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An American Surgeon

He Was Needed Because He Would Not Tell

By HORACE BRADFORD

I am a surgeon, and my home is in Florence, Italy. When a young man I studied at a college of physicians and surgeons in my native country, America, but, possessing a taste for art, concluded to change my profession. Coming here to Florence, I studied art for a while, but soon saw that I did not possess the talent necessary to make an artist. Having fallen in love with this delightful city, I remained, hanging out my shingle as a surgeon.

One night I attended a ball at the Pitti palace. It was my first appearance among the aristocracy of Florence, and I was much interested in watching the people there, few of whom I had ever seen. A young girl with a gentleman attendant on each side of her walked by me. The appearance of the three told a story. The man on her left was young, handsome, in every way attractive. He on her right was past middle age and disagreeable looking as the other was engaging. As they passed me he gave the younger man a malignant look. The girl appeared to be much troubled. It was plain that her heart was with the man on her left, that she was constrained to choose the man on her right and that the two men hated each other on her account.

"Everywhere," I remarked to myself, "the stream of life is troubled. To be rich, to be prominent, does not render one immune from that which is disagreeable. Happy love has evidently come to this young girl, to be interfered with by one who, judging from her expression, has some claim upon her. How I should like to know the story!"

As I thought the last words I little dreamed that within a few hours a climax would come in the drama being enacted by these three persons and that I would come upon the stage for a minor part. When I left the palace I went directly to my rooms and to bed. An hour later I was awakened from a sound sleep by a violent knocking. I arose, slipped on a gown and opened the door. Two gentlemen in evening dress stepped into the room.

"You are the American surgeon, I believe?" said one.
"At your service," I replied.
"You are wanted to attend a man dangerously wounded," said the other.
"You are chosen partly on account of your standing in your profession, but principally because you are not one of our circle. We do not like our affairs to be known. I must ask you to permit me to blindfold you."

I objected to this, but one of the men put his hand to his hip pocket and drew forth a small pistol with mother-of-pearl mountings, while the other produced a stiletto. I picked up my bag of instruments and suffered them to be a handkerchief about my eyes. They led me out to the sidewalk, told me to raise my foot, and I stepped into a carriage.

"Drive a roundabout way," I heard one of the gentlemen say.
"No," interposed the other. "He may bleed to death. We must go as quickly as possible."

There was no need to make turns, for I had no idea where they were taking me. In what I supposed to be ten minutes the carriage stopped. I was helped out and soon by the increased warmth of the air felt myself to be in a building. Then I mounted steps, and at last the bandage was taken off my eyes. I was standing beside a bed on which lay—miraculously—the young man I had seen walking on the left of the girl at the Pitti. I knew too well the danger of showing any sign of recognition.

"Signor Dottore," he said with a feeble voice, "I have been stabbed on the left side—here," uncovering. "It is near the heart."

It was near the heart, but had fortunately just escaped that organ. After an examination I assured the patient that if he kept perfectly quiet till the wound should heal he would recover. But I thought that, considering its close proximity to a vital organ, a surgeon should remain with him until a healing should be established.

"Then," said one of the men who had brought me, "you must remain. We do not care that two surgeons should be introduced here just now."

"But my practice—my patients?"
"All damages to your practice shall be liberally paid for."

I made a virtue of necessity and assented. Meanwhile I had bandaged the cut and when I had finished turned and looked about me. I was in one of those looked palaces, as they are called in Florence, belonging to some influential family. The furniture, at least some of it, must have been several hundred years old. The bed on which the wounded man lay was canopied. On the walls were paintings, some of which I recognized as masterpieces of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. There was no one in the room except the two men who brought me and the patient. I directed that a large lounge of antique pattern should be made comfortable for me to sleep on, as it would be best for me to be very near the patient. Then the men who had brought me left, one of them first saying to me

"Signor Dottore, we are very glad to hear you say that the patient has so good a chance for his life. When you leave here be discreet and all will be well with you, but if you talk—well, all I have to say is you will not talk very long."

I remained a week at the palace, the name of which I did not know. Indeed, I was not permitted to leave the room of the patient, my meals all being served there. My mail was brought me, and it was amusing for the first day or two to read the messages of my patients with reference to my sudden disappearance. Then I asked those who had kidnapped me to leave word at my apartments that I had been called to Siena on a very important case. This had the effect of quieting those who sought me.

My patient turned out to be as engaging a man as I had deemed him to be when he passed me in the Pitti palace.
"Your effort," I said to him one day, "to keep your drama—it came very near being a tragedy—from me would possibly have been successful had it not been that I was at the ball at the Pitti palace the night you were stabbed. I saw you pass me with the man who stabbed you and the lady for whom you were stabbed. So you see it would be safer for you to tell me the whole story, since I have a part of it, I pledging myself to secrecy, rather than to permit me to go away with what I already have unpledged."

