

**AN ACCOUNT OF THE CAPTIVITY
FIRST IN DULCIGNO, AND THEN IN TRIPOLI OF BARBARY**

OF GIAN-MARCO BETTI

A CITIZEN OF BOLOGNA

And of his ransom in the year 1762

**BY THE VENERABLE ARCHCONFRATERNITY
OF SAINT MARY OF THE SNOW
CALLED OF THE BANNER**

Sole administrator in this city of the Holy Work of Ransom

**AND DEDICATED TO
THE NOBLE AND EXCELLENT SENATOR**

GIAN-FRANCESCO ALDROVANDI MARISCOTTI

*Bolognese patrician; nobleman of Modena, Reggio, Ferrara, and Ravenna; Count of Viano
and Piagna; Gentleman of the Chamber to His Majesty the King of Sardinia; and most worthy
Protector of the aforesaid Archconfraternity*

IN BOLOGNA
At the Longhi Printing House, with permission of the Superiors

ABOUT THIS PUBLIC EDITION

This English edition was prepared by Montenegro.com from the library's scanned images of the 1762 Italian pamphlet using optical character recognition (OCR) and machine-translation tools, followed by editorial review. Automated reading of eighteenth-century type can introduce errors. This is a reading translation, not a diplomatic transcription; consult the source scans for exact wording and pagination.

Source: Biblioteca comunale dell'Archiginnasio, Bologna, shelf mark A.V. H. VIII. 17 op. 14, inventory 135796. Reproduction and publication of the supplied scans were authorized under protocol 379/IV-3c.

Historical-language notice: the source reflects the religious, racial, and political language of its time. That language is retained where necessary to represent the source and is not endorsed by Montenegro.com.

The public PDF is text-only. It contains no scan reproductions, embedded images, embedded files, scripts, forms, annotations, or personal contact data.

Prepared and editorially reviewed by Montenegro.com, 2026

TO THE MOST NOBLE AND EXCELLENT SENATOR

We wish to adorn with your most illustrious name the narrative we now publish of the captivity endured in Tripoli by Gian-Marco Betti and of the ransom which, by divine favor, we have secured for him. You, most distinguished Sir, can receive it only with goodwill. Just as you once graciously yielded to our humble entreaties when we resolved to choose you as Protector of our Archconfraternity, so now be pleased that we make known to the public that you are indeed our Protector, and that we prize and take great pride in that honor.

The public, upon whose truthful lips your name never appears without praise, will see it at the head of these pages and will commend both our choice and the pleasure we take in having made it. We have eagerly awaited this solemn and splendid occasion for that very purpose. We know well that the thing we offer you is slight, and that the name of a knight so richly adorned with learning as yourself would deserve to stand before a far finer and more celebrated work.

Yet occasions sometimes arise in which the smallest things, lifted above their littleness because they so perfectly suit the person to whom they are offered, acquire a certain worth and are received with favor. If our judgment does not deceive us, we believe that such must be the fortune of the present offering.

In these pages is told the ransom we have just made from the barbarous and greedy African shores: the ransom of a Christian, and a Christian who is our fellow citizen; a deliverance willingly undertaken by our Archconfraternity and brought to a prosperous conclusion.

We know plainly the ardent zeal that engages you in advancing our holy religion, and the zeal that moves you to promote not only the common welfare of our country but also the private good of individuals, especially of the unfortunate. We see how graciously you favor us and how wonderfully the protection in which you hold us answers our hopes. We have witnessed the counsel and effort by which you assisted the ransom here described; and we firmly believe that you must rejoice in so happy an outcome and be exceedingly glad of it.

We therefore cannot doubt that this account of the event which we lay before you will be received by you with every kindness. We accompany the offering with that profound respect by which we are honored to remain:

*Your most devoted and obedient servants,
The Officers and Brethren
OF SAINT MARY OF THE SNOW*

AN ACCOUNT

OF THE CAPTIVITY AND RANSOM OF GIAN-MARCO BETTI

Translator's note: the title names the captive Gian-Marco Betti, while the body of the original consistently calls him Giovanni Betti. That distinction has been preserved here.

