

Broughton welled up within me, and surged through my heart as it had never done before. Perhaps an hour passed, and I awoke. My dream was ended. I awoke to find a new man. My despair had gone. In its place had developed a resolve to escape. Yet the prospects were meagre. The prison was a strong one and well guarded.

I arose from my chair and walked around my cell. The air was damp. The cement walls were clammy and moist. My foot-step, ringing on the stone floor, gave out a startling sound.

Near the window I paused. I saw some words carved in the cement wall. They were in shadow, and it required some minutes of effort before I could decipher them. Shading my eyes from the light which came through the grated window, I gazed steadily at the letters until, accustomed to the dim light which fell upon them, I made them out.

On one line, carved in bold letters, was the name "Henry Thoriane." And under it, in smaller but no less distinct character, were the words, "I will avenge."

I was in the cell occupied once by the son of the Englishman about whom Mutterelli had told me, and who was now, according to Mutterelli, in the monastery of The Saints.

Moved by curiosity, I felt along the walls even in the darkest corners, hoping to find something more from the prisoner of state, and feeling a morbid interest in the promised vengeance of Thoriane. I wished sincerely that I might effect a co-operation with him, and unite my energies with his in destroying the power of the *prefetto*.

But he was in the monastery and I was in the prison. The chances of communication ever being established between us were remote, indeed.

But the motto of Thoriane strengthened my resolution to escape, and from that moment I had no other idea in my head. There was no room in my brain for any other thought than that. It filled me and moved me and controlled my actions.

The first thing to be done was to learn as much as possible of my surroundings. This was an easy matter so far as the cell was concerned. I knew every inch of it already.

But there was the window. I dragged the table across the stone floor and climbed upon it. It put me just high enough to enable me to look out through the strong bars of the little window.

Looking down, I saw that the prison yard extended about forty feet from the prison walls, and was surrounded by a stone wall, surmounted by sharpened spikes, over which it would be impossible to climb. An armed sentry paced to and fro in the yard, adding another factor to the impracticability of trying to escape in that direction, even if I could obtain an exit from the cell into the yard. But if I could not get over the spiked fence I could look through it, and a fine stretch of country lay beyond the forbidding points. To the right I saw just a portion of the monastery rising above the trees—just one end of it. Farther away I saw a high tower, which I recognized as one which Mutterelli had shown me when we were taking our reconnoitering tour on horseback. It had then been to the east of us. Putting it in line now with the corner of the monastery, gave me the impression that I was looking northward. The tower was not north from me, but off to the right, which would be nearly east. But a line from my little window, straight ahead, would, I thought, lead directly to the northward and, therefore, away from Cagliari.

A winding road extended from the east, being near the prison, where it first came within the range of my vision from the window. Then it turned northward, crossed the valley, and pursued a zig zag course up a ragged mountain side. It was rough, and looked as if it might be difficult of ascent. And from my perch in the window, the far-off rocks and hills and rugged paths seemed to offer no end of hiding-places if I could but reach them. Of course, I would be at a disadvantage in not knowing the country, while those who would be my pursuers knew, probably, every foot of it. But this difficulty seemed small and insignificant compared to the greater and present one of iron bars and stone walls.

Still meditating, pondering and cudgeling my brain over the problem of escape, I stepped down from the table, replaced it and took a few turns around my cell to stretch my legs.

I was getting hungry, and knew that it must be noon. I supposed they fed prisoners in Sardinia, and waited patiently for my portion. I did not expect anything very appetizing, but to successfully put into operation any plan to escape I must have my full strength, and to that end I determined to devour whatever food they put before me.

Dinner time came at last, and I was agreeably surprised to receive at the hands of the keeper a substantial meal. Doing justice to this, I felt like a new man, ready for any emergency and willing to take any chance for liberty. But I must,

I reasoned, bide my time and wait for a promising opportunity. If I made an attempt to escape and failed, I knew that I would be put in irons or otherwise confined, so that any further attempt would be impossible.

I remembered that the *prefetto* had told me that I was to be put at labour for the State. As yet there had been no hint at what this labour might be. Perhaps I was not to be kept in this cell many days, but, like Henry Thoriane, removed to the monastery or some other place, there to work out my punishment.

