

Life on the Italian island of Corsica in 1767 was hard. So hard that Carlo Forni and his friend Corbollo decided to join a ship sailing for Florida. A Scotsman, Dr. Andrew Turnbull, had planned the crossing. He owned land in the New World. And he had promised passage, food, and land to any who agreed to work in his colony for ten years.

During the terrible ocean voyage many people died. When the ship finally landed at an inlet named New Smyrna, the settlers saw only a flat and swampy wilderness. At once Carlo took charge and helped the settlers put up shacks to house themselves. They had scarcely finished building the huts when Dr. Turnbull ordered them to get to work on the land. Not only was the work hard, but the settlers were made to live like slaves.

Carlo went to see Dr. Turnbull, who lived in comfort in a large house.

"Any trouble?" Turnbull asked.

"You must know that the life here is not what you promised. Something must be done to help your workers," Carlo pleaded.

"What? You want to ruin me?" the doctor barked.

"There is plenty of food in the ocean. At least let them fish," pleaded Carlo.

"And waste the time they should be spending on the land? Never!" Turnbull shouted.

Fuming inside, Carlo returned to the fields.

Soon after this an English merchant ship moored in the inlet. The sailors coming ashore were shocked by the misery they saw around them. Returning to their ship, they carried back their own food and gave it to the starving settlers.

Turnbull heard about what was happening. He went to the captain of the ship and told him to keep his men away from the settlers.

Carlo said nothing when he heard what Dr. Turnbull had done.

A few days later, however, Carlo told the workers that he had a plan to free them. He told them to be ready for action.

One morning Corbollo stole to Carlo's side in the field. He said, "There's a ship in the harbor. The crew has gone ashore!"

Carlo glanced toward the harbor and saw a large ship. He shouted, "That's it! Hurry, give the signal!"

Soon three hundred Italians, Greeks, and Spaniards dropped their work and came running. "We are boarding that ship. We are sailing to Havana and freedom," Carlo said.

Carlo, Corbollo, and Skouras, a trusted Greek friend, had no trouble getting everyone safely aboard the ship.

Dr. Turnbull was frantic that the fortune he had invested in the colony would be lost. He rushed to the British authorities for help. It was not long before a British ship overtook the runaways. They forced the ship back to the Florida shore.

On landing, the three leaders, Carlo, Corbollo, and Skouras, were arrested. They were sentenced to be hanged.

The scaffolds were ready and the settlers were assembled by the troops to watch the hangings. The governor turned to Skouras. "You did not plot this crime. I will free you if you act as executioner for the two rebels."

"No! I will die with them."

Carlo spoke up, "We must die, Skouras, but you must live on. You must see the day when our people will be free in this New

World. Do it, I beg you!"

"Amen," Corbollo echoed him.

Skouras, with tears in his eyes, then performed the sorry task.

The plight of the New Smyrna settlers shocked many people in Florida. A few years later the attorney general of the province took

up the case. The contract with Dr. Turnbull was canceled. The settlers were given land in northern Saint Augustine.

Thus the once abused immigrants of New Smyrna became the free men of Saint Augustine. And so Carlo Forni's prophetic words proved true.

## CHECK YOUR READING

1. **When Carlo Forni and Corbollo left Corsica, they were seeking**
  - A adventure
  - B great riches
  - C an easier, better life
2. **Dr. Andrew Turnbull had promised Carlo and his friend**
  - A good wages
  - B their ocean passage, food, and land
  - C a chance to see the world
3. **The land at New Smyrna, Florida, was**
  - A heavily forested
  - B hilly and rocky
  - C flat and swampy
4. **When they had built their shacks, the workers were told to**
  - A start working the land
  - B plant gardens for their food
  - C fish in the ocean for food
5. **Sailors from the merchant ship who saw the settlers**
  - A brought them food
  - B decided to join them
  - C envied them
6. **Carlo's plan of escape failed because**
  - A one of the workers betrayed him
  - B a British ship was sent after them
  - C a storm sank the rescue ship
7. **Carlo, Corbollo, and Skouras were**
  - A sentenced to be hanged
  - B thrown into prison
  - C whipped and placed in chains
8. **The governor offered Skouras his freedom if he would**
  - A promise not to try to escape again
  - B work for fifteen years instead of ten
  - C act as executioner of Carlo and Corbollo
9. **Carlo urged Skouras**
  - A to die like a man
  - B to accept the governor's offer
  - C not to hang his friends
10. **Carlo's prophecy was that one day the immigrants would**
  - A hang Dr. Turnbull
  - B return to the old country
  - C be free men