That charity toward our neighbor which Jesus Christ our Savior so often recommends in His Gospel should willingly and zealously be exercised by us for the good of all whenever a suitable occasion offers itself; and still more toward those united to us by blood, friendship, or country. Perfect charity ought first to be practiced toward these and then extended to others, just as the vine, after clothing with leaves the elm that supports it, sends its branches over the neighboring plants and adorns them.

This is precisely the extraordinary work of charity performed by the Venerable Archconfraternity of Saint Mary of the Snow, called of the Banner, sole administrator in Bologna of the Holy Work of Ransom. Whenever news reaches it that one of our fellow citizens has, through misfortune, fallen into slavery among the Muslim peoples of Barbary, it immediately resolves to act with all speed and at every cost to procure his redemption.

In former times very many shared in this charitable work; whoever wishes proof may consult its registers, whose authority all must accept. In the present century alone, of which no more than sixty-one years have passed, it records twelve enslaved fellow citizens redeemed at a very considerable expense. These are but a part of the many from past centuries whom I could cite. For this, the devotion and care of the brethren deserve the highest praise, as does the mercy of the faithful in the city and countryside, whose abundant alms have supported this work of charity.

Among the virtues concerning our neighbor, this is surely one of the most meritorious before God, for it aims to draw the unfortunate not only from the bodily sufferings they endure, but also from the immediate danger of abandoning the straight path of eternal salvation by embracing the Muslim faith. Our forefathers therefore acted most wisely in founding archconfraternities that would help men escape such peril, trusting that the result would answer their desire.

For brevity I omit from this account certain things that might appear superfluous. I relate only what serves the purpose and what I judge best suited to stir still further the charity of the faithful, so that through alms those fellow citizens now held in bondage may be freed. At the same time, the public may be assured of the fruits produced by these offerings and be moved to continue them, so that a fund may accumulate to aid others who may hereafter find themselves in need of such help.

To give some order to this sorrowful account, it should first be said that GIOVANNI, son of Giuseppe BETTI, a citizen of Bologna and a saddler by trade, was born on the feast of Saint Mark about thirty-seven years ago, in the parish of Saint Thomas of the Market, and was baptized in our metropolitan church of Bologna.

As he grew, his parents raised him decently and as a Christian. They sent him to school to learn the first elements and afterwards placed him in the saddler's trade. But, being of a lively

spirit and quick intelligence, while still young he began to feel the desire to travel and wander through the world, as young men are apt to do. He therefore conceived the thought of abandoning his father's house and his native city.

For some time he remained uncertain; at last he resolved to act. Without anyone's knowledge, he suddenly left Bologna poorly equipped and with little money, casting himself into the arms of fortune, whatever might happen. We should not wonder that an inexperienced young man blindly entertained such a wish and, following it, went to his misfortune. Thus he departed Bologna twelve years ago and traveled through many countries, meeting now adverse and now favorable fortune.

His father loved him as deeply as any father ever loved a son. When Giovanni vanished from home and every effort failed to discover what had become of him, the father's grief may easily be imagined. Many means were tried to obtain news, but all in vain. At last the father and the rest of the family came to believe that some accident had ended his life.

With this said, let us begin the story proposed at the outset. After wandering here and there, young Betti entered the service of an officer in the Venetian troops forming the garrison of Budua, near the frontiers of the Venetian state. Dissatisfied with the treatment he received from the officer, he nevertheless accompanied him to Pastruich, also under Venetian rule. Before long he fled from Pastruich, but Montenegrins seized him and carried him to Montenegro, a territory governed by schismatic Greeks and bordering the Ottoman Empire.

These Montenegrins, men without faith who made a trade of robbing Catholic Christians and selling them, promptly sold GIOVANNI BETTI to the commander of Sciablac, a Turkish fortress, for a sum not exceeding twenty-seven Venetian zecchini. Giovanni remained in this man's service for a year.

The commander employed him in every base task. Cruel and far removed from every feeling of humanity, five times during that year he had Giovanni's hands tied behind him, ropes placed around his neck, and chains fastened to his feet, and kept him bound to a post in his stable. Before tying him there, both the commander and his servants would throw themselves upon him. Once bound, they left him that way for a month, or at least twenty days, giving him only miserable nourishment.

