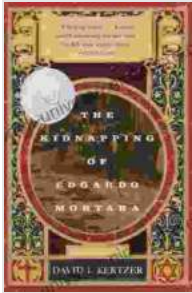


# The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara: A Tragic Tale of Religious Intolerance and Parental Anguish



The kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara in 1858 is a haunting story that epitomizes the darkest aspects of religious intolerance and the devastating consequences it can have on individuals and families. This young Jewish boy was forcibly removed from his home in Bologna, Italy, by the Papal States police and placed in a monastery, all because of an unfounded accusation of attempted baptism by a Catholic servant. The ensuing

international outcry and diplomatic maneuvers surrounding the case shed light on the deep-rooted antisemitism prevalent in Europe during that era.



## **The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara** by David I. Kertzer

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 4302 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

Word Wise : Enabled

Print length : 367 pages



### **The Early Years and Accusation**

Edgardo Mortara was born into a Jewish family in Bologna on August 7, 1851. At the age of six, he befriended Anna Morisi, a Catholic servant who worked for the Mortara family. On Easter Sunday, April 23, 1858, Morisi claimed that she had secretly baptized Edgardo while he was ill, using water and the words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

Morisi's motive for this act is unclear. Some speculate that she was genuinely concerned for Edgardo's soul, while others suggest that she may have been motivated by religious zeal or a desire to gain favor with the Catholic Church. Regardless of her intentions, her actions set in motion a chain of events that would have a profound impact on the Mortara family and Jewish communities worldwide.

### **The Kidnapping**

Upon learning of the accusation, the local priest informed the authorities, who promptly dispatched police to the Mortara home on June 24, 1858. Despite the pleas and protests of Edgardo's parents, the six-year-old boy was forcibly taken from his family and placed in a monastery. The Papal States maintained that, according to canon law, any baptized child, regardless of age or consent, must be raised as a Catholic.

## **International Outcry and Diplomatic Maneuvers**

The kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara sparked outrage and condemnation from Jewish communities and liberal thinkers across Europe and beyond. Jewish organizations launched protests and petitions demanding the boy's release, while influential figures such as Napoleon III of France and Queen Victoria of England intervened on the Mortara family's behalf. The diplomatic pressure on the Papal States intensified, with several countries threatening to sever relations if Edgardo was not returned.

## **The Pope's Refusal and Edgardo's Fate**

Despite the international outcry and diplomatic efforts, Pope Pius IX refused to budge. He maintained that canon law prohibited him from returning a baptized child to non-Catholic parents. Edgardo remained in the monastery, where he was subjected to intense religious indoctrination.

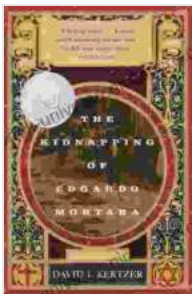
Seven years later, in 1865, the Mortara family was allowed to visit Edgardo. By this time, he had been fully assimilated into the Catholic faith and had no desire to return to his Jewish family. The reunion was deeply bittersweet for the Mortaras, who were torn between their love for their son and the realization that they would never have him back.

## **Edgardo's Later Life and Legacy**

Edgardo Mortara left the monastery in 1870, after the unification of Italy and the collapse of the Papal States. He became a priest and eventually rose to the rank of canon in the Catholic Church. He never publicly renounced his Jewish heritage but chose to live a life dedicated to the Catholic faith.

The kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara remains a potent symbol of religious intolerance and the profound pain it can inflict on families. It also highlights the importance of interfaith dialogue and understanding as a means of preventing such tragedies from occurring in the future.

The story of Edgardo Mortara is a haunting reminder of the dark forces that can divide humanity. It is a tale of unimaginable suffering for one family and a testament to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity. The kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara remains a scar on the collective memory of Europe, a reminder that religious intolerance and persecution can never be justified.



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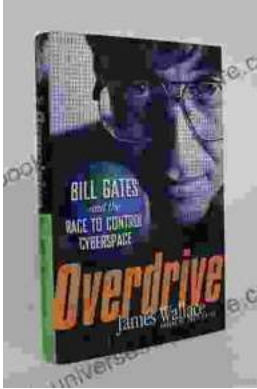
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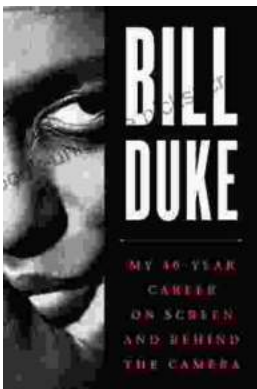
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