

# 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 to be in charge of security. The Major set out immediately to win the friendship of the citizens, and to improve their living conditions. He determined to replace their bell, which the Germans had taken. Major Joppolo talked with Father Pensovechio, the town's leading priest. He explained to the priest what he wanted to accomplish for the people of Adano, and secured the promise of the priest to call attention, at mass, to the posted civil instructions. The Major promised the priest that he would attend mass the next day.

## CHAPTER IV

"You could have read the proclamations which our friends will post. Fatta. You would not have had anything to lean against while reading because the proclamations will be posted on the walls upon which you depend. The hour of the reading, that is to say about five o'clock, would have been bad for you, because it is the hour when you are overcome with energy and are able to lift a bottle of wine to your lips. But the others will read, Fatta. They will learn that the Americans are our friends. They will learn of the changes. They will know what to do. They will avoid the punishments. For them, Adano will be a new town, and life will be different. For you, it will be the same. You will do wrong, and you will be punished. Adano will still be a place of fear.

"Look at the lazy Fatta, people! Do not be like him. Read the proclamations. Acquaint yourself with the new Adano! I have cried." And Mercurio Salvatore moved the drum around behind him and marched off to the several other places convenient for shouting, and in his own way he told the people about the changes which were to come.

Father Pensovechio could not remember when so many people had come to the Church of San Angelo.

It was a pleasure, certainly it was a pleasure, to have so many come to the Church of San Angelo.

But now Father Pensovechio had a thought which made him very uneasy. What if the Mister Major should not come? Think of the shame. Think of how the other priests would laugh. Think how this vanity, this large crowd, would complain. Think of how his own faithful would flock on later Sundays to the other churches. Think of preaching to empty pews.

It was already five minutes past seven. The senior acolyte had already whispered in his ear that it was time to begin the mass. And the Mister Major had not come.

The Mister Major, at that moment, was sitting in his office having a breakfast of fruit and discussing with Borth and with the usher Zito, who never went to church, the matter of the bell. Major Joppolo sat with his feet on the huge desk eating fruit, Borth sat on the end of the desk also eating, and the little Zito stood at attention in front of it, not eating but wishing he were.

In the Church of San Angelo, meanwhile, Father Pensovechio was growing frantic. Most of the heads in his crowd, his lovely crowd, kept turning toward the door instead of facing the silver crucifix which survived the fire of 1553.

In his office Major Joppolo said: "They took the bell away on the fourteenth of June. That is a month less two days. That is not so much time. Considering how things are done in our Army, perhaps not much has been done with the bell. Where was it sent, Zito?"

Zito said: "To the provincial government at the town of Vicinamare."

Major Joppolo said: "Perhaps it got no farther. Perhaps the bell is still sitting in its crate in Vicinamare."

Zito grew excited: "Do you think that is possible?" he asked.

The Major said: "It is possible. We must find out."

And he took a piece of foolscap from his brief case and began a letter:

"To: Lt. Col. R. N. Sartorius, C.A.O., Vicinamare, Prov. of Vicinamare."

"From: Major V. Joppolo, C.A.O., Adano, Prov. of Vicinamare."

"Re: Bell belonging to town of Adano."

"Undersigned would very much appreciate your initiating investigation of records of provincial government of Vicinamare to see if you can trace."

The service in the Church of San Angelo was taking a most unusual course. Having completed the supplication, Father Pensovechio started reciting the Litany of Saint Joseph. It was the longest litany he could think of offhand, and he repeated the words without any sense of their meaning.

"Joseph, most valiant, Joseph, most obedient, Joseph, most faithful, mirror of patience, lover of poverty, model of workmen, ornament of the domestic life, guardian of virgins, safeguard of families. . ."

Suddenly Father Pensovechio broke off. He had had an idea. He beckoned again to the senior acolyte and whispered in his ear: "Have old Guzzo ring the bell." "Now, father?"

"Do as I say. Hurry." And then the priest resumed in his hollow voice: ". . . consolation of the poor, hope of the sick, patron of the dying, terror of the demons."

And the people responded: "Pray for us." The priest said: "Protector of the Holy Church."

The people were just in the middle of responding: "Pray for us," when they heard a stroke of the bell over their heads. Worship had to stop while the bell rang, for its vibrations shook the whole church.

In his office Major Joppolo blotted the letter and folded it.

Borth said: "What time is it?"

The Major looked at his wrist watch. "Seven twenty-six," he said.

Borth said in Italian: "Zito, if you are such an expert on bells, what is that one ringing for at seven twenty-six in the morning, and all alone?"

Zito said: "It is strange. That is a church bell. From the tone I would say it was the bell of San Angelo."

"San Angelo!" The Major jumped up. He said, "I promised the priest I would come, I got thinking about the old bell. Zito, show me the way. Run, Zito, this is terrible."

Zito darted out of the door, and the Major ran after him.

Three or four idlers, sitting in the morning sun, thought it was undignified of the new American Major to chase little Zito through the streets. If he wanted to punish Zito,

and even then was somewhat late. But we are very glad to have him here." Father Pensovechio spoke with feeling. "We are glad that he is one of us. Because of this man, I believe that the Americans are my friends. You must believe the same thing, my children."