At last, through the petitions of the commander's mother and wife, who could not bear to see him so treated, the man relaxed this inhuman severity. He inflicted these torments because he wanted Giovanni to renounce the holy faith, become a Turk, and marry a Muslim woman who served in the household; or else to become a schismatic and marry a Greek widow.

At other times the commander summoned him, assumed a pleasant expression, and cunningly tried to win him with words: 'From what I know of you, I cannot believe you so mad as to persist obstinately in the Christian religion. Come, let us be brief and waste no more words. Renounce your law. If you do what I ask, every past error will be forgiven, and I promise that when you are set at liberty you shall have the means to live comfortably.'

The captive remained firm against these flattering promises. Seeing that all his efforts to make Giovanni apostatize were wasted, the commander fell into rage and fury. Fortunately Giovanni had brought from his homeland the sound principles of piety learned in his earliest years. With divine

grace, these kept him constant, in this and in other dangers, in his resolve never to abandon the holy Catholic faith.

The wicked commander, burning ever more fiercely with anger, tried to force him to eat meat on Fridays and Saturdays, though on other days he gave him none. After Giovanni served at his table on those days, he ordered him to eat meat in his presence. When Giovanni refused, the man discharged one or two pistols at close range. As soon as the captive saw him reach for the weapons, however, he found time to flee and escaped injury.

On another day the commander ordered him to bring to the table a dish of various fruits. Giovanni did not yet understand the language well and, through his ill fortune, thought that a dish of meat had been requested. He obeyed and set it before his master. The sight threw the man into such a rage that he seized the copper dish and, with curses, hurled it at Giovanni's head. The poor captive was badly wounded and streamed with blood.

Not content to see him injured, the barbarous master drew the pistol he always carried and fired. By the Lord's grace the ball passed over Giovanni's head, only narrowly missing him. Dazed by the blow of the dish, bleeding heavily from a wound whose scar still remains, Giovanni heard the shot and saw the ball lodge in the wooden partition against which he stood. He then realized that a Montenegrin had raised the master's arm, causing the shot to go wide; to that man he owed his life.

Seeing himself so abused and always in danger of being killed in the service of so inhuman and cruel a master, the poor captive resolved to flee. Though battered and wounded in the head, he waited only for sunset. He spoke of his plan to no one except a French captive serving a relative of the commander, who was also ready to escape. They left together without being observed, but watched everything along the way, knowing how much harm would follow if they were pursued.

Having escaped Sciablac, the two set out for Scutari and arrived after six painful days. There they soon learned that relatives of the commander lived in the city, one of whom exercised judicial authority. Knowing that remaining there could bring only evil, they departed at sunrise toward Durazzo. After two days they reached the mouth of the Bojana River and boarded a small vessel. The boatmen did not suspect who they were or what they intended.

The oars were quickly put into the water to cross the river mouth, after which they hoped to go ashore and take the road to Durazzo. They rejoiced greatly in their good fortune, believing their plan certain to succeed. During the passage, however, a wind arose which, together with the force of the current, carried the boat out to sea.

There they met a sixteen-oared vessel carrying many men from Dulcigno who were going to gather wood on a nearby shore. When those men saw the little four-oared boat from a distance, nothing more was needed. They blocked its return and escape, quickly came alongside, and entered it like a thunderbolt from heaven. Boat and all it carried fell into their hands.

The unhappy GIOVANNI BETTI was again a captive. The captain of the men from Dulcigno recognized him as Italian and deceitfully told him: 'You have nothing to fear or trouble yourself about. We shall go to Dulcigno, about eighty miles from Sciablac. There are plenty of boats there to take you to Ancona or Senigallia, and soon you will be home.' Yet even as the captain ironically

wished him good fortune, the sailors seized Giovanni by force and threw him violently into their vessel.

They soon landed on a shore not far away. Six armed sailors escorted him by land to Dulcigno, no more than twelve miles distant. This happened in the year 1757.

