amazement. Major Joppolo was pleased to see him and said cheerfully: "Good morning, Tomasino."

But Tomasino's face changed from curious to sullen, and he said: "I did not want to do it." "Do what, Tomasino?" "Come to the place of authority, this Palazzo. I have never done it in my life. My wife made me do it."

"Why? What did she want?" "She said that if you had lowered yourself to come and see me on my fish-boat, I could lower myself to go and see you in the Palazzo. She wanted me to invite you to come to our house tonight to help eat some tortrone which my daughter Tina made. My wife is a difficult woman. I hate her. She thinks she is the authority in my house."

Major Joppolo said: "Please be so good as to tell your wife that even though her husband was so reluctant in the delivery of her message, the Major would be delighted to accept."

Tomasino said: "I am of half a mind not to tell her. I hate her." Promptly at nine o'clock Major Joppolo knocked on the door at 9 Via Vittorio Emanuele. Tomasino opened the door, but did not show the slightest pleasure at having a visitor.

"Come in," he grumbled. The Major stepped in and tried to shake his hand but could not find it in the dark.

"We have to climb many stairs," Tomasino complained. As a matter of fact, there was only one flight. At the top of it they turned into a brightly lighted hallway. Tomasino led the Major through the hallway to a narrow parlor. This parlor belied the un sociability of Tomasino, for its furniture consisted almost exclusively of chairs—a sure sign, in Adano, of frequent and numerous guests. Besides the chairs there were only a large Italian radio in one corner and a round table in the center. The room was so narrow that from the chairs on either side one could reach whatever was on the table.

Two guests had arrived before the Major, and their identity surprised him.

"Hi, Major," said Captain Purvis, who looked as if he had been into a couple of bottles of wine. "Giuseppe told me the old fish-hound here had a couple of pretty daughters. I was getting kinda lonesome. Giuseppe here told me he'd bring me up. Good old Giuseppe."

"Good night, a boss," said Giuseppe. He was much embarrassed; he had had no idea that the Major would show up.

The Major was just as embarrassed as Giuseppe. He was thinking of those sentences from the Amgot notebook: "Don't play favorites. Be careful about invitations."

"Why, hello," the Major said. "Haven't seen the quail yet," Captain Purvis said. "The old lady's out in the kitchen. She's a honey."

The Major sat down stiffly. Captain Purvis said: "Say, I didn't know you were an old hand around here, you dog. Why don't you tell me about these good things? You old bum, I thought you never did anything but work. Tell me, how are these chickens?"

Major Joppolo said weakly: "I haven't seen the girls, except one of them in church. This is my first time here."

Captain Purvis, who was unquestionably tipsy, said: "Hey, speaking of chickens, I heard one the other day. You remember where Hoover said once that he was going to fix it so there would be a chicken in every pot? Well, I heard the other day that after the U.S. Army was around these Italian towns for a while there was going to be a chicken on every lap."

The Captain roared with laughter. Giuseppe, although he had no idea what the point was, laughed politely. The Major was horrified. Tomasino sat in depressed silence, understanding nothing.

Tomasino's wife came in from the kitchen with a platter of tortrone and saved the day. She must have weighed two hundred and fifty pounds. She put the candy down.

Giuseppe jumped to his feet and introduced the Major to Tomasino's wife. Her name was Rosa.

She said in her husky fat lady's voice: "I am delighted to see you

here, Mister Major. That wet stone"—she pointed at Tomasino—"almost refused to go and ask you."

Captain Purvis said: "Where are these pretty mackerel the old fish-hound is supposed to have? Say, Major, we got to make a deal here. Giuseppe here says he thinks I'd like the dark one best."

Giuseppe put in a word for his loyalty: "I'm a save a blonde for you, boss."

Major Joppolo really didn't know what to say. Giuseppe said quickly to the fat Rosa, "Where are the girls?"

The mother said: "If you think you can hurry two pretty girls trying to make themselves prettier, you'll find them in the bedroom."

Major Joppolo was alarmed to see Giuseppe get up and go into the bedroom. He wondered what kind of girls these were, anyhow.

But in a few moments Giuseppe came back, leading a girl by each hand. He had apparently explained the situation to the girls, because Tina went directly to Major Joppolo, shook his hand, and sat down beside him, and the dark one, Francesca, went straight to Captain Purvis, shook his hand, and sat down by him.

"Mmm," said Captain Purvis, "not bad." He felt secure in the certainty that the girls did not speak English.

"Take it easy," Major Joppolo said. Tina said in Italian: "I heard you breathing in church last Sunday."



"I've never been so happy in my life."

You ought to take more exercise, Mister Major."

Major Joppolo said: "I was late. I was very late. I got working on something, and I lost track of time. I had to run to church. It was very embarrassing."

