The Well of Saint Clare

by Anatole France

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THE WORKS OF ANATOLE FRANCE

IN AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

EDITED BY FREDERIC CHAPMAN

THE WELL OF SAINT CLARE

THE WELL OF SAINT CLARE

BY ANATOLE FRANCE

A TRANSLATION BY

ALFRED ALLINSON

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THE WELL OF SAINT CLARE

PROLOGUE

THE REVEREND FATHER ADONE DONI

PROLOGUE

THE REVEREND FATHER ADONE DONI

Τὰ γὰρ φυσικὰ, καὶ τὰ ἠθικὰ ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ μαθηματικὰ, καὶ τοὺς ἐγκυκλίους λόγους, καὶ περὶ τεχνῶν, πᾶσαν εἶχεν ἐμπειρίαν.—Diogenes Laërtius, IX, 37.1

I was spending the Spring at Sienna. Occupied all day long with meticulous researches among the city archives, I used after supper to take an evening walk along the wild road leading to Monte Oliveto, where I would encounter in the twilight huge white oxen under ponderous yokes dragging a rustic wain with wheels of solid timber—all unchanged since the times of old Evander. The church bells knelled the peaceful ending of the day, while the purple shades of night descended sadly and majestically on the low chain of neighbouring hills. The black squadrons of the rooks had already sought their nests about the city walls, but relieved against the opalescent sky a single sparrow-hawk still hung floating with motionless wings above a solitary ilex tree.

I moved forward to confront the silence and solitude and the mild terrors that lowered before me in the growing dusk. The tide of darkness rose by imperceptible degrees and drowned the landscape. The infinite of starry eyes winked in the sky, while in the gloom below the fireflies spangled the bushes with their trembling love-lights.

These living sparks cover all the Roman Campagna and the plains of Umbria and Tuscany, on May nights. I had watched them in former days on the Appian Way,

round the tomb of Cæcilia Metella—their playground for two thousand years; now I found them dancing the selfsame dance in the land of St. Catherine and of Pia de' Tolomei, at the gates of Sienna, that most melancholy and most fascinating of cities. All along my path they quivered in the bents and brushwood, chasing one another, and ever and anon, at the call of desire, tracing above the roadway the fiery arch of their darting flight.

On the white ribbon of the road, in these clear Spring nights, the only person I used to encounter was the Reverend Father Adone Doni, who at the time was, like myself, working in the old Academy degli Intronati. I had taken an instant liking for the Cordelier in question, a man who, grown grey in study, still preserved the cheerful, facile humour of a simple, unlettered countryman. He was very willing to converse; and I greatly relished his bland speech, his cultivated yet artless way of thought, his look of old Silenus purged at the baptismal font, the play of his passions at once keen and refined, the strange, alluring personality that informed the whole man. Assiduous at the library, he was also a frequent visitor to the marketplace, halting for choice in front of the peasant girls who sell oranges, and listening to their unconventional remarks. He was learning, he would say, from their lips the true Lingua Toscana.

All I knew of his past life, about which he never spoke, was that he was born at Viterbo, of a noble but miserably impoverished family, that he had studied the humanities and theology at Rome, as a young man had joined the Franciscans of Assisi, where he worked at the Archives, and had had difficulties on questions of faith with his ecclesiastical superiors. Indeed I thought I noticed myself a tendency in the Father towards peculiar views. He was a man of religion and a man of science, but not without certain eccentricities under either aspect. He believed in God on the evidence of Holy Scripture and in accordance with the teachings of the Church, and laughed at those simple philosophers who believed in Him on their own account, without being under any obligation to do so. So far he was well within the bounds of

orthodoxy; it was in connection with the Devil that he professed peculiar opinions. He held the Devil to be wicked, but not absolutely wicked, and considered that the fiend's innate imperfection must always bar him from attaining to the perfection of evil. He believed he discerned some symptoms of goodness in the obscure manifestations of Satan's activity, and without venturing to put it in so many words, augured from these the final redemption of the pensive Archangel after the consummation of the ages.

These little eccentricities of thought and temperament, which had separated him from the rest of the world and thrown him back upon a solitary existence, afforded me amusement. He had wits enough; all he lacked was common sense and appreciation of ordinary everyday things. His life was divided between phantoms of the past and dreams of the future; the actual present was utterly foreign to his notions. For his political ideas, these came simultaneously from antique Santa Maria degli Angeli and the revolutionary secret societies of London, and were a combination of Christian and socialist. But he was no fanatic; his contempt for human reason was too complete for him to attach great importance to his own share in it. The government of states appeared to him in the light of a huge practical joke, at which he would laugh quietly and composedly, as a man of taste should. Judges, civil and criminal, caused him surprise, while he looked on the military classes in a spirit of philosophical toleration.

I was not long in discovering some flagrant contradictions in his mental attitude. He longed with all the charity of his gentle heart for the reign of universal peace. Yet at the same time he had a penchant for civil war, and held in high esteem that Farinata degli Uberti, who loved his native Florence so boldly and so well that he constrained her by force and fraud, making the Arbia run red with Florentine blood the while, to will and think precisely what he willed and thought himself. For all that, the Reverend Father Adone Doni was a tender-hearted dreamer of dreams. It was on the spiritual authority of St. Peter's chair he counted to establish in this world the

kingdom of God. He believed the Paraclete was leading the Popes along a road unknown to themselves. Therefore he had nothing but deferential words for the Roaring Lamb of Sinigaglia and the Opportunist Eagle of Carpineto, as it was his custom to designate Pius IX and Leo XIII respectively.

Agreeable as was the Reverend Father's conversation to me, I used, out of respect for his freedom of action and my own, to avoid showing myself too assiduous in seeking his society inside the city walls, while on his side he observed an exquisite discretion towards myself. But in our walks abroad we frequently managed to meet as if by accident. Half a league outside the Porta Romana the high road traverses a hollow way between melancholy uplands on either hand, relieved only by a few gloomy larches. Under the clayey slope of the northern escarpment and close by the roadside, a dry well rears its light canopy of open ironwork.

At this spot I would encounter the Reverend Father Adone Doni almost every evening, seated on the coping of the well, his hands buried in the sleeves of his gown, gazing out with mild surprise into the night. The gathering dusk still left it possible to make out on his bright-eyed, flat-nosed face the habitual expression of timid daring and graceful irony which was impressed upon it so profoundly. At first we merely exchanged formal good wishes for each other's health, peace and happiness. Then I would take my place by his side on the old stone well-head, that bore some traces of carving. It was still possible, in full daylight, to distinguish a figure with a head bigger than its body and representing an Angel, as seemed indicated by the wings.

The Reverend Father never failed to say courteously:

"Welcome, Signore! Welcome to the Well of St. Clare."

One evening I asked him the reason why the well bore the name of this favourite disciple of St. Francis. He informed me it was because of a very edifying little miracle, which for all its charm had unfortunately never found a place in the

collection of the Fioretti. I begged him to oblige me by telling it, which he proceeded to do in the following terms:

"In the days when the poor man of Jesus Christ, Francis, son of Bernardone, used to journey from town to town teaching holy simplicity and love, he visited Sienna, in company with Brother Leo, the man of his own heart. But the Siennese, a covetous and cruel generation, true sons of the She-Wolf on whose milk they boasted themselves to have been suckled, gave a sorry welcome to the holy man, who bade them take into their house two ladies of a perfect beauty, to wit Poverty and Obedience. They overwhelmed him with obloquy and mocking laughter, and drove him forth from the city. He left the place in the night by the Porta Romana. Brother Leo, who tramped alongside, spoke up and said to him:—

'"The Siennese have written on the gates of their city,—"Sienna opens her heart to you wider than her doors." And nevertheless, brother Francis, these same men have shut their hearts against us.'

"And Francis, son of Bernardone, replied:

'"The fault is with me, be sure of that, brother Leo, little lamb of God. I have not known how to knock at the doors of their hearts forcefully and skilfully enough. I am far below the fellows who set a bear dancing in the Great Piazza. For they draw together a great crowd by exhibiting the rude coarse beast, whilst I that had ladies of celestial fairness to show them, I have attracted no one. Brother Leo, I charge you, on your holy obedience, to say thus to me: "Brother Francis, you are a poor man, without any merit whatsoever, a stumbling-block and a very rock of offence!" And all the while Brother Leo was hesitating to obey, the holy man suffered grievously within himself. As he went on his murky way, his thoughts turned to pleasant Assisi, where he had left behind him his sons in the spirit, and Clare, daughter of his soul. He knew how Clare was exposed to great tribulations for the love of holy Poverty. And he doubted whether his well-beloved daughter were not sick of body and soul,

and weary of well-doing, in the house of St. Damian.

"So sore did these doubts weigh on him, that arrived at this spot where the road enters the hollow way between the hills, he seemed to feel his feet sink into the ground at each step he took. He dragged himself as far as the Well here, which was then in its pristine beauty and full of limpid water, and fell exhausted on the well-head where we are seated at this moment. A long while the man of God remained bent over the mouth of the well. After which, lifting up his head, he said joyfully to Brother Leo: 'What think you, brother Leo, lamb of God, I have seen in the Well?'

"And Brother Leo answered:

"'Brother Francis, you saw the moon reflected in the well.'

"'My brother,' replied the Saint of God, 'it is not our sister the Moon I saw in the well, but by the Lord, the true countenance of sister Clare, and so pure and shining so bright with a holy joy that all my doubts were instantly dispelled, and it was made plain to me that our sister enjoys at this present hour the full content God accords his chosen vessels, loading them with the treasures of Poverty.'

"So saying, the good St. Francis drank a few drops of water in the hollow of his hand, and arose refreshed.

"And that is why the name of St. Clare was given to this Well."

Such was the tale told by the Reverend Father Adone Doni.

Night after night I returned to find the amiable Cordelier sitting on the edge of the mystic well. I would seat myself by his side, and he would tell over for my benefit some fragment of history known only to himself. He had many delightful stories of the sort to relate, being better read than any one else in the antiquities of his country. These lived again and grew bright and young in his head, as if it contained an intellectual Fountain of Eternal Youth. Ever fresh pictures flowed from his white-fringed lips. As he spoke, the moonlight bathed his beard in a silver flood.

The crickets accompanied the narrator's voice with the shrilling of their wing-cases, and ever and anon his words, uttered in the softest of all dialects of human speech, would be answered by the fluted plaintive croaking of the frogs, which hearkened from across the road—a friendly, if apprehensive audience.

I left Sienna towards the middle of June; and I have never seen the Reverend Father Adone Doni since. He clings to my memory like a figure in a dream; and I have now put into writing the tales he told me on the road of Monte Oliveto. They will be found in the present volume; I only hope they may have retained, in their new dress, some vestiges of the grace they had in the telling at the Well of St. Clare.

1 "For of physical and ethical science, no less than of mathematics and the common round of learning, as well as concerning arts, he possessed full knowledge and experience."

SAN SATIRO

TO ALPHONSE DAUDET

SAN SATIRO

Consors paterni luminis, Lux ipse lucis et dies, Noctem canendo rumpimus; Assiste postulantibus. Aufer tenebras mentium; Fuga catervas dæmonum; Expelle somnolentiam, Ne pigritantes obruat.1

(Breviarium Romanum Third day of the week: at matins.)

Fra Mino had raised himself by his humility above his brethren, and still a young man, he governed the Monastery of Santa Fiora wisely and well. He was devout, and loved long meditations and long prayers; sometimes he had ecstasies. After the example of his spiritual father, St. Francis, he composed songs in the vernacular tongue in celebration of perfect love, which is the love of God. And these exercises were without fault whether of metre or of meaning, for had he not studied the seven

liberal Arts at the University of Bologna?

Now one evening, as he was walking under the cloister arches, he felt his heart filled with trouble and sadness at the remembrance of a lady of Florence he had loved in the first flower of his youth, ere the habit of St. Francis was a safeguard to his flesh. He prayed God to drive away the image; nevertheless his heart continued sad within him.

"The bells," he pondered, "say like the Angels, AVE MARIA; but their voice is lost in the mists of heaven. On the cloister wall yonder, the Master Perugia delights to honour has painted marvellous well the three Marys contemplating with a love ineffable the body of the Saviour. But the night has veiled the tears in their eyes and the dumb sobs of their mouths, and I cannot weep with them. Yonder Well in the middle of the cloister garth was covered but now with doves that had come to drink, but these are flown away, for they found no water in the hollows of the carven well-head. And behold. Lord! my soul falls silent like the bells, is darkened like the holy Marys, and runs dry like the well. Why, Jesus my God! why is my heart arid, and dark, and dumb, when Thou art its dayspring, and the song of birds, and the water-brook flowing from the hills?"

Fra Mino dreaded to return to his cell, and thinking prayer would dispel his melancholy and calm his disquiet, he passed into the Monastery Church by the low door leading from the cloister. Silence and gloom filled the building, raised more than a hundred and fifty years before on the foundations of a ruined Roman Temple by the great Margaritone. He traversed the Nave, and went and knelt in the Chapel behind the High Altar dedicated to San Michele, whose legend was painted in fresco on the wall. But the dim light of the lamp hanging from the vault was insufficient to show the Archangel fighting with Satan and weighing souls in the balance. Only the moon, shining through the great window, threw a pale ray over the Tomb of San Satiro, where it lay under an arcade to the right of the Altar. This tomb, in shape

resembling the great vats used at vintage time, was more ancient than the Church and in all respects similar to a Pagan sarcophagus, except that the sign of the Cross was to be seen traced in three different places on its marble sides.

Fra Mino remained for hours prostrate before the Altar; but he found it impossible to pray, and at midnight felt himself weighed down under the same heaviness that overcame Jesus Christ's disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane. And lo! as he lay there without courage or counsel, he saw as it were a white cloud rise above the tomb of San Satiro, and presently observed that this cloud was made up of a multitude of cloudlets, of which each one was a woman. They floated in the dim air; and through their light raiment shone the whiteness of their light limbs. Then Fra Mino saw how among them were goat-footed young men who were chasing them. These were naked, and nothing hid the terrifying ardour of their desires. And the nymphs fled away from them, while beneath their racing steps there sprang up flowery meadows and brooks of water. Each time a goat-foot put out his hand to seize one of them, a sallow would shoot up suddenly to hide the nymph in its hollow trunk as in a cave, and the grey leaves shivered with light murmurings and spurts of mocking laughter.

When all the women were hidden in the sallows, their goat-footed lovers, sitting on the grass of the new-come meadows, breathed in their flutes of reeds and drew from them sounds to destroy the peace of any creature of the earth. The nymphs were fascinated, and soon began to peep out between the branches, and one by one deserting the shady covert, drew near under the irresistible attraction of the music. Then the goat-men rushed upon them with a demoniac fury. Folded in the arms of their ruthless assailants, the nymphs strove to keep up a while longer their raillery and loud laughter, but the mirth died on their lips. With heads thrown back and eyes swooning with joy and terror, they could only call upon their mother, or scream a shrill "You are killing me," or keep a sullen silence.

Fra Mino longed to turn his head, but he could not, and his eyes remained wide open in spite of himself.

Meanwhile the nymphs, winding their arms about the goat-men's loins, fell to biting and caressing and provoking their hairy lovers, and body intertwined with body, they enfolded and bathed them in their tender flesh that was sweeter and softer and more living than the water of the brook which ran by them under the sallows.

At the sight, Fra Mino fell, in mind and intention, into deadly sin. He desired to be one of these demons, half men and half beasts, and hold to his bosom, after their carnal fashion, the fair lady of Florence he had loved in the flower of his years, and who was now dead.

But already the goat-men were scattering through the country-side. Some were busied gathering honey in the hollow trunks of oaks, others carving reeds into the shape of flutes, or butting one against the other, crashing their horned brows together. Meantime the bodies of the nymphs, sweet wrecks of love, lay motionless, strewing the meadows. Fra Mino lay groaning on the Chapel flags; for so fierce had been the desire of sin within him that now he was filled full of bitter shame at his own weakness.

Suddenly one of the nymphs, chancing as she lay to turn her eyes upon him, cried out:

"A man! a man!"

And pointing him out to her companions:

"Look, sisters; yonder is no goat-herd, he has no flute of reed beside him. Nor yet do I recognize him for the master of one of those rustic farmsteads whose garden-close, sloping to the hill-side beneath the vines, is guarded by a Priapus hewn out of a stump of beech. What would he among us, if he is neither goat-herd, nor neat-herd, nor gardener? His looks are harsh and gloomy, and I cannot read in his eyes the love of the gods and goddesses that people the wide sky, the woods and mountains. He

wears a barbarous habit; perhaps he is a Scythian. Let us approach the stranger, my sisters, and make sure he is not come as a foe to sully our fountains, hew down our trees, tear open our hill-sides and betray to cruel men the mystery of our happy lurking places. Come with me, Mnaïs; come, Ægle, Neæra and Melibœa.

"On! on!" returned Mnaïs, "on, with our arms in hand!"

"On! on!" all cried in chorus.

Then Fra Mino saw them spring up, and gather great handfuls of roses, and advance upon him in a long line, each armed with roses and thorns. But the distance that separated them from him, which at first had seemed very short, for indeed he thought almost to touch them and felt their breath on his face, appeared suddenly to increase, and he watched them coming as though from out a far-off forest. Impatient to be at him, they began to run, threatening him with their cruel flowers, while menaces flew from their flower-like lips. And lo! as they came nearer, a change was wrought in them; at each step they lost something of their grace and beauty, and the bloom of their youth faded as fast as the roses in their hands. First their eyes grew hollow and the mouth fell in. The neck, but now so pure and white, hung in great hideous folds, and grey elf-locks draggled over their wrinkled brows. On they came; and their eyes were circled with red, their lips drawn in upon the toothless gums. On they came, carrying dead roses in their arms, which were black and writhen as the old vine stocks the peasants of Chianti burn for firewood in the winter nights. On they came, with shaking heads and palsied thighs, tottering and trembling.

Arrived at the spot where Fra Mino stood rooted to the ground with affright, they were no better than a crowd of horrid witches, bald and bearded, nose and chin touching, and bosoms hanging loose and flabby. They came crowding round him:

"Ah, ha! the pretty darling!" cried one. "He is as white as a sheet, and his heart beats like a hare the dogs are snapping at. Ægle, sister mine, say, what must be done with him?"

"Neæra mine!" Ægle replied, "why! we must open his breast, tear out his heart and put a sponge in its place instead."

"Not so!" said Melibœa. "That were making him pay too dear for his curiosity and the pleasure he has had in surprising our frolic. Enough for this time to inflict a light chastisement. Say, shall we give him a good whipping?"

Straightway surrounding the Monk, the sisters dragged his gown above his head and belaboured him with the handfuls of thorns they still held.

The blood was beginning to come, when Neæra signed to them to stop:

"Enough!" she cried! "he is my gallant, I tell you! I saw him just now casting tender eyes at me; I would content his wishes, and grant him my favours without more delay."

She smiled alluringly; and a long, black tooth projecting from her mouth tickled his nostril. She murmured softly:

"Come, come, my Adonis!"

Then suddenly, wild with rage:

"Fie, fie! his senses are benumbed. His coldness offends my charms. He scorns me; avenge me, comrades! Mnaïs, Ægle, Melibœa, avenge your sister!"

At this appeal, one and all, lifting their thorny whips, fell to scourging him so savagely that Fra Mino's body was soon one wound from head to toe. Now and again they would stop to cough and spit, only to begin afresh, plying their whips more vigorously than ever. Only sheer weariness induced them to leave off.

"I hope," Neæra then said, "next time he will not do me the undeserved insult I still blush to remember. We will spare his life; but if he betrays the secret of our sports and pleasures, we will surely kill him. Good-bye to you, my pretty boy!"

So saying, the old woman suddenly squatted down over the Monk and drowned him in a torrent of very filthy liquid. Each sister followed suit and did the like; then one

after the other they re-entered the tomb of San Satiro, slipping in through a tiny crack in the lid, leaving their victim lying full length in a stream of a most intolerable stench.

When the last had disappeared,—the cock crew. Then Fra Mino at last found himself able to rise from the earth. Broken with fatigue and pain, benumbed with cold, shuddering with fever, half stifled with the foul exhalations of the poisonous liquor, he set his clothing straight and dragged himself to his cell, just as day broke.

From that night on, Fra Mino never had a moment's peace. The recollection of what he had seen in the Chapel of San Michele, above San Satiro's tomb, disturbed him in the Church services and in all his pious exercises. He trembled when he visited the Church along with his fellows; and as his turn came, according to the rule, to kiss the pavement of the Choir, his lips shuddered to encounter the traces of the nymphs' presence, and he would murmur: "O! my Saviour, dost not Thou hear me say what Thou didst Thyself say to Thy Father, Lead us not, we beseech Thee, into temptation?" At first he had thought of sending to the Lord Bishop an account of what he had witnessed. But on riper reflexion, he became convinced it were better to meditate at leisure on these extraordinary events and only divulge them after a more exhaustive study of all the circumstances. Besides it so happened that the Lord Bishop, allied with the Guelphs of Pisa against the Ghibellines of Florence, was at that moment waging war with such right good will that for a whole month he had not so much as unbuckled his cuirass. And that is why, without saying a word to anyone, Fra Mino made profound researches on the tomb of San Satiro and the Chapel containing it. Deeply versed in the knowledge of books, he investigated many texts, both ancient and modern; yet found no glimmer of enlightenment in any of them. Indeed the only effect of the works on Magic which he studied was to double his uncertainty.

One morning, after labouring all the night as was his wont, he was fain to refresh his

heart with a walk in the fields. He took the hilly path which, winding between the vines and the elms they are wedded to, leads to a wood of myrtles and olives, sacred in old days to the Roman gods. His feet bathed in the wet grass, his brow refreshed by the dew that distilled from the pointed leaves of the Guelder roses, Fra Mino wandered long in the forest, till he came upon a spring over which the wild tamarisks gently swayed their light foliage and the downy clusters of their pink berries. Lower down amid the willows, where the water formed a wider pool, herons stood motionless, while the smaller birds sang sweetly in the branching myrtles. The scent of mint rose moist and fragrant from the ground, and the grass was spangled with the flowers of which our Lord said that "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Fra Mino sat down on a mossy stone and praising God, Who made the heavens and the dew, he fell to pondering the hidden mysteries of Nature.

Now the remembrance of all he had seen in the Chapel of San Michele never left his thoughts; so he sat meditating, his head between his hands, wondering for the thousandth time what the dream might signify: "For indeed," he said to himself, "such a vision must needs have a meaning; it should even have several, which it behoves to discover, whether by sudden illumination, or by dint of an exact applying of the scholastic rules. And I deem that, in this especial case, the poets I studied at Bologna, such as Horace the Satirist and Statius, should likewise be of great help to me, seeing many verities are intermingled with their fables."

After long pondering these thoughts within his breast, and others more subtle still, he lifted his eyes and perceived he was not alone. Leaning against the cavernous trunk of an ancient holm-oak, an old man stood gazing at the sky through the leaves, and smiling to himself. Above his hoary brow peeped out two shorty blunt horns. His nose was flat with wide nostrils, and from his chin depended a white beard, through which were visible the rugged muscles of the neck. A shaggy growth of hair covered his breast, while from the thighs downwards his limbs showed a thick fleece

that trailed down to his cloven feet. He held to his lips a flute of reed, from which he drew a feeble sound of music. Then he began to sing in a voice that left the words barely distinguishable:

Laughing she fled, Her teeth in the golden grape; After I sped, And clasping her flying shape, I quenched my drouth On the fruit at her mouth.

Astounded at these strange sights and sounds, Fra Mino crossed himself. Still the old man showed no mark of confusion, but cast a long and artless look at the Monk. Amid the deep wrinkles that scored his face, the clear blue eyes sparkled like the waters of a spring through the rugged bark of a grove of oaks.

"Man or beast," shrilled Mino, "I command you in the name of the Saviour to say who you are."

"My son," replied the old man, "I am San Satiro! Speak not so loud, for fear of frightening the birds."

Then Fra Mino resumed, in a quieter tone:

"Forasmuch, old man, as you shrank not before the dread sign of the Cross, I cannot hold you to be a demon or some foul spirit escaped out of Hell. But if verily and indeed you are a man, as you say you are, or rather the soul of a man sanctified by the deeds of a good life and by the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, expound, I pray you, the mystery of your goat's horns and your shaggy limbs ending in those black, cloven hoofs."

At the question, the old man lifted up his arms towards heaven, and said:

"My son, the nature of men and animals, of plants and stones, is the secret of the immortal gods, and I know as little as yourself what is the reason of these horns wherewith my brow is decked, and which the Nymphs used in olden days to wind about with garlands of flowers. I cannot tell you the meaning of the two wrinkled folds that droop from my neck, nor why I have the feet of a wanton goat. But I would have you know, my son, there was once in these woods a race of women

having horned brows like mine and shaggy thighs. Yet were their bosoms round and white, and their belly and polished loins shone in the light. The sun was young then, and loved to fleck them with his golden arrows, as they lay beneath the shady foliage. They were very fair, my son; but alas! they have vanished from the woods, every one. My mates have perished likewise, and I am left lonely, the last of my tribe."

"I would fain know your age, old man, and your lineage and country."

"My son, I was born of the Earth long ere Jupiter had dethroned Saturn, and my eyes have looked upon the flowery freshness of the new-created World. Not yet had the human race emerged from the clay. Alone with me, the dancing Satyr girls set the ground ringing with the rhythmic beat of their double hoofs. They were taller and stronger and fairer than either Nymphs or Women; and their ampler loins received abundantly the seed of the first-born of Earth.

