

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen  
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo  
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm  
Garnett Engels Byron Schiller  
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka  
Cotton Dostoyevsky Hall  
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Willis  
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac  
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane  
Burroughs Verne  
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch  
Homer Tolstoy Whitman  
Darwin Thoreau Twain  
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott  
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte  
London Descartes Cervantes Wells Hesse  
Poe Aristotle Wells Voltaire Cooke  
Hale James Hastings Shakespeare Chambers Irving  
Bunner Richter Chekhov da Shaw Wodehouse  
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# **Among the Brigands**

James De Mille

# Imprint

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By Prof. James de Mille

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## Among the Brigands

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## THE YOUNG DODGE CLUB.

## AMONG THE BRIGANDS.

### CHAPTER I.

*Stranger in a strange Land. – A Citadel of Trunks. – Besieged. – Retreat in good Order. – A most tremendous Uproar. – Kicks! Thumps! – Smash of Chain! – Crash of Tables! – A general Row! – The Cry for Help! – The Voice of David! – The Revelation of the Darkness! – The fiery Eyes! – The Unseen! – The Revelation of the Mystery. – A general Fight.*

Mr. Moses V. Sprole had passed the greater part of his life in his native village, and being anxious to see the world, resolved upon a tour in Europe. As he did not care to go alone, he offered to take with him his four nephews, who were great favorites with their bachelor uncle, and his chief associates. This offer met with an eager response from the boys, and a willing assent from their parents, who fully believed that a tour of this description would be of immense benefit to them. This brief explanation will serve to account for the appearance of Uncle Moses in Naples, where he landed on a mellow day in February, *en route* for Switzerland, bowed down with the responsibility of several heavy trunks, and the still heavier responsibility of four fine lumps of boys, of whose troubles, trials, tribulations, and manifold adventures, he seemed, on the present occasion, to have a mournful presentiment.

These troubles began at once; for scarcely had they landed when they found themselves surrounded by the lazzaroni, and the air was filled with a babel of exclamations.

"Signori!" "Signo!" "Moosoo!" "Meestaire!" "Sare!" "Carra ze baggage!" "Tek ze loggage!" "Show ze hotel!" "Hotel della Europa!" "Hotel dell' Inghelterra!" "Hotel dell' America!" "Eccelenza, you wanta good, naisy, rosbif, you comma longsida me!" "Come long!" "Hurrah!" "Bravo!" "O, yais." "Ver nais." "O, yais. You know me. American Meestaire!"

All this, and ever so much more, together with scraps of French, German, Bohemian, Hungarian, Russian, and several other languages which the lazzaroni had picked up for the purpose of making themselves agreeable to foreigners. They surrounded Uncle Moses and his four boys in a dense crowd—grinning, chattering, gesticulating, dancing, pushing, jumping, and grimacing, as only Neapolitan lazzaroni can; and they tried to get hold of the luggage that lay upon the wharf.

Bagged, hatless, shirtless, blessed with but one pair of trousers per man; bearded, dirty, noisy; yet fat and good-natured withal; the lazzaroni produced a startling effect upon the newly arrived travelers.

Uncle Moses soon grew utterly bewildered by the noise and disorder. One idea, however, was prominent in his mind, and that was his luggage. He had heard of Italian brigands. At the sight of this crowd, all that he had beard on that subject came back before him. "Rinaldo Rinaldini," a charming brigand book, which had been the delight of his childhood, now stood out clear in his recollection. The lazzaroni seemed to be a crowd of bandits, filled with but one purpose, and that was to seize the luggage. The efforts of the lazzaroni to get the trunks roused him to action. Springing forward, he struck their hands away with a formidable cotton umbrella, and drew the trunks together in a pile. Three lay in a row, and one was on the top of these. The pile was a small pyramid.

"Here, boys," he cried; "you keep by me, Don't let these varmints get the trunks. Sit down on 'em, and keep 'em off."

Saying this, Uncle Moses put the two Clark boys on a trunk on one side, and the two Wilmot boys on a trunk on the other; and mounting himself upon the middle trunk, he sat down and glared defiantly at the enemy.

This action was greeted by the lazzaroni with a burst of laughter and a shout of, —

"Br-r-r-r-r-r-r-ra-vo!"

To which Uncle Moses and the boys made no reply. In fact, it would have been a little difficult for them to do so, as not one of them understood a word of any language spoken among men except their own. So they said nothing; but constituting themselves into a beleaguered garrison, they intrenched themselves within their citadel, and bade defiance to the foe.

