

THE WRECK

Across the night a gray moon fell through bars of shifting cloud to set there from reef and white wave met suddenly at the doors of hell.



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CHAPTER XXI THE RESCUE OF ANGIOLA.

The next day, as the big gun from the citadel boomed out the twelve-hour and all the bells of the town changed forth the time, five horsemen rode through the gate of St. Angelo, whose doors were spread wide open.

The single sentry on duty paced sleepily up and down; he was looking for his noontide siesta, and the guard of a half-score of Baglioni's lazzari lay with their armor off, basking in the yellow sun.

At the figure rose from a lounge chair and surveyed me. I confess that my heart began to beat a little fast when I saw the man against whom I was to pit myself.

"Is it usual for the Cavaliere di Savelli to pay visits with a drawn sword in his hand?" "Is it usual," I replied, "for gentlemen to be received by having a savage beast set at bay?"

"Oh, Pluto!" and he touched the bear; "Pluto was not set at you, man—you would not be here if he was." "Probably—if, however, you will call the bear to one side I would like to discuss my business with you, cavaliere."

"Shut the door and sit down there," he replied, "Pluto will not disturb us—you can put back your sword. It would avail you little," he grinned.

It cost me an effort, but I did as I was bidden, and Baglioni sank back into his lounge, the bear still standing and keeping its fierce eyes on me. Its master, however, kept turning his hand up and down its shaggy coat, whilst he asked, in his measured voice:

"Well, and to what do I owe the honor of this visit?" "You would prefer no beating about the bush?" "It is my way."

reared that echoed through the house a huge bear rose on his hind legs and struck out at my face with his claws.

"Diavolo! go back," shouted the sentry to the brute, and I whipped out my sword; but the animal merely stood in the open doorway, making no further advance, his great jaws open and puffing like a blacksmith's bellows.

"Cospetto! excellency, call off the bear," shouted the sentry again; indeed he seemed positively to hate the animal, and from inside came a low, deep-toned but mocking laugh. "Come back, Pluto—down, you brute—down!" then there was a heavy "thud," the tinkling of shivered glass, and the bear, dropping on its fore feet, slumped back into the room.

"The Cavaliere di Baglioni?" I inquired, "At the Cavaliere di Savelli's service," and at the figure rose from a lounge chair and surveyed me. I confess that my heart began to beat a little fast when I saw the man against whom I was to pit myself.

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"Well, and to what do I owe the honor of this visit?" "You would prefer no beating about the bush?" "It is my way."

"Well, then, cavaliere, I have come from Rome with a special object, and that is to ask you to change sides and to use your influence with your cousin, Count Carlo, to do likewise."

"I follow the head of my house," "Exactly. You are aware that His Holiness is now over 70 years of age."

The bear, which had stretched itself on the floor, rose with a grunt, but Baglioni pressed its head down, and it sank back and began to hum itself between its paws, like an enormous bee, or rather with the sound a thousand bees might make.

After a little delay there was a knock at the door, but apparently, as usual, the person outside, whoever he was, did not feel disposed to come in. My host rose in anger and stepped across the room, followed by his beast, the latter passing unpleasantly close to me.

There was an altercation at the door; my host went out with his pet, and for a minute or two I was left alone. I moved my seat nearer to the small table beside Baglioni's lounge, and taking up the pack of cards, began to shuffle and cut them.

"The cavaliere came back very soon, a flask in one hand and a glass in the other." "Blood of St. John!" he exclaimed, as he set them down with a clink on the table, "those rascals—I will have their ears cut out, and I'll put the poor lamb—"

"With pleasure, but my purse-bearer is downstairs—will you permit me to see him?" "By all means—the heavier the purse the better for me."

"A favor—I cannot play with that beast near me—could you not send him away?" "Send him away—my familiar," he said, with an awful smile. "No, no, Di Savelli—he is my luck; but I shall keep him at a distance if you like."

I rose and went down to Jacopo, and found him and Bande Nere already on friendly terms with the guard. I took my purse from him and found time to whisper a warning to strike the moment he heard my whistle. When I came back I was relieved to find the bear fastened by a chain to a ring in the wall. The chain itself was weak and could have been snapped with ease, but the animal made no effort to strain at it, and lay down as contentedly as a dog.

"Back at last," he said, and his voice had lost its measured cadence; "heavens, I have not spread the cards for a whole year—what stakes?" "Simply cutting the cards?"

"Yes, it is the quickest game I know." "Say a crown each turn to begin with." We cut through four times, and I paid over two crowns. Baglioni laughed as he put them on one side; "peddling stakes these, cavaliere—make them ten crowns a cut."

"Agreed—three cuts and a shuffle." He nodded, and I paid ten crowns, feeling at this rate that my purse would soon be empty; but I saw that the fever was taking hold of him, and offered to double the stakes.

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Ugo di Savelli, I should say—it is not so! May I ask your business? If it is any message from your master I incline to hear it," and she turned away with a motion of supreme disdain, thinking no doubt that I was a follower of Count Carlo.

"Ho! ho!" laughed Baglioni at my look of discomfiture, "the future countess can speak her mind. I pity Carlo. You had best cut short your five minutes, cavaliere, and come back to the card."