"Under the reign of Jupiter the Nymphs began to inhabit fountains and forests and mountains; while the Fauns, accoupling with the Nymphs, formed light-footed bands that roamed the woods together. Meantime I spent a happy life, tasting at will the clusters of the wild grapes and the lips of the laughing Faun-girls. I enjoyed deep and restful slumbers amid the lush grass; and I would celebrate on my rustic flute Jupiter, Saturn's successor, for it is of my nature to praise the gods, masters of the world.

"Alas! and I am grown old, for I am but a god, and the centuries have blanched the hairs of my head and of my bosom, and have extinguished the fire of my reins. I was already heavily weighted with years when the Great Pan died, and Jupiter, meeting the same lot he had laid upon Saturn, was dethroned by the Galilean. Since then I have dragged out an ever-flagging life, so feeble and languid that at last it fell out I died, and was entombed. And verily I am now but the shadow of myself. If I still exist a little, it is because nothing ever really perishes, and none is suffered

altogether to die out. Death must never be more perfect and complete than life. Beings lost in the Ocean of Things are like the waves you may watch, my child, rising and falling in the Adriatic Sea. They have neither beginning nor end, they are born and die insensibly. Insensibly as the waves, my soul passes. A faint far-off memory of the satyr girls of the Golden Age yet brightens my eyes, and on my lips float soundlessly the ancient hymns of praise."

This said, he fell silent. Fra Mino gazed at the old man, and knew him, that he was a phantom and nothing more.

"Yes! you may indeed be a goat-foot," he told him gravely, "without being a demon; 'tis not a thing wholly incredible. Such creatures as God framed to have no part in Adam's heritage, these can no more be damned than they can be saved. I can never believe that the Centaur Cheiron, who was wiser than men are, is suffering eternal torments in the belly of Leviathan. A traveller who penetrated once into Limbo, relates how he saw him seated in a grassy spot and conversing with Rhipheus, the most righteous man of all the Trojans. Others indeed affirm that Holy Paradise itself has been opened to admit Rhipheus of Troy. Any way the case Is one where doubt Is not unlawful. But you lied, old man, when you told me you were a Saint, who are not so much even as a man."

The goat-foot made answer:

"My son, when I was young, I was no more used to lie than the sheep whose milk I sucked or the he-goats with which I would butt in the joy of my strength and beauty. Lies were unknown In those times, nor had the sheep's fleece yet learned to assume factitious hues; and my soul has remained unchanged from that day to this. See, I go naked as in the golden age of Saturn; and my spirit is veiled as little as my body. I am no liar. And why indeed should you deem It a thing so extraordinary, my son, that I have become a Saint in the train of the Galilean, albeit no offspring of the first mother some name Eve and others Pyrrha, and whom it is very meet to reverence

under either title? Nay! for that matter, neither is St. Michael woman-born. I know him, and at times we have talks together, he and I. He tells me of the days when he was an ox-herd on Mount Garganus...."

But here Fra Mino interrupted the Satyr:

"I cannot suffer you to say St. Michael was an ox-herd, because he guarded the cattle of a man whose name was Garganus, the same as the Mountain. But there, I would fain learn, old man, how you were made a Saint."

"Listen," replied the goat-foot, "and your curiosity shall be satisfied.

"When men coming from the East proclaimed in the fair vale of Arno how that the Galilean had dethroned Jupiter, they hewed down the oaks whereon the country folk were used to hang up little goddesses of clay and votive tablets; they planted crosses over against the holy fountains, and forbade the shepherds any more to carry to the grottos of the Nymphs offerings of wine and milk and cakes. Naturally enough this angered all the tribe of Fauns and Pans and Sylvan Genii, and in their wrath these attacked the apostles of the new God. When the holy men were asleep of nights, on their bed of dry leaves, the Nymphs would steal up and pull their beards, while the young Fauns, slipping into their stable, would pluck out hairs from their she-ass's tail. In vain I sought to disarm their simple malice and exhort them to submission. 'My children,' I would warn them, 'the days of easy gaiety and light laughter are gone by.' But they were reckless, and would not hearken; and a sore price they paid for their heedlessness.

"But for myself, had I not seen the reign of Saturn come to an end? and I deemed it natural and just that Jupiter should perish in his turn. I was prepared to acquiesce in the downfall of the great old gods, and offered no resistance to the emissaries of the Galilean. Nay! I did them sundry little services. Better acquainted than they with the forest paths, I would gather mulberries and sloes, and lay them on leaves at the threshold of their grotto, and make them little presents of plovers' eggs. Then, if they

were building a cabin, I would carry the timber and stones for them on my back. In gratitude, they poured water on my brow, invoking on my head the peace of Jesus Christ.

"So I lived with them and in their way; and those who loved them, loved me. As they were honoured, so was I, and my sanctity seemed as great as theirs.

"I have told you, my son, I was already very old in those days. The sun had scarce heat enough to warm my benumbed limbs. I was no better than an old rotten tree, that has lost its crown of fresh leaves and singing birds. Each returning Autumn brought my end nearer; and one Winter's morning they found me stretched motionless by the roadside.

"The Bishop, followed by his Priests and all the people, celebrated my obsequies. Then I was laid in a great tomb of white marble, marked in three places with the sign of the Cross, and bearing carved on the slab in front the words Sanctus Satyrus, within a garland of roses.

"In those times, my son, tombs were erected along the roadsides. Mine was placed two miles out from the city, on the Florence road. A young plane-tree grew up over it, and threw its shadow across it, dappled with sunlight and full of bird songs and twitterings, freshness and joy. Near by, a fountain flowed over a bed of water-weed, where the boys and girls came laughing merrily to bathe together. It was a charming spot—and soon a holy one as well. Thither young mothers would bring their babies and let them touch the marble of the tomb, that they might grow up sturdy and straight in all their limbs. The country folk one and all believed that new-born infants presented at my grave must one day surpass their fellows in strength and courage. This is why they brought me all the flower of the gallant Tuscan race. Moreover the peasants often led their asses thither in hopes of making them prolific. My memory was revered; each year at the return of Spring, the Bishop used to come with his Clergy to pray over my bones, and I could watch far away through the

meadow grass the slow approach of Cross and Candle in procession, the scarlet canopy, and the chanting acolytes. Thus it was, my son, in the days of good King Berengar.

"Meantime, the Satyrs and the Satyr girls, the Fauns and Nymphs, dragged out a wretched, wandering life. No more altars of meadow turf for them, no more wreaths of flowers, no more offerings of milk and wheat and honey. Only now and then at long intervals some goat-herd would furtively lay a tiny cheese on the threshold of the sacred grot, whose entrance was almost blocked now with thorns and brambles. But it was merely the rabbits and squirrels came to eat these poor dainties. The Nymphs were dwellers in distant forests and gloomy caves, driven forth of their old homes by the apostles from the East. And to hinder their ever returning more, the priests of the Galilean God poured over trees and stones a charmed water, and pronounced magic words, and set up crosses where roads met in the forest; for the Galilean, my son, is learned in the art of incantations. Better than Saturn, better than Jupiter, he knows the virtue of formularies and mystic signs. Thus the poor rustic Divinities could no more find refuge in their sacred woods. The company of long-haired, goat-footed Satyrs, that beat of yore their mother earth with sounding hoof, was but a cloud of pale, dumb shadows trailing along the mountain-side like the morning mist the Sun melts and dispels.

"Buffeted, as by a fierce wind, by the wrath of Heaven, their spectral forms would be whirled eddying all day long in the dust of the roads. The night on the contrary was somewhat less hostile to them. Night is not wholly the Galilean God's; He shares its dominion with the devils. As the shades of night descended from the hills, Fauns and Faun-women, Nymphs and Pans, came huddling beneath the shelter of the tombs along the roadside, and there under the kindly empire of the infernal powers would enjoy a brief repose. Of all the tombs they liked mine the best, as that of a reverend ancestor of their own. Soon all assembled under that part of the cornice which, giving South, was quite free of moss and always dry. Thither the airy

folk came flying every evening as surely as doves to the dovecote. They easily found room, grown tiny now and light as the chaff that scuds before the winnowing-fan. For my own part, sallying out from my quiet death-chamber, I would sit down sometimes in the midst of them under shelter of the marble edge-tiles, and in a feeble, whistling voice sing them songs of the days of Saturn and Jupiter; then they would remember the happy times gone by for ever. Under the eyes of Diana, they would join to make a show of their ancient pastimes, and the belated traveller would seem to see the night mists of the meadows in the moonlight mimic the intertwining limbs of lovers. And in very deed they were little more than a fleeting fog themselves. The cold tried them sorely. One night, when the snow shrouded the fields, the Nymphs Ægle, Neæra, Mnaïs and Melibœa glided through the cracks in the marble into the narrow, gloomy chamber where I dwell. Their comrades crowded after in their train, and the Fauns, dashing in pursuit of them, quickly joined them too. My house became their house. We scarcely ever left it, except to visit the woods, when the night was fine and clear. Even then they would make haste to return at the first cock-crow. For you must know, my son, that alone of the horned race I have leave to appear on this earth by the light of day. It is a privilege attached to my Saintship.

"My tomb now inspired more veneration than ever among the country people, and every day young mothers came to present their nurslings to me, lifting the naked babes in their arms. When the sons of St. Francis settled in the land and built a monastery on the hill-side, they craved the Bishop's leave to transfer my monument to their Church and there keep it as a sacred thing. The favour was granted, and I was borne in great pomp to the Chapel of San Michele, where I repose to this day. My rustic family was carried thither along with me. It was a signal honour; but I confess I regretted the broad highway, where I could watch at dawn the peasant women carrying on their heads their basketfuls of grapes and figs and red aubergines. Time has hardly softened my regret, and I would I were still beneath the

plane-tree on the Sacred Way.

"Such is my life," ended the old Satyr. "It flows on pleasantly, gentle and unobtrusive, down all the ages of the world. If a touch of sadness mingles with the joy of it, 'tis because the gods have willed it so. Oh! my son, let us praise the gods, masters of the universe!"

Fra Mino stood thinking a while. Then he said:

"I understand now the meaning of what I saw, during that evil night, in the Chapel of San Michele. Still one point remains dark to my mind. Tell me why, old man, the Nymphs who, dwell with you, and couple with the fauns, changed into old women of squalid ugliness when they came nigh me."

"Alas! my son," answered the Saint, "time spares neither men nor gods. These last are immortal only in the imagination of the short-lived race of men. In reality they suffer the penalties of age, and verge, as the centuries go by, towards irreparable decay. Nymphs grow old as well as women. No rose but turns into an arid hip at last; no Nymph but ends as an ugly Witchwife. Watching as you did the frolic of my little household, you saw how the memory of their bygone youth yet beautifies the Nymphs and Fauns in the moment of their loves, and how their ardour, reanimated an instant, can reanimate their charms. But the ruin of centuries shows again directly after. Alas! alas! the race of the Nymphs is old, very old and decrepit."

Fra Mino asked yet another question:

"Old man! if what you say is true, and you have won to blessedness by mysterious ways, if it is true—however absurd—that you are a Saint, how comes it you house in your tomb with these phantoms which know not to praise God, and which pollute with their indecencies the temple of the Lord? Answer me, old man!"

But the goat-footed Saint, without a word of answer, vanished softly away into thin air.

Seated on a mossy stone beside the spring, Fra Mino pondered the discourse he had

just listened to, and found it contained, along with some passages impenetrably obscure, others that were full of clearness and enlightenment.

"This Satyr Saint," he reflected, "maybe likened to the Sibyl, who in the pantheon of the false gods, proclaimed the coming Redeemer to the Nations. The mire of old-world falsehoods yet clings about the hoofs of his feet, but his forehead is uplifted to the light, and his lips confess the truth."

As the shadow of the beeches was lengthening along the grassy hill-side, the Monk rose up from his stone and began to descend the narrow path that led to the House of the Sons of St. Francis. But he dared not let his eyes rest on the flowers sleeping on the surface of the pools, for he saw in them the likeness of the wanton nymphs. He got back to his cell at the moment when the bells were sounding the Ave Maria. It was a small, white chamber, furnished simply with a bed, a stool, and one of the high desks writers use. On the wall a mendicant friar had painted years ago, in the manner of Giotto, a representation of the holy Marys at the foot of the Cross. Below this painting, a shelf of wood, as black and polished as the beams of an ancient oil-press, was covered with books. Of these, some were sacred, others profane, for Fra Mino was a student of the classic poets, to the end he might praise God in all the works of men, and blessed the good Virgil for having prophesied the birth of the Saviour, when the bard of Mantua declares to the Nations: Jam redit et Virgo.2

On the window-sill a tall lily stood in a vase of coarse earthenware, for Fra Mino loved to trace the name of the Blessed Virgin inscribed in the gold dust of the flower's calyx. The window itself, which opened very high up in the wall, was small, but the sky could be seen from it, blue above the purple hills.

Ensconced in this pleasant tomb of his life and longings, Mino sat down before the narrow desk, with its two shelves at top, where he was accustomed to devote himself to his studies. Then, dipping his reed in the inkhorn fastened to the side of the little coffer that held his sheets of parchment, his brushes, and his colours and gold dust,

he besought the flies, in the name of the Lord, not to annoy him, and began to write the account of all he had seen and heard in the Chapel of San Michele, during his night of torment, as well as on the day just done, in the woods by the stream side. And first of all, he traced these lines on the parchment:

"A true record of those things which Fra Mino, of the Order of Friars Minors, saw and heard, and which he doth here relate for the instruction of the Faithful. To the praise of Jesus Christ and the glory of the blessed and humble poor man of Christ, St. Francis. Amen."

Then he set down in order in writing, without omitting aught, all he had noted of the nymphs that turned into witches and the old man with horns on his brow, whose voice quavered in the woods like a last sigh of the Classic flute and a first prelude of the Christian harp. While he wrote, the birds sang; and night closed in slowly, blotting out the bright colours of the day. The Monk lighted his lamp, and went on with his writing. As he recounted each several marvel he had made acquaintance with, he carefully expounded its literal, and its spiritual, signification, all according to the rules of rhetoric and theology. And just as men fence about cities with walls and towers to make them strong, so he supported all his arguments with texts of Scripture. He concluded from the singular revelations he had received: firstly, that Jesus Christ is Lord of all creatures, and is God of the Satyrs and the Pans, as well as of men. This is why St. Jerome saw in the Desert Centaurs that confessed Jesus Christ; secondly, that God had communicated to the Pagans certain glimmerings of light, to the end they might be saved. Likewise the Sibyls, for instance the Cumæan, the Egyptian and the Delphic, did these not foreshadow, amid the darkness of the Gentiles, the Holy Cradle, the Rods, the Reed, the Crown of Thorns and the Cross itself? For which reason St. Augustine admitted the Erythræan Sibyl into the City of God. Fra Mino gave thanks to God for having taught him so much learning; and a great joy flooded his heart to think Virgil was among the elect. And he wrote gleefully at the bottom of the last leaf:

"Here endeth the Apocalypse of Brother Mino, the poor man of Jesus Christ. I have seen the aureole of the blessed Saints crowning the horned forehead of the Satyr, in token that Jesus Christ hath redeemed from the shades of limbo the sages and poets of Antiquity."

The night was already far spent when, having finished his task, Fra Mino stretched himself upon his bed to snatch a little repose. Just as he was dropping asleep, an old woman came in at the window, riding on a moonbeam. He recognized her instantly for the ugliest of the witches he had seen in the Chapel of San Michele.

"My sweet," she said, addressing him, "what have you been doing this day? Yet we warned you, I and my pretty sisters, you must not reveal our secrets. For if you betrayed us, we told you we should kill you. And sorry I should be, for indeed I love you tenderly."

She clipped him in her arms, called him her heavenly Adonis, her darling, her little white ass, and lavished a thousand ardent caresses on him.

Anon, when he repulsed her with a spasm of disgust,

"Child, child!" she said to him, "you scorn me, because my eyes are rimmed with red, my nostrils rotted with the acrid, fetid humour they distil, and my gums adorned with a single tooth, and that black and extravagantly long. Such is your Neæra to-day, it is too true. But if you love me, I shall once more become, by you and for you, what I was in the golden days of Saturn, when my youth was in blossom amid the blossoms of the young, flower-decked world. 'Tis love, oh! my young god, that makes the beauty of things. To restore my beauty, all that is needed is a little courage. Up, Mino, be bold and show your mettle!"

At these words, which were accompanied by appropriate gestures, Fra Mino, shuddering with fear and horror, felt himself swoon away, and slipped from his bed on to the pavement of his cell. As he fell, he seemed to catch a glimpse, between his half-closed lids, of a nymph of perfect shape and peerless beauty, whose naked body

rolled over his like waves of milk.

He woke in broad daylight, bruised and broken by his fall. The leaves of the manuscript he had written the night before still littered the desk. He read them through again, folded and sealed them with his seal, put the roll inside his gown, and unheeding the menaces the witches had twice over given him, started to carry his revelations to the Lord Bishop, whose Palace lifted its battlements above the roofs in the middle of the city. He found him donning his spurs in the Great Hall, surrounded by his men-at-arms. For the Bishop was just then at war with the Ghibellines of Florence. He asked the Monk to what he owed his visit, and on being informed of the matter, invited him there and then to read out his report. Fra Mino obeyed, and the Bishop heard out his tale to the end. He had no special lights on the subject of apparitions; but he was animated with an ardent zeal for the interests of the Faith. Without a day's delay, and not suffering the cares of the War to distract him from his purpose, he appointed twelve famous Doctors in Theology and Canon Law to examine into the affair, urging them to give a definite and speedy decision. After mature inquiry and not without again and again cross-questioning Fra Mino, the Doctors determined the best thing to do was to open the tomb of San Satiro in the Chapel of San Michele, and go through a course of special exorcisms on the spot. As to the points of doctrine raised by Fra Mino, they declined to pronounce a formal opinion, inclining however to regard as rash, frivolous and new-fangled the arguments advanced by the Franciscan.

Agreeably to the advice of the learned Doctors and by order of the Bishop, the tomb of San Satiro was opened. It was found to contain nothing but a handful of ashes, which the priests sprinkled with holy water. At this there rose a white vapour, from which issued a sound of faint and feeble groans.

The night following this pious ceremony Fra Mino dreamed that the witches, bending over his bed, were tearing his heart out of his bosom. He rose at dawn,

tortured with sharp pains and devoured by a raging thirst. He dragged himself as far as the cloister well, where the doves used to drink. But no sooner had he drained down a few drops of water that filled a hollow in the well-head than he felt his heart swell within him like a sponge, and with a stifled cry to God, he choked and died.

1 "Partner of the Father's light, light of light and day of day, we break the dusk of night with psalms; help us now, Thy suppliants. Remove the darkness of our minds; scatter the demon hosts away; expel the sin of drowsiness, lest we be slack in serving Thee."

2 Now the Virgin too returns.

MESSER GUIDO CAVALCANTI

TO JULES LEMAÎTRE

MESSER GUIDO CAVALCANTI

Guido, di Messer Cavalcante de' Cavalcanti, fu un de' migliori loici che avesse il mondo, et ottimo filosofo naturale.... E perciò che egli alquanto tenea della opinione degli Epicuri, si diceva tra la gente volgare che queste sue speculazioni eran solo in cercare se trovar si potesse che Iddio non fosse.1

(The Decameron of Messer Giovanni Boccaccio, Sixth Day, Novella IX.)

DIM NON. FVI. ME. MINI. NON. SVM. NON. CVRO. DO. NNIA. ITALIA. AN. NORVM. XX. HIC. QVIESCO.2

(Inscription from the Cippus of Donnia Italia as read by M. Jean-François Bladé.)

Messer Guido Cavalcanti was, in the twentieth year of his age, the most agreeable and the best-built man of all the Florentine nobles. Beneath his long, dark locks, which escaping from under his cap, fell in jetty curls over his white brow, his eyes, that had a golden gleam in them, shone out with a dazzling brilliance. He possessed the arms of Hercules and the hands of a Nymph. His shoulders were broad, and his

figure slim and supple. He was well skilled in breaking difficult horses and wielding heavy weapons, and a peerless rider at the ring. Whenever he passed along the city streets to hear Mass at San Giovanni or San Michele, or walked by Arno side in the water-meadows, that were pranked with flowers like a beautiful picture, if any fair ladies, going in a troop together, met him in the way, they never failed to say the one to the other with a blush: "See, yonder is Messer Guido, son of the Lord Cavalcante de' Cavalcanti. 'Tis a very St. George for comeliness, pardi!" And men report that Madonna Gemma, wife of Sandro Bujamonte, one day sent her Nurse to let him know how she loved him with all her soul, and was like to die of longing. Nor less ardently was he invited to join the Companies the young Florentine lords were used in those days to form among themselves, feasting, supping, gaming and hunting together, and sometimes so dearly loving each other that one and all would wear garments of a like cut and colour. But with equal disdain he shunned the society of Florentine ladies and the assemblages of her young Nobles; for so proud and fierce was his humour, he took no pleasure but in solitude.

He would often stay all the day shut up in his chamber, then forth to wander solitary beneath the holm-oaks that bordered the Ema road at the hour when the first stars are a-tremble in the pale evening sky. If by chance he encountered riders of his own age, he never laughed, and said little—and that little was not always comprehensible. His strange bearing and ambiguous words were a grief and a grievance to his comrades—and above all to Messer Betto Brunelleschi, for he dearly loved Messer Guido, and had no fonder wish than to make him one of the Brotherhood which embraced the richest and the handsomest young noblemen of Florence, and of which he was himself the glory and the delight. For indeed Messer Betto Brunelleschi was reputed the fine flower of chivalry and the most perfect knight of all Tuscany—after Messer Guido.

One day as the latter was just entering the Porch of Santa Maria Novella, where the Monks of the Order of Saint Dominic kept at that time a number of books that had

been brought to Italy by the Greeks, Messer Betto, who was crossing the Piazza at the moment, loudly hailed his friend:

"Hola! Guido mine," he shouted, "whither away now, this bright day, that invites you, methinks, to go fowling in the hills rather than hide in the gloom of the Cloister yonder? Do me a favour, and come to my house at Arezzo, where I will play the flute to you, for the pleasure of seeing you smile."

"Grammercy!" replied Messer Guido, without so much as deigning to turn his head. "I am away to see my Lady."

And so saying, he entered the Church, which he crossed with a rapid step, recking as little of the Blessed Sacrament exposed on the Altar as of Messer Betto, sitting stiff on his horse outside the door, astounded at the words he had just heard. Guido pushed open a low portal leading to the Cloisters, followed the Cloister wall, and arrived in the Library, where Fra Sisto was painting the figures of angels. There, after saluting the good Brother, he drew out from a great painted chest one of the books newly come from Constantinople, laid it on a desk and began to turn over the leaves. It was a Treatise on Love, writ in Greek by the divine Plato. Messer Guido sighed; his hands began to tremble and his eyes filled with tears.

"Alas!" he muttered; "hid beneath these signs is the Light, and I cannot see it."

He said thus to himself, because the knowledge of the Greek tongue was then altogether lost in the West. After many a long-drawn groan, he took the book, and kissing it, laid it in the iron chest like a beautiful dead woman in her coffin. Then he asked the good Fra Sisto to give him the Manuscript of the Speeches of Cicero, which he read, till the shades of evening, glooming down on the cypresses in the Cloister garden, spread their batlike wings over the pages of his book. For you must know Messer Guido Cavalcanti was a searcher after truth in the writings of the Ancients, and was for treading the arduous ways that lead mankind to immortality. Devoured by the noble longing of discovery, he would set out in canzones the

doctrines of the old-world Sages concerning Love which is the path to Virtue.

A few days later, Messer Betto Brunelleschi came to visit him at his own house on the promenade of the Adimari, at the peep of day, the hour when the lark sings in the corn. He found him still abed, and after kissing him, said tenderly:

"My Guido, my Guido lad! put me out of my pain. Last week you told me you were on your way to visit your Lady in the Church and Cloister of Santa Maria Novella. Ever since I have been turning, turning your words in my head, without fathoming their meaning. I shall have no peace till you have given me an explanation of them. I beseech you, tell me what you meant—so far, that is, as your discretion shall suffer you, seeing the matter doth concern a lady."

Messer Guido burst out a-laughing. Raising himself on his elbow in bed, he looked Messer Betto in the eyes.

"Friend!" said he, "the Lady I spoke to you of hath more than one habitation. The day you saw me going to visit her, I found her in the Library of Santa Maria Novella. But alack! I heard but the one half of her discourse, for she spoke to me in both of the two languages that flow like honey from her adorable lips. First she delivered me a discourse in the tongue of the Greeks, which I could not comprehend, then she addressed me in the dialect of the Latins with a wondrous wisdom. And so well pleased was I with her conversation that I am right fain to marry her."

"Tis at the least," said Messer Betto, "a niece of the Emperor of Constantinople, or his natural daughter.... How name you her?"

"If needs be," answered Messer Guido, "we must give her a love name, such as every poet gives to his mistress. I will call her Diotima, in memory of Diotima of Megara, who showed the way to the lovers of Virtue. But her public and avowed name is Philosophy, and 'tis the most excellent bride a man can find. I want no other, and I swear by the gods to be faithful unto death, which doth put an end to life and thought."

When he heard these sentiments, Messer Betto struck his forehead with his hand and cried:

"Per Bacco! but I never guessed the riddle! Friend Guido, you have the subtlest wit under the red lily of Florence. I heartily commend your taking to wife so high a dame. Of a surety, will spring of this union a numerous progeny of canzones, sonnets and ballades. I promise to baptize you these pretty babes to the sound of my flute, with dainty mottoes galore and gallant devices. I am the more rejoiced at this spiritual wedlock, seeing it will never hinder you, when the time comes, to marry according to the flesh some fair and goodly lady of the city."