The foe, on the other hand, pressed round them, bombarding the garrison with broken English, broken French, and broken German, and sometimes made an assault upon the trunks.

Time passed on, and the garrison sat there, holding their own. At length they all became aware of the fact that they were excessively hungry. It was very evident that this kind of thing could not last much longer.

Meanwhile Uncle Moses had recovered his presence of mind. He was naturally cool and self-possessed, and after mounting the trunks, and gathering the boys about him, he quickly rallied from his confusion, and looked eagerly around to find some way by which he might be extricated from his difficulty.

At last a way appeared.

Around him, in his immediate neighborhood, stood the lazzaroni, as urgent, as patient, and as aggressive as ever, with their offers of assistance. Beyond these were people passing up and down the wharf, all of whom were foreigners, and therefore inaccessible. Beyond these again was a wide space, and in the distance a busy street, with carriages driving to and fro.

Uncle Moses looked for a long time, hoping to see something like a cab. In vain. They all seemed to him to be "one-hoss shays," and what was worse, all seemed to be filled.

"Boys," said he at last, "I'm goin' to make a move. You jest sit here, and hold on to the trunks. I'll go an hunt up one of them one-hoss shays. There ain't nothin' else that I can do. Hold on now, hard and fast, till I come back."

With these words off went Uncle Moses, and the boys remained behind, waiting.

A very fine-looking set of boys they were too.

There was Frank Wilmot, about fifteen years of age, tall, stout, with fine, frank face, and crisp, curly hair.

There was Clive Wilmot, about fourteen, tall and slight, with large eyes and dark hair.

There was David Clark, about Frank's age, rather pale, with serious face, and quiet, thoughtful manner.

And there was Robert, or, as he was always called, Bob Clark—an odd-looking boy, with a bullet head, pug nose, comical face, brown eyes, and short shingled hair.

Uncle Moses was not gone long. By some wonderful means or other he had succeeded in procuring a vehicle of that kind which is universal in this city, and he now reappeared to the delighted boys, coming at a tearing pace towards them, seated in a Neapolitan caleche.

The Neapolitan caleche is a wonderful machine, quite unequalled among wheeled vehicles. The wheels are far back, the shafts are long, and horse draws it. But in the caleche it is a very common thing for any quantity of people to pile themselves. There is a seat for two, which is generally occupied by the most, worthy, perhaps; but all around them cluster others,—behind them, before them, and on each side of them,—clinging to the shafts, standing on the axle, hanging on the springs. Indeed, I have heard of babies being slung underneath, in baskets; but I don't believe that.

At any rate, Uncle Moses and his party all tumbled in triumphantly. Two trunks were put in front, one behind, and one suspended underneath. David and Clive sat behind, Frank and Uncle Moses on the seat, while Bob sat on the trunk in front, with the driver. The lazzaroni looked on with mournful faces, but still proffered their services. In patient perseverance few people can equal them.

The driver saw at once the purpose of the Americans, though they could not tell him what they wanted. So he drove them to a

hotel in the Strada Toledo, where he left them, after having been paid by Uncle Moses the largest fare he had ever received in his life; for Uncle Moses gave him about five dollars, and felt grateful to him besides.

Their apartments were very nice rooms in the sixth story. The hotel was a quadrangular edifice, with a spacious court-yard. Around this court-yard ran galleries, opening into each story, and communicating with one another by stairways, which were used by all the occupants of the house.

From the gallery in the sixth story a door opened into their parlor. On the left side of this was a snug bedroom, of which Uncle Moses took possession; on the right side was another, which was appropriated by David and Clive; while the third, which was on the other side, and looked out into the street, was taken by Frank and Bob.

Thus the four boys paired off, and made themselves very comfortable..

That night they all went to bed early. Uncle Moses retired last. All slept soundly, for they were very much fatigued.

But just before daybreak, and in the dim morning twilight, Frank and Bob were suddenly roused by a most tremendous uproar in the parlor — kicks, thumps, tables upsetting, chairs breaking, and a general row going on; in the midst of which din arose the voice of David, calling frantically upon themselves and Uncle Moses.

This was certainly enough to rouse anybody.

Up jumped Frank, and rushed to the door.

Up jumped Bob, and sprang after him.

The noise outside was outrageous. What was it? Could it be robbers?

No. Robbers would prefer to do their work in silence. What was it?

