

A Bell for Adano

By John Hersey

THE STORY THUS FAR: The American troops arrived in Adano, with Major Joppolo, the Amgot officer in charge. Sergeant Borth was in charge of security. The Major was determined to hold the confidence of the people and to replace their bell stolen by the Nazis. Despite orders issued by General Marvin, barring carts from the city, Joppolo recalled the orders, to permit food and water to enter the city. The people of the city had arranged a party of appreciation for the Major. The bell arrived, as did also orders from General Marvin relieving the Major of command. Unaware of the orders the Major continued his work. He made arrangements to attend his party that night.

CHAPTER XXII

Major Joppolo was excited. He called up Lieutenant Livingston and thanked him for his part in getting the bell. "Why hell," he said, "it ought to be up this afternoon. Maybe we can ring it for the party tonight. You're coming, aren't you?"

"Wouldn't miss it, Major."

"Well, see you there, Captain. Thanks a hell of a lot."

"Don't mention it. Say, there's just one thing, Major."

"What's that?"

"I'm a Lieutenant. It takes a long time to get to be a Captain in the Navy."

"Is that a fact?" the Major said. "Well, you ought to be a Captain soon," and he hung up.

Zito moved near to the desk while the Major read, and when he was finished, the usher said: "We have a new bell, Mister Major?"

"We have a new bell, Zito."

"Is the tone good enough?"

"I hope so, Zito. I think so."

"Is there some history to it?"

"Yes, Zito, I'll tell you about it when the bell is up. Do you think I ought to make a little speech explaining the bell to the people here?"

"Oh yes, you should, Mister Major. The people of Adano will be curious about the bell."

"Zito, do you think they will understand all that the bell means? I mean that it stands for the things that I believe in? Do you think I could explain that to them?"

"I think so, Mister Major. I understand what you mean, and Zito is not very clever."

A few minutes before eleven o'clock the funeral procession of the three fishermen who had been killed in the explosion went through the Piazza. Major Joppolo went out onto the balcony to watch it. At the head of the procession there were three carts. The first two carried the bodies of Agnello and Merendino. Their coffins were small dinghies such as the fishermen used to get out to their boats, with the tops planked over. The third cart, which was for Sconzo, carried a dinghy which was not planked over, but was filled with flowers.

Long before eleven thirty, Major Joppolo was out on the sidewalk beside the crated bell, waiting for the Engineers to come. He poked and shoved at the crate affectionately, as if there were something delicious to eat inside it.

The gang from the Engineer battalion was surprisingly on time. The Major explained the job, pointing to the top of the clock tower.

"How long do you think it will take?" he asked the old buck sergeant in charge.

"Well," the sergeant said, "some days the boys gets cramps in their stomachs and they claim they shouldn't ought to hurry when they has the cramps. Other days they don't get no cramps. It all depends."

"How long do you guess?"

"We'll have it for you today or tomorrow. It all depends."

"Try to finish today, will you?"

"It all depends," the sergeant said, and he turned furiously on his men, who slowly gathered themselves for work.

Major Joppolo went to lunch at noon. Sergeant Borth was already in the Albergo dei Pescatori when the Major arrived. The Major sat down with Borth, as he often did, in spite of his rank.

He told Borth about the bell, and his excitement about it gave Borth something to tease.

"You're worse than the first day we came here," the Sergeant said.

"How am I worse?" the Major said.

"You're so damn sentimental."

"Oh, cut it out, Borth."

Borth's teasing cut a little deep. "No, I'm serious," he said. "There's a war going on. Fishermen get blown up in the harbor here. Children get run over in the streets. There's one case of malaria in every six people. And you can't think about anything but tinkling a bell."

Major Joppolo said: "I'm worried about those fishermen, Borth. I could get in trouble over that. Do you think I was guilty of carelessness about it? You know I forced the Navy to let them go out."

Purely by way of teasing, Borth said something he had cause to regret later: "Sure," he said, "you could catch hell for that. You could get sent back to the States."

And Major Joppolo said: "They wouldn't do that, they couldn't."

Borth said: "Why couldn't they? I heard about a fellow in airborne who got sent home just for getting drunk."