"Nay! you are out," returned Messer Guido. "They that celebrate the espousals of the mind should leave carnal marriage to the profane vulgar, which includes the great Lords, the Merchants and the Handicraftsmen. If like me you had known my Diotima, you would have learned, friend Betto, that she doth distinguish two sorts of men, on the one hand such as, being fruitful only by the body, strive but for that coarse and commonplace immortality that is won by the generation of children, on the other they whose soul conceives and engenders what is meet for the soul to produce, to wit the Good and Beautiful. My Diotima hath willed I should be of the second sort, and I will not go against her good pleasure, and copy the mere brutes that breed and procreate."

Messer Betto Brunelleschi by no means approved of this resolution. He pointed out to his friend that in life we must adapt ourselves to the different conditions and modes of existence suitable to the different ages, that after the epoch of pleasures comes that of ambition, and that it was good and prudent, as youth waned, to contract alliance with some rich and noble family, affording access to the great offices of the Republic, such as Prior of the Arts and Liberty, Captain of the People, or Gonfalonier of Justice.

Seeing however that his friend only received his advice with a lip of disgust, as if it

were some bitter drug, he said no more on the point, for fear of angering him, deeming it wise to trust to time, which will change men's hearts and reverse the strongest resolutions.

"Sweet Guido," he interposed gaily, "tell me this much at any rate. Doth your lady suffer you to have delight with pretty maids and to take part in our diversions?"

"For that matter," replied Messer Guido, "she hath no more care of such things than of the encounters that small dog you see asleep yonder at the foot of my bed may make in the street. And in very deed they are of no account, provided a man doth himself attach no value to them."

Messer Betto left the room a trifle piqued at his friend's scornful bearing. He continued to feel the liveliest affection for his friend, but thought it unbecoming to press him overmuch to attend the fêtes and entertainments he gave all the Winter long with an admirable liberality. At the same time the gentlemen of his Company resented hotly the slight the son of the Signor Cavalcante de' Cavalcanti did them by refusing to share their society. They began to rally him on, his studies and poring over books, declaring that by dint of so feeding on parchment, like the Monks and the rats, he would end up by growing to resemble these, and would anon have nothing to show but a pointed snout and three long hairs for beard, peeping out from under a black hood, and that Madonna Gemma herself would cry out at sight of him:

"Venus, my Patroness! what a pass have his books brought my handsome St. George to! He is good for naught now but to throw away his lance and hold a writing-reed in hand instead." So they miscalled him sore, saying he toyed only with the bookworms and spiders, and was tied to the apron-strings of Mistress Philosophia. Nor did they stop short at such-like light raillery, but let it be understood he was too learned by far to be a good Christian, that he was given over to Magic Arts, and held converse with the Devils of Hell.

"Folk do not lurk in hiding like that," they said to each other, "for any reason but to

foregather with the Devils, male and female, and get gold of them as the price of revolting and shameful acts."

To crown all, they charged him with sharing those false and pernicious doctrines of Epicurus which had already seduced an Emperor at Naples and a Pope in Rome, and threatened to turn the peoples of Europe into a herd of swine, without a thought of God and their own immortal souls. "A mighty fine gain," they ended up, "when his studies have brought him to forswear the Holy Trinity!" This last charge they bruited abroad was the most formidable of all, and might easily work ruin on Messer Guido.

Now Messer Guido Cavalcanti was well aware of the mockery they made of him in the Companies by reason of the careful heed he had of eternal things; and this was why he shunned the society of living men and sought rather to the dead.

In those days the Church of San Giovanni was surrounded with Roman tombs. Thither would Messer Guido often come at Ave Maria and meditate far into the silent night. He believed, as the Chronicles reported, that this fair Church of San Giovanni had been a Pagan Temple before it was a Christian Church, and the thought pleased his soul, which was enamoured of the old-world mysteries. Especially he loved to look on these tombs, where the sign of the Cross found no place, but which bore Latin inscriptions and were adorned with carven figures of men and gods. They were long cubes of white marble, on the sides of which could be made out representations of banquets and hunting parties, the death of Adonis, the fight of Lapithæ and Centaurs, the refusal of the chaste Hippolytus, the Amazons. Messer Guido would read the lettering with anxious care, and try hard to penetrate the meaning of these fables. One tomb in particular occupied him more than all the rest, for it showed him two Loves, each holding a torch, and he was curious to discover the nature of these two Loves. Well! one night that he was pondering on these things more deeply than ever, a shadow rose up above the lid of the tomb—a luminous shadow, as when you see, or fancy you see, the moon shining

faintly through a cloud. Gradually it took the shape of a beautiful virgin, and said thus in a voice softer than the reeds waving in the wind:

"I am she that sleeps within this tomb, and I am called Julia Læta. I lost the light on my marriage-day, at the age of sixteen years, three months and nine days. Since then, whether I am, or am not, I cannot tell. Never question the dead, stranger, for they see naught, and a thick night environs them. 'Tis said that such as in life knew the cruel joys of Venus roam the glades of a dense forest of myrtles. For me who died a virgin, I sleep a dreamless sleep. They have graven two Loves on the stone of my sepulchre. One gives mortals the light of day; the other quenches it in their tender eyes for ever. The countenance of both is the same, a smiling countenance, for birth and death are two twin brothers, and all is joy to the Immortal Gods. I have spoken."

The voice fell silent, like the rustling of leaves when the wind drops. The transparent shadow vanished away in the light of dawn, which descended clear and white on the hills; and the tombs of San Giovanni grew wan and silent once again in the morning air. And Messer Guido pondered:

"The truth I foresaw, hath been made manifest to me. Is it not writ in the Book the Priests use, 'Shall the dead praise Thee, O Lord?' The dead are without thought or knowledge, and the divine Epicurus was well advised when he enfranchised the living from the vain terrors of the life to come."

A troop of horsemen pricking across the Piazza abruptly broke up his meditations. It was Messer Betto and his Company away to hunt the cranes along the brookside of Peretola.

"So ho!" cried one of them, whose name was Bocca, "see yonder, Messer Guido the Philosopher, who scorns us for our good life and gentle ways and merry doings. He seems half frozen."

"And well he may be," put in Messer Doria, who was reputed a wag. "His lady, the

Moon, whom he kisses tenderly all night, hath hied her behind the hills to sleep with some shepherd swain. He is eat up with jealousy; look you, how green he is!"

They spurred their horses among the tombs, and drew up in a ring about Messer Guido.

"Nay! nay! Messer Doria," returned Bocca, "the lady Moon is too round and bright for so black a gallant. If you would know his mistresses, they be here. Here he comes to find them in their bed, where he is less like to be stung of fleas than of scorpions."

"Fie! Out upon the vile necromancer!" exclaimed Messer Giordano, crossing himself; "see what learning leads to! Folk disown God, and go fornicating in Pagan graveyards."

Leaning against the Church wall, Messer Guido let the riders have their say. When he judged they had voided all the froth of their shallow brains over him:

"Gentle cavaliers," he answered, smiling, "you are at home. I am your host, and courtesy constrains me to receive your insults without reply."

So saying, he bounded over the tombs and walked quietly away. The horsemen looked at one another in amazement; then bursting out laughing, they gave spur to their steeds. As they were galloping along the Peretola Road, Messer Bocca said to Messer Betto:

"Who can doubt now but this Guido is gone mad? He told us we were at home in the graveyard. And to say such a thing, he must needs have lost his wits."

"True it is," replied Messer Betto, "I cannot imagine what he meant to have us understand by talking in such a sort. But he is used to expressing himself in dark sayings and subtle parables. He hath tossed us a bone this time must be opened to find the marrow."

"Pardi!" ejaculated Messer Giordano; "my dog may have this bone to gnaw, and the

Pagan that threw it to boot."

They soon reached the banks of the Peretola brook, whence the cranes may be seen rising in flocks at daybreak. During the chase, which was abundantly successful, Messer Betto Brunelleschi never ceased pondering the words Guido had used. And by dint of much thinking, he discovered their signification. Hailing Messer Bocca with loud cries, he said to him:

"Come hither, Messer Bocca! I have just guessed what it was Messer Guido meant us to understand. He told us we were at home in a graveyard, because the ignorant be for all the world like dead men, who, according to the Epicurean doctrine, have no faculty of thought or knowledge."

Messer Bocca replied, shrugging his shoulders, he understood better than most how to fly a Flanders hawk, to make knife-play with his enemies, and to upset a girl, and this was knowledge sufficient for his state in life.

Messer Guido continued for several years more to study the science of Love. He embodied his reflexions in canzones, which it is not given to all men to interpret, composing a book of these verses that was borne in triumph through the streets, garlanded with laurel. Then, seeing the purest souls are not without alloy of terrestrial passions, and life bears us one and all along in its sinuous and stormy course, it fell out that at the turning-point of youth and age, Messer Guido was seduced by the ambitions of the flesh and the powers of this world. He wedded, to further his projects of aggrandizement, the daughter of the Lord Farinata degli Uberti, the same who one time reddened the Arbia with the blood of the Florentines. He threw himself into the quarrels of the citizens with all the pride and impetuosity of his nature. And he took for mistresses the Lady Mandetta and the Lady Giovanna, who represented the one the Albigensians, the other the Ghibellines. It was the time when Messer Dante Alighieri was Prior of the Arts and Liberty. The city was divided into two hostile camps, those of the Bianchi and the Neri. One day when the

principal citizens were assembled in the Piazza of the Frescobaldi, the Bianchi on one side the square and the Neri on the other, to assist at the obsequies of a noble lady of Florence, the Doctors and the Knights were seated as the custom was, on raised benches, while in front of them the younger men sat on the ground on rush mats. One of the latter standing up to settle his cloak, those who were opposite thought he was for defying them. They started to their feet in turn, and bared their swords. Instantly every one unsheathed, and the kinsmen of the dead lady had all the difficulty in the world to separate the combatants.

From that day, Florence ceased to be a town gladdened by the work of its handicraftsmen, and became a forest full of wolves ravening for each other's blood. Messer Guido shared these savage passions, and grew gloomy, restless and sullen. Never a day passed but he exchanged sword-thrusts with the Neri in the streets of Florence, where in old days he had meditated on the nature and constitution of the soul. More than once he had felt the assassin's dagger on his flesh, before he was banished with the rest of his faction and confined in the plague-stricken town of Sarzana. For six months he languished there, sick with fever and hate. And when eventually the Bianchi were recalled, he came back to his native city a dying man.

In the year 1300, on the third day after the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, he found strength enough to drag himself as far as his own fair Church of San Giovanni. Worn out with fatigue and grief, he lay down on the tomb of Julia Læta, who in the old days had revealed to him the mysteries the profane know nothing of. It was the hour when the Church bells ring out through the quivering air of evening a long-drawn farewell to the setting sun. Messer Betto Brunelleschi, who was crossing the Piazza on his way home from his country house, saw amid the tombs two haggard falcon's eyes burning in a fleshless face, and recognizing the friend of his youth, was seized with wonder and pity.

He approached him, and kissing him as he used in former days, said with a sigh:

"Ah! Guido mine! what fire is it hath consumed you away thus? You burned up your life in science first, and then in public affairs. I beseech you, quench somewhat the ardour of your spirit; comrade, let us husband our strength, and, as Riccardo the blacksmith says, make up a fire to last."

But Guido Cavalcanti put his hand on his lips.

"Hush!" he whispered, "hush! not a word more, friend Betto. I wait my lady, her who shall console me for so many vain loves that in this world have betrayed me and that I have betrayed. It is equally cruel and useless to think and to act. This I know. The curse is not so much to live, for I see you are well and hearty, friend Betto, and many another man is the same. The curse is not to live, but to know we live. The curse is to be conscious and to will. Happily there is a remedy for these evils. Let us say no more; I await the lady whom I have never wronged, for never have I doubted but she was gentle and true-hearted, and I have learned by much pondering how peaceful and secure it is to slumber on her bosom. Many fables have been told of her bed and dwelling-places. But I have not believed the lies of the ignorant crowd. So it is, she cometh to me as a mistress to her lover, her brow garlanded with flowers and her lips smiling."

He broke off with these words, and fell dead over the ancient tomb. His body was buried without any great pomp in the Cloister of Santa Maria Novella.

1 "Guido, son of Messer Cavalcante de' Cavalcanti, was one of the best Logicians the world held, and a most finished Natural Philosopher.... And forasmuch as in some degree he held by the opinion of the Epicureans, it was therefore said among the vulgar folk how that these his speculations were only pursued for to discover if it might be there was no God."

2 "To the Gods of the Lower World.—I was not. I remember. I am not and I heed not. I, Donnia Italia, a maid of twenty, rest here."

LUCIFER

TO LOUIS GANDERAX

LUCIFER

E si compiacque tanto Spinello di farlo orribile e contrafatto, che si dice (tanto può alcuna fiata l'immaginazione) che la detta figura da lui dipinta gli apparve in sogno, domandandolo dove egli l' avesse veduta si brutta.1

(Vite de' piu eccellenti pittori, da Messer Giorgio Vasari.—"Vita di Spinello.")

Andrea Tafi, painter and worker-in-mosaic of Florence, had a wholesome terror of the Devils of Hell, particularly in the watches of the night, when it is given to the powers of Darkness to prevail. And the worthy man's fears were not unreasonable, for in those days the Demons had good cause to hate the Painters, who robbed them of more souls with a single picture than a good little Preaching Friar could do in thirty sermons. No doubt the Monk, to instil a soul-saving horror in the hearts of the faithful, would describe to the utmost of his powers "that day of wrath, that day of mourning," which is to reduce the universe to ashes, teste David et Sibylla, borrowing his deepest voice and bellowing through his hands to imitate the Archangel's last trump. But there! it was "all sound and fury, signifying nothing," whereas a painting displayed on a Chapel wall or in the Cloister, showing Jesus Christ sitting on the Great White Throne to judge the living and the dead, spoke unceasingly to the eyes of sinners, and through the eyes chastened such as had sinned by the eyes or otherwise.

It was in the days when cunning masters were depicting at Santa-Croce in Florence and the Campo Santo of Pisa the mysteries of Divine Justice. These works were drawn according to the account in verse which Dante Alighieri, a man very learned in Theology and in Canon Law, wrote in days gone by of his journey to Hell and Purgatory and Paradise, whither by the singular great merits of his lady, he was able

to make his way alive. So everything in these paintings was instructive and true, and we may say surely less profit is to be had of reading the most full and ample Chronicle than from contemplating such representative, works of art. Moreover, the Florentine masters took heed to paint, under the shade of orange groves, on the flower-starred turf, fair ladies and gallant knights, with Death lying in wait for them with his scythe, while they were discoursing of love to the sound of lutes and viols. Nothing was better fitted to convert carnal-minded sinners who quaff forgetfulness of God on the lips of women. To rebuke the covetous, the painter would show to the life the Devils pouring molten gold down the throat of Bishop or Abbess, who had commissioned some work from him and then scamped his pay.

This is why the Demons in those days were bitter enemies of the painters, and above all of the Florentine painters, who surpassed all the rest in subtlety of wit. Chiefly they reproached them with representing them under a hideous guise, with the heads of bird and fish, serpents' bodies and bats' wings. This sore resentment which they felt will come out plainly in the history of Spinello of Arezzo.

Spinello Spinelli was sprung of a noble family of Florentine exiles, and his graciousness of mind matched his gentle birth; for he was the most skilful painter of his time. He wrought many and great works at Florence; and the Pisans begged him to complete Giotto's wall-paintings in their Campo Santo, where the dead rest beneath roses in holy earth shipped from Jerusalem. At last, after working long years in divers cities and getting much gold, he longed to see once more the good city of Arezzo, his mother. The men of Arezzo had not forgotten how Spinello, in his younger days, being enrolled in the Confraternity of Santa Maria della Misericordia, had visited the sick and buried the dead in the plague of 1383. They were grateful to him beside for having by his works spread the fame of their city over all Tuscany. For all these reasons they welcomed him with high honours on his return.

Still full of vigour in his old age, he undertook important tasks in his native town.

His wife would tell him:

"You are rich, Spinello. Do you rest, and leave younger men to paint instead of you. It is meet a man should end his days in a gentle, religious quiet. It is tempting God to be for ever raising new and worldly monuments, mere heathen towers of Babel. Quit your colours and your varnishes, Spinello, or they will destroy your peace of mind."

So the good dame would preach, but he refused to listen, for his one thought was to increase his fortune and renown. Far from resting on his laurels, he arranged a price with the Wardens of Sant' Agnolo for a history of St. Michael, that was to cover all the Choir of the Church and contain an infinity of figures. Into this enterprise he threw himself with extraordinary ardour. Rereading the parts of Scripture that were to be his inspiration, he set himself to study deeply every line and every word of these passages. Not content with drawing all day long in his workshop, he persisted in working both at bed and board; while at dusk, walking below the hill on whose brow Arezzo proudly lifts her walls and towers, he was still lost in thought. And we may say the story of the Archangel was already limned in his brain when he started to sketch out the incidents in red chalk on the plaster of the wall. He was soon done tracing these outlines; then he fell to painting above the high altar the scene that was to outshine all the others in brilliancy. For it was his intent therein to glorify the leader of the hosts of Heaven for the victory he won before the beginning of time. Accordingly Spinello represented St. Michael fighting in the air against the serpent with seven heads and ten horns, and he figured with delight, in the bottom part of the picture, the Prince of the Devils, Lucifer, under the semblance of an appalling monster. The figures seemed to grow to life of themselves under his hand. His success was beyond his fondest hopes; so hideous was the countenance of Lucifer, none could escape the nightmare of its foulness. The face haunted the painter in the streets and even went home with him to his lodging.

Presently when night was come, Spinello lay-down in his bed beside his wife and

fell asleep. In his slumbers he saw an Angel as comely as St. Michael, but black; and the Angel said to him:

"Spinello, I am Lucifer. Tell me, where had you seen me, that you should paint me as you have, under so ignominious a likeness?"

The old painter answered trembling, that he had never seen him with his eyes, never having gone down alive into Hell, like Messer Dante Alighieri; but that, in depicting him as he had done, he was for expressing in visible lines and colours the hideousness of sin.

Lucifer shrugged his shoulders, and the hill of San Gemignano seemed of a sudden to heave and stagger.

"Spinello," he went on, "will you do me the pleasure to reason awhile with me? I am no mean Logician; He you pray to knows that."

Receiving no reply, Lucifer proceeded in these terms:

"Spinello, you have read the books that tell of me. You know of my enterprise, and how I forsook Heaven to become the Prince of this World. A tremendous adventure,—and a unique one, had not the Giants in like fashion assailed the god Jupiter, as yourself have seen, Spinello, recorded on an ancient tomb where this Titanic war is carved in marble."

"It is true," said Spinello, "I have seen the tomb, shaped like a great tun, in the Church of Santa Reparata at Florence. 'Tis a fine work of the Romans."

"Still," returned Lucifer, smiling, "the Giants are not pictured on it in the shape of frogs or chameleons or the like hideous and horrid creatures."

"True," replied the painter, "but then they had not attacked the true God, but only a false idol of the Pagans. 'Tis a mighty difference. The fact is clear, Lucifer, you raised the standard of revolt against the true and veritable King of Earth and Heaven."

"I will not deny it," said Lucifer. "And how many sorts of sins do you charge me with for that?"

"Seven, it is like enough," the painter answered, "and deadly sins one and all."

"Seven!" exclaimed the Angel of Darkness; "well! the number is canonical. Everything goes by sevens in my history, which is close bound up with God's. Spinello, you deem me proud, angry and envious. I enter no protest, provided you allow that glory was my only aim. Do you deem me covetous? Granted again; Covetousness is a virtue for Princes. For Gluttony and Lust, if you hold me guilty, I will not complain. Remains Indolence."

As he pronounced the word, Lucifer crossed his arms across his breast, and shaking his gloomy head, tossed his flaming locks:

"Tell me, Spinello, do you really think I am indolent? Do you take me for a coward? Do you hold that in my revolt I showed a lack of courage? Nay! you cannot. Then it was but just to paint me in the guise of a hero, with a proud countenance. You should wrong no one, not even the Devil. Cannot you see that you insult Him you make prayer to, when you give Him for adversary a vile, monstrous toad? Spinello, you are very ignorant for a man of your age. I have a great mind to pull your ears, as they do to an ill-conditioned schoolboy."

At this threat, and seeing the arm of Lucifer already stretched out towards him, Spinello clapped his hand to his head and began to howl with terror.

His good wife, waking up with a start, asked him what ailed him. He told her with chattering teeth, how he had just seen Lucifer and had been in terror for his ears.

"I told you so," retorted the worthy dame; "I knew all those figures you will go on painting on the walls would end by driving you mad."

"I am not mad," protested the painter. "I saw him with my own eyes; and he is beautiful to look on, albeit proud and sad. First thing to-morrow I will blot out the horrid figure I have drawn and set in its place the shape I beheld in my dream. For

we must not wrong even the Devil himself."

"You had best go to sleep again," scolded his wife. "You are talking stark nonsense, and unchristian to boot."

Spinello tried to rise, but his strength failed him and he fell back unconscious on his pillow. He lingered on a few days in a high fever, and then died.

1

"And so successful was Spinello with his horrible and portentous Production that it was commonly reported—so great is alway the force of fancy—that the said figure (of Lucifer trodden underfoot by St. Michael in the Altar-piece of the Church of St. Agnolo at Arezzo) painted by him had appeared to the artist in a dream, and asked him in what place he had beheld him under so brutish a form."

Lives of the most Excellent Painters, by Giorgio Vasari.—"Life of Spinello."

THE LOAVES OF BLACK BREAD

TO MADEMOISELLE MARY FINALY

THE LOAVES OF BLACK BREAD

Tu tibi divitias stolidissime congeris amplas Negasque micam pauperi; Advenit ecce dies qua saevis ignibus ardens Rogabis aquae guttulam.1

(Navis stultifera, Sebastian Brandt, 1507, fol, xix.)

In those days Nicolas Nerli was a banker in the noble city of Florence. Tierce was no sooner sounded than he was at his desk, and at nones he was seated there still, poring all day long over the figures he wrote in his table-books. He lent money to the Emperor and to the Pope. And if he did not lend to the Devil, it was only because he was afraid of bad debts with him they call the Wily One, and who is full of cunning and trickery. Nicolas Nerli was bold and unscrupulous; he had won great

riches and robbed many folks of their own. Wherefore he was highly honoured in the city of Florence. He dwelt in a Palace where the light of God's day entered only by narrow windows; and this was a wise precaution, for the rich man's house must be a castle, and they who possess much wealth do well to defend by force what they have gotten by cunning.

Accordingly the windows were guarded with bars and the doors with chains. Outside, the walls were painted in fresco by clever craftsmen, who had depicted thereon the Virtues under the likeness of women, the Patriarchs, the Prophets and the Kings of Israel. Tapestries hung in the rooms within, displaying the histories of Alexander and Tristram, as they are told us in legends. Nicolas Nerli set all the city talking of his wealth by the pious foundations he established. He had raised an Hospital beyond the walls, the frieze of which, carved and painted, represented the most honourable actions of his own life; in gratitude for the sums of money he had given towards the completion of Santa Maria Novella, his portrait was suspended in the choir of that Church. In it he was shown kneeling, with praying hands, at the feet of the Blessed Virgin, easily recognizable by his cap of red worsted, his furred hood, his yellow face swimming in fatness and his little keen eyes. His good wife, Monna Bismantova, a worthy-looking woman with a mournful air, and seeming as though no man could ever have taken aught of pleasure with her, was on the other side of the Virgin in the humble attitude of supplication. Nicolas Nerli was one of the chiefest citizens of the Republic; seeing he had never spoken against the laws, and because he had never regarded the poor nor such folk as the great and powerful condemn to fine and exile, nothing had lowered in the estimation of the Magistrates the high repute he had won in their eyes by reason of his great riches.

Returning one winter evening later than usual to his Palace, he was surrounded on the threshold by a band of half-naked mendicants who held out their hands and asked alms.

He repulsed them with hard words. But hunger making them as fierce and bold as wolves, they formed a circle round him, and begged him for bread in hoarse, lamentable voices. He was just stooping to pick up stones to throw at them when he saw one of his serving-men coming, carrying on his head a basketful of loaves of black bread, intended for the stablemen, kitchen helpers and gardeners.

He signed to the pantler to approach, and diving both hands into the basket, tossed the loaves to the starving wretches. Then entering the house, he went to bed and fell asleep. In the night, he was smitten with apoplexy and died so suddenly he believed himself still in his bed when he saw, in a place "as dark as Erebus," St. Michael the Archangel shining in the brightness that issued from his own presence.

Balance in hand, the Archangel was engaged in filling the scales. Recognizing in the scale that hung lowest certain jewels belonging to widow women that he had in pledge, a great heap of clippings from pieces he had filched dishonestly, and sundry very fine gold coins which were unique and which he had acquired by usury or fraud, Nicolas Nerli comprehended it was his own life, now come to an end, that St. Michael was at that instant weighing before his eyes.

"Good Sir!" he said, "good St. Michael! if you put in the one scale all the lucre I have gotten in my life, set in the other, if it please you, the noble foundations whereby I have so splendidly shown my piety. Forget not the Duomo of Santa Maria Novella, to which I contributed a good third; nor my Hospital beyond the walls, that I built entirely out of my own pocket."

"Never fear, Nicolas Nerli," answered the Archangel; "I will forget nothing."