Slowly and cautiously Frank opened the door, and looked forth into the parlor. It was as yet quite dark, and the room into which he peered was wrapped in the shades of night. What little he could see he saw but indistinctly. Yet he saw something.

He saw a dark, shadowy figure in rapid motion backward and forward, and at every movement some article of furniture would go with a crash to the floor. Sometimes the figure seemed to be on the table, at other times it was leaping in the air. Suddenly, as he looked, the door, which opened out into the parlor, was banged back with a violent blow, and shut again. Frank was nearly knocked down.

"What is it?" asked Bob.

"I don't know," said Frank, "unless it's a madman."

"What shall we do?"

"If we were all together," said Frank, "we might make a rush at him, and secure him. I've a great mind to make a start, as it is."

"It must be a brigand!" said Bob; for his mind, like the minds of the rest of the party, was largely filled with images of Italian bandits.

"Perhaps so," said Frank; "but at any rate let's make a rush at him. Will you do it?"

"Of course," said Bob.

At this Frank carefully opened the door again, and looked forth. The noise had ceased for the time. Bob poked his head forth also. They looked eagerly into the room.

Suddenly Frank touched Bob.

"Look!" he whispered, "by the table."

Bob looked.

It was certainly a singular sight that met their view. In the midst of the gloom they could see two balls of light that seemed like eyes, though there was no form visible to which these glaring, fiery eyes might belong. And the eyes seemed to glare out of the darkness directly at them. All was still now; but the very stillness gave additional horror to that unseen being, whose dread gaze seemed to be fastened upon them.

Suddenly David's voice was heard from the next room,—

"Frank! Bob!"

"Hallo!" cried both boys.

"What shall we do? Can't you do something?"

"I'll see," cried Frank. "Bob, light the lamp."

"I haven't any matches," said Bob.

"What a pity!" said David. "Can't you wake Uncle Moses? Your room is next to his."

At this Bob went to the wall between his room and that of Uncle Moses, and began to pound with all his might. Uncle Moses did not respond, but there came a response from another quarter. It was from the thing in the parlor. Once more the fearful uproar began. Crash! went the chairs. Bang! went the tables. A rapid racket of hard footfalls succeeded, mingled with the smash of the furniture.

Frank closed the door.

"If I only had a light," said he, "I should know what to do. But what can a fellow do in the dark?"

"I wonder what's the matter with Uncle Moses."

"He? O, he would sleep through anything."

"I wonder if it is a brigand, after all," said Bob.

"I don't know. I still think it may be a madman."

"I don't like those glaring eyes."

"If I only had a fair chance, and could see," said Frank, fiercely, "I'd soon find out what is behind those glaring eyes."

Louder grew the din while they were speaking—the rattle, the bang, the smash, the general confusion of deafening sounds.

"I should like to know," said Frank, coolly, "how much longer this sort of thing is going to last."

For some time longer the boys kept the door shut, and the noise at length ceased as suddenly as it had begun. It had now grown much lighter, for in these southern countries twilight, whether in the morning or the evening, is but of short duration, and light ad-

vances or retires with a rapidity which is startling to the natives of more northern latitudes.

This increase of light gave fresh courage to Frank, who, even in the dark, and in the face of the mystery, had behaved very well; and he began to arrange a plan of action. His arrangements were soon completed. He simply drew a jackknife from his pocket, and opened it.

"Now, Bob," said he, "you follow me."

"All right," said Bob, cheerily.

Frank quietly opened the door, and looked forth, while Bob, in eager curiosity, looked out the same instant. There was now sufficient light for them to see every object in the room. A scene of wild disorder revealed itself. All the furniture was turned topsy-turvy. The door leading to the gallery was open, and there, before their eyes, standing on the sofa, was the being that had created such excitement.

One look was enough.

One cry escaped both the boys:—

"A billy goat! A miserable billy goat!" cried they.

And the next moment both of them sprang forward and seized the animal by the horns.

Then began a struggle. The goat was strong. He was also excited by the singularity of his surroundings and the suddenness of the attack. So he showed fight, and resisted desperately. Frank and Bob, however, clung most tenaciously to the horns which they had seized. Backward and forward the combatants pushed and dragged one another, with a new uproar as loud as the previous one.

In the midst of this they were interrupted by the appearance of Uncle Moses.

The door of his room opened, and that venerable personage made his appearance in a long night-gown, which reached to his heels, and wearing a long, starched night-cap, which nearly touched the ceiling.