At this moment I heard the bear whining below, impatient for his master, and I knew his bonds were all too slender to hold him. There was nothing for it but to save Angiola in spite of herself. All this happened in a flash, and with my full strength I hit Baglioni below the left ear, just where the neck and head united. So sudden, so unexpected was the blow that the huge man rolled over like an ox, and a short shrill scream broke from Angiola. My sword was out in a moment, and I stood over Baglioni.

"A cry, a movement, and I kill you like a dog," I gasped out, my breath coming thick and fast; "throw the key to the lady—pick it up, girl—quick—now run to the door and stand there—I am here to save you." It was done at once, for Baglioni saw he must obey or die, and springing back I closed the door quickly and turned the key. Almost as I did so I heard footsteps hurrying below, and blew loudly on my whistle. The sound of the whistle was followed by an angry shouting that was drowned by a terrible roar, and I saw Pluto before me, rushing up the stair, with the end of his broken chain still hanging to him. Baglioni was battering at the door behind me. He was safe enough, but my companion had landed in a faint, and I wanted all my hands and all my nerve to meet the beast, who was now on the stairway, not ten feet away from me. Close to me was a heavy stool. I seized this and flung it at the animal with all my strength, and getting between his forefeet he caused him to stumble and slip back a half dozen steps, but with another roar Pluto gathered himself together and rushed up again, his jaws agape and white with foam. I gave him the point deep into his neck. It might have been a pin prick, and he felt the steel with his teeth. Rising to his feet he struck at me, tearing my short cloak clean off my shoulders, and then my sword was up to the hilt in his side and we grappled. My left cheek was once touched by his claws, and seemed to be hanging in ribbons; but although almost blinded with blood and choked by his fetid breath I held my head well down and drove my dagger again and again into the beast. Angiola had recovered from her faint, and above the grunting of the bear, the battering at the door and the clash of steel below I heard her laughing in shrill hysterics. My strength was failing. I was about to give up all but the bare life when there was a loud report, and with a howl the bear fell backward. My hand somehow fastened itself to the hilt of my sword sticking in the animal's side, and the weight of him, as he fell back, and as I shook myself clear, freed the blade. I stood half dazed, watching the huge black body sliding down the stairs, until it lay in a shapeless heap on the landing. Jacopo's voice brought me to myself.

"For the love of God—quick, excellency—quick!" God, I suppose, gives men strength sometimes for His own purposes. And so it must have been with me, for I picked my dear up in my arms and half giddy and staggering made my way to the entrance door. I need not say I had no time to look about me, but Jacopo helped me with my burden. Lifting her to the pommel of the saddle, I sprang up behind, and, drawing my darling close to me, with a shout of triumph I set free my plunging horse and let him go with a loose rein.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Sterne's Destination. Lawrence Sterne, the writer, was the victim of the intensest poverty. A little time before his death, being in a state of destitution, he went one evening to borrow five pounds from his friend Garrick. Upon arriving he heard music and knew that a party was going on. He heard the merry laughter, and gently replacing the uplifted knocker retraced his steps. We never feel our miseries so keenly as when contrasted with the joys of others, and it is only then that we realize Wordsworth's picture: "And homeless near a thousand homes I stood, And near a thousand tables pined for food."

Another story of this writer does not evoke so much sympathy. It was known that Sterne used his wife very ill, and in talking with Garrick one day in fine sentimental style of conjugal love and fidelity said: "The husband who behaves unkindly to his wife deserves to have his house burn down over his head." "If you think so," said Garrick, quietly, "I hope yours is well insured."—Detroit Free Press.

A Novelist's Memory. A characteristic of the late William Black was his ignorance of his own books, and it was very difficult to get him to talk about his novels. It seemed that as soon as the proof sheets were returned to the printers Mr. Black forgot all about his own creations. "In talking to my husband the other day," Mrs. Black once said to a visitor, "I suddenly remembered an anecdote in one of his novels which illustrated what I was saying. Mr. Black laughed heartily at the story and then turned eagerly to me: 'But where did you hear so good a story?' My husband wouldn't believe it was in one of his own books until I found it for him."—Detroit Free Press.

Getting an Opening. A man had a story about a gun which he delivered himself of upon all occasions. At a dinner party one evening he written in his chair for over an hour waiting for a chance to introduce his story, but no opportunity presented itself. Finally he slipped a coin into the hand of a waiter and whispered: "When you leave the room again slam the door." The waiter slammed the door as directed, and the man sprang to his feet with the exclamation: "What's that noise—a gun?" "Oh, no!" replied his host. "It was only the door." "Ah, I see! Well, speaking of guns reminds me of a little story," etc.—Liverpool Mercury.

Hubby Holds the Record. Polite Shopman (showing goods)—Here is something I would like to call your attention to, madam. It is the very latest thing out. Mrs. Rounder (absently)—If there's anything out later than my husband'll take it, if only as a curiosity.—Tit-Bits

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Table with columns for destination and time. WEST BOUND: Lv Paris c 8:41am, Lv Elkhorn 8:51am, Lv Elkhorn 9:01am, Lv Newtown 9:11am, Lv C. S. Ry Depot b 9:21am, Lv Georgetown 9:31am, Lv Davails 9:41am, Lv Stamping Grnd 9:51am, Lv Elkhorn 10:01am, Ar Frankfort a 10:11am.

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KENTUCKY CENTRAL POINTS

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