And with his own heavenly hands he set in the lighter scale the Duomo of Santa Maria Novella and the Hospital with its frieze all carved and painted. But the scale did not drop an inch.

At this the Banker was sorely disquieted.

"Good St. Michael! think again. You have not put this side of the balance my fine

holy-water stoup I gave to San Giovanni, nor the pulpit in Sant' Andrea, where the baptism of Our Lord Jesus Christ is depicted life-size. The artist charged me a pretty penny for it."

The Archangel put both pulpit and stoup atop of the Hospital in the scale, but still it never stirred. Nicolas Nerli began to feel a cold sweat bathing his brow.

"Good Sir! dear Archangel!" he asked, "are you quite certain your balances are true?"

St. Michael replied, smiling, that they were of a different pattern from the balances the brokers of Paris use and the money-changers of Venice, and were precisely accurate.

"What!" sighed Nicolas Nerli, his face as white as chalk. "Duomo, pulpit, basin, Hospital with all its beds, do they weigh no more than a bit of straw, a pinch of down from a bird's breast?"

"See for yourself, Nicolas!" said the Archangel; "so far the weight of your iniquities much outweighs the light load of your good works."

"Then I must go to Hell," cried the Florentine; and his teeth chattered with horror.

"Patience, Nicolas Nerli," returned the Weigher of Souls, "patience! we are not done yet. There is something left."

So saying, the Blessed St. Michael took the loaves of black bread the rich man had tossed the night before to the poor beggars. He laid them in the scale containing the good works, which instantly fell, while the other rose, and the two scales remained level. The beam dropped neither to right nor left, and the needle marked the exact equality of the two loads.

The Banker could not believe his eyes; but the glorious Archangel said solemnly:

"See, Nicolas Nerli; you are good neither for Heaven nor Hell. Begone! Go back to Florence! multiply through the city the loaves you gave last night with your own

hand, in the dusk, when no man saw you—and you shall be saved. It is not enough that Heaven open its doors to the thief that repented and the harlot that wept. The mercy of God is infinite, and able to save even a rich man. Do this; multiply the loaves whose weight you see weighing down my balances. Begone!"

Then Nicholas Nerli awoke in his bed. He resolved to follow faithfully the counsel of the Archangel, and multiply the bread of the poor, and so enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

For the three years he spent on earth after his first death, he was very pitiful to the unfortunate and a great giver of alms.

1 "You heap up in your folly ample riches for yourself, and refuse a crumb of bread to the poor man; lo! the day is at hand when burning in cruel flames, you shall beg for a drop of water."—Ship of Fools.

THE MERRY-HEARTED BUFFALMACCO

TO EUGÈNE MÜNTZ

THE MERRY-HEARTED BUFFALMACCO

Buonamico di Cristofano detto Buffalmacco pittore Fiorentino, il qual fu discepolo d' Andrea Tafi, e come uomo burlevole celebrato da Messer Giovanni Boccaccio nel suo Decamerone, fu come si sa carissimo compagno di Bruno e di Calendrino pittori ancor essi faceti e piacevole, e, come si può vedere nell' opere sue sparse per tutta Toscana, di assai buon giudizio nell' arte sua del dipignere.

(Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, da Messer Giorgio Vasari—"Vita di Buonamico Buffalmacco.")1

1"Buonamico di Cristofano, known as Buffalmacco, a Florentine painter, the same that was pupil of Andrea Tafi, and celebrated as a burlesque character by Messer Giovanni Boccaccio in his Decameron was as we know bosom friend of Bruno and

Calendrino, also painters and of an even more witty and merry humour than himself, and as may be seen in his works scattered throughout Tuscany, of no mean judgement in his art of painting." (Lives of the most Excellent Painters by Messer Giorgio Vasari.—"Life of Buonamico Buffalmacco.")

I

THE COCKROACHES

In his callow youth, Buonamico Cristofani, Florentine, surnamed Buffalmacco by reason of his merry humour, served his apprenticeship in the workshop of Andrea Tafi, painter and worker-in-mosaic. Now the said Tafi was a very knowledgeable master. Sojourning at Venice in the days when Apollonius was covering the walls of San Marco with mosaics, he had discovered by means of a trick certain secrets the Greek craftsmen were for keeping sedulously to themselves. Returning to his native city, he won so high a repute in the art of composing pictures by arranging together a countless number of little differently coloured cubes of glass, he could not supply all the demands addressed to him for works of the sort, and all day and every day, from matins to vespers, he was busy, mounted on a scaffold in some Church or other, depicting the dead Christ, or Christ in His glory, the Patriarchs and Prophets, or the history of Job or of Noah. And as he was likewise keen to paint in fresco, with pounded colours, in the manner of the Greeks, which was then the only one known, he refused himself all rest, and gave his apprentices none either. He used to tell them:

"They who like myself are in possession of noble secrets and excel in their art should keep both mind and hand ceaselessly active to carry out their enterprises, so as to win much wealth and leave a long memory behind them. And if I, old and broken down as I am, spare myself no trouble, you are bound to do your utmost to help me with all your strength, which is fresh, hearty and undiminished."

And in order that his colours, his tesseræ of molten glass and his impastos might be all ready prepared by dawn of day, he forced the lads to rise in the middle of the night. Nothing could well be more hateful to Buffalmacco, who was in the habit of supping plentifully, and loved to run the streets at an hour when, as they say, all cats are grey. He went to bed late and slept sound, his conscience being clear enough after all. Accordingly, when Tafi's shrill voice woke him up out of his beauty sleep, he would only turn round on his pillow and pretend to be deaf. But his master invariably persisted, and at a pinch would go into the apprentice's room and very soon have the sheets dragged off the bed and a jug of cold water emptied over the sluggard's head.

Poor Buffalmacco, shivering and half dressed, would away grumbling, to grind the colours in the dark, cold workroom, cudgelling his wits the while, grinding and cursing all the time, to think of some way of escaping such harsh and humiliating treatment in future. Long he sought in vain; but his mind was an active one, and one morning early a happy thought struck him.

To put this in execution, Buffalmacco waited till his master was out of the way. Directly day broke, Andrea Tafi, as his habit was, pocketed the flask of Chianti and the three eggs that formed his regular breakfast, and bidding his pupils melt the glass tesseræ according to the directions, and take every possible pains, went off to work in the famous church of San Giovanni, a marvellously beautiful building, constructed with admirable art in the Classical manner. At the time he was executing on its walls a series of mosaics representing the Angels, Archangels, Cherubim and Seraphim, Powers, Thrones and Dominions; the chief acts of the Almighty, from the Creation of Light to the Deluge; the history of Joseph and his brethren, the history of Jesus Christ from the moment He was conceived in His Mother's womb till His Ascension into Heaven, and the life of St. John Baptist. Seeing the infinite pains he took to fix the pieces truly in the cement and arrange them artistically, he expected both profit and fame as the result of this great work and the host of figures it

contained. Then, directly the master was gone, Buffalmacco hastened to make his preparations for the enterprise he was bent upon. He went down into the cellar, which, communicating as it did with a baker's next door, was full of cockroaches drawn thither by the smell of the sacks of flour. Everybody knows how cockroaches, or kitchen-beetles, swarm in bakeries, inns and corn-mills. These are a sort of crawling, stinking insects, with long, ungainly, shaggy legs and an ugly shell of a dirty yellow.1

During the Civil Wars that stained the Arbia red and fertilized the olive-yards with the blood of nobles, these loathsome insects had two names in Tuscany: the Florentines called them Siennese, and the Siennese Florentines.2

The good Buffalmacco laughed to see the creatures all moving up and down and in and out, looking for all the world like tiny shields of a host of pigmy knights jousting in a fairy tourney.

"Ah, ah!" he cried to himself, "they are may-bugs bedevilled, that's what they are! They would not enjoy the springtime, and Jupiter punished them for their sluggishness. He has condemned them to crawl about in the dark, weighed down by their useless wings—an object-lesson to men to make the most of life in the heyday of youth and love."

This was what Buffalmacco said to himself; for he was ready enough, like other folk, to see in nature a symbol of his own passions and inclinations, which were to drink, to divert himself with pretty women and sleep his fill in a warm bed in winter and a nice cool one in summer.

However, he had not visited the cellar to ponder on symbols and emblems, and he was not long in carrying out his plan. He caught two dozen of the cockroaches, without regard to sex or age, and popped them in a bag he had brought with him for the purpose. This done, he proceeded to hide the bag under his bed, and returned to the workroom, where his comrades Bruno and Calendrino were painting, from the

master's sketches, the good St. Francis receiving the stigmata, and meantime devising some way of hoodwinking Memmi the cobbler, whose wife was comely and obliging.

Buffalmacco, who was not less expert, far from it, than his two comrades, mounted the ladder and started painting the wings of the seraphic crucifix that came down from heaven to mark the Blessed Saint with the five wounds of love, taking the utmost pains to blend in the celestial pinions all the tenderest hues of the rainbow. The task occupied him all day, and when old Tafi came back from San Giovanni, he could not refrain from bestowing a few words of commendation on his pupil. This cost him no small effort, for age and riches had made him both cross and critical.

"My lads," he said, addressing the apprentices, "those wings are painted with a good deal of spirit. Buffalmacco might go far in the art of painting, if he would only apply himself more vigorously. But there, his mind is far too much set on self-indulgence; and great achievements can only be accomplished by steady labour. Now Calendrino here would beat you all, with his industry—if he were not a born fool."

In such fashion Andrea Tafi improved the occasion with a proper severity. Then, having said his say, he went to the kitchen to take his supper, which consisted of a bit of salt fish; after that he betook himself to his chamber, lay down in his bed, and was soon snoring. Meantime Buffalmacco made his usual round through every quarter of the city where wine was to be had cheap and girls cheaper still. This done, he got home again half an hour or so before the time Tafi generally woke. He drew out the bag from under his bed, took the cockroaches one by one, and by means of a short, sharp needle fastened a little wax taper on the back of each. Lighting the tapers, he let the insects loose, one after the other, in the room. The creatures are too stupid to feel pain, or if they do, to manifest any great panic. They set off crawling over the floor, at a pace which surprise and perhaps some vague terror made a trifle quicker than usual. Before long they started describing circles, not because it is, as

Plato says, a perfect figure, but as a result of the instinct that always makes insects turn round and round, in their efforts to escape any unknown danger. Buffalmacco looked on from the vantage-ground of his bed, on which he had thrown himself, and congratulated himself on the success of his device. And indeed nothing could be more marvellous than these lights showing a miniature presentment of the harmony of the spheres, such as it is set out by Aristotle and his commentators. The cockroaches themselves were invisible; only the little flames they carried could be seen, which seemed to be all alive. Just as these same lights were weaving in the darkness of the room more cycles and epicycles than ever Ptolemy and the Arabs observed as they watched the motions of the planets, Tafi's voice made itself heard, shriller than ever, what with a cold in the head and what with annoyance.

"Buffalmacco! Buffalmacco, I say!" screamed the old fellow, coughing and spitting, "get up, I say! Get up, you scoundrel! In less than an hour's time, it will be broad daylight. The bugs in your bed must be built like very Venuses, you are so loath to leave 'em. Up, you sluggard! If you don't rise this instant, I'll drag you from between the sheets by the hair of your head and your long ears!"

These were the sort of terms in which the master would call his pupil out of bed in the dusk of every morning, such was his zeal for painting and mosaic-work. On this occasion receiving no reply, he drew on his hose, but without taking time to pull them any higher than his knees, and started for his apprentice's bedroom, stumbling at every step. This was exactly what Buffalmacco expected, and directly he heard the clatter of his master's footsteps on the stairs, he turned his nose to the wall and pretended to be fast asleep. And there was old Tafi shouting up the stairs:

"Hilloa! but you're a grand sleeper. I'll have you out of your slumbers, I will, though you should be dreaming this very moment that the eleven thousand virgins are slipping into your bed, begging you to teach 'em what's what."

With these words on his lips, Andrea Tafi shoved the door of the room violently

open.

Then, catching sight of the points of fire running all over the floor, he stopped dead on the landing and fell a-trembling in every limb.

"They're devils," he thought, "never a doubt of it,—devils and evil spirits. Why! they move with a sort of mathematical precision, which is their strong point, I've always been told. Naturally the Demons hate us painters, who depict them under hideous shapes, in contrast with the Angels we represent in glory, an aureole about their brows and waving wings of dazzling splendour. The unhappy boy is beset with devils; I can count at least a thousand around his pallet. No doubt he has angered Lucifer himself, by drawing some horrible picture of him. 'Tis only too likely these ten thousand imps here will leap upon him and carry him off alive to Hell. His doom is fixed. And alack! I have myself figured, in mosaic and other ways, very odious caricatures of Devils, and they have good reason to bear me a grudge too."

The thought redoubled his fears, and hauling up his hose, he took to his heels, too much terrified to think of facing the hundred thousand hobgoblins he had seen wheeling round and round with bodies of fire, and dashed down the stairs as fast as ever his old legs would carry him. Buffalmacco had a fine laugh under the sheets, and for once in a way slept on till broad daylight. Nor did his master ever again dare to go and wake him.

1 It would be better to speak of the wing-cases. "Shell" is an utterly unsuitable word—not in the least fitting. The Oriental cockroach is in question, an insect familiar in almost every part of Europe.

2 In Russia they are termed Prussians, and in Prussia Russians. The French call them cafards (canting creatures, hypocrites).

II

THE ASCENDING UP OF ANDREA TAFI

Andrea Tafi, of Florence, being chosen to decorate the cupola of San Giovanni with mosaics, carried out the said work in the most perfect fashion. Every figure was treated in the Greek manner, which Tafi had learned during his sojourn at Venice, where he had seen workmen busy adorning the walls of San Marco. He had even brought back with him from that city a Greek by name Apollonius, who knew excellent secrets for designing in mosaic. This Apollonius was a skilful workman and a very clever man. He knew the proportions to be given to the different parts of the human body and the material for mixing the best cement.

Fearing the Greek might carry his knowledge and address to some other painter of the city, Andrea Tafi never left his side day or night Every morning he took him with him to San Giovanni, and brought him home every evening to his own house, facing San Michele, and made him sleep there with his two apprentices, Bruno and Buffalmacco, in a room separated merely by a partition from his own bed-chamber. And as this partition left half a foot between the top and the beams of the ceiling, whatever was said in one room could easily be overheard in the other.

Now Tafi was a man of decent manners and pious. He was not like some painters who, on leaving the Churches where they have been depicting God creating the world and the infant Jesus in his holy mother's arms, go straight to houses of ill fame to play dice and drink, play the pipes and cuddle the girls. He had never wished for better than his good wife, albeit she was by no means made and moulded by the Creator to afford any great delight to men; for she was a very dry and a very chilling personage. Then, after God had removed her from this world to a better, in his loving mercy, Andrea took no other woman to his bosom either by marriage or otherwise. On the contrary he was strictly continent, as became his years, sparing himself both expense and vexation, and pleasing God to boot, who recompenses in the next world the privations men endure in this. Andrea Tafi was chaste, sober and well-advised.

He said his prayers with unfailing regularity, and being got to bed, he never fell asleep without first invoking the Blessed Virgin in these words:

"Holy Virgin, Mother of God, which for Thy merits wast exalted alive to Heaven, stretch forth Thy hand full of grace and mercy to me, to lift me up to that blessed Paradise where Thou sittest on a chair of gold."

And this petition old Tafi did not mumble between the two or three teeth he had left, but spoke it out in a loud, strong voice, persuaded it is the singing, as they say, makes the song, and that if you want to be heard, it is best to shout. Thus it came about that Master Tafi's supplication was overheard every night by Apollonius the Greek and the two young Florentines who lay in the next chamber. Now it so happened Apollonius was likewise of a merry humour, every whit as ready for a jest as Bruno or Buffalmacco. All three itched sore to play off some trick on the old painter, who was a just man and a god-fearing, but hard-fisted withal and a cruel taskmaster. Accordingly one night, after listening to the old fellow's customary address to the Virgin, the three comrades fell a-laughing under the bed-clothes and cutting a hundred jokes. Presently, when they heard him snoring, they began asking each other in whispers what jape they could play off on him. Well knowing the holy terror the old man had of the Devil, Apollonius proposed to go, dressed in red, with horns and a mask, to drag him out of bed by the feet. But the ingenious Buffalmacco had a better suggestion to offer:

"To-morrow we will provide ourselves with a good stout rope and a pulley, and I undertake to give you the same evening a highly diverting exhibition."

Apollonius and Bruno were curious to know what the pulley and rope were to be used for, but Buffalmacco refused to say. Nevertheless they promised faithfully to get him what he wanted; for they knew him to possess the merriest wit in the world and the most fertile in amusing contrivances, having earned his nickname of Buffalmacco for these very qualities. And truly he knew some excellent turns, that

have since become legendary.

The three friends, having nothing now to keep them awake, fell asleep under the moon, which looking in at the garret window, pointed the tip of one of her horns, as if in mockery, at old Tafi. They slept sound till daybreak, when the master began hammering on the partition, and called out, coughing and spitting as usual.

"Get up, master Apollonius! Up with you, apprentices! Day's come; Phœbus has blown out the sky candles! Quick's the word! 'Life is short, and art long.'"

Then he began threatening Bruno and Buffalmacco he would come and start them out with a bucket of cold water, jeering and asking them:

"Is your bed so delicious, eh? Have you got Helen of Troy there, you're so loath to quit the sheets?"

Meanwhile he was slipping on his hose and his old, worn hood. This done, he sallied out, to find the lads waiting on the landing, fully dressed and with their tools all ready.

That morning, in the fair Church of San Giovanni, on the planking that mounted to the cornice, the work went on merrily for a while. For the last week the master had been trying his hardest to give a good representation according to the recognized rules of art of the baptism of Jesus Christ. He had just begun putting in the fishes swimming in the Jordan. Apollonius was mixing the cement with bitumen and chopped straw, pronouncing words of might known only to himself; while Bruno and Buffalmacco were picking the little cubes of stone to be used, and Tafi arranging them according to the sketch he had made on a slab of slate he held in his hand. But just when the master was busiest over the job, the three friends sprang lightly down the ladder and slipped out of the Church. Bruno went off to the house of Calendrino, outside the walls, in search of a pulley that was used for hoisting corn into the granary. At the same time Apollonius hurried away to Ripoli to see an old lady, the wife of a Judge, whom he had promised to provide with a philtre to draw

lovers to her side, and persuading her that hemp was indispensable for compounding the potion, got her to hand him over the well-rope, a good stout piece of cord.

The two friends next met at Tafi's house, where they found Buffalmacco awaiting them. The latter at once set to work to attach the pulley firmly to the king-post of the roof, above the partition separating the master's sleeping-room from his apprentices'. Then, after passing the old lady's well-rope through the pulley, he left one end hanging down in their own chamber, while he went into his master's apartment and fastened the bed to the other extremity, by each corner. He took good care the rope should be concealed behind the curtains, so that nothing out of the way might be visible. When all was done, the three companions went back to San Giovanni.

The old man, who had been so busily engaged as scarcely to have noticed their absence, addressed them with a beaming face:

"Look you," he said, "how those fish sparkle with divers colours, and particularly with gold, purple and blue, as creatures should which inhabit the ocean and the rivers, and which possess so marvellous a brilliancy of hues only because they were the first to submit to the empire of the goddess Venus, as is all explained in the legend."

Thus the master discoursed in a way full of grace and good sense. For you must know he was a man of wit and learning, albeit his humour was so saturnine and grasping, above all when his thoughts turned toward filthy lucre. He went on:

"Now is not a painter's trade a good one and deserving of all praise? it wins him riches in this world and happiness in the next. For be sure Our Lord Jesus Christ will welcome gratefully in His holy Paradise craftsmen like myself who have portrayed His veritable likeness."

And Andrea Tafi was glad at heart to be at work upon this great picture in mosaic, whereof several portions are yet visible at San Giovanni to this day. Presently when night came and effaced both form and colour in all the Church, he tore himself

regretfully from the river Jordan and sought his house. He supped in the kitchen off a couple of tomatoes and a scrap of cheese, went upstairs to his room, undressed in the dark and got into bed.

No sooner was he laid down than he made his customary prayer to the Blessed Virgin:

"Holy Virgin, Mother of God, which for Thy merits wast exalted alive to Heaven, stretch forth Thy hand full of grace and mercy to me, to lift me up to Paradise!"

The moment was come which the three companions had been eagerly awaiting in the neighbouring room.

They grasped the rope's end that hung down the partition from the pulley, and scarcely had the good old fellow finished his supplication when at a sign from Buffalmacco they hauled so vigorously on the cord, that the bed fastened at the other end began to rise from the floor. Master Andrea, feeling himself being hoisted aloft, yet without seeing how, got it into his head it was the Blessed Virgin answering his prayer and drawing him up to Heaven. He was panic-stricken and fell a-screaming in a quavering voice:

"Stop, stop, sweet Lady! I never asked it should be now!"

And as the bed rose higher and higher, the rope working smoothly and noiselessly over the pulley, the old man poured out the most pitiful supplications to the Virgin Mary:

"Good Lady! sweet Lady! don't pull so! Ho, there! Let go, I say!" But she seemed not to hear a word. At this he grew furiously angry and bellowed:

"You must be deaf, you wooden-head! Let go, bitch of a Madonna!"

Seeing he was leaving the floor for good and all, his terror increased yet further; and, calling upon Jesus, he besought Him to make His holy Mother listen to reason. It was high time, he asseverated, she should give up this mischancy Assumption.

Sinner that he was, and son of a sinner, he could not, and he would not, go up to Heaven before he'd finished the river Jordan, the waves and the fishes, and the rest of Our Blessed Lord's history. Meanwhile the canopy of the bed was all but touching the beams of the roofing, and Tafi was crying in desperation:

"Jesus, unless you stop your Blessed Mother this instant, the roof of my house, which cost a fine penny, will most certainly be burst up. For I see for sure I'm going slap through it. Stop! stop! I can hear the tiles cracking."

Buffalmacco perceived that by now his master's voice was actually strangling in his throat, and he ordered his companions to let go the rope. This they did, the result being that the bed, tumbling suddenly from roof to floor of the room, crashed down on the boards, breaking the legs and splitting the panels; simultaneously the bedposts toppled over and the canopy, curtains, hangings and all fell atop of Master Andrea, who, thinking he was going to be smothered, started howling like a devil incarnate. His very soul staggered under the shock, and he could not tell whether he was fallen back again into his chamber or pitched headlong into Hell.

At this point the three apprentices rushed in, as if just awakened by the noise. Seeing the ruins of the bed lying smothered in clouds of dust, they feigned intense surprise, and instead of going to the old man's help, asked him if it was the Devil had done the mischief. But he only sighed heavily, and said:

"It's all up with me; pull me out of this. I'm a dying man!"

At last they dragged him from among the débris, under which he was ready to suffocate, and placed him sitting up with his back to the wall. He breathed hard, coughed and spat, and:

"My lads," he said, "but for the timely succour of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hurled me back to earth again with a violence you can plainly see the effects of, I should at this present moment be in the circle of Heaven named the crystalline or primum mobile. His holy Mother would not listen to a word. In my fall, I have lost three

teeth, which, without being exactly sound, still did me good service. Moreover, I have an agonizing pain in my right side and in the arm that holds the brush."

"My master," said Apollonius pityingly, "you must have received some internal hurts, which is a very dangerous thing. At Constantinople, in the risings, I discovered how much more deadly such injuries are than mere external wounds. But never fear, I am going to charm away the mischief with spells."

"Not for worlds!" put in the old man; "that were a deadly sin. But come hither, all three, and do me the service, an you will, of rubbing me well in the worst places."

They did as he asked, and never left him till they had pretty well scarified every bit of skin off the old fellow's back and loins.

The good lads made it their first business to sow the story broadcast through the city. This they did to such good effect that there was not man, woman nor child in Florence could look Master Andrea Tafi in the face without bursting out laughing. Now one morning Buffalmacco was passing down the Corso, Messer Guido, the son of the Signor Cavalcanti, who was on his way to the marshes to shoot crane, stopped his horse, called the apprentice to him, and tossed him his purse with the words:

"Ho! gentle Buffalmacco, here's somewhat to drink to the health of Epicurus and his disciples."

You must know Messer Guido was of the sect of the Epicureans and loved to marshal well-arranged arguments against the existence of God. He was used to declare the death of men is precisely the same as that of beasts.

"Buffalmacco," added the young nobleman, "this purse I have given you is for payment of the very instructive, complete and profitable experiment you made, when you sent old Tafi to Heaven—who, seeing his carcass taking the road to the Empyrean, began to squeal like a pig being killed. This proves plainly he had no real assurance in the promised joys of Paradise—which are, it must be allowed, far from certain. In the same way as nurses tell children fairy-tales, vague things are talked

concerning the immortality of mortal men. The vulgar herd thinks it believes these tales, but it does not really and truly. Hard fact comes and shivers the poets' fables. There is nothing assured but the sad life of this world. Horace, the Roman poet, is of my opinion when he says: Serus in cælum redeas."1

1 "May it be long ere you return to heaven your home."—Ode 2 of Book I, addressed to Augustus.

