

ASABRI—BY GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

Illustration From a Pose From Life by Pauline Frederick,
Star of "Joseph and His Brethren," and by Earle
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Asabri, head of the great banking house of Asabri Brothers in Rome, had been a great sportsman in his youth. But by middle-age he had grown a little tired, you may say; so he looked now with favor upon automobiles, motor-boats and saddle-horses.

Almost every afternoon he rode alone in the Campagna, covering great distances on his stanch Irish mare, Biddy. She was the handsomest horse in Rome; her master the handsomest man. He looked like some old Roman consul going out to govern and civilize.

One day as he rode out of Rome he saw that fog was gathering; and he resolved, for there was an inexhaustible well of boyishness within him, to get lost in it. He had no engagement for that night; his family had already left Rome for their villa on Lake Como. Nobody would worry about him except Luigi, his valet.

"Biddy," he said after a time, in English, "this is no common Roman mist; it's a genuine fog that has been sucked up from the salt sea. You can smell salt and fish. We shall be lost, possibly for a long time. There will be no hot mash for you tonight. You will eat what goats eat and be very grateful."

He had not counted on two things. At dinner time he was hungry; at supper time he was ravenous. And he no longer thought of losing himself on purpose, but made all the efforts in his power to get back to Rome.

There was a glimmering point of light off to the left, and he urged Biddy toward it. He saw presently

that it was a fire built against a faded and unfamiliar tomb.

The fire was cooking something in a kettle. There was a smell of garlic. Three young men sat cross-legged, watching the fire and the kettle. Against the tomb leaned three guns, very old and dangerous.

"Brigands!" smiled Asabri, and he hailed them:

"Ho there! Wake up! I am a squadron of police attacking you from the rear."

He rode unarmed into their midst and slid unconcernedly from his saddle to the ground.

"Put up your weapons, brothers," he said; "I was only joking. It seems that I am in danger, not you."

The young men, upon whom "brigand" was written in no uncertain signs, were very much embarrassed.

"May I sit with you?" Asabri asked. "Thanks."

He sat in silence for a moment; and the three young men examined with great respect the man's splendid round head, and his face of a Roman emperor.

"Whose tomb is this?" he asked them.

"It is ours," said the one who had first smiled. "It used to hallow the remains of Attullus Cimber."

"Oho!" said Asabri. "Attullus Cimber, a direct ancestor of my friend and associate Sullandenti. And tell me how far is it to Rome?"

"A long way. You could not find the half of it tonight."

"Brothers," said Asabri, "has business been good? I ask for a reason."

"The reason, sir?"

"Why," said he, "I thought, if I