I knew that so long as I was in that cell I could do nothing without first taking the life of my keeper, and I did not wish to kill a man who was but doing his duty to his government as he understood it. And even if I killed him, I knew that the danger of detection before I got away from the building would be very great. So I resolved to wait awhile, and to conduct myself so as to allay all suspicion, till my keepers into a sense of security, and then see what would be done with me.

And so I waited. The night came on, and with it my supper, which I ate with less relish than I had my dinner, because it was not as good a meal, and because the lack of exercise interfered with my usually ready appetites. During the long night I lay on my prison bed, sleeping part of the time, but having wakeful hours, in which I pondered and studied over the great problem of my life—how to escape and carry the plans, now seemingly ended in disaster, to a successful termination.

And one day followed another in this wise, and night followed night, until I had spent a week in the prison. I had heard nothing from Mutterelli, and gave him up. Having lost sight of the promised reward, he had, no doubt, lost all interest in me. I had held no communication with the outside world, because it was not permitted. I gained the good will of my guard or keeper, and he spent many an hour with me—the locked door between us—I in my cell, he in the corridor, talking through the window of the door. For this officer of the State had taught me many words of the language, and I found that, with my knowledge of Latin, it was not difficult to pick up the peculiar dialect of Sardinia.

This whiled away the time pleasantly, and I thought the ability to make myself understood in the native tongue was a valuable help to me if I ever succeeded in effecting my escape. So I drew him on, learning all I could each day, hoping, dreaming, waiting for that supreme moment in which my blow for liberty should be struck.

CHAPTER XVII.

"NUMBER 101!"

"What is it?"

"You are to be put into a road gang this morning, and go out to work on the public boulevard."

I was known as Number 101. My keeper imparted the above delightful information to me on the ninth day of my imprisonment.

I say delightful because I mean it, and do not use the word in an ironical sense. The news was indeed delightful and gratifying. It was what I had waited for. It was the beginning of my labour for the State, and my hopes rose, for now, surely, I would find an opportunity to strike for my liberty.

"When am I to go?" I asked in a disinterested way, as if it did not matter to me whether I remained in the cell or worked outside.

"In one hour. Be ready."

I had been ready a week.

That hour seemed as long as any of the previous days had seemed, so eager was I to get outside the walls of the prison, to

breathe the pure air again, to stimulate my muscles with exercise, and to work for my own deliverance.

When at last the hour was up and I was called, I stepped from my cell, and was conducted by an armed guard into an open court, where a score or more of prisoners were assembled.

They were an ugly-looking lot. There were faces in the crowd that showed the passions of hate and all forms of wickedness. They all seemed to be Italian or Sardinian types. I was the only exception. I was placed alongside a villainous-looking ruffian, whose melodorous presence was decidedly nauseating. We were about in the centre of the column, which was formed of twos. We were guarded by a dozen armed men, all about as villainous in their appearance as my fellow prisoners.

Having, by dint of great executive ability, loud talking, and cursing, got us in proper form, our keepers marched us forth to do the work to which we had been assigned.

We were marching along the road leading northward from Cagliari; then turning to the west, we journeyed in that direction about an hour. At last we came up a rough road leading to the northward, that bore indications of being an unfinished work. Stones and piles of sand lay about. Stakes were driven into the ground to mark the edges of the road. It was, as I correctly surmised, a new public road, leading from Cagliari proper, in the shore region, out to the suburbs, and was to be a smooth, hard road for driving and pleasure-taking.

I judged from the direction that this new road ran parallel with, and perhaps four miles distant from, the one I had seen from my cell windows, running over the ragged mountains.

The officer in command lost no time, but put us at once to work. Most of the prisoners had evidently been there before, for they seemed to know just what to do, as if they were resuming work that had but recently been laid down.

I was put at digging up the new ground in advance of the levellers, and for four mortal hours did I swing a pickaxe into the soil of Sardinia. The very outrageousness of my imprisonment and labour made me smile grimly, as I wondered what my fashionable friends in New York would say could they see me 'doing time' for the *prefetto*.