Major Joppolo noticed that the skin of the neck below the blonde hair, though clean, was quite dark, and he wondered whether the hair was naturally blonde. He wondered about this off and on during the mass which followed.

After mass he left quickly, to avoid the embarrassment he knew would result from mingling too much with the crowd. He took time only to tell Giuseppe that he had a little interpreting for him to do that afternoon, and to look into the face of the blonde.

On the fifth day of the invasion a babel stood in line in front of the shop of the baker Zapulla. There were many women, mostly dressed in black, and a few men. They talked in loud voices, each clamoring for an audience.

"He has a furious energy," said Maria Carolina the wife of the noisy cartman Afronti. "He told small Zito to report for work at seven each morning. Zito thought that no official would be up that early. Zito went to work at seven and a half, and the Mister Major told him that there would be a new usher unless the old usher could wake up on time in the morning."

Carmelina, the wife of the lazy Fatta, who was at the head of the line, said loudly: "It would be pleasing if Zapulla the baker got up on time in the morning so that the bread would be ready."

Zapulla the baker, black with the wood cove of his oven, came out to the front of the shop and roared: "Zapulla the baker has been up since four in the morning. If Zapulla the baker hears remarks, he is liable to go back to bed and let the bread burn up."

"Do you remember," said Margherita the fat Craxi's formidable wife, "do you remember how the Mayor Nasta used to hold office hours from noon until one, each day, the hour when we were all busy with our children? And how we had to apply in writing to see him? And how we had to wait ten days? And how he would treat us when we did see him? Now it is different. You can walk in any time all day." She paused. "He stands up when you enter," she said impressively.

"Is that so?" said Laura Sofia, who was not the wife of anyone and at her age was not likely to be ever. "I think I shall go and see him."

"On what pretext?" jibed Maria Carolina, wife of the noisy cartman Afronti. "To make eyes at him?"

"Oh," said Laura Sofia, "I have my complaints, just like the rest of you—even if I haven't litters of children grunting like pigs on my floor." Carmelina, wife of the lazy Fatta, said: "My children are hungry. It would be nice if they could get their bread on time."

From the depths of his shop Zapulla the baker shouted: "The children of certain people may stay hungry if certain people do not hold their tongues."

Mercurio Salvatore, crier of the town of Adano, was near the end of the line, but even though he toned his voice down to his conversational whisper, the whole line could hear him when he said: "I wish to tell you something. I asked him if I could listen to my radio."

"He said: 'Why not, crier?'"

"I asked him what station I would be permitted to listen to. I asked: 'Should it be the Radio of Algiers, or should it be the Radio of London which is called B.C.C.?'"

"He said: 'Reception here is best for Radio Roma. Why don't you listen to the one you can hear the best?'"

"I said: 'Can you mean it? Radio Roma is anti-American. It has nothing but slander for the Americans.'"

"And he said to me: 'Crier, I love the truth, and I want you to love it too. You listen to Radio Roma. You will hear that it is three fourths lies. I want you to judge for yourself and to want the truth. Then perhaps you will want to listen to the other broadcasts which you cannot hear quite so clearly.'"

Margherita, the formidable wife of Craxi, said: "Have you listened, crier?"

Mercurio Salvatore said: "I have listened. I could detect only one lie yesterday, but it was a big one. Radio Roma said that Italian forces in the city of Vicinamare threw back three vicious Allied attacks. We all knew that Vicinamare was in the hands of the Americans late on the first day of the disembarkation."

Carmelina the wife of the lazy Fatta said: "It will be late on the fifth day before we get bread from this baker Zapulla."

Zapulla was impolite to Carmelina because of what she said. He came forward and threw a piece of wood-coke at her head and roared: "Silence!"

The woodcoke missed Carmelina's head, but hit the stomach of the formidable Margherita. She advanced, shaking her large fists. Zapulla went back to his ovens, as if he had not noticed where his woodcoke went.

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(TO BE CONTINUED)

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A General Quiz

- #### The Questions
1. What is the correct name for the Statue of Liberty?
  2. Why do so many English towns end in chester as Winchester?
  3. The sea elephant when fully grown contains how many gallons of oil?
  4. What did the ancient Greeks use for napkins?
  5. Does the South pole receive more sunlight than the tropics?
  6. What is histrionic art?
  7. What is the only landbird that can fly backward?
  8. When a man has more than one wife, it is called polygamy. When a woman has more than one husband, what is it called?
  9. Does the Panama canal show a profit?
  10. What is quicksand?

- #### The Answers
1. Liberty Enlightening the World.
  2. Chester is English for the Roman word castra or camp. Many of these towns were sites of Roman camps.
  3. Approximately 70 gallons of oil.
  4. Pieces of bread.
  5. Yes. At the December solstice it is nearer the sun than any other spot on earth is at any time.
  6. The art of the theater.
  7. The humming bird.
  8. Polyandry.
  9. Yes.
  10. A bed of sand so water-soaked as readily to engulf anyone or thing that attempts to rest upon it.

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NOTE—The slip cover shown here is from Book 5 which also gives large diagrams showing how to make bound button-holes. This 32-page booklet is full of other ideas for making the most of old furniture and things you have on hand. To get Book 5, send 15 cents with name and address direct to:—

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