III

THE MASTER

Having learned the art of preparing and using the proper coats and colours, as well as the secret of painting figures in the good manner of Cimabuë and Giotto, the young Buonamico Cristofani, the Florentine, surnamed Buffalmacco, abandoned the workshop of his master Andrea Tafi, and proceeded to establish himself in the quarter of the fullers, immediately opposite to the house known by the sign of the Goose's Head. Now in those days, like fair ladies outvying one another in wearing gowns broidered with flowers, the towns of Italy made it their pride to cover the walls of their Churches and Cloisters with paintings. Among all these, Florence was the most sumptuous and magnificent, and was the place of all others for a Painter to live in. Buffalmacco knew how to give his figures movement and expression; and, while far behind the divine Giotto for beauty of design, he pleased the eye by the gay exuberance of his inventions. So he was not long in getting commissions in considerable numbers. It only depended on himself to win riches and fame with all speed. But his chief idea was to amuse himself in company of Bruno di Giovanni and Nello, and squander along with them, in debauchery, all the money he made.

Now the Abbess of the Ladies of Faenza, established at Florence, determined about this time to have the Church of their Nunnery decorated with frescoes. Hearing that there lived in the quarter of the fullers and wool-carders a very clever painter named

Buffalmacco, she despatched her Steward thither to come to an arrangement with him as to the execution of the proposed paintings. The master agreed to the terms offered and undertook the commission readily enough. He had a scaffolding erected in the Nunnery Church and on the still moist plaster began to paint, with wondrous vigour of execution, the history of Jesus Christ. First of all, to the right of the Altar, he illustrated the massacre of the Holy Innocents, and succeeded in expressing so vividly the grief and rage of the mothers trying vainly to save their little ones from the Roman soldiers' hands, that the very wall seemed to chant like the faithful in Church, "Cur, Crudelis Herodes?..." Drawn thither by curiosity, the Nuns used to come, two or three of them together, to watch the master at work. At sight of all these despairing mothers and murdered babes, they could not help sobbing and shedding tears. In particular there was one little fellow Buffalmacco had drawn lying in his swaddling bands, smiling and sucking his thumb, between a soldier's legs. The Nuns begged and prayed this one might not be killed:

"Oh! spare him," they said to the Painter. "Do take care the soldiers don't see him and kill him!"

The good Buffalmacco answered:

"For love of you, dear sisters, I will protect him all I can. But these murderers are filled with so savage a rage, it will be a difficult matter to stop them."

When they declared "The baby is such a little darling!..." he offered to make each of them a little darling prettier still.

"Thank you kindly!" they answered back, laughing.

The Abbess came in her turn to assure herself with her own eyes that the work was being done satisfactorily. She was a lady of very high birth, named Usimbalda, a proud, severe and careful personage. Seeing a man working without cloak or hood, and like a common labourer wearing only shirt and hose, she mistook him for some apprentice lad and did not condescend so much as to speak to him. She came again

and again, five or six times, to the Chapel, without ever seeing any one more important than this working fellow she deemed only fit to grind the colours. Out of all patience at last, she showed him she was far from satisfied.

"My lad," she bade him, "tell your master from me he must come and work himself at the pictures I commissioned him to paint. I meant them to be the work of his own hand, not a mere apprentice's."

Far from declaring himself, Buffalmacco put on the look and voice of a poor working-man, and humbly answered Usimbalda, that he saw plain enough he was not of the sort to inspire confidence in so noble a lady, and that his duty was to obey.

"I will inform my master," he went on; "and he will not fail to put himself at the orders of My Lady Abbess."

With this assurance, the Lady Usimbalda left the Church. No sooner was he alone than Buffalmacco arranged on the scaffolding, just at the spot where he was at work, two stools with a crock on the top. Then going to the corner where he had laid them, he pulled out his cloak and hat, which as it happened were in a very fair state of freshness, and put them on the lay figure he had improvised; next, he stuck a brush in the spout of the crock, which was turned towards the wall. This done, after assuring himself the thing had quite the look of a man busy painting, he decamped with all speed, determined to keep away till he had seen what happened.

Next day the Nuns paid their usual visit to the scene of action. But finding instead of the merry fellow they were accustomed to, a stately gentleman who held himself In the stiffest of attitudes and seemed entirely indisposed to laugh and talk, they were afraid and took to flight.

Madame Usimbalda on the contrary, when she returned to the Church, was delighted to see the master at work in lieu of the apprentice.

She proceeded to give him much valuable advice, exhorting him for a good ten minutes to paint figures that should be modest, noble and expressive—before she

discovered she was addressing her remarks to a crock.

She would hardly have found out her mistake even then, had she not grown impatient at receiving no reply, and pulling the master by his cloak, brought crock, stool, hat, brush and all tumbling at her feet. Then, as she was by no means wanting in sense, she saw it was intended as a lesson not to judge the artist by his dress. She sent her steward to Buffalmacco, and begged him to finish what he had begun.

He completed the work greatly to his credit. Connoisseurs especially admired in these frescoes the figure of the Crucified Redeemer, the three Marys weeping at the foot of the Cross, Judas hanged on a tree, and a man blowing his nose. Unfortunately the paintings were all destroyed along with the Church of the Nunnery of the Ladies of Faenza.

IV

THE PAINTER

Equally famous for his wit and humour and for his skill in devising figure subjects on the walls of Church and Cloister, Buonamico, surnamed Buffalmacco, had already left his youth behind when he was invited from Florence to Arezzo by the Lord Bishop of that city, who wished the halls of his Palace decorated with paintings. Buffalmacco undertook the commission, and directly the walls were duly laid with stucco, started on a picture of the Adoration of the Wise Men.

In the course of a few days he had painted in King Melchior complete, mounted on a white horse, looking for all the world as if he were alive. His horse's saddle-cloth was scarlet, dotted with precious stones.

Now all the time he was at work, the Bishop's pet monkey sat staring intently at his proceedings, never taking his eyes off him. Whether the painter was squeezing his tubes, mixing his colours, beating up his eggs or laying on the colour with his brush on the moist surface, the creature never lost one of his movements. It was a baboon

brought from Barbary for the Doge of Venice in one of the State Galleys. The Doge made a present of it to the Bishop of Arezzo, who thanked his Magnificence, reminding him prettily how King Solomon's ships had in like fashion imported from the land of Ophir apes and peacocks, as is related in the First Book of Kings (x. 22). And there was nothing in all his Palace Bishop Guido held more precious than this baboon.

He left the animal to roam at liberty about the halls and gardens, where it was for ever at some mischievous trick or another. One Sunday, during the painter's absence, the creature climbed up on the scaffolding, laid hold of the tubes, mixed up the colours in a way of its own, broke all the eggs it could find, and began plying the brush on the wall, as it had seen the other do. It worked away at King Melchior and his horse, never leaving off till the whole composition was repainted according to its own ideas.

Next morning Buffalmacco, finding his colours all topsy-turvy and his work spoiled, was both grieved and angry. He was persuaded some painter of Arezzo, who was jealous of his superior skill, had played him this dirty trick, and went straight to the Bishop to complain. The latter urged him to set to work again and repair with all speed what had been ruined in a manner so mysterious. He undertook that for the future two soldiers should keep guard night and day before the frescoes, with orders to drive their lances through any one who should dare to come near. On this condition, Buffalmacco agreed to resume his task, and two soldiers were put on sentry close at hand. One evening, just as he was leaving the hall, his day's work finished, the soldiers saw the Lord Bishop's ape spring so nimbly into his place on the scaffold and seize the colour-tubes and brushes with such rapidity there was no possibility of stopping him. They shouted lustily to the painter, who came back just in time to see the baboon paint over for the second time King Melchior, the white horse and the scarlet saddle-cloth. The sight was like to move poor Buffalmacco at one and the same time to laughter and tears.

He went off to the Bishop and thus addressed him:

"My Lord Bishop, you are good enough to admire my style of painting; but your baboon prefers a different. What need to have had me summoned here, when you had a master painter in your own household? It may be he lacked experience. But now he has nothing left to learn, my presence here is quite unnecessary, and I will back to Florence."

Having so said, the good Buffalmacco returned to his inn, in great vexation. He ate his supper without appetite and went to bed in a very dismal frame of mind.

Then the Lord Bishop's ape appeared to him in a dream, not a mere mannikin as he was in reality, but as tall as Monte San Gemignano, cocking up a prodigious tail and tickling the moon. He was squatted in an olive wood among the farms and oil-presses, while betwixt his legs a narrow road ran alongside a row of flourishing vineyards. Now the said road was thronged with a multitude of pilgrims, who defiled one by one before the painter's eyes. And lo! Buffalmacco recognized the countless victims of his practical jokes and merry humour generally.

He saw, to begin with, his old master Andrea Tafi, who had taught him how men win renown by practice of the arts, and whom in return he had befooled again and again, making him mistake for devils of hell a dozen wax tapers pinned on the backs of a lot of great cockroaches, and hoisting him in his bed to the joists of the ceiling, so that the poor old fellow thought he was being carried up to heaven and was in mortal terror.

He saw the wool-carder of the Gooses Head, and his wife, that notable woman, at the spinning-wheel. Into this good dame's cooking-pot Buffalmacco had been wont every evening to throw big handfuls of salt through a crack in the wall, so that day after day the wool-carder would spit out his porridge and beat his wife.

He saw Master Simon de Villa, the Bolognese physician, to be known by his Doctor's cap, the same he had pitched into the cesspool beside the Convent of the

Nuns of Ripoli. The Doctor ruined his best velvet gown, but nobody pitied him, for regardless of his good wife's claims, a plain woman but a Christian, he had longed to bed with Prester John's Chinchimura, who wears horns betwixt her sinful buttocks. Good Buffalmacco had persuaded the Doctor he could take him o' nights to the Witches' Sabbath, where he went himself with a merry company to make love to the Queen of France, who gave him wine and spices for his doughty deeds. Simon accepted the invitation, hoping he should be treated right royally too. Then Buffalmacco having donned a beast's skin and a horned mask such as they wear at merry-makings, came to Master Simon, declaring he was a devil ordered to conduct him to the Sabbath. Taking him on his shoulders, he carried him to the edge of a pit full of filth, where he pitched him in head first.

Next Buffalmacco saw Calendrino, whom he had got to believe that the stone Heliotropia was to be found in the plain of the Mugnone, which stone possesses the virtue of rendering invisible whosoever bears it about his person. He took him to Mugnone along with Bruno da Giovanni, and when Calendrino had picked up a very large number of stones, Buffalmacco suddenly pretended he could not see him, crying out: "The scamp has given us the slip; an I catch him, I'll bang his behind with this paving-stone!" And he landed the stone exactly where he said he would, without Calendrino having any right to complain, because he was invisible. This same Calendrino was without any sense of humour, and Buffalmacco played on his simplicity so far as to make him actually believe he was with child, and got a brace of fat capons out of him as fee for his safe delivery.

Next Buffalmacco saw the countryman for whom he had painted the Blessed Virgin with the Infant Jesus in her arms, afterwards changing the babe into a bear's cub.

He saw moreover the Abbess of the Nuns of Faenza, who had commissioned him to paint the walls of the Convent Church in fresco, and he told her on his oath and honour you must mix good wine with the colours, if the flesh tints are to be really

brilliant. So the Abbess gave him for every Saint, male or female, depicted in his pictures a flask of the wine reserved for Bishops' drinking, which he poured down his throat, trusting to vermilion to bring out the warm tints. The same Lady Abbess it was he deceived, making her take a pitcher with a cloak thrown over it for a master painter, as has been already recounted.

Buffalmacco saw, besides, a long line of other folks he had befooled, cajoled, cozened and bemocked. Closing the rear, marched with crozier, mitre and cope, the great Sant' Ercolano, whom in a merry mood he had represented in the Great Square of Perugia, girt about with a garland of gudgeons.

All as they passed paid their compliment to the ape which had avenged them; and the monster, opening a great mouth wider than the jaws of hell, broke into a mocking laugh.

For the first time in his life Buffalmacco had a downright bad night's rest.

THE LADY OF VERONA

TO HUGUES REBELL

THE LADY OF VERONA

"Puella autem moriens dixit: 'Satanas, trado tibi corpus meum cum anima mea.'" (Quadragesimale opus declamatum Parisiis in ecclesia Sti. Johannis in Gravia per venerabilem patrem Sacrae scripturae interpretem eximium Ol. Maillardum, 151.1)1

The following was found by the Reverend Father Adone Doni, in the Archives of the Monastery of Santa Croce, at Verona.

Signora Eletta of Verona was so wondrous fair and of so perfect a grace of body, that the learned of the city, they who had knowledge of history and legend, were used to call her lady mother by the names of Latona, Leda and Semele, making implication thereby of their belief that the fruit of her womb had been framed in her

by a god, Jupiter, rather than by any mortal man, such as were her husband and lovers. But the wiser heads, notably the Fra Battista, whose successor I am as Superior of Santa Croce, held that such exceeding beauty of the flesh came of the operation of the Devil, who is an artist in the sense the dying Nero understood the word when he said, "Qualis artifex pereo!"2 And we may be sure Satan, the enemy of God, who is cunning to work the metals, excels likewise in the moulding of human flesh.

I myself, who am writing these lines, possessing no small acquaintance with the world, have many a time seen church bells and figures of men wrought by the Enemy of Mankind—and the craftsmanship thereof admirable. Likewise have I had knowledge of children engendered in women by the Devil, but on this matter my tongue is tied by the obligation of secrecy binding on every Confessor. I will limit myself, therefore, to saying that many strange tales were bruited concerning the birth of the Signora Eletta. I saw this lady for the first time on the Piazza of Verona on Good Friday of the year 1320, when she had just completed her fourteenth year. And I have beheld her since in the public walks and the Churches ladies most favour. She was like a picture painted by a very excellent limner.

She had hair of wavy gold, a white brow, eyes of a colour never seen but in the precious stone called aquamarine, cheeks of rose, a nose straight and finely cut. Her mouth was a Cupid's bow, that wounded with its smiles; and the chin was as full of laughter as the mouth. Her whole body was framed to perfection for the delight of lovers. The breasts were not of exaggerated size; yet showed beneath the muslin two swelling globes of a full and most winsome roundness. As well by reason of my sacred character, as because I never saw her but clad in her walking dress and her limbs half hidden, I will not describe the other parts of her fair body, which one and all proclaimed their perfection through the stuffs that veiled them. I will only assure you, that when she was in her accustomed place in the Church of San Zenone, there was never a movement she could make, whether to rise to her feet or drop on her

knees or prostrate herself with forehead touching the stones, as is meet to do at the instant of the elevation of the blessed body of Jesus Christ, without straightway inspiring the men that saw her with an ardent longing to hold her pressed to their bosom.

Now it came about that Signora Eletta married, when about the age of fifteen, Messer Antonio Torlota, an Advocate. He was a very learned man, of good repute, and wealthy, but already far advanced in years, and so heavy and misshapen, that seeing him carrying his papers in a great leathern bag, you could scarcely tell which bag it was dragging about the other.

It was pitiful to think how, as the result of the holy sacrament of wedlock, which is instituted among men for their glory and eternal salvation, the fairest lady of Verona was bedded with so old a man, all ruinate in health and vigour. And wise folk saw with more pain than wonder that, profiting by the freedom allowed her by her husband, busied all night long as he was solving the problems of justice and injustice, Messer Torlota's young wife welcomed to her bed the handsomest and most proper cavaliers of the city. But the pleasure she took therein came from herself, not from them at all. It was her own self she loved, and not her lovers. All her enjoyment was of the loveliness of her own proper flesh, and of nothing else. Herself was her own desire and delight, and her own fond concupiscence. Whereby, methinks, the sin of carnal indulgence was, in her case, enormously aggravated.

For, albeit, this sin must ever divide us from God—a sufficient sign of its gravity—yet is it true to say that carnal offenders are regarded by the Sovereign Judge, both in this world and the next, with less indignation than are covetous men, traitors, murderers, and wicked men who have made traffic of holy things. And the reason of this is that the naughty desires sensualists entertain, being directed towards others rather than to themselves, do still show some degraded traces of true love and gentle charity.

But nothing of the kind was to be seen in the adulterous amours of the Signora Eletta, who in every passion loved herself and herself only. And herein was she much wider separated from God than so many other women who gave way to their wanton desires. For in their case these desires were towards others, whereas the Lady Eletta's had none but herself for their object. What I say hereanent, I say to make more understandable the conclusion of the matter, which I must now relate.

At the age of twenty she fell sick and felt herself to be dying. Then she bewailed her fair body with the most piteous tears. She made her women dress her out in her richest attire, looked long and steadfastly at herself in the mirror, fondled with both hands her bosom and hips, to enjoy for the last time her own exceeding beauty. And, aghast at the thought of this body she so adored being eaten of the worms in the damp earth, she said, as she breathed her last, with a great sigh of faith and hope:

"Satan, best beloved Satan! take thou my soul and my body; Satan, gentle Satan! hear my prayer: take, take my body along with my soul."

She was borne to San Zenone, as custom ordains, with her face uncovered; and, within the memory of man, none had ever seen a dead woman look so lovely. While the priests were chanting the offices for the dead around her bier, she lay as if swooning with delight in the arms of an invisible lover. When the ceremony was over, the Signora Eletta's coffin, carefully closed and sealed, was deposited in holy ground, amid the tombs that surrounded San Zenone, and of which some are Ancient Roman monuments. But next morning the earth they had thrown over the dead woman was found removed, and there lay the coffin open and empty.

1 "But the dying girl said, 'Satan, I give over my body to you along with my soul.'" (Lenten Sermon preached at Paris in the Church of St. Jean-en-Grève by that venerable father and excellent expounder of Holy Scripture, Olivier Maillard, 1511.)

2 "What an artist dies in me!" "Oh! the loss to Art! the loss to Art!"

THE HUMAN TRAGEDY

TO J.H. ROSNY

THE HUMAN TRAGEDY

Πᾶς δ' ὀδυνηρὸς βίος ἀνθρώπων, κοὐκ ἔστι πόων ἀνάπαυσις. ἄλλο τι τοῦ ζῆν φίλτερον, ἀλλ' ὃ σκότος ἀμπίσχων κρύπτει νεφέλαις.

(Euripides, Hippolytus, 190 sqq.)1

1 "All the life of man is full of pain, and there is no surcease of sorrow. If there be aught better elsewhere than this present life, it is hid shrouded in the clouds of darkness."

I

FRA GIOVANNI

In those days the holy man, who, born though he was of human parents, was veritably a son of God, and who had chosen for his bride a maiden that folk open the door to as reluctantly as to Death itself, and never with a smile,—the poor man of Jesus Christ, St. Francis, was gone up to the Skies. Earth, which he had perfumed with his virtues, kept only his body and the fruitful seed of his words. His sons in the spirit grew meantime, and multiplied among the Peoples, for the blessing of Abraham was upon them.

Kings and Queens girded on the cord of St. Francis, the poor man of Jesus Christ. Men in multitudes sought in forgetfulness of self and of the world the secret of true happiness; and flying the joy of life, found a greater joy.

The Order of St. Francis spread fast through all Christendom, and the Houses of the Poor Men of the Lord covered the face of Italy, Spain, the two Gauls and the Teutonic lands. In the good town of Viterbo arose a House of peculiar sanctity. In it

Fra Giovanni took the vows of Poverty, and lived humble and despised, his soul a garden of flowers fenced about with walls.

He had knowledge by revelation of many truths that escape clever and world-wise men. And ignorant and simple-minded as he was, he knew things unknown to the most learned Doctors of the age.

He knew that the cares of riches make men ill-conditioned and wretched, and that coming into the world poor and naked, they would be happy, if only they would live as they were born. He was poor and merry-hearted. His delight was in obedience; and renouncing the making of plans of any sort for the future, he relished the bread of the heart. For the weight of human actions is a heavy load, and we are trees bearing poisoned fruit. He was afraid to act, for is not all effort painful and useless? He was afraid to think, for thought is evil.

He was very humble, knowing how men have nothing of their own that they should boast of, and that pride hardens the heart. He knew, moreover, that they who possess for all wealth only the riches of the spirit, if they make boast of their treasure, so far lower themselves to the level of the great ones of the earth.

And Fra Giovanni outdid in humility all the Monks of the House of Viterbo. The Superior of the Monastery, the holy Brother Silvester, was less righteous than he, forasmuch as the master is less righteous than the servant, the mother less innocent than the babe.

Observing that Fra Giovanni had a way of stripping himself of his gown to clothe the suffering members of Jesus Christ, the Superior forbade him, in the name of holy obedience, to give away his garments to the poor. Now the same day this command was laid on him, Giovanni went, as his wont was, to pray in the woods that cover the slopes of Monte Cunino. It was Winter time; snow was falling, and the wolves coming down into the villages.

Fra Giovanni kneeling down at the foot of an oak, spoke to God, as might one friend

to another, and besought Him to take pity on all orphans, prisoners and captives, to take pity on the master of the fields sorely harried by the Lombard usurers, to take pity on the stags and hinds of the forest chased by the hunters, and on all trapped creatures, whether of fur or feathers. And lo! he was rapt away in an ecstasy, and saw a hand pointing in the sky.

When presently the sun had slipped behind the mountains, the man of God arose from his knees and took the path to the Monastery. On the white, silent road thither, he met a beggar, who asked him an alms for the love of God.

"Alas!" he told him, "I have nothing but my gown, and the Superior has forbidden me to cut it in two so as to give away the half. Therefore I cannot divide it with you. But if you love me, my son, you will take it off me whole and undivided."

On hearing these words, the beggar promptly stripped the Friar of his gown.

So Fra Giovanni went on his way naked under the falling snow, and entered the city. As he was crossing the Piazza with nothing on but a linen cloth about his loins, the children who were running at play in the Great Square made mock at him. In derision, they shook their fists in his face with the thumb stuck between the first and middle fingers, and threw snow at him mixed with mud and small stones.

Now there lay in the Great Square some logs of timber for the woodwork of a house, and one of the logs happened to be balanced across another. Two children ran and took their places, one at each end of the beam, and began playing see-saw—two of the same children who had made mock of the holy man and thrown stones at him.

He went up to them now smiling, and said:

"Dear little children, will you suffer me to share your game?"

And sitting down on one end of the beam, he see-sawed up and down against the two little ones.

And some of the citizens happening to pass that way, said, wondering:

"Truly and indeed the man is out of his wits."

But after the bells had rung the Ave Maria, Fra Giovanni was still at see-saw. And it chanced that certain Priests from Rome, who had come to Viterbo to visit the Mendicant Friars, whose fame was great through the world, just then crossed the Great Square. And hearing the children shouting, "Look! little Brother Giovanni's here," the Priests drew near the Monk, and saluted him very respectfully. But the holy man never re turned their salute, but making as though he did not see them, went on see-sawing on the swaying beam. So the Priests said to each other:

"Come away; the fellow is a mere dunce and dullard!"

Then was Fra Giovanni glad, and his heart overflowed with joy. For these things he did out of humility and for the love of God. And he put his joy in the scorn of men, as the miser shuts his gold in a cedarn chest, locked with a triple lock.

At nightfall he knocked at the Monastery door, and being admitted, appeared among the Brethren naked, bleeding, and covered with mire. He smiled and said:

"A kind thief took my gown, and some children deemed me worthy to play with them."

But the Brothers were angry, because he had dared to pass through the city in so undignified a plight.

"He feels no compunction," they declared, "about exposing the Holy Order of St. Francis to derision and disgrace. He deserves the most exemplary punishment."

The General of the Order, being warned a great scandal was ruining the sacred Society, called together all the Brethren of the Chapter, and made Fra Giovanni kneel humbly on his knees in the midst of them all. Then, his face blazing with anger, he chid him harshly in a loud, rough voice. This done, he consulted the assembly as to the penance it was meet to impose on the guilty Brother.

Some were for having him put in prison or suspended in an iron cage from the

Church steeple, while others advised he should be chained up for a madman.

And Fra Giovanni, beaming with satisfaction, told them:

"You are very right, my Brethren; I deserve these punishments, and worse ones still. I am good for nothing but foolishly to waste and squander the goods of God and of my Order."

And Brother Marcian, who was a man of great sternness both of life and doctrine, cried:

"Hear him! he talks like a hypocrite; that honeyed voice of his issues from a whited sepulchre."

And Fra Giovanni said again:

"Brother Marcian, I am indeed capable of every infamy—but for God's good help."

Meantime the General was pondering over the strange behaviour of Fra Giovanni, and he besought the Holy Spirit to inspire the judgment he was to give. And lo! as he prayed, his anger was changed into admiration. He had known St. Francis in the days when that Angel of Heaven, born of a woman, was a sojourner in this world, and the ensample of the favourite follower of Christ had taught him the love of spiritual perfection.

So his soul was enlightened, and he recognized in the works of Fra Giovanni a divine innocency and beauty.

"My brethren," he said at length, "far from blaming our Brother, let us admire the grace he receives so abundantly from God. In very truth he is a better man than we. What he has done, he has done in imitation of Jesus Christ, who 'suffered the little children to come unto Him,' and let the Roman soldiers strip Him of His garments."

Then he thus addressed the kneeling Fra Giovanni:

"This, Brother, is the penance I lay upon you. In the name of that holy obedience you owe St. Francis, I command you go forth into the country, and the first beggar

you meet, beg him to strip you of your tunic. Then, when he has left you naked, you must come back into the city, and play in the Public Square With the little children."

Having so said, the General of the Order came down from his chair of state, and, raising Fra Giovanni from the ground, fell on his own knees before him and kissed his feet. Then, turning to the assembled Monks, he said to them:

"In very truth, my Brethren, this man is the good God's plaything."

II

THE LAMP

In those days the truth was revealed to Fra Giovanni that the riches of this world come from God and should be the heritage of the poor, who are the favourite children of Jesus Christ.

Christian folk were busy celebrating the Saviour's birth; and Fra Giovanni had come to the town of Assisi, which is set upon a mountain-top, and from this mountain first rose the Sun of Charity.