Major Joppolo said: "They couldn't, Borth, there's so much to do here. Think if they got some-

body bad in this town. Think if they got a dope like that fellow up at Pontebasso."

Borth said: "You don't like yourself much, do you?"

Major Joppolo said: "Oh lay off, Borth, sometimes you aren't funny."

At 12:25 Zito came running down to the Albergo dei Pescatori to tell the Major that the bell was uncrated. "It looks nice," he said.

The Major tried to get Borth to go up with him to look at the bell, but Borth said: "This eggplant is so good, I don't see how I could leave it."

So the Major went up with Zito. On the way the usher said: "Before I forget it, Mister Major, the officials are very anxious to meet with you at four o'clock. They said it was important."

A moment of worry showed itself on the Major's face. "Is it about the fishermen, Zito?"

Zito said: "I am the usher, Mister Major, the officials do not tell me what is on their minds." Then



"We have a new bell, Zito."

Zito seemed to think better of what he had said, and he added: "No, it is not about the fishermen."

The Major said: "Oh, so the usher has ways of finding out what is on the officials' minds?"

Zito just smiled.

There were quite a few people standing around watching the Engineers working on the bell. One of them was the ancient Cacopardo. Because he had spoken to the Major about the bell on the very first day of the invasion, he had appointed himself a kind of supervisor of the work, although none of the Engineers could speak Italian.

As soon as the Major came up, Cacopardo said: "I have sent for Guzzo, the bell-ringer at the Church of San Angelo. He will be able to tell just by looking at it whether it is a good bell. If it is not, you will of course have to send it back."

The bell stood on the sidewalk just where the Navy men had put it down. The crate had been peeled down from around it.

It was bronze, and the men of the Corelli had taken the trouble to polish it, so that it was like gold in the midday sun. On one side there was this inscription:

U.S.S. CORELLI
America ed Italia.

When Cacopardo saw the Major reading the inscription, he asked: "Who is this man Corelli, and how does he happen to get his name on the bell of Adano?"

The Major said: "I will tell you later, when the bell is hung." Then he got a little stone out of the street and tapped it against the side, but of course there was only a dead sound, since the bell was sitting on wood. "I wonder how the tone is," the Major said.

"Guzzo will know," Cacopardo said.

In time the bell-ringer came. He was almost as old as Cacopardo. His hands and forearms looked very strong, but the rest of him looked as if it were long overdue.

Cacopardo called him to the center of the crowd and told him to examine the bell. The old bell-ringer walked round and round the bell, looking at it. Then he leaned over and ran the flat of his hand from top to bottom. Then he stood up and seemed to read the inscription over and over. He looked once up at the top of the clock tower, where some engineers were rigging a hoist. He asked that the bell be turned over and when some of the engineers had turned it up on its side, he looked inside.

He stood up finally and shrugged his shoulders and said: "It is all right."

Cacopardo was delighted. He said to the Major: "I know old Guzzo. He does not exaggerate. When he says something is fair, he means it is perfect. The bell will be very good."

"I'm glad," the Major said.

At a few minutes past one o'clock, Major Joppolo went home to his villa to take a nap. He wanted to save up some strength for the party—but he also wanted to think a little about his speech about the bell.

He lay down on his bed. At first his thoughts were confused, because he was excited. But gradually the thoughts began to sort themselves out, and everything came very straight to Major Joppolo.

He would say a few words, he thought, about the removal of the old bell. Then he would tell about how the people of Adano had interested him in trying to get a new one. Then a few words about Corelli, and what he had done for Italians in the last war, and then the meaning today of the inscription on the bell, America ed Italia, America and Italy, and then perhaps something about the Americans' Liberty Bell. After talking about it that day, the Major had been curious about the Liberty Bell, and he had written a letter back to Amgot headquarters inquiring about it, and now he would be able to explain the crack, and he would tell the people of Adano the inscription on that bell, the words from Leviticus: "Proclaim liberty throughout the land and to all the inhabitants thereof."