Tina said: "You had Father Pensocchio worried. I could tell by the way he got mixed up in his service."

Major Joppolo said: "Do you go to church every Sunday?" Tina said: "Of course."

Major Joppolo was able to talk with Tina, interrupted only once in a while by bursts from the mother and gales of laughter all around the room, except from Tomasino, who stared moodily at the floor.

The Major said: "Do you always go to the Church of San Angelo?" This time it was Tina who blushed. "No," she said. "Giuseppe told me you were going to be there. I wanted to see what the American Major was like. Most Sundays I go to the Church of the Benedettini."

Major Joppolo said: "What do you think of the American Major?" Tina said: "He breathes very loudly, like the leaky bellows of the pipe organ at the Benedettini."

The Major laughed. "Have a piece of tortrone," Tina said. "I made it."

One could not very well turn down an invitation put just that way, so the Major took a big piece. The candy was passed all around the room, and for a time all conversation stopped. Nothing could be heard except the crunching of nuts between teeth and the smacking sound of boiled sugar coming unstuck from teeth. During this time of chewing, Major Joppolo couldn't help thinking how strange it was to build a whole evening around the eating of tortrone, but that seemed to be the program.

When he dared, Major Joppolo said "Good."

Captain Purvis could afford to be more honest in English. He said: "What did we come to, a glue factory?"

"Another piece," Tina said to the Major cordially. "In a few minutes," the Major said.

"We must have some wine," the fat and happy Rosa said. "Go out in the kitchen, fool," she said to

Tomasino. "and get a bottle of Marsala."

Wine on top of tortrone, and probably mixed right up with it. Major Joppolo could think of nothing less tempting, but Captain Purvis, hearing the word vino, shouted: "Vino, hurry for vino."

Major Joppolo stood up and said: "Purvis, either you shut your big trap or I'll throw you out of here."

Captain Purvis said: "Aw come on, Major, don't be a spoil sport. You know you feel the same way, if you were just honest enough to say so."

"Shut up, Purvis!" The Major's eyes blazed. "That's an order. Now you behave yourself."

Captain Purvis stood up and saluted with a wavering dignity.

Tomasino came back with the wine, and Captain Purvis saluted the bottle, bending slightly at the waist and aiming the breakaway of the salute straight at the bottle.

Rosa, sensing that something was wrong, shouted desperately: "My buy, my buy!" But nobody laughed.

Tina jumped up and said: "Let's dance," and she ran over to the radio and turned on Radio Moscow. "Moscow always has the best music," she said.

Francesca, with Major Joppolo's help, carried the table from the middle of the room to the end away from the radio. Captain Purvis rushed over to Rosa, held out his arms, and said: "Okay, fatso, let's dance."

Rosa understood from his gestures what he meant, and she stood up laughing. The tipsy Captain and his huge partner careened around the room. After a couple of turns Rosa collapsed into a chair.

Then Captain Purvis danced with Francesca, and Major Joppolo with Tina. They stamped and laughed and talked above the music until Tomasino said glumly: "You are making too much noise. You will wake the girls."

Tina ran over and toned the radio down a little. "The girls?" the Major said. Tina blushed. She said: "My sister's daughters."

"Francesca's?" "Oh, no, of my sister who is in Rome."

Major Joppolo did not think to ask why the daughters were in Adano and the mother in Rome; or why Tina blushed; or why she did not seem very anxious to talk any more about the sleeping girls.

"Let's dance some more," she said. So they danced until they were both sweating in the midsummer heat.

It was Tina who said: "Some fresh air, Mister Major?" He said: "That would be a good idea."

Tina said: "We can go right out here." She slipped out through wooden shutter doors onto a narrow balcony over the dark street, and the Major followed her.

Tina closed the shutter doors behind the Major.

The two stood against the cool iron of the balcony railing and looked up at the sharp stars. Tina said: "Do you like it here?"

Major Joppolo said: "I've never been so happy in my life."

"That seems strange," Tina said, "when you're so far from home."

"In not so far from home, in a way. Florence is almost a home to me. My father and mother were from a little town near Florence."

"Where are you from, in America I mean?" "The Bronx, Tina."

"Where is that, the Bronx?" "New York."

"The Bronx is part of New York City?" "Sometimes I think New York City is part of the Bronx."

"Oh, I should love to go there. Is the Bronx beautiful? Is it beautiful for Florentines in the Bronx? How would it be for someone from Adano?"

"For my Florentine parents, I think it is beautiful, yes, it is beautiful. In Italy they were just poor peasants, and you know it is not very beautiful for most of the peasants here. There my father is a waiter. He has a very good job, in the University Club. It is a very nice atmosphere, all the chairs are leather like in the Palazzo and the walls are all paneled. My mother has a washing machine. Father has a car. It is very beautiful for them, I think. For me, it was not at all very beautiful."