Now the day before Christmas eve, Fra Giovanni was kneeling in prayer before the Altar under which St. Francis sleeps in a stone coffin. And he was meditating, dreaming how St. Francis was born in a stable, like Jesus. And while he was pondering, the Sacristan came up to him and asked him of his goodness to look after the Church while he ate his supper. Church and Altar were both loaded with precious ornaments; gold and silver were there in abundance, for the sons of St. Francis had long fallen from their early poverty, and had received gifts from the Queens of the Earth.

Fra Giovanni assured the Sacristan:

"Go, Brother, and enjoy your meal. I will guard the Church, as Our Lord would have it guarded."

And so saying, he went on with his meditations. And as he knelt there alone in prayer, a poor woman entered the Church and asked an alms of him for the love of God.

"I have nothing," the holy man replied; "but the Altar is loaded with ornaments, and I will go see if I cannot find something to give you." A golden lamp hung above the Altar, decked about with silver bells. Examining the lamp, he said to himself:

"Those little bells are but idle vanities. The true ornament of yonder Altar is the body of St. Francis, which reposes naked under the flags with a black stone for a pillow."

And drawing his knife from his pocket, he detached the little silver bells, one after the other, and gave them to the poor woman.

Presently, when the Sacristan, his meal finished, returned to the Church, Fra Giovanni, the holy man of God, said to him:

"Never trouble, my brother, about the little bells that belonged to the lamp. I have given them away to a poor woman who had need of them."

Now Fra Giovanni did in this wise, because he knew by revelation that all the things in this world, belonging to God, belong of rights to the poor.

And he was blamed on earth by men whose thoughts were given over to riches. But he was found praiseworthy in the sight of the Divine Goodness.

III

THE SERAPHIC DOCTOR

Fra Giovanni was not proficient in the knowledge of letters, and he rejoiced in his ignorance as being an abundant source of humiliations.

But after watching one day in the Cloister of Santa Maria degli Angeli a number of Doctors of Theology in meditation on the perfections of the Most Holy Trinity and

the Mysteries of the Passion, he began to doubt whether they did not possess the love of God more fully than he, by reason of their wider knowledge.

He was afflicted in his soul, and for the first time in his life fell into melancholy. But sadness was unnatural to one in his estate; for joy is the inheritance of the poor.

He resolved to carry his difficulty to the General of the Order, to be rid of it as of a galling burden. Now Giovanni di Fidanza was General of the Order in those days.

In the cradle he had received from St. Francis himself the name of Bonaventure. He had studied Theology at the University of Paris; and he excelled in the science of Love, which is the science of God. He knew the four degrees which lift the creature to his Creator, and he pondered on the mystery of the six wings of the Cherubim. This was the reason why he was called the Seraphic Doctor.

And he was well aware that Science is vain without Love. Fra Giovanni found him walking in his garden, on the terrace overlooking the city.

It was a Sunday; and the handicraftsmen of the town and the peasants who work in the vineyards were climbing, at the foot of the terrace, the steep street that leads to the Church.

And Fra Giovanni, seeing Brother Bonaventure in the garden, in the midst of the lilies, drew near and said:

"Brother Bonaventure, free my mind of the doubt that is tormenting me, and tell me: Can an ignorant man love God with as great love as a learned Doctor of the Church?"

And Brother Bonaventure answered:

"I will tell you the truth, Fra Giovanni; a poor old woman may not only equal but surpass all the Doctors of Theology in the world. And seeing the sole excellence of man lies in loving, I tell you again—the most ignorant of women shall be exalted in Heaven above the Doctors."

Fra Giovanni, on hearing these words, was filled with great joy; and, leaning out over the low wall of the garden, looked lovingly at the passers-by. Then he cried out at the top of his voice:

"Ho! you poor women, ignorant and simple-minded, you shall be set in Heaven above Brother Bonaventure."

And the Seraphic Doctor, hearing the good Brother's proclamation, smiled sweetly where he stood among the lilies of his garden.

IV

THE LOAF ON THE FLAT STONE

Forasmuch as the good St. Francis had bidden his sons to "Go, beg your bread from door to door," Fra Giovanni was one day sent to a certain city. Having passed the Gate, he went up and down the streets to beg his bread from door to door, according to the rule of the Order, for the love of God.

But the folk of that city were more covetous than the men of Lucca, and harder than they of Perugia. The bakers and tanners who were dicing before their shop-doors, repulsed the poor man of Jesus Christ with harsh words. Even the young women, holding their new-born babes in their arms, turned their faces from him. And when the good Brother, whose joy was in dishonour, smiled at the refusals and insults he received,

"He is laughing at us," said the townsmen to each other. "He is a born fool—or say rather a vagabond impostor and a drunkard. He has over-drunk himself with wine. It were a sin and a shame to give him so much as a crumb of bread from our hutch."

And the good Brother answered:

"You say true, my friends; I am not worthy to stir your pity, nor fit to share the food of your dogs and your pigs."

The children, who were just then coming out of school, overheard what was said, and ran after the holy man shouting:

"Madman! Madman!"—and pelted him with mud and stones.

Then Fra Giovanni went forth into the country. The city was built on the slope of a hill, and was surrounded by vineyards and oliveyards. He descended the hill by a hollow way, and seeing on either side the grapes of the vines that hung down from the branches of the elms, he stretched out his arm and blessed the clusters. Likewise he blessed the olive and the mulberry trees and all the wheat of the lowlands.

Meantime he was both hungry and thirsty; and he took delight in thirst and hunger.

At the end of a cross-road, he saw a wood of laurels; and it was the habit of the Begging Friars to go and pray in the woods, amongst the poor animals cruel men hunt and harry. Accordingly Fra Giovanni entered the wood, and fared on by the side of a brook that ran clear and singing on its way.

Presently he saw a flat stone beside the brook, and at the same moment a young man of a wondrous beauty, clad in a white robe, laid a loaf of bread on the stone, and disappeared.

And Fra Giovanni knelt down and prayed, saying:

"O God, how good art Thou, to send Thy poor man bread by the hand of one of Thy Angels; O blessed poverty! O very glorious and most sumptuous poverty!"

And he ate the loaf the Angel had brought, and drank the water of the brook, and was strengthened in body and in soul. And an invisible hand wrote on the walls of the city: "Woe, woe to the rich!"

V

THE TABLE UNDER THE FIG-TREE.

Following the example of St. Francis, his well-beloved Father, Fra Giovanni used to

visit the Hospital of Viterbo to help the lepers, giving them to drink and washing their sores.

And if they blasphemed, he used to tell them, "You are the chosen sons of Jesus Christ." And there were some lepers of a very humble spirit whom he would gather together in a chamber, and with whom he took delight as a mother does surrounded by her children.

But the Hospital walls were very thick, and daylight entered only by narrow windows high up above the floor. The air was so fetid the lepers could scarce live in the place at all. And Fra Giovanni noted how one of them, by name Lucido, who showed an exemplary patience, was slowly dying of the evil atmosphere.

Fra Giovanni loved Lucido, and would tell him:

"My brother, you are Lucido, and no precious stone is purer than your heart, in the eyes of God."

And observing how Lucido suffered more sorely than the others from the poisonous air they breathed in the Lepers' Ward, he said to him one day:

"Friend Lucido, dear Lamb of the Lord, while the very air they breathe in this place is pestilence, in the gardens of Santa Maria degli Angeli we inhale the sweet scent of the laburnums. Come you with me to the House of the Poor Brethren, and you will find relief."

So speaking, he took the Leper by the arm, wrapped him in his own cloak and led him away to Santa Maria degli Angeli.

Arrived at the gate of the Monastery, he summoned the Doorkeeper with happy shouts of exultation:

"Open!" he cried, "open to the friend I am bringing you. His name is Lucido, and a good name it is, for he is a very pearl of patience."

The Brother opened the Gate; but the instant he saw in Fra Giovanni's arms a man

whose face, livid and all but expressionless, was covered over with scales, he knew him for a leper, and rushed off in terror to warn the Brother Superior. The latter's name was Andrea of Padua, and he was a man of very holy life. Nevertheless when he learned that Fra Giovanni was bringing a leper into the House of Santa Maria degli Angeli, he was very wroth, and coming to him with a face burning with anger, bade him:

"Stay there outside, with the man. You are a senseless fool to expose your brethren thus to contagion."

Fra Giovanni only looked on the ground without venturing any reply. All the joy was gone from his face; and Lucido, seeing him troubled:

"Brother!" said he, "I am grieved you are made sad because of me."

And Fra Giovanni kissed the leper on the cheek.

Then he said, turning to the Superior:

"Will you suffer me, my Father, to stay outside the Gate with this man, and share my meal with him?"—to which the Father Superior answered:

"Even do as you please, seeing you set up yourself above the holy rule of obedience."

And with these harsh words he went back again into the Monastery.

Now in front of the Gate was a stone bench under a fig-tree, and on this bench Fra Giovanni set down his bowl. But while he was supping with the Leper, the Father Superior had the Gate thrown open, and came and sat under the fig-tree and said:

"Forgive me, Fra Giovanni, for having given you offence. I am come hither now to share your meal."

VI

THE TEMPTATION

Then Satan sat him down on the brow of a hill, and gazed down at the House of the Poor Brethren. He was black and beautiful, like a young Egyptian. And he thought in his heart:

"Forasmuch as I am the Enemy of Mankind and the Adversary of God, therefore will I tempt these Monks, and I will tell them what is kept hid by Him who is their Friend. Lo! I will afflict these men of Religion by telling them the truth, and I will darken their spirit, uttering to them words of verity and reasonableness. I will plunge reflexion like a sword in their reins; and so soon as they shall know the reality of things, they will be unhappy. For joy there is none but in illusion, and peace is only to be found in ignorance. And because I am the Master of such as study the nature of plants and animals, the virtue of stones, the secrets of fire, the courses of the stars and the influence of the planets, for this reason men have named me the Prince of Darkness. Likewise they call me the Wily One, because by me was constructed the plummet-line whereby Ulpian straightened out the Law. And my kingdom is of this world. Well then, I will try these Monks, and I will make them to know their works are evil, and that the tree of their Charity bears bitter fruit. Yea! I will tempt them without hate and without love."

Thus said Satan in his heart. Meantime, as the shades of evening were lengthening along the base of the hills and the cottage chimneys were smoking for the evening meal, the holy man Giovanni issued from out the wood where he was wont to pray, and turned into the road leading to Santa Maria degli Angeli, saying:

"My house is the house of joy and delight, because it is the house of poverty."

And seeing Fra Giovanni wending his way homewards, Satan thought:

"Lo! here is one of those men I am come to tempt";—and drawing his black cloak over his head, he advanced along the high road, which was bordered with terebinths, to meet the holy man.

Now Satan had made himself like a widow-woman with a veil, and when he had

joined Fra Giovanni, he put on a honeyed voice and asked an alms of him, saying:

"Give me an alms for the love of Him who is your friend, and whom I am not worthy so much as to name."

And Fra Giovanni answered:

"It happens so, I have with me a little silver cup a nobleman of the countryside gave me, to have it melted down and used for the Altar of Santa Maria degli Angeli. You may take that, lady; and I will go to-morrow and ask the nobleman to let me have another of the same weight for the Blessed Virgin. Thus will his wishes be accomplished, and over and above, you will have gotten an alms for the love of God."

Satan took the cup and said:

"Good brother, suffer a poor widow-woman to kiss your hand. For verily the hand that gives gifts is soft and fragrant."

Fra Giovanni replied:

"Lady, be heedful not to kiss my hand. On the contrary, begone with all speed. For, methinks, you are winsome of face, albeit black as the Magian King that bore the frankincense and myrrh; and it is not becoming I should look on you longer, seeing how danger is forever dogging the lonely man's steps. Wherefore suffer me now to leave you, commending you to God's care. And forgive me, if I have failed aught in politeness towards you, lady. For the good St. Francis was used to say: 'Courtesy shall be the ornament of my sons, as the flowers bedeck the hill-sides.'"

But Satan said again:

"Good Father, inform me at the least of a guest-house, where I may pass the night honestly."

Fra Giovanni replied:

"Go, mistress, to the House of St. Damian, where dwell the poor ladies of Our Lord.

She who will welcome you is Clare, and indeed she is a clear mirror of purity; the same is the Duchess of Poverty."

And Satan said again:

"My Father, I am an adulterous woman, and I have lain with many men."

And Fra Giovanni said:

"Lady, if I really deemed you laden with the sins you tell of, I would crave of you as a high honour to kiss your feet, for I am less worth than you, and your crimes are little compared with mine. Yet have I received greater favours of Heaven than have been accorded to you. For in the days when St. Francis and his twelve disciples were still upon earth, I lived with Angels of Heaven."

And Satan returned:

"My Father, when I asked you an alms for the love of Him who loves you, I was cherishing in my heart a wicked intent, and I am fain to tell you what this was. I wander the roads a-begging, in order to collect a sum of money I destine for a man of Perosa who is my paramour, and who has promised me, on handling this money, to kill traitorously a certain knight I hate, because when I offered my body to him, he scorned me. Well! the total was yet incomplete; but now the weight of your silver cup has made it up. So the alms you have given me will be the price of blood. You have sold a just man to death. For the Knight I told you of is chaste, temperate and pious, and I hate him for this cause. 'Tis you will have brought about his murder. You have laid a weight of silver in the scale of crime, to bear it down."

Hearing these words, the good Fra Giovanni wept, and drawing aside, he fell on his knees in a thorn-brake, and prayed the Lord, saying:

"O Lord, make this crime to fall neither on this woman's head nor on mine nor on that of any of Thy creatures, but let it be put beneath Thy feet, which were pierced with the nails, and be washed in Thy most precious blood. Distil on me and on this my sister of the highway a drop of hyssop, and we shall be purified, and shall

overpass the snow in whiteness."

But the Enemy fled away, thinking:

"This man I have not been able to tempt by reason of his utter simplicity."

VII

THE SUBTLE DOCTOR

Satan returned and sat on the Mountain that looks towards Viterbo, laughing under its crown of olives. And he said in his heart: "I will tempt that man yonder." He conceived this purpose in his spirit, because he had seen Fra Giovanni, girt about with a cord, and a sack over his shoulder, crossing the meadows below on his way to the city to beg his bread there according to the rules.

So Satan took on the appearance of a holy Bishop, and came down into the plain. A mitre was on his head sparkling with precious stones, that flashed like actual fire in the sunlight. His cope was covered with figures embroidered and painted so beautifully no craftsman in all the world could have wrought their like.

Amongst the rest he was depicted himself, in silk and gold, under the guise of a St. George and a St. Sebastian, as also under that of a Virgin St. Catherine and the Empress Helena. The loveliness of the faces troubled the mind and saddened the heart. The garment was truly of a wondrous workmanship, and nothing so rich and rare is to be seen in the Treasuries of Churches.

Thus decked in cope and mitre, and majestic as St. Ambrose, the glory of Milan, Satan pursued his way, leaning on his crozier, over the flowery plain.

Presently nearing the holy man, he hailed him and said:

"Peace be with you!"

But he said not of what sort this peace was; and Fra Giovanni supposed it was the peace of the Lord. He thought to himself:

"This Bishop, who gives me the salutation of peace, was doubtless in his lifetime a sainted Pontiff and a blessed Martyr unshakable in his constancy. That is why Jesus Christ has changed the wooden cross to a golden in the hands of this gallant Confessor of the Faith. To-day he is powerful in Heaven; and lo! after his holy and happy death, he walks in these meadows that are painted with flowers and broidered with pearls of dew."

Such were the good Giovanni's thoughts, and he was in no wise abashed. So saluting Satan with a deep reverence, he said:

"Sir! you are exceeding gracious to appear to a poor man such as I. But indeed these meadows are so lovely, 'tis no wonder if the Saints of Paradise come to walk here; they are painted with flowers and broidered with pearls of dew. The Lord did very kindly when he made them."

And Satan said to him:

"It is not the meadows, it is your heart I am fain to look at; I have come down from the Mountain to speak with you. I have, in bygone Centuries, held many high disputations in the Church. Amid the assembled Doctors my voice would boom forth like thunder, and my thoughts flash like lightning. I am very learned, and they name me the Subtle Doctor. I have disputed with God's Angels. Now I would hold dispute with you."

Fra Giovanni made answer:

"Nay! but how should the poor little man that I am hold dispute with the Subtle Doctor? I know nothing, and my simplicity is such I can keep nothing in my head but those songs in the vulgar tongue where they have stuck in rhymes to help the memory, as in

'Jesus, mirror of my soul, Cleanse my heart and make it whole.'

or in

'Holy Mary, Maid of Flowers, Lead me to the Heavenly Bowers.'

And Satan answered:

"Fra Giovanni, the Venetian ladies amuse their leisure and show their adroitness in fitting a multitude of little pieces of ivory into a box of cedar-wood, which at the set-off seemed all too small to contain so many. In the same fashion I will pack ideas into your head that no one would have dreamed it could ever hold; and I will fill you with a new wisdom. I will show that, thinking to walk in the right way, you are straying abroad all the while like a drunken man, and that you are driving the plough without any heed to draw the furrows straight."

Fra Giovanni humbled himself, saying:

"It is most true I am a fool, and do nothing but what is wrong."

Then Satan asked him:

"What think you of poverty? "—and the holy man replied:

"I think it is a pearl of price."

But Satan retorted:

"You pretend poverty is a great good; yet all the while you are robbing the poor of a part of this great good, by giving them alms."

Fra Giovanni pondered over this, and said:

"The alms I give, I give to Our Lord Jesus Christ, whose poverty cannot be minished, for it is infinite. It gushes from Him as from an inexhaustible fountain; and its waters flow freely for His favourite sons. And these shall be poor always, according to the promise of the Son of God. In giving to the poor, I am giving not to men, but to God, as the citizens pay tax to the Podestà, and the rate is for the City, which of the money it so receives supplies the town's needs. Now what I give is for paving the City of God. It is a vain thing to be poor in deed, if we be not poor in spirit. The gown of frieze, the cord, the sandals, the wallet and the wooden bowl are

only signs and symbols. The Poverty I love is spiritual, and I address her as Lady, because she is an idea, and all beauty resides in this same idea."

Satan smiled, and replied:

"Your maxims, Fra Giovanni, are the maxims of a wise man of Greece, Diogenes by name, who taught at their Universities in the times when Alexander of Macedon was waging his wars."

And Satan said again:

"Is it true you despise the goods of this world?"

And Fra Giovanni replied:

"I do despise them."

And Satan said to him:

"Look you! in scorning these, you are scorning at the same time the hard-working men who produce them, and so doing, fulfil the order given to your first father, Adam, when he was commanded, 'In the sweat of thy face, thou shalt eat bread.' Seeing work is good, the fruit of this work is good too. Yet you work not, neither have any care for the work of others. But you receive and give alms, in contempt of the law laid on Adam and on his seed through the ages."

"Alas!" sighed Brother Giovanni, "I am laden with crimes, and at once the most wicked and the most foolish man in all the world. Wherefore never heed me, but read in the Book. Our Lord said, 'Consider the lilies of the field; they toil not, neither do they spin.' Again he said, 'Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.'"

Then Satan lifted up his hand, with the gesture of one who disputes and prepares to count off his arguments on the fingers. And he said:

"Giovanni, Giovanni! what was written in one sense, you read in another; you are less like a Doctor at his desk than an ass at the manger. So must I correct you, as a

master corrects his scholar. It is written the lilies of the field have no need to spin—because they are beautiful, and beauty is a virtue. Again it is written how Mary is not to do the household tasks, because she is doing lovingly to Him who has come to see her. But you, who are not beautiful nor yet instructed, like Mary, in the things of love, you drag out a contemptible existence wandering the highways."

Giovanni made reply:

"Sir! just as a Painter will depict on a narrow panel of wood an entire city with its houses and towers and walls, so you have painted in a few words my soul and my similitude with a wondrous exactness. And I am altogether what you describe. But if I followed perfectly the rule etablished by St. Francis, that Angel of God, and if I practised spiritual poverty to the full, I should be the lily of the fields and I should have the good part of Mary."

But Satan interrupted him, and cried:

"You profess to love the poor, yet you prefer the rich man and his riches, and adore Him who possesses treasures to give away."

And Fra Giovanni answered:

"He I love possesses not the good things of the body, but those of the spirit."

And Satan retorted:

"All good things are of the flesh, and are tasted of through the flesh. This Epicurus taught, and Horace the Satirist said the same in his Verses."

At these words the holy man only sighed and said:

"Sir! I cannot tell what you mean."

Satan shrugged his shoulders and said:

"My words are exact and literal, yet the man cannot tell what I mean. I have disputed with Augustine and Jerome, with Gregory and him of the Golden Mouth, St. Chrysostom. And they comprehended me still less. Miserable men walk groping in

the dark, and Error lifts over their head her monstrous canopy. Simple and sage alike are the plaything of eternal falsehood."

And Satan said again to the holy man Giovanni:

"Have you won happiness? If you have happiness, I shall not prevail against you. A man's thoughts are only stirred by sorrow, and their meditations by grief. Then, tortured by fears and desires, he turns anxiously in his bed and rends his pillow with lies. What use to tempt this man? He is happy."

But Fra Giovanni sighed:

"Sir! I am less happy since listening to you. Your words trouble my mind."

On hearing this, Satan cast away his pastoral staff, his mitre and his cope; and stood there naked and unashamed. He was black and more beautiful than the loveliest of the Angels.

He smiled gently, and said to the holy man:

"Friend, be comforted. I am the Evil Spirit."

VIII

THE BURNING COAL

Now Brother Giovanni was simple of heart and spirit, and his tongue was tied; he knew not the secret of speaking to his fellow-men.

But one day when he was praying, as his habit was, at the foot of an ancient holm-oak, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him, and saluting him, said:

"I salute you, because it is I who visit the simple-minded, and announce the mysteries to virgins."

And the Angel held in his hand a burning coal. This he laid on the holy man's lips, and spoke again, and said:

"By virtue of this fire shall your lips remain pure, and they shall glow with

eloquence. I have burned them, and they shall be burned. Your tongue shall be loosed, and you shall speak to your fellows. For men must hear the word of life, and learn how they shall not be saved but by innocency of heart. For this cause the Lord has unloosed the tongue of the simple and innocent."

Then the Angel went back again to Heaven. And the holy man was seized with terror, and he prayed, saying:

"O God, my heart is so sore troubled I cannot find on my lips the sweet savour of the fire Thy Angel hath touched them with.

"Thou wouldst chasten me, O Lord, seeing Thou dost send me to speak to the folk, who will not hearken to my words. I shall be hateful to all men, and Thy priests themselves will declare, 'He is a blasphemer!'

"For Thy reason is contrary to the reason of men. Nevertheless Thy will be done."

Then he rose up from his knees, and set out on his way citywards.

IX

THE HOUSE OF INNOCENCE

On that day Fra Giovanni had left the Monastery at early dawn, the hour when the birds awake and begin singing. He was on his way to the city and he thought within himself: "I am going to the city to beg my bread and to give bread to other beggars; I shall give away what I receive, and take back what I have given. For it is good to ask and to receive for the love of God. And he who receives is the brother of him who gives. And we should not consider too curiously which of the twain brothers we are, because truly the gift is naught, but everything is in the gracious giving.

"He that receives, if he have gracious charity, is the equal of him that gives. But he who sells is the enemy of him who buys, and the seller constrains the buyer to be his foe. Herein lies the root of the curse that poisons cities, as the venom of the serpent

is in his tail. And it must needs be a Lady set her foot on the serpent's tail, and that Lady is Poverty. Already hath she visited King Louis of France in his Tower; but never yet entered among the Florentines, because she is chaste and will not put foot in a place of ill repute. Now the money-changer's shop is an ill place, for it is there Bankers and Changers commit the most heinous of sins. Harlots sin in the brothels; but their sin is not so great as is that of the Bankers, and whosoever grows rich by banking and money-dealing.

"Verily I say unto you, Bankers and Money-changers shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, nor yet bakers, nor dealers in drugs, nor such as practise the trade of wool, which is the boast of the City of the Lily. Forasmuch as they give a price to gold, and make a profit out of exchange, they are setting up idols in the face of men. And when they declare 'Gold has a value,' they tell a lie. For Gold is more vile than the dry leaves that flutter and rustle in the Autumn wind under the terebinths. There is nothing precious save the work of men's hands, when God gives it His countenance."

And lo! as he was meditating in this wise, Fra Giovanni saw that the Mountain side was torn open, and that men were dragging great stones from its flank. And one of the quarrymen was lying by the wayside, with a rag of coarse cloth for all covering; and his body was disfigured by bitter marks of the biting cold and scorching heat. The bones of his shoulders and chest showed all but bare beneath the meagre flesh; and Despair looked out grim and gaunt from the black cavern of his eyes.

Fra Giovanni approached him, saying:

"Peace be with you!"

But the quarryman made no answer, and did not so much as turn his head. So Fra Giovanni, thinking he had not heard, repeated:

"Peace be with you!"—and then the same words again for the third time.

At last the quarryman looked up at him sullenly, and growled:

"I shall have no peace till I am dead. Begone, cursed black crow! you wish me peace; that shows you are a glozing cheat! Go to, and caw to simpler fools than I! I know very well the quarryman's lot is an utterly miserable one, and there is no comfort for his wretchedness. I hale out stones from dawn to dark, and for price of my toil, all I get is a scrap of black bread. Then when my arms are no longer as strong as the stones of the mountain, and my body is all worn out, I shall perish of hunger."

"Brother!" said the holy man Giovanni; "it is not just or right you should hale out so much stone, and win so little bread."