Dinner time came, and we stopped work long enough to eat the meal that was prepared for us.

After dinner, I, in company with the same ill-swelling ruffian who was my marching partner, was sent some distance away to bring back a supply of cement in a wagon drawn by a small horse, a rugged, stout little animal, that did not seem to feel fatigue.

My Sardinian partner and I stood up in the wagon, I doing the driving, while behind us sat a guard with a rifle in his hands, directing me.

As we left the main force behind, my heart began to beat violently and my brain to work quickly, for now, I thought, the only opportunity I would get had come.

Rounding a bend in the road, we were entirely out of sight of the others. No houses were near. There were no passers-by. Surely no time could promise better for my purpose than the present.

We travelled in this way perhaps three miles. Then we came to a sort of atoro-house or shed, where we stopped. The guard had the key to the shed, and handing it to me, he ordered me to open the door.

I did as I was told. Nothing could exceed my humility and meekness at that moment.

The stuff used for these roads proved to be a kind of asphalt brought from the coast farther north, and stored in the shed until needed. It was now dry, and lay in piles of broken lumps and blocks.

The guard stood looking on while my companion and I proceeded to carry the stuff out to the wagon and load up for our return trip. I had resolved that this return trip would never be made—at least by me.

I had made several trips to the wagon, putting in lumps of the asphalt, my fellow-labourer keeping close to me, assisting in the work. We passed close in front of the guard, who by the time we had worked a quarter of an hour had lighted his cigarette and had grown less watchful.

Suddenly an overwhelming influence seized me, and I struck the blow that I had been dreaming of ever since my incarceration.

I had not the least cause to feel murderously inclined toward the guard, but it was my liberty against his life, and the balance fell my way. I had reached his side with a heavy piece of the asphalt in my hands. Without giving him time to raise his rifle, I lifted the lump and sent it crashing against his skull.

With a groan, he fell into a heap on the floor.

I sprang to the horse and began rapidly to loosen him from the wagon. But now an enemy arose upon whom I had not counted. My fellow-prisoner, either from a mistaken sense of duty or from a desire to win favour and perhaps pardon for himself, sought to prevent my departure. He sprang upon me, and we had a hand-to-hand tussle, in which it seemed at times as if I was going to get the worst of it. Backward and forward we awayed, now with his hand at my throat, now with my fist square against his jaw, writhing, twisting, biting and kicking until I finally got a good grip on his throat and nearly strangled him.

Seizing him with a mighty effort, I hurled him against the body of the guard, and with a last pull at the straps, freed the horse from his encumbrance.

Leaping upon his back, I banged his sides with my heels, and away he went to the northward, carrying me toward freedom.

But the Sardinian prisoner was not yet beaten. I heard the crack of the guard's rifle behind me, and felt a stinging sensation in the back. I was shot.

The immediate result of the wound was to urge me to redouble my efforts to get away. The little horse pounded the ground as he did all in his power to aid me. Still I belaboured him with my heels to increase his speed.

I felt the warm blood oozing down my back, and began to feel weak and dizzy. Even though I had not been hit in a vital spot, I knew that the loss of blood would finish me unless I was able soon to stay it. But to halt now would be death anyhow, and I kept on. The rifle was fired again, but this time the distance was too great for the Sardinian's aim, and I was not touched.

On, on we went, my little horse and I, past woods and past farms, until I saw the road across the valley, which I had seen from my prison window, and which had seemed to lead to places of refuge in the mountains.

I was now so weak from the loss of blood that I was swaying from side to side, and almost blinded by dizziness.

I clung desperately to the horse until we had crossed the valley, and had reached the verge of the forest, and the upward curve of the mountain road.

So far as I knew, I was not yet pursued. Suddenly my horse stumbled and fell. My weakness was now so great that my hands refused to cling; my legs were as those of a man paralyzed. I rolled from the animal's back and fell with a thud by the wayside. Relieved of his burden, the horse recovered his footing and plunged forward out of sight.

I was stunned by the fall. Many bright lights seemed to play before my eyes. Music sounded in my ears. I remembered

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