At Dulcigno the captain sold him for twenty-five zecchini to Mamet Salamanaga, a relative of the Pasha, with whom Giovanni remained enslaved for more than four months. This master was a man of arms, very ready to shed blood, as the barbarians were accustomed to be. Giovanni once fled from him, but matters became worse. He was caught on the road, beaten with a musket and struck with its butt so severely that his whole body turned black. A blow to the head stunned him, drained his strength, and left a serious wound.

When he recovered his senses, his hands were bound useless at his sides and he was tied to one of their horses and taken back to the city. There he was chained by the neck, hands, and feet and fastened to a post for a month. Every day he was beaten over all his limbs and even on the soles of his feet. An order called for fifty-five blows, though the number was reduced through the pleas of the master's wife and daughter, who were deeply distressed by the sight.

During this torment the Pasha granted him his life, for his master had resolved to have him hanged. The text later states that Giovanni had been sold to this master for thirty-five Venetian zecchini. During the six months he served him, he endured further cruel beatings and was denied enough food, so that it was considered a miracle he survived.

He was then sold to one of the master's relatives for fifty-five Venetian zecchini and served him for six months. One evening as darkness came on, Giovanni fled without waiting longer. He carefully avoided discovery and left the road so that those pursuing him might not overtake him. He headed toward Scutari, intending to place himself under the protection of the Venetian consul or another Catholic minister.

He had not gone far when, least expecting it, he was captured. His hands were tied tightly behind him, and he was fastened to a horse's tail and dragged back to Dulcigno. Exhausted and without strength, he was put in chains and cruelly secured by the neck to a great iron ring in the stable. He remained so for twenty-seven days, sustained on a little bread and water. Only very rarely did the mistress secretly give him a small quantity of soup, pitying his condition.

His master, a fierce hater of Christians, abused his power and let no day pass without exercising his rage. When he could do no more he beat Giovanni with a very long pipe made from a twisted cherrywood branch, or seized a cudgel and struck so many heavy blows that the captive often came close to being clubbed to death.

After Giovanni had suffered seven months of this hostile existence, a Tripolitan galley arrived at Dulcigno. The galley exchanged a Black captive for him, and its rais, seeing that Giovanni was still young, paid fifteen Venetian zecchini in addition. He carried Giovanni to Tripoli, a voyage of fifteen days, and delivered him to the Bey's chief minister, to whom the exchanged captive had belonged.

Giovanni remained this man's slave for four months. For many weeks the minister would not allow him to hear Mass in the Christians' church, and he likewise compelled him to eat meat on Fridays and Saturdays, mocking those Catholic observances.

This minister was a Neapolitan apostate named Mamet Caia. He had grown rich by making every man's property his own. Since his conscience no longer reproached him for his apostasy, he threatened to send Giovanni to Fezzan in exchange for a Moor, believing that there he would surely renounce Christianity. When threats failed to change the captive's mind, avarice moved Mamet to kindness: he urged Giovanni to ransom himself for three hundred Tripolitan zecchini. But from whom could Giovanni hope to obtain them?

After five months of captivity under this apostate, who tormented him excessively and gave him almost nothing to eat, the unhappy captive was given to the ruler, the Bey. Under him Giovanni remained more than twenty months, until his ransom. He labored on the royal palace, the fortress, and other buildings the Bey was having constructed.

The overseers and master masons appointed to guard him - all dregs and rabble - frequently flogged him and also struck him with stones. In the morning they gave him only two ounces of black bread made from barley mixed with spoiled wheat; in the evening, four ounces and nothing else. At times they all fell upon him, punching and kicking him, each doing whatever he pleased, as though the prince's will were not satisfied unless they hurried to mistreat him.

While poor GIOVANNI was enslaved in Tripoli, news reached his father Giuseppe Betti in Bologna that his son was alive there in bondage, misery, and pain. On one hand the father was comforted that Giovanni still lived after being long believed dead; on the other he grieved that his son was in so anguished a state.

Moved by a father's proper affection and knowing no better course for securing his liberation, Giuseppe immediately submitted a humble petition to the officers of the Archconfraternity of the Ransom in Bologna. He begged them to provide sufficient alms to redeem his son and deliver him from the danger that his sufferings might tempt him to renounce the holy Catholic faith. His paternal plea sought above all to prevent his son's soul from being lost for want of aid.