Then the quarryman rose to his feet and pointing,

"Master Monk," said he, "what see you up yonder on the hill?"

"Brother, I see the walls of the City."

"And above them?"

"Above them I see the roofs of the houses, which crown the ramparts."

"And higher still?"

"The tops of the pines, the domes of the Churches and the Belltowers."

"And higher still?"

"I see a Tower overtopping all the rest, and crowned with battlements. It is the Tower of the Podestà."

"Monk, what see you above the battlements of that Tower?"

"I see nothing, brother, above the battlements save the sky."

"But I," cried the quarryman, "I see upon that Tower a hideous giant brandishing a club, and on the club is inscribed: OPPRESSION. Yea! Oppression is lifted up above the citizens' heads on the Great Tower of the Magistrates and the City's Laws."

And Fra Giovanni answered:

"What one man sees, another cannot see, and it may be the horrid shape you describe is set on the Tower of the Podestà yonder, in the city of Viterbo. But is there no remedy for the ills you endure, my brother? The good St. Francis left behind him on this earth so full a fountain of consolation that all men may draw refreshment therefrom."

Then the quarryman spoke after this fashion:

"Men have said, 'This mountain is ours.' And these men are my masters, and it is for them I hew stone. And they enjoy the fruit of my labour."

Fra Giovanni sighed:

"Surely men must be mad to believe they own a mountain."

But the quarryman replied:

"Nay! they are not mad; and the Laws of the City guarantee them their ownership. The citizens pay them for the stones I have hewn, which are marbles of great price."

And Fra Giovanni said:

"We must change the laws of the City and the habits of the citizens. St. Francis, that Angel of God, has given the example and shown the way. When he resolved, by God's command, to rebuild the ruined Church of St. Damian, he did not set out to find the master of the quarry. He did not say, 'Go buy me the finest marbles, and I will give you gold in exchange.' For the holy man, who was called the son of Bernardone and who was the true son of God, knew this, that the man who sells is the enemy of the man who buys, and that the art of Trafficking is more mischievous, if possible, than the art of War. Wherefore he did not apply to the master-masons or any of them that give marble and timber and lead in exchange for money. But he went forth into the Mountain and gathered his load of wood and stones, and bore it himself to the spot hallowed to the memory of the Blessed Damian. With his own hands, by help of the mason's line, he laid the stones to form the walls; and he made the cement to bind together the stones one to another. Finished, it was a lowly circuit

of roughly fashioned stones, the work of a weakling. But who considers it with the eyes of the soul recognizes therein an Angel's thought. For the mortar of this wall was not worked with the blood of the unfortunate; this house of St. Damian was not raised with the thirty pieces of silver paid for the blood of that Just Man, which, rejected by Iscariot, go travelling the world ever since, passing from hand to hand, to buy up all the injustice and all the cruelty of the earth.

"For, alone of all others, this house is founded on Innocence, stablished on Love, based on Charity, and alone of all others it is the House of God.

"And I tell you verily, quarryman and brother, the poor man of Jesus Christ, in doing these things, gave to the world an example of Justice, and one day his foolishness shall shine forth as wisdom. For all things in this earth are God's and we are His children; and it is meet the children should share alike in His inheritance. That is, each should get what he has need of. And seeing grown men do not ask for broth, nor babes for wine, the share of each shall not be the same, but each shall have the heritage that is fitting for him.

"And labour shall be a joyful thing, when it is no longer paid. 'Tis gold only, the cursed gold, that makes the sharing uneven. When each man shall go severally to the Mountain for his stone, and carry his load to the city on his own back, the stone shall weigh light and it shall be the stone of cheerfulness. And we will build the house of joy and gladness, and the new city shall rise from its foundations. And there shall be neither rich nor poor, but all men will call themselves poor men, because they will be glad to bear a name that brings them honour."

So spoke the gentle Fra Giovanni, and the unhappy quarryman thought to himself:

"This man clad in a shroud and girt with a cord has proclaimed new tidings. I shall not see the end of my miseries, for I am going to die of hunger and exhaustion. But I shall die happy, for my eyes, before they close, will have beheld the dawn of the day of Justice."

X

THE FRIENDS OF ORDER

Now in those days there was in the very illustrious city of Viterbo a Confraternity of sixty old men. These counted among their number many of the chief men of the place; and their objects were the accumulation of honours and riches, and the pursuit of virtue. The Brotherhood included a Gonfalonier of the Republic, Doctors of either faculty, Judges, Merchants, Money-changers of conspicuous piety, and one or two old Soldiers of Fortune grown too ancient and feeble for the Wars.

Seeing they were banded together for the purpose of stirring up their fellow-citizens to goodness and good order, and to bear mutual witness to the practice of these virtues, they gave themselves the title of The Friends of Order. This name was inscribed on the banner of the Confraternity, and they were all of one mind to persuade the poor to follow goodness and good order, to the end no changes might be made in the Constitution.

Their habit was to meet on the last day of each month, in the Palace of the Podestà, to make inquiry of each other what of good had been done in the city during the month. And to such of the poorer citizens as had done well and orderly, they used to present pieces of money.

Now on a certain day the Friends of Order were holding meeting. At one end of the Hall was a raised platform covered with velvet, and over the platform a magnificent canopy of state, held up by four figures carved and painted. These figures represented Justice, Temperance, Strength and Chastity; and beneath the canopy sat the Officers of the Brotherhood. The President, who was entitled the Dean, took his place in the middle on a golden chair, which in richness was scarce inferior to the throne that once upon a time the disciple of St. Francis saw prepared in Heaven for the poor man of the Lord. This seat of state had been presented to the Dean of the Brotherhood to the end that in him should be honoured all the goodness done in the

city.

And as soon as the Members of the Confraternity were ranged in the fitting order, the Dean got up to speak. He congratulated any serving-maids that served their masters without receiving wages, and spoke highly of the old men who, having no bread to eat, did not ask for any.

And he said:

"These have done well, and we shall reward them. For it behoves that goodness be rewarded, and it is our bounden duty to pay the price of it, being as we are the first and foremost citizens of the city."

And when he finished speaking, the crowd of the general folk that stood under the platform clapped their hands.

But no sooner had they done applauding than Fra Giovanni lifted up his voice from the midst of the miserable, poverty-stricken band, and asked loudly:

"What is goodness?"

At this great clamour arose in the assembly, and the Dean shouted:

"Who was it spoke?"

And a red-haired man who was standing among the people, answered:

"It was a Monk, by name Giovanni, who is the disgrace of his Cloister. He goes naked through the streets, carrying his clothes on his head, and gives himself up to all sorts of extravagances."

Next a Baker spoke up and said:

"He is a madman or a miscreant! He begs his bread at the Bakers' doors."

Then a number of those present, shouting noisily and dragging Fra Giovanni by the gown, tried to hustle him out of the hall, while others more angry still, began throwing stools and breaking them over the holy man's head. But the Dean rose from his seat under the canopy, and said:

"Leave the man in peace, so that he may hear me and be confounded. He asks what goodness is, because goodness is not in him and he is devoid of virtue. I answer him, 'The knowledge of goodness resides in virtuous men; and good citizens carry within them a proper respect for the laws. They approve what has been done in the city to insure to each man enjoyment of the riches he may have acquired. They support the established order of things, and are ready to fly to arms to defend the same. For the duty of the poor is to defend the good things belonging to the rich; and this is how the union betwixt citizens is maintained. This is goodness and good order. Again, the rich man has his serving-man bring out a basket full of bread, which he distributes to the poor; and this is goodness again.' These are the lessons this rough, ignorant fellow required to be taught."

Having so said, the Dean sat down, and the crowd of poor folks raised a murmur of approval. But Fra Giovanni, stepping on one of the stools that had been thrown at his head with contumely and insult, addressed them all and said:

"Hear the words of comfort! Goodness resides not in men, for men know not of themselves what is good. They are ignorant of their own nature and destiny. What seems good, may be evil all the while; and what is deemed useful, harmful. No man can choose the things meet for him, because he knows not his own needs, but is like the little child sitting in the meadows, that sucks for wholesome milk the juice of the deadly nightshade. The babe does not know that the nightshade is a poison; but its mother knows. This is why goodness is to do the will of God.

"It is false to say, 'Tis I teach goodness, and goodness is to obey the city laws.' For the Laws are not of God; they are of man, and share in man's craft and cunning and imperfection. They are like the rules children make in the Square of Viterbo, when they are playing ball. Goodness is not in customs nor in laws; it is in God and in the accomplishment of God's will upon earth, and it is neither by law-makers nor magistrates that God's will is accomplished upon the earth.

"For the great men of this world do their own will, and their will is contrary to God's. But they who have stripped off pride and know there is no goodness in them, these men receive noble gifts, and God Himself distils His sweetness within them like honey in the hollow of the oaks.

"And we must be the oak-tree full of honey and dew. Humble, ignorant and simple folks, these have knowledge of God; and by them shall God's kingdom be stablished on earth. Salvation is not in the strength of laws nor in the multitude of soldiers; it is in poverty and humbleness of spirit.

"Say not, 'Goodness is in me, and I teach goodness.' Rather say, 'Goodness is in God on high.' Over long have men hardened their hearts in their own wisdom. Over long have they set up the Lion and the She-Wolf above the Gates of their Cities. Their wisdom and their prudence have brought about slavery and wars and the shedding of much innocent blood. Wherefore you should put your guidance in God's hand, as the blind man trusts himself to his dog's guidance. Fear not to shut the eyes of your spirit and have done with Reason, for has not Reason made you unhappy and wicked? By Reason have you grown like the man who, having guessed the secrets of the Beast crouching in the cavern, waxed proud of his knowingness, and deeming himself wiser than his fellows, slew his father and wedded his mother.

"God was not with him; but He is with the humble and simple-minded. Learn not to will and He will put His will in you. Seek not to guess the riddles of the Beast. Be ignorant, and you shall not fear to go astray. 'Tis only wise men that are deceived."

Fra Giovanni having thus spoken, the Dean got up and said:

"The miscreant has insulted me, and I willingly forgive him the insult. But he has spoken against the laws of Viterbo, and it is meet he should be punished."

So Fra Giovanni was led before the Judges, who had him loaded with chains and cast him into the city gaol.

XI

THE REVOLT OF GENTLENESS

The holy man Giovanni was chained to a massive pillar in the middle of the dungeon over which the river flowed.

Two other prisoners were plunged along with him in the thick and fetid darkness. Both these had realized and proclaimed the injustice of the Laws. One was for overthrowing the Republic by force. He had been guilty of startling assassinations, and his hope was to purify the city with fire and sword. The other trusted to be able to change men's hearts, and had delivered very persuasive discourses. Inventor of wise laws, he counted on the charms of his genius and the innocency of his life to induce his fellow-citizens to submit to them. But both had met with the same doom.

When they learned how the holy man was chained alongside of them for having spoken against the laws of the city, they congratulated him. And the one who had invented wise laws, said to him:

"If ever, brother, we are restored to liberty, seeing you think as I do, you shall help me to persuade the citizens that they ought to set up above them the empire of just laws."

But the holy man Giovanni answered him:

"What matter for Justice being in the Laws, if it is not in men's hearts? And if men's hearts are unjust, what gain shall it be that Equity reign in the Courts of Law?

"Say not, 'We will stablish just laws, and we will render to every man what is his due.' For no one is just, and we know not what is meet for men. We are no less ignorant what is good for them and what is evil. And whensoever the Princes of the People and the Chiefs of the Commonwealth have loved Justice, they have caused the slaying of many folk.

"Give not the compass and the level to the false measurer; for with true instruments,

he will make untrue apportionments. And he will say: 'See, I carry on me the level, the rule and the square, and I am a good measurer.' So long as men shall be covetous and cruel, will they make the most merciful laws cruel, and will rob their brethren with words of love on their lips. This is why it is vain to reveal to them the words of love and the laws of gentleness.

"Set not up laws against laws, nor raise tables of marble and tables of brass before men's eyes. For whatever is written on the tables of the Law, is written in letters of blood."

So spoke the holy man. And the other prisoner,—he who had committed startling murders, and contrived the ruin that was to save the city, approved his words and said:

"Comrade, you have spoken well. Know you, I will never set up law against law, right rule against crooked rule; my wish is to destroy the law by violence and compel the citizens to live thenceforth in happy freedom. And know further that I have slain both judges and soldiers, and have committed many crimes for the public good."

Hearing these words, the man of the Lord rose, stretched out his manacled arms in the heavy darkness and cried:

"Ill betide the violent! for violence ever begets violence. Whosoever acts like you is sowing the earth with hate and fury, and his children shall tear their feet with the wayside briars, and serpents shall bite their heel.

"Ill betide you! for you have shed the blood of the unjust judge and the brutal soldier, and lo! you are become like the soldier and the judge yourself. Like them you bear on your hands the indelible stain.

"A fool the man who says, 'We will do evildoing in our turn, and our heart shall be comforted. We will be unjust, and it shall be the beginning of justice.' Evildoing is in evil desiring. Desire nothing, and evildoing will be done away. Injustice hurts only

the unjust; I shall suffer no harm of it, if I am just. Oppression is a sword whose hilt wounds the hand of him who holds it; but its point cannot pierce the heart of the man who is simple-minded and good and kind.

"For such an one nothing is dangerous, if he fear nothing. To endure all things, is to endure nothing. Let us be good and kindly, and the whole round world shall be the same. For the world will be an instrument for your goodness, and your persecutors will work to make you better and more beautiful.

"You love life, and this is an affection which rules the heart of every man. Then love suffering; for to live is to suffer. Never envy your cruel masters; rather have compassion for the commanders of armies. Pity the Publicans and Judges; the proudest of them have known the stings of grief and the terrors of death. Happier you, because your consciences are void of offence; for you, let grief lose its bitterness and death its terrors.

"Be ye God's children, and tell yourselves, 'All is well in Him.' Beware of pursuing even the public good with overmuch violence and avidity, for fear something of cruelty mar your integrity. Rather should your desire of universal loving-kindness have the unction of a prayer and the soft fervour of a hope.

"Fair the table, whereat every man shall get his just portion, and the guests shall each one wash the other's feet. But say not, 'I will set up this table by force in the streets of the city and in the public squares.' For it is not knife in hand you must call together your brethren to the feast of Justice and Gentleness. Of its own accord must the board be spread in the Campo di Marte, by virtue of graciousness and good will.

"This shall be a miracle; and be sure, miracles are not wrought save by faith and love. If you disobey your masters, let it be by love. Neither fetter nor kill them, but tell them rather, 'I will never slay my brothers, nor throw them into chains.' Endure, suffer, submit, will what God wills, and your will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven. What seems evil is evil, and what seems good is good. Striving and

discontent is the true curse of mankind. Let us then be peaceful and content, and never strike the wicked, for fear we make ourselves like them.

"If we have not the good fortune to be poor in very deed, let us not make ourselves rich men in spirit, and heartbound to the things of this world that make folk unjust and unhappy. Let us suffer persecution with gentleness, and be those chosen vessels that turn into balm the gall poured into them."

XII

WORDS OF LOVE

Then the Judges had the holy man, Giovanni, brought before them chained to him who had thrown Greek fire in the Palace of the Priors. And they said to the holy man:

"You are alongside of the guilty because you are not on our side. For whosoever is not with good citizens is with evil."

And the holy man answered them:

"There are neither good nor evil among men; but all alike are unhappy. And they who suffer neither hunger nor contumely, they are afflicted by riches and power. It is not given to any man born of woman to escape the miseries of life, and the son of woman is like a fever patient, who turns and turns in his bed, and can find no rest, because he will not lie down on the Cross of Jesus, his head among the thorns, and take his joy in suffering. Yet is it in suffering that joy is found; and they who love know this.

"I companion with Love, but that man with Hate; and for this cause we can never come together. And I say to him, 'Brother, you have done ill, and your crime is great and grievous,' And I speak so, because Charity and Love urge me. But you, you condemn yonder guilty man in the name of Justice. But invoking Justice, you take a vain oath, for there is no such thing as Justice among men.

"We are all of us guilty. And when you say, 'The life of peoples is in our hand,' you are lying, and you are the coffin which declares, 'I am the cradle.' The life of peoples is in the harvests of the fields, which grow yellow beneath the Lord's sight. It is in the vines hanging from the elms, and in the smiles and tears wherein heaven bathes the fruits of the trees in the orchard closes. It is not in the laws, which are made by the rich and powerful for the maintenance of their own power and riches.

"Ye forget how ye are all born poor and naked. And He who came to lie in the manger at Bethlehem, has come without profiting you. And He must needs be born again and be crucified a second time for your salvation.

"The man of violence has laid hold of the arms you forged; and is well compared to the warriors you hold in honour because they have destroyed cities. What is defended by force shall be attacked by force. And if you have wit to read the book you have written, you will find what I say therein. For you have put in your book that the right of nations is the right of war; and you have glorified violence, paying honours to conquering generals and raising statues in your public squares to them and their war-horses.

"And you have laid it down, 'There is violence that is right, and violence that is wrong. And this is the right of nations and this is the law.' But so soon as the men shall have put you outside the law, they will be the law, even as you became the law, when you had overthrown the tyrant that was the law before you.

"Now, be assured, it is very certain that there is no true right save in the renouncing of right. There is no hallowed law save in love. There is no Justice save in Charity. 'Tis not by force we should resist force, for strife only hardens the fighters' hearts and the issue of battles is aye dubious. But if we oppose gentleness to violence, this latter getting no hold upon its adversary, falls dead of itself.

"It is related by learned men in the Bestiaries how the unicorn, which bears on its forehead a flaming sword, transfixes the hunter in his coat-of-mail, but falls to its

knees before a pure virgin. Be ye gentle-hearted, therefore, and simple-souled; keep your heart pure, and ye shall fear nothing.

"Put not your trust in the sword of the Condottieri, for did not the shepherd boy's smooth stone pierce Goliath's brow? But be ye strong in love, and love them that hate you. Hate, when unreturned, is robbed of half its sting; and what is left is weak, widowed, and like to die. Strip yourselves, that other men strip you not. Love your enemies, that they become your friends. Forgive, that ye may be forgiven. Say not, 'Gentleness is a bane to the shepherds of the peoples.' For how can you know, seeing these have never tried? They profess by harshness to have lessened the evil of the world. Yet is evil still rampant among men, and there is never a sign of its growing less.

"I said to some, 'Be not oppressors,' and to others, 'Rise not in revolt against oppression,'—and neither hearkened to me. They cast the stone of derision at me. Because I was on all men's side, each reproached me and said, 'You are not on my side.'

"I said, 'I am the friend of the wretched.' But you never thought I was your friend, because in your pride, you know not that you are wretched. Nevertheless the wretchedness of the master is more cruel than that of the slave. My tender pity for your woes only made you think I was mocking you; and the oppressed deemed me to be of the party of the oppressors. 'He has no bowels,' they said. Nay! but I am on the side of love and not of hate. This is why you scorn me; and because I preach peace on earth, you hold me for a fool. You think my words wander all ways, like the steps of a drunken man. And it is very true I walk your fields like those harpers who on the eve of battles, come to play before the tents. And the soldiers say, as they listen: "Tis some poor simpletons come playing the tunes we heard long ago in our mountains.' I am this harper that roams between the hosts in battle array of hostile armies. When I think whither human wisdom leads, I am glad to be a

madman and a simpleton; and I thank God that He has given me the harp to handle and not the sword."

XIII

THE TRUTH

The holy man Giovanni was very straitly confined in gaol, where he was fastened by chains to rings built into the wall. But his soul was unfettered, and no tortures had been able to shake his firmness. He promised himself he would never betray the faith that was in him, and was ready to be witness and martyr of the Truth, to the end he might die in God. And he said to himself, "Truth shall go along with me to the scaffold. She shall look at me and weep and say, 'My tears flow, seeing it is for my sake this man is going to his death.'"

And as the holy man was thus holding colloquy of his own thoughts in the solitude of his dungeon, a knight entered into the prison, without ever the doors having been opened. He was clad in a red mantle, and carried in his hand a lighted lantern.

Fra Giovanni accosted him and said:

"What is your name, subtle sir, that slips through prison walls?"

And the knight made answer:

"Brother, what use to tell you the names folk give me? For you I will bear the one you shall call me by. Know this, I am come to you full of helpfulness and goodwill, and being informed you dearly love the Truth, I bring you a word touching this same Truth that you have taken for lady and companion."

And Fra Giovanni began to tender thanks to his visitor. But the knight stopped him in the midst, saying:

"I warn you, this word of mine will seem to you at the first empty and of no account, for it is with it as with a tiny key, that the heedless man throws away without using.

"But the careful householder tries it in lock after lock, till he finds at last it opens a chest full of gold and precious stones.

"Wherefore I say to you, Fra Giovanni, seeing you have chosen peradventure to take Truth for your Lady and darling, it behoves you greatly to know concerning her all that may be known. Well then, know that she is white. And from her appearance, which I will describe you, you shall gather her nature, which will be very useful to you in making up to her and kissing her fair body with all sorts of pretty caresses, after the fashion of a lover fondling his mistress. Therefore take it as proven, brother mine, that she is white."

After hearkening to these words, the holy man Giovanni answered:

"Subtle Sir, the meaning of your discourse is not so hard to guess as you would seem to fear. And my wit, albeit naturally thick and dull, was instantly transfixed by the fine point of your allegory. You say that Truth is white to manifest the perfect purity that is in her, and show clearly she is a lady of immaculate virtue. And truly I picture her to myself such as you describe, overpassing in whiteness the lilies of the garden and the snow that in winter clothes the summits of Monte Alverno."

But the visitor shook his head and said:

"Nay! Fra Giovanni, that is not the meaning of my words, and you have in no wise broken the bone to extract the marrow. I instructed you that Truth is white, not that she is pure; and it shows little discernment to think that she is pure."

Grieved at what he now heard, the holy man Giovanni replied:

"Even as the Moon, when the Earth hides the Sun's light from her, is darkened by the thick shadow of this World, where was wrought the crime of our mother Eve, so, most Subtle Sir, you have obscured a plain saying under baffling phrases. Thus we have you astray in the dark; for indeed Truth is pure, coming from God, the fountain of all purity."

But the Opponent retorted:

"Fra Giovanni, your logic is at fault, or you would know that purity is an inconceivable quality. This is what the shepherds of Arcady did, so they say, who named pure gods the gods they knew not the nature of."

Then the good Fra Giovanni sighed and said:

"Sir! your words are dark and wrapped in sadness. At times in my sleep angels have visited me. Their words I could not comprehend; but the mystery of their thought was full of joy."

Hereupon the subtle visitor resumed:

"Come, Fra Giovanni, let us argue it out both of us according to the rules of syllogism."

But the holy man answered:

"Nay! I cannot argue with you; I have neither wish nor wit for the task."

"Well then!" returned the Subtle Sophist, "I must needs find another Opponent."

And in a moment, lifting the index finger of his left hand, he made with his right out of a corner of his gown a red cap for this finger. Then holding it up before his nose,

"Look!" he said, "look at this finger. He's a learned Doctor now, and I am going to hold a learned argument with him. He's a Platonist, maybe Plato himself.

"Messer Plato, what is purity? I wait your answer, Messer Plato. Oh! you say. Consciousness is pure. Consciousness only when it is devoid of everything which may be seen, heard, handled, in one word proved by the senses. You grant me further,—yes! you nod your cap, that Truth will be pure Truth under the same conditions, that is to say provided only you make her dumb, blind, deaf, legless, paralytic, crippled of all her limbs. And I am quite ready to allow that in this state she will escape the delusions that make mock of mankind, and will have no temptations to play the runagate. You are a scoffer, and you have made much mock at the world. Doff your cap."

And the Opponent, dropping the corner of his gown, once more addressed the holy man Giovanni:

"My friend, these old Sophists knew not what Truth was. But I, who am a student of physics and a great observer of natural curiosities, you may believe me when I tell you she is white, or, more strictly speaking, whiteness itself.

"From which we must not conclude, I have told you before, that she is pure. Consider the Lady Eletta, of Verona, whose thighs were like milk; think you for this they were abstract from the world in general, withdrawn in the invisible and intangible, which is the pure, according to the Platonic doctrine? You would be much mistaken if you supposed so."

"I do not know this Lady Eletta you speak of," said the holy man Giovanni.

"She gave herself and her living body," said the Opponent, "to two Popes, sixty Cardinals, fourteen Princes, eighteen merchants, the Queen of Cyprus, three Turks, four Jews, the Lord Bishop of Arezzo's ape, a hermaphrodite, and the Devil. But we are wandering from our subject, which is to discover the proper character of Truth.

"Now, if this character is not purity, as I have just established it cannot be in argument with Plato himself, it is conceivable it may be impurity, which impurity is the necessary condition of all existing things. For have we not just seen how the pure has neither life nor consciousness? And you must yourself, I trow, have learned amply from experience that life and all pertaining thereto is invariably compound, blended, diversified, liable to increase and decrease, unstable, soluble, corruptible—never pure."

"Doctor," replied Giovanni, "your reasons are nothing worth, forasmuch as God, who is all pure, exists."

But the Subtle Doctor retorted:

"If you would read your books more carefully, my son, you would see it is said of Him you have just named, not, 'He exists,' but, 'He is.' Now to exist and to be are not

one and the same thing, but two opposite things. You are alive, and do you not say yourself, 'I am nothing; I am as if I were not'? And you do not say, 'I am he who is.' Because to live, is each moment to cease to be. Again you say, 'I am full of impurities,' forasmuch you are not a single thing, but a blending of things that stir and strive."

"Now do you speak wisely," answered the holy man, "and I see by your discourse that you are very deep read, Subtle Sir, in the sciences, divine as well as human. For true indeed it is God is He who is."