He was not only very much astonished, but saw the reasonableness of what I said.
"I did not notice you," he replied, "at the ball and supposed that you had no position in court society. An Italian surgeon would have been unavailable for us. We are all so interlarded socially, those below constantly watching those above and all watching one another, that we dare not trust any one of our own number. You, as an American, are not mixed in our jealousies, our disputes, our—"
"Assassinations."

"You are wrong there. There are no assassinations in modern Italy. I fought with the Duke—But I will tell you the story and have every confidence that you will not reveal it."

"I am Count Baradini, and my ancestors have lived in this palace since the twelfth century. The man you saw on the other side of the signorina at the ball was the Duke of Abolino, a relative of the king. The signorina herself is the daughter of the Countess Francocello, an old family that sprang up under the influence of Lorenzo de' Medici, commonly called Lorenzo the Magnificent. Signorina Bianca Francocello and myself have been lovers ever since I was sixteen and she fourteen years old. Upon her entrance into society lately on her eighteenth birthday the duke saw her and became desirous of possessing her. He is a widower, very rich and has great influence with the king. Soon after seeing Signorina Bianca he made a formal application for her hand. Her mother—her father is dead—urged her to accept what is to be considered in a worldly point of view a better position than I could give her. To be a duchess and rich is higher in the worldly scale than to be a countess and with no possessions except this old palace. As for Bianca, her heart is all mine, as mine is hers, and if left to her own will she would refuse the duke to marry me. Indeed, rather than wed with him she declares she will go into a convent."

The duke was expecting to have his own way in the matter when at the recent ball at the Pitti he discovered that I was his rival. I was with Signorina Bianca a few minutes before we passed you, when the duke joined her and by a look bade me give way to him. I asked the lady to go with me into another apartment. She assented, whereupon the duke went with us. On reaching the other room Bianca showed the duke so plainly that his presence was not desirable that he left us giving me a malignant look as he did so that plainly meant 'I am a man of too much importance to be interfered with by such as you.'

"On leaving the palace the duke, who took occasion to go out at the same time as I, jostled me. Seeing that I must have it out with him, I sent him a challenge."

"Just at present the king would be furious if he knew that members of the nobility to whom he looks for support, especially his relative, had fought a duel. If I were known to have sent a challenge to the Duke of Abolino I should in some way be made to suffer. I met him within an hour after we left the Pitti, but, realizing my position, I did not dare even pink him. He came very near killing me, as you see, and I doubt not will be disappointed if I recover."

The duke and my second joined in conference as to how to keep the matter a secret and decided to call upon you to attend me.

"There you have the story so far as it has been enacted."

The balance of the tale I learned from Count Baradini after he had recovered. Signorina Bianca was commanded by her mother to marry the duke, and the king sent a message to say that he would be pleased at a match between her and his well-loved cousin. Despite these commands and requests the girl flatly refused to marry any one but the man she loved, and when those who were conspiring against her found it impossible to move her they desisted, and finally her mother gave a reluctant consent that she should marry the duke.

When the wedding came off I was present and had a pleasant chat with the bride about her husband's wound, of which she had been kept in ignorance till the affair had blown over. So long as I remained in Florence I was welcome at the palace of Count and Countess Baradini.

RELIGIOUS WARS IN EUROPE.

The Thirty Years' Conflict and the Peace of Westphalia.
Osnabruck is one of the most venerable towns of Prussia. In the closing years of the eighth century Charlemagne designated it as the capital of a bishopric, a distinction which it enjoyed without interruption for more than a thousand years. In 1503 the see was suppressed, the last bishop being Frederick, duke of York, son of the English Hanoverian monarch, George III. In 1558 the city was restored to its religious eminence when it was again made the seat of a Roman Catholic bishop.

It is on account of her share in the preliminary negotiations which led to the epochal peace of Westphalia that Osnabruck is famous in history. In 1644, after all central Europe had been devastated by the great struggle which eventually became known as the Thirty Years' war, representatives of Sweden, the German empire and German Protestants met here, while in the neighboring city of Munster, thirty miles to the southwest, delegates from France, Spain, the German Catholics and the German empire gathered.

The negotiations extended over a period of four years. In October, 1648, both groups of conferees having arrived at a common basis of settlement, the Osnabruck diplomats repaired to Munster, where a few days later the peace was signed which guaranteed the sovereignty and independence of the several states of the empire and which forbade religious persecution throughout Germany. It was this peace, in which Osnabruck played such a vital part, that put an end to religious wars in Europe.

As early as 888 Osnabruck was granted the right to establish its own mint, but it was not until the fifteenth century that the city reached the crest of its mediæval prosperity. Following the decline which was necessarily incidental to the ravages of the Thirty Years' war, it enjoyed a second era of growth.

The two most impressive architectural piles in Osnabruck are the spacious cathedral, dating back to the twelfth century and representing a combination of the Romanesque and Transitional styles, and the royal palace, built in 1602-75.—National Geographic Society Bulletin.

QUEENSLAND SAVAGES.

Some Curious Customs of a Race That Will Soon Be Extinct.