And then everything was wonderfully clear in the mind of Victor Joppolo. He knew exactly what he would say. Words came to him which were beautiful and were the truth about the new bell and its meaning for Adano, and about what he, Victor Joppolo, wanted for the people of Adano. The words were as clear as anything can be, and as true.

At about two o'clock the courier came by motorcycle from Vicinamare. From his office Sergeant Borth saw him throw the pouch onto the sidewalk in front of the Palazzo. Mail, even official mail, was enough of an event so that Sergeant Borth got up and went across to the Palazzo and up to Major Joppolo's office to see what there was.

There was nothing for Sergeant Borth, but as long as Major Joppolo was out, Sergeant Borth decided to rifle through what there was.

In time he came on a paper addressed to Major Joppolo. He read it:

"1. You are authorized to proceed by first available transportation to A.F.H.Q., Algiers, via port of Vicinamare.

"2. Reassignment of station will be made by A.F.H.Q.

"3. Reason for this order is that reference (1) did wilfully and without consultation countermand orders issued by General Marvin, 49th Division, re entry of mule carts into town of Adano."

And the order was signed by General Marvin.

Sergeant Borth folded the order, put it in his pocket, and left the building. He went directly to the M.P. command post in the Fascio.

He said to Captain Purvis: "The Major's been relieved."

Captain Purvis said: "What do you mean?"

"Just what I said: he's been ordered back to Algiers for reassignment."

"What for?"

"Insubordination. Countermanding an order by Marvin about mule carts. I guess it was after that affair of the mule the General shot outside town."

Captain Purvis had forgotten all about the report he had sent to Division. Now that he remembered he didn't have the courage to say anything about it. All he said was: "What a hell of a note."

Borth said: "I'll say. The Major's just begun to accomplish things in this town."

Captain Purvis said: "Yeah, I guess he has." A suspicion crossed his mind: this fellow Borth had a way of knowing too much. "How did you know he was ordered out?"

Borth said: "I saw the order up in the Major's office."

"Does the Major know about it, then?"

"No, the Major's out. I have the order in my pocket. I took it. I'm not going to tell him about it until after the party tonight."

The Major got back to his office at about a quarter to four. He went through the courier mail and worked for a few minutes on a report to Colonel Sartorius. Promptly at four Zito came in and said: "Will you see the officials now?"

"Yes, Zito."

Now when the officials came in—old Bellanca first as usual, then the others, Gargano, Saitta, D'Arpa, Rondo, Signora Carmelina Spinnato, and Tagliavia—Major Joppolo could see by their cheerful expressions that there was to be no unpleasantness in this interview.

Old Bellanca spoke: "We have something we wish to give the Mister Major."

D'Arpa could not resist saying in his high voice: "We wish to give the Mister Major a Mister Major." The others snickered.

Bellanca said: "Please get it, Zito." Zito went out.

First the usher came back carrying an easel. He went out again. Then he brought in Lojacono's portrait of the Major.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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ASK ME ANOTHER?

A General Quiz

1. Does an ostrich bury its head in the sand in order to hide?
2. In playing the flute, the velocity of air necessary is equivalent to that of a hurricane, or at the rate of how many miles an hour?
3. "God made the sea; we made the shore" is a proverb belonging to what nation?
4. The temperature of the moon drops 400 degrees at sunset. Why doesn't the earth's temperature drop considerably?
5. For what purpose was the Leaning Tower of Pisa erected?
6. Are the words "key" and "quay" homonyms?

The Answers

1. No. It grubs for food with its bill.
2. Seventy-five miles or more.
3. The Dutch.
4. The earth is blanketed by air which holds the heat caused by the rays of the sun.
5. It was erected as a bell tower for the Cathedral of Pisa.
6. Yes, they are pronounced identically.

They Made a Mess of Recipient's Self-Esteem

Girls who broke off their engagements to servicemen in a certain outfit in the Southwest Pacific received a severe shock.

When a man out there received a letter from his girl friend, saying she was tired of waiting, he didn't, as a rule, retire to nurse his broken heart in solitude. He would pin the letter on the camp notice board.

The other men in the unit would then read the letter and scribble on it what they thought of the girl. Then after three or four days it was taken down and mailed back to her.

These candid symposiums were known as "mess pots."



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