"Why not, Mister Major?" "Well, it's hard to explain. You see, I grew up in America. I could see that the Bronx was not the most beautiful place in America. I always wanted a little more than we had. I don't know, it's hard to explain."

"No," said Tina, "you don't have to explain. I know what it is to be restless. That's why my hair is blonde, I guess."

Major Joppolo had made up his mind that Tina's hair was dyed. But he didn't expect her to talk about it. Tina sensed his embarrassment. "Oh, my hair is not natural, Mister Major. I dyed it because I was not satisfied. My dark hair was my Bronx. Every one had dark hair. I wanted something different."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Improved Uniform International LESSON

By HAROLD L. LUNDQUIST, D. D. Of The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago. Released by Western Newspaper Union.

Lesson for May 13

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THE TRAGEDY OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM

LESSON TEXT—I Kings 12:26-30; 19:1-4, 13b-18; II Kings 17:7, 8. GOLDEN TEXT—O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together.—Psalm 34:3.

Nations as well as people come to crossroads in their history, and taking the wrong road then means future disaster. Solomon had built up a great national prosperity, but at the expense of heavy taxes. He had forgotten God, and was succeeded by a son who followed in his footsteps.

Offered an opportunity to ease the burden of the people (I Kings 12:14), Rehoboam in his folly made it greater, and the nation was divided. The ten northern tribes, which were henceforth to be known as Israel, followed Jeroboam, and the two southern tribes under Rehoboam became the kingdom of Judah.

Jeroboam started with God's favor, and might have led his people aright, but instead he became the king whose name stood for wickedness (see II Kings 15:18). The story of that downfall is a sad picture of unbelief and failure.

I. Religion Meets Politics (I Kings 12:26-30)

Jerusalem, now in the rival kingdom of Judah, was the center of Hebrew worship. While the people of Israel were free to go there to worship, Jeroboam saw that it might lead to their being led away from him. It was a shrewd political deduction, but it left God out of the picture.

He established new centers of worship, where calves of gold were set up. They were probably intended to be a symbol of God, but they bespeak the folly of mixing worldly things with the things of God. They become an abomination and a snare.

The people responded to the apparent interest of the king in their welfare, and worshiped at the most convenient place. Religion had met politics, and had let politics take the upper hand.

Someone has suggested that when we begin to find ways to make our religion easy, we can be certain that it is the enemy of our souls who is at work. When Satan begins to be solicitous about our welfare and suggest that it is too far to go to church, or that the weather is too cold (or too warm), etc., etc., we should be on guard.

Religious ease was a big step downward for Israel, and it can be for any other nation. Where does America stand in that important matter?

II. A Queen Meets a Prophet (I Kings 19:1-4, 13b-18)

Elijah under the mighty hand of God had defied the wicked king, Ahab, and his more wicked queen, Jezebel; yes, and all the prophets of Baal, and had been gloriously victorious (I Kings 18:17-41).

The queen, who was devilish in her wickedness and determination to destroy the worship of the true God, threatened the prophet. He who had met the challenge of the hundreds of prophets fled in fear before the relentless hatred of this venomous woman.

The prophet felt that all was lost, but God revealed to him that even in that dark day there were many who were still true to Him (v. 18). It is a precious and encouraging bit of light in an otherwise dark scene.

Our main interest in this lesson is not the experience of the prophet, but in seeing the cause of Israel's downfall. Here we see one great reason—every king of Israel was a wicked man. Some were better and some worse, but all of them forgot God.

A nation is on the downward path when its rulers forget God. What about our own nation? What about the elected representatives of the people? Do we choose men for public office because of their Christian faith and character, or on the basis of political expediency or affiliation?

III. A Nation Meets Its Doom (II Kings 17:7, 8)

The hour had struck when God's heavy hand of judgment had to fall on Israel, the northern kingdom of 10 tribes. Verse 6 of this chapter relates their carrying away into captivity to Assyria, and verses 7-9 tell us the reason for that judgment.

Ingratitude for God's blessing (v. 7) led to the worship of other gods (v. 8). They knew God's hatred for the sin of idolatry, and His judgment upon those who walked in that way, but they went right on.

Note in verse 8 that these things were done "secretly." "The same thing is true today of many who profess to be the people of God. The line of demarcation between the church and the world is not clearly drawn. We do well to note carefully the outcome of this course of procedure on Israel's part (vv. 6, 18). The fact that Israel did these things secretly did not hide them from the eyes of Jehovah (Ps. 139:1, 2; Heb. 4:13)." (John W. Bradbury).

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