The aborigines of Queensland are fast fading away, and in view of the fact that this race will soon be extinct an examination of their social customs is interesting.

The death bone or bone apparatus, with its supposed property of producing death, is one of the most dreaded and universal superstitions among the natives of the Queensland interior. The apparatus consists of a pointer connected by string with an elongated cylindrical receptacle. The pointer, three to five inches long, is made from a human forearm bone, the string is made from human hair, and the receptacle, which incloses the victim's life-blood, is fashioned from a skin bone. The "medicine man" of the tribe uses the weapon by aiming the pointer at the person selected for punishment.

One of the most curious of the aboriginal weapons is the "whirler," or "bull roarer." It is made of a flattened piece of gidgee timber cut into spindle shape, into one extremity of which a hole is drilled with a sharpened emu bone. By means of the aperture this whirler is attached to a piece of string fixed at the end of a small stick. Revolving rapidly, the whirler gives out a roaring sound.—London Telegraph.

Venison, Venelson, Venzon.
We have noted methods of cooking venison, but how should it be pronounced—as a two or a three syllable word? Most of us pronounce it as if spelled with a "z" and, as it is derived from the French venaison, this is as it should be. Shakespeare, it is true, treated it as a trisyllable and apparently regarded the "s" as hard, for in "As You Like It" the duke asks, "Shall we go kill us venison?" But his contemporary, Chapman, made but two syllables of it and, that there might be no doubt as to the pronunciation he favored, even spelled it phonetically, thus—venison.—London Chronicle.

His Pad Break.
"Why on earth do you come to me to borrow money. Billus?" said Harkaway peevishly. "Why don't you go to Jorrock? He's the prosperous looking member of our set."

"That's just it, Harkaway," said Billus. "Jorrock looks so very prosperous that I am quite sure he spends every penny he makes, but you, old man—why, you dress like a man who saves his money."

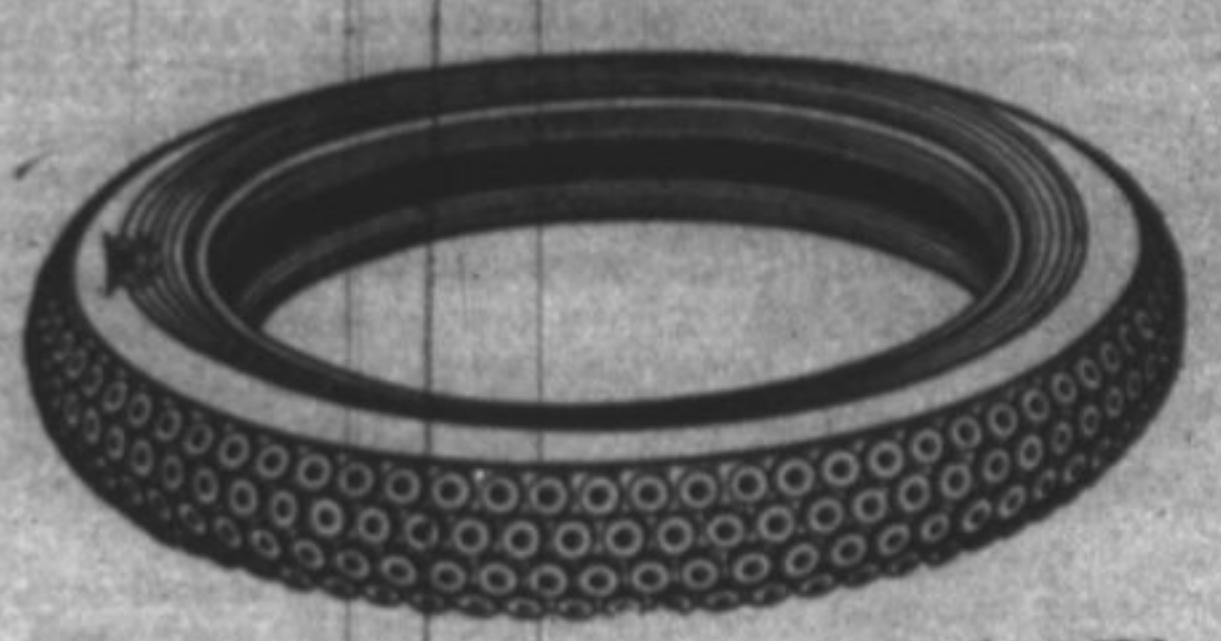
P. S.—He didn't get it.

Men Are So Uncertain.
"Why did you jilt that man who wanted to marry you?"
"Because," replied the prima donna, "I couldn't decide whether he was actually in love with me or merely wanted to hear me sing for nothing."—Exchange.

Keeping Up the Supply.
First Man (with magazine)—What a tremendous number of stories Penley Penman writes! Second Man—Doesn't he? They say he uses an incubator to hatch his plots.—Stray Stories.

Virtue alone outbuilds the pyramids; her monuments shall last when Egypt's fall.—Young.

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