The officers graciously received the petition. They assembled, pitied father and son, and immediately considered the ransom, collecting alms from every quarter and adding funds already gathered.

On 6 July of the previous year, 1761, the father received a letter secretly sent by his son when opportunity allowed. With tears Giovanni commended himself to his father for deliverance, confessing that the misfortunes that had befallen him were deserved because of his many acts of disobedience while at home. He promised that, if he regained freedom and could return to his country, he would live subject to his father's love and command and would do whatever was asked of him.

Finally he begged his father to grant him that happiness, to receive him like the Prodigal Son with paternal tenderness, and to forgive his faults. The father was deeply moved and wept as he read, declaring that he could not be fully content until he saw his son free.

A sworn attestation of Giovanni's sorrowful imprisonment was also obtained from Father Filippo of Montevarchi, of the Strict Observance of Saint Francis in the Tuscan Province, a privileged missionary, Apostolic Prefect, and pastor general of Tripoli of Barbary and its kingdom. The certificate likewise bears the date 6 July 1761. That religious, renowned for zeal and holiness, sent fervent petitions for the ransom.

The negotiations soon began. The officers of the Archconfraternity wrote to Livorno to the Reverend Father Ambrogio of Saint Augustine, a Discalced Trinitarian and zealous procurator for the redemption of captives who resided there, asking him to employ every care and act of charity in the affair.

Heir to the zeal of his holy founder and thoroughly acquainted with all that such business required, Father Ambrogio wrote to the Most Illustrious Count Cosimo Conti, Imperial Consul, urging him to take the matter to heart. The consul acted with great skill and through his negotiations succeeded in concluding the captive's long-desired redemption.

I would fail in my duty if I did not also mention Prior Pellegrino Biafoni and Chamberlain Giulio Cesare Gampedelli, both officers of the Archconfraternity. They took a large part in the affair and labored greatly to carry it out, following the zeal of the noble senator Count Gian-Francesco Aldrovandi, Protector of that worthy assembly. No one more attentive or fervent than he could have been found.

On 20 August notice came that the redeemed man was already at Livorno, brought there by a Dutch ship whose captain was named Pietro Asmus. After thirty days of quarantine he was received and lodged through the devotion and courtesy of the Discalced Trinitarian Fathers of the Redemption, great supporters of the Work of Ransom. They welcomed GIOVANNI BETTI and provided him with clothing and food. Upon entering their convent he felt as though he had returned from death to life.

He then went to visit the miraculous image of the Virgin Mary venerated at the sanctuary of Montenero, not far from Livorno. There, with all the joy of his heart, he gave fervent thanks to the great Mother of God. Through sacramental confession and communion he dedicated himself wholly to the service of the God who had, with such mercy, freed him from the hard chains of captivity.

An exact account was then received of the expenses for the ransom and passage. Together with the many further expenses that had to be met, they amounted in all to 1,940 Bolognese lire and 18 soldi.

When the time came to leave Livorno, the redeemed GIOVANNI promptly set out. On 30 September 1762 he arrived in Bologna. The Chamberlain of the Archconfraternity went as far as Loiano to receive him. He was treated with particular kindness by the excellent senator Count Gian-Francesco Aldrovandi, most worthy Protector of the Archconfraternity of the Ransom, who lodged him in his palace until the day of the public ceremony.

The redeemed man's meeting with his father was truly a scene of great tenderness. The son could not cease weeping as he begged forgiveness for the past and promised respect and

obedience in the future. His father clasped him to his breast and for a while could say nothing, overcome by the great joy that filled his heart. Together they made a great celebration.

This is the account which the Archconfraternity owed to the public. This is the happiest day, on which it leads its newly redeemed man as though in triumph to offer solemn thanks to God for the benefits granted him. May the Lord prosper this narrative, so that its purpose - to advance divine worship among those who read it - may take effect in their hearts, and may it increase the generous and fervent devotion that has until now been maintained toward this Holy Work of Ransom.

PRAISE BE TO GOD