"By the body of Bacchus," exclaimed the other, "He is, and that perfectly and universally. Wherefore are we dispensed from seeking Him in any single place, being assured He is to be discovered neither more nor less in any one spot than in any other, and that you cannot find so much as a pair of old spatterdashes without their due share of Him."

"Admirably put, and most true," returned Giovanni. "But it is right to add that He is more particularly in the sacred elements, by the way of transubstantiation."

"More than that!" added the learned Doctor; "He is actually edible in them. Note moreover, my son, that He is round in an apple, long-shaped in an aubergine, sharp in a knife and musical in a flute. He has all the qualities of substances, and likewise all the properties of figures. He is acute and He is obtuse, because He is at one and the same time all possible triangles; his radii are at once equal and unequal, because He is both the circle and the ellipse—and He is the hyperbola besides, which is an indescribable figure."

While the holy Giovanni was still pondering these sublime verities, he heard the Subtle Doctor suddenly burst out a-laughing. Then he asked him:

"Why do you laugh?"

"I am laughing," replied the Doctor, "to think how they have discovered in me certain oppositions and contradictions, and have reproached me bitterly for the

same. It is very true I have many such. But they fail to see that, if I had them all, I should then be like the Other."

The holy man asked him:

"What other is it you speak of?"

And the Adversary answered:

"If you knew of whom I speak, you would know who I am. And my wisest words you would be loath to listen to, for much ill has been said of me. But, if you remain ignorant who I am, I can be of much use to you. I will teach you how intensely sensitive men are to the sounds that the lips utter, and how they let themselves be killed for the sake of words that are devoid of meaning. This we see with the Martyrs,—and in your own case, Giovanni, who look forward with joy to be strangled and then burned to the singing of the Seven Psalms, in the Great Square of Viterbo, for this word Truth, for which you could not by any possibility discover a reasonable interpretation.

"Verily you might ransack every hole and corner of your dim brain, and pick over all the spiders' webs and old iron that cumber your head, without ever lighting on a picklock to open this word and extract the meaning. But for me, my poor friend, you would get yourself hanged and your body burned for a word of one syllable which neither you nor your judges know the sense of, so that none could ever have discovered which to despise the most, hangmen or hanged.

"Know then that Truth, your well-beloved mistress, is made up of elements compacted of wet and dry, hard and soft, cold and hot, and that it is with this lady as with women of common humanity, in whom soft flesh and warm blood are not diffused equally in all the body."

Fra Giovanni doubted in his simplicity whether this discourse was altogether becoming. The Adversary read the holy man's thought, and reassured him, saying:

"Such is the learning we are taught at School. I am a Theologian, I!"

Then he got up, and added:

"I regret to leave you, friend; but I cannot tarry longer with you. For I have many contradictions to pose to many men. I can taste no rest day nor night; but I must be going ceaselessly from place to place, setting down my lantern now on the scholar's desk, now at the bed's head of the sick man who cannot sleep."

So saying, he went away as he had come. And the holy man Giovanni asked himself: "Why did this Doctor say, Truth was white, I wonder?" And lying in the straw he kept revolving this question in his head. His body shared the restlessness of his mind, and kept turning first one side then the other in search of the repose he could not find.

XIV

GIOVANNI'S DREAM

And this is why, left alone in his dungeon, he prayed to the Lord, saying:

"O Lord! Thy loving-kindness is infinite toward me, and Thy favour manifest, seeing Thou hast so willed I should lie on a dunghill, like Job and Lazarus, whom Thou didst love so well. And Thou hast given me to know how filthy straw is a soft and sweet pillow to the just man. And Thou, dear Son of God, who didst descend into Hell, bless Thou the sleep of Thy servant where he lies in the gloomy prison-house. Forasmuch as men have robbed me of air and light, because I was steadfast to confess the truth, deign to enlighten me with the glory of the everlasting dayspring and feed me on the flames of Thy love, O living Truth, O Lord my God!"

Thus prayed the holy man Giovanni with his lips. But in his heart he remembered the sayings of the Adversary. He was troubled to the bottom of his spirit, and in much trouble and anguish of mind he fell asleep.

And seeing the thought of the Adversary weighed heavy on his slumbers, his sleep was not like the little child's lying on its mother's breast, a gentle sleep of smiles and

milk. And in his dreams he beheld a vast wheel that shone with colours of living fire.

It was like those rose windows of flower-like brilliancy that glow over the doors of Churches, the masterpieces of Gothic craftsmen, and display in the translucent glass the history of the Virgin Mary and the glory of the Prophets. But the secret of these rose windows is unknown to the Tuscan artificer.

And this wheel was great and dazzling and brighter a thousandfold than the best wrought of all the rose windows that ever were divided by compass and painted with brush in the lands of the North. The Emperor Charlemagne saw not the like the day he was crowned.

The only man who ever beheld a wheel more splendid was the poet who, a lady leading him, entered clothed in flesh into Holy Paradise. The rose was of living light, and seemed alive itself, every age and every condition, in an eager crowd, formed the nave and spokes and felloe. They were clad each according to his estate, and it was easy to recognize Pope and Emperor, Kings and Queens, Bishops, Barons, Knights, ladies, esquires, clerks, burghers, merchants, attorneys, apothecaries, labourers, ruffians, Moors and Jews. Moreover, seeing all that live on this earth were shown on the wheel, Satyrs and Cyclopes were there, and Pygmies and Centaurs such as Africa nurses in her burning deserts, and the men Marco Polo the traveller found, who are born without heads and with a face below their navel.

And from betwixt the lips of each there issued a scroll, bearing a device. Now each device was of a hue which did not appear in any other, and in all the incalculable multitude of devices, no two could have been discovered of the same appearance. Some were dyed purple, others painted with the bright colours of the sky and sea, or the shining of the stars, yet others green as grass. Many were exceeding pale, many again exceeding dark and sombre, the whole so ordered that the eye found in these devices every one of the colours that paint the universe.

The holy man Giovanni began to decipher them, by this means making himself acquainted with the divers thoughts of divers men. And after reading on a good while, he perceived that these devices were as much diversified in the sense of the words as in the hues of the letters, and that the sentences differed one from the other in such sort that there was never a single one did not flatly contradict every other.

But at the same time he noted that this contradiction which existed in the head and body of the maxims did not continue in their tail, but that they all agreed together very accurately in their lower extremity, all ending in the same fashion, seeing each and all terminated in these words, Such is Truth.

And he said in his heart:

"These mottoes are like the flowers young men and maidens pluck in the water-meadows by the Arno, to make them into posies. For these flowers are readily gathered together by the tails, while the heads keep separate and fight amongst themselves in hue and brilliancy. And it is the same with the opinions of human beings."

And the holy man found in the devices a host of contradictions regarding the origin of sovereignty, the fountains of knowledge, pleasure and pain, things lawful and things unlawful. And he discovered likewise mighty difficulties in connection with the shape of the Earth and the Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, by reason of the Heretics and Arabs and Jews, the monsters of the African desert and the Epicureans, who all had their place, a scroll in their lips, on the wheel of fire.

And each sentence ended in this way, Such is Truth. And the holy man Giovanni marvelled to see so many truths all diversely coloured. He saw red, and blue, and green, and yellow, but he saw no white—not even the one the Pope made proclamation of, to wit, "On this rock have I built my Church and committed thereto the crowns of all the world." Indeed this device was all red and as if blood-stained.

And the holy man sighed:

"Then I am never to find on the wheel of the universe the pure, white Truth, the immaculate and candid Truth, I would find."

And he called upon Truth, crying with tears in his eyes:

"Truth! Truth! for whose sake I am to die, show yourself before your martyr's eyes."

And lo! as he was wailing out the words, the living wheel began to revolve, and the devices, running one into the other, no longer kept distinct, while on the great disk came circles of every hue, circles wider and wider the further they were from the centre.

Then as the motion grew faster, these circles disappeared one by one; the widest vanished first, because the speed was swiftest near the felloe of the wheel. But directly the wheel began to spin so fast the eye could not see it move and it seemed to stand motionless, the smallest circles too disappeared, like the morning-star when the sun pales the hills of Assisi.

Then at the last the wheel looked all white; and it overpassed in brilliance the translucent orb where the Florentine poet saw Beatrice in the dewdrop. It seemed as though an Angel, wiping the eternal pearl to cleanse it of all stains, had set it on the Earth, so like was the wheel to the Moon, when she shines high in the heavens lightly veiled under the gauze of filmy clouds. For at these times no shadow of a man carrying sticks, no mark at all, shows on her opalescent surface. Even so never a stain was visible on the wheel of light.

And the holy man Giovanni heard a voice which said to him:

"Behold that same white Truth you were fain to contemplate. And know it is built up of the divers contradictory truths, in the same fashion as all colours go to make up white. The little children of Viterbo know this, for having spun their tops striped with many colours on the flags on the Great Market. But the doctors of Bologna never guessed the reasons for this appearance. Now in every one of the devices was a portion of the Truth, and all together make up the true and veritable device."

"Alas! and alas!" replied the holy man, "how am I to read it? For my eyes are dazzled."

And the voice answered:

"Very true, there is naught to be seen there but flashing fire. No Latin letters, nor Arabic, nor Greek, no cabalistic signs, can ever express this device; and no hand is there may trace it in characters of flame on palace walls.

"Friend, never set your heart on reading what is not written. Only know this, that whatsoever a man has thought or believed in his brief lifetime is a parcel of this infinite Truth; and that, even as much dirt and disorder enter into what we call the order of nature, that is the clean and proper ordering of the universe, so the maxims of knaves and fools, who make the mass of mankind, participate in some sort in that general and universal Truth-which is absolute, everlasting and divine. Which makes me sore afraid, by the by, it may very like not exist at all."

And with a great burst of mocking laughter, the voice fell silent.

Then the holy man saw a long leg stretched out, in red hose, and inside the shoe the foot seemed cloven and like a goat's, only much larger. And it gave the wheel of light so shrewd a kick on the rim of its felloe, that sparks flew out as they do when the blacksmith smites the iron with his hammer, and the great wheel leapt into the air to fall far away, broken into fragments. Meantime the air was filled with such piercing laughter that the holy man awoke.

And in the livid gloom of the dungeon, he thought sadly:

"I have no hope or wish left to know Truth, if, as has just been manifested to me, she only shows herself in contradictions and inconsistencies. How shall I dare by my death to be witness and martyr of what men must believe, now the vision of the wheel of the universe has made me see how every particular falsehood is a parcel of general Truth, absolute and unknowable? Why, O my God, have you suffered me to behold these things, and let it be revealed to me before my last sleep, that Truth is

everywhere and that she is nowhere?"

And the holy man laid his head in his hands and wept.

XV

THE JUDGMENT

Fra Giovanni was led before the Magistrates of the Republic to be judged according to the laws of Viterbo. And one of the Magistrates said to the guards:

"Take his chains off him. For every person accused should appear freely before us."

And Giovanni thought:

"Why does the Judge pronounce words that are not straight?"

And the first of the Magistrates began to question the holy man, and said to him:

"Giovanni, bad man that you are, being thrown in prison by the august clemency of the laws, you have spoken against those laws. You have contrived with wicked men, chained in the same dungeon as yourself, a plot to overthrow the order stablished in this city."

The holy man Giovanni made answer:

"Nay! I but spoke for Justice and Truth. If the laws of the city are agreeable to Justice and Truth, I have not spoken against them. I have only spoken words of loving-kindness. I said:

"'Strive not to destroy force by force. Be peaceable in the midst of wars, to the end the spirit of God may rest on you like a little bird on the top of a poplar in the valley that is flooded by the torrent.' I said, 'Be gentle toward the men of violence.'"

Then the Judge cried out in anger:

"Speak! tell us who are the men of violence."

But the holy man said:

"You are for milking the cow that has given all her milk, and would learn of me more than I know."

However the Judge imposed silence on the holy man, and he said:

"Your tongue has discharged the arrow of your discourse, and its shot was aimed at the Republic. Only it has lighted lower, and turned back upon yourself."

And the holy man said:

"You judge me, not by my acts and my words, which are manifest, but by my motives, which are visible only to God's eye."

And the Judge replied:

"Nay! if we could not see the invisible and were not gods upon earth, how would it be possible for us to judge folk? Do you not know a law has just been passed in Viterbo, which punishes even men's secret thoughts? For the police of cities is for ever being perfected, and the wise Ulpian, who held the rule and the square in the days of Cæsar, would be astonished himself, if he could see our rules and squares, improved as they are."

And the Judge said again:

"Giovanni, you have been conspiring in your prison against the common weal."

But the holy man denied having ever conspired against the weal of Viterbo. Then the Judge said:

"The gaoler has given testimony against you."

And the holy man asked the Judge:

"What weight will my testimony have in one scale, when that of the gaoler is in the other?"

The Judge answered:

"Why! yours will kick the beam."

Wherefore the holy man held his peace henceforth.

Then the Judge declared:

"Anon you were talking, and the words you said proved your perfidy. Now you say nothing, and your silence is the avowal of your crime. So you have confessed your guilt twice over."

And the Magistrate they entitled the Accuser rose and said:

"The illustrious city of Viterbo speaks by my voice, and my voice shall be grave and calm, because it is the public voice. And you will think you are listening to a bronze statue speaking, for I make accusation not with my heart and bowels, but with the tables of bronze whereon the Law is inscribed."

And straightway he began to gesticulate furiously and utter a raging torrent of words. And he declaimed the argument of a play, in imitation of Seneca the Tragedian: and this drama was filled full of crimes committed by the holy man Giovanni. And the Accuser represented in succession all the characters of the tragedy. He mimicked the groans of the victims and the voice of Giovanni, the better to strike awe into his audience, who seemed to hear and see Giovanni himself, intoxicated with hate and evildoing. And the Accuser tore his hair and rent his gown and fell back exhausted on his august seat of office.

And the Judge who had questioned the accused before took up the word again and said:

"It is meet a citizen defend this man. For none, so says the law of Viterbo, may be condemned without having been first defended."

Thereupon an Advocate of Viterbo got up on a stool and spoke in these terms:

"If this monk has said and done what is laid to his charge, he is very wicked. But we have no proof that he has spoken and acted in the manner supposed. Moreover, good sirs, had we this proof, it would behove us to consider further the extreme simplicity

of the man and the feebleness of his understanding. He was the laughing-stock of the children in the Public Square. He is ignorant; he has done a thousand extravagances. For my own part I believe he is beside himself. What he says is worthless nonsense, and there is nothing sensible he can do. I think he has been frequenting seditious societies; and goes about repeating what he heard there, without understanding a word of it. He is too dull-witted to be punished. Look out for his instructors; it is they are to blame. There are many difficulties in the matter, and the wise man has told us, 'In doubt, refrain from action.'"

Having so said, the Advocate stepped down from his stool. And Brother Giovanni received his death sentence. And he was informed he was to be hanged in the Square where the peasant women come to sell fruit and vegetables and the children to play knucklebones.

Next a very illustrious Doctor of Law, who was one of the Judges, got up and said:

"Giovanni, it behoves you to subscribe consent to the sentence condemning you, for being pronounced in the name of the city, it is pronounced by yourself, inasmuch as you are part and parcel of the city. You have an honourable part in it, as citizen, and I will convince you that you ought to be well content to be strangled by the city's judgment.

"Know this, the satisfaction of the whole comprehends and embraces the satisfaction of the parts, and seeing you are a part—a vile and miserable part, yet still a part—of the noble city of Viterbo, your condemnation which satisfies the community should be no less satisfactory to yourself.

"And I will further prove you that you should rightly consider death doom agreeable and fitting. For there is no other thing so useful and becoming as is the law, which is the just measure of things, and you ought to be pleased to have received this same just and proper measure. In accordance with the rules stablished by Cæsar Justinian, you have got your due. Your condemnation is just, and therefore a pleasant and a

good thing. But, were it unjust and tainted and contaminated with ignorance and iniquity (which God forbid), still it would be incumbent on you to approve the same.

"For an unjust sentence, when it is pronounced in the prescribed forms of law, participates in the virtue of the said forms and through them continues august, efficacious and of high merit. What it contains of wrong is temporary and of little consequence, and concerns only the particular instance, whereas the good in it derives from the fixity and permanence of the organization of the laws, and therefore is it agreeable to the general dictates of justice. Wherefore Papinian declares it is better to give false judgment than none at all, seeing how men without justice are no better than wild beasts in the woods, whereas by justice is made manifest their nobleness and dignity, as is seen by the example of the Judges of the Areopagus, who were held in special honour among the Athenians. So, seeing it is necessary and profitable to give judgment, and that it is not possible to do so without fault or mistake, it follows that mistake and faultiness are comprised in the excellence of Justice and participate in the said excellence. Accordingly, supposing you deemed your sentence unfair, you should find satisfaction in this unfairness, inasmuch as it is united and amalgamated with fairness, just as tin and copper are fused together to make bronze, which is a precious metal and employed for very noble purposes, in the fashion Pliny describes in his Histories."

The learned Doctor then proceeded to enumerate the conveniencies and advantages which flow from expiation and wash away sin, as the maids every Saturday wash the courtyards of their masters' houses. And he demonstrated to the holy man what a boon it was for him to be condemned to death by the august good pleasure of the Commonwealth of Viterbo, which had granted him judges and a defender. And so soon as the Doctor's eloquence was exhausted and he fell silent, Fra Giovanni was fettered once more and led back to prison.

XVI

THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD

Now on the morning appointed for his hanging, the holy man Giovanni was lying sound asleep. And the Subtle Doctor came and opened the door of his prison cell, and pulling him by the sleeve, cried:

"Ho! there, son of woman, awake! The day is just unclosing his grey eyes. The lark is singing, and the morning mists kissing the mountain sides. Clouds glide along the hills, soft and sinuous, snow-white with rosy reflexions,—which are the flanks and bosoms and loins of immortal nymphs, divine daughters of the rivers and the sky, maidens of the morn old Oceanus leads forth along the heights,—a flock multiform as his waves, and who welcome to their cool, fresh arms, on a couch of hyacinths and anemones, the gods, masters of the world, and the shepherd swains loved of goddesses. For there are shepherds their mothers bore beautiful and worthy the bed of the nymphs that dwell in the water-springs and woodlands.

"And for myself, who have deeply studied the secrets of nature, seeing but now these clouds curling wantonly round the bosom of the hill, I was filled with mysterious longings at the sight, longings I know nothing of but that they spring from the region of my loins, and that, like the infant Hercules, they showed their strength from the very cradle. And these longings were not merely after rosy mists and floating clouds; they pictured very precisely a wench named Monna Libetta I made acquaintance with once in travelling, at Castro, at an inn where she was serving-maid and at the free disposal of the muleteers and soldiers frequenting it.

"But the picture I framed in my mind of Monna Libetta, this morning, as I fared along the slopes of the hills, was wondrously embellished by the tenderness of recollection and the regrets of separation, and she was tricked out with all the pretty fancies that, springing from the loins as I said, presently send their fragrant fire coursing through all the body's soul, transfusing it with languishing ardours and pains that are a delicious pleasure.

"For I would have you know, my Giovanni, that looking at her calmly and coldly, the girl was not greatly different from all the rest of the country wenches that, in the plains of Umbria and the Roman Marches, go afield to milk the cattle. She had dark eyes, slow and sullen, a sunburnt face, a big mouth, the bosom heavy, the belly tanned and the forepart of the legs, from the knee, shaggy with hair. Her laugh was ready and rude, in a general way; but in act with a lover, her face grew dark and transfigured as if with wonder at the presence of a god. 'Twas this had attached me to her, and I have many a time pondered since on the nature of this attachment, for I am learned and curious to search out the reasons of things.

"And I discovered the force that drew me toward this girl Monna Libetta, maid-servant at the inn of Castro, was the same that governs the stars in heaven and that there is one force and one only in the world, which is Love. And it is likewise Hate, as is shown by the case of this same Monna Libetta, who was fiercely fondled, and just as fiercely beaten.

"And I mind me how a groom in the Pope's stables, who was her chief lover, struck her so savagely one night in the hay-loft where he was bedding with her, that he left her lying there for dead. And he rushed crying through the streets that the vampires had strangled the girl. These be subjects a man must needs ponder if he would gain some notion of true physics and natural philosophy."

Thus spoke the Subtle Doctor. And the holy man Giovanni sitting up on his bedding of dung, answered:

"Nay! Doctor, is this language meet to address to a man that is to be hanged in a very short while? Hearing you, I am filled with doubt whether your words are the words of a good man and a great Theologian, or if they do not rather come from an evil dream sent by the Angel of Darkness."

But the Subtle Doctor made answer:

"Who talks of being hanged? I tell you, Giovanni, I am come hither, at the earliest

peep of day, to set you free and help you to fly. See! I have donned a gaoler's habit; the prison door stands open. Quick! up and away!"

At this the holy man rose to his feet, and answered:

"Doctor, take heed what you are saying. I have made the sacrifice of my life, and I admit it has cost me dear to make it. If trusting to your word that I am restored to life, I am then led to the place of execution, I must needs make a second sacrifice more grievous than the first, and suffer two deaths instead of out. And I confess to you my desire of martyrdom is vanished away, and a longing come upon me to breathe the air of day under the branches of the mountain pines."

The Subtle Doctor made reply:

"It happens that was just my intent to lead you away under the pines rustling in the wind with the soft sighing of a flute. We will break our fast sitting on the mossy slope overlooking the city. Come with me! Why do you tarry?"

And the holy man said:

"Before going hence with you, I would fain know clearly who you are. I am fallen from my first constancy; my courage is no better now than a straw blown about on the wasted threshing-floor of my virtue. But I am left my faith in the Son of God, and to save my body, I would ill like to lose my soul."

"Verily," cried the Subtle Doctor, "think you verily I have any desire of your soul! Is it then so fair a maid and sweet a lady you are afraid I may rob you of it? Nay! keep it, friend; I could make nothing of it."

The holy man was scarce assured by what he heard, for the other's words breathed no pious odour. But, as he was exceeding eager to be free, he asked no more questions, but followed the Doctor and passed the wicket of the prison by his side.

Only when he was without, he inquired:

"Who are you, you who send dreams to men and set prisoners free? You have the

beauty of a woman and the strength of a man, and I admire you, though I cannot love you."

And the Subtle Doctor answered:

"You will love me so soon as I have made you suffer. Men cannot love but those who make them suffer; and there is no love except in pain."

And so conversing, they left the city and began climbing the mountain paths. And after faring far, they saw at the entering in of a wood a red-tiled house, before which was a wide terrace overlooking the plain, planted with fruit trees and bordered with vines.

So they sat down in the courtyard at the foot of a vine trunk; its leaves were gilded by the Autumn and from the boughs hung clusters of grapes. And a girl brought them milk and honey and cakes of maize.

Presently the Subtle Doctor, stretching out his arm, plucked a scarlet-cheeked apple, bit into it and gave it to the holy man. And Giovanni ate and drank; and his beard was all white with milk and his eyes laughed as he gazed up at the sky, which filled them with blue light and joy. And the girl smiled.

Then the Subtle Doctor said:

"Look at yonder child; she is far comelier than Monna Libetta."

And the holy man, intoxicated with milk and honey, and made merry with the light of day, sang songs his mother was used to sing when she carried him as a babe in her arms. They were songs of shepherds and shepherdesses, and they spoke of love. And as the girl stood listening on the threshold of the door, the holy man left his seat and ran staggering towards her, took her in his arms and showered on her cheeks kisses full of milk, laughter and joy.

And the Subtle Doctor having paid the reckoning, the two travellers hied them toward the plain.

As they were walking between the silvery willows that border the water, the holy man said:

"Let us sit; for now I am weary."

So they sat down beneath a willow, and watched the water-flags curling their sword-like leaves on the river banks and the bright-coloured flies flashing over the surface. But Giovanni's laughter was ceased, and his face was sad.

And the Subtle Doctor asked him:

"Why are you so pensive?"

And Giovanni answered him:

"I have felt through you the sweet caress of living things, and I am troubled at heart. I have tasted the milk and the honey. I have looked on the servant-maid standing at the threshold and seen that she was comely. And disquietude is in my soul and in my flesh.

"What a long road I have travelled since I have known you. Do you remember the grove of holm-oaks where I saw you the first time? For be sure, I recognize you.

"You it was visited me in my hermit's cell and stood before me with woman's eyes sparkling through a transparent veil, while your alluring mouth instructed me in the entanglements of Right and Wrong. Again it was you appeared in the meadows clad in a golden cope, like an Ambrose or an Augustine. Then I knew not the curse of thought; but you set me thinking. You put pride like a coal of fire on my lips; and I learned to speculate. But as yet, in the untrained freshness of my wit and raw youthfulness of mind, I felt no doubt. But again you came to me, and gave me uncertainty to feed on and doubt to drink like wine. So comes it, that this day I taste through you the entrancing illusion of things, and that the soul of woods and streams, of sky and earth, and living shapes, penetrates my breast.

"And lo! I am a miserable man, because I have followed after you, Prince of men!"

And Giovanni gazed at his companion, who stood there beautiful as day and night. And he said to him:

"Through you it is I suffer, and I love you. I love you because you are my misery and my pride, my joy and my sorrow, the splendour and the cruelty of things created, because you are desire and speculation, and because you have made me like unto yourself. For verily your promise in the Garden, in the dawn of this world's days, was not vain, and I have tasted the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, O Satan."

Presently Giovanni resumed again.

"I know, I see, I feel, I will, I suffer. And I love you for all the ill you have done me. I love you, because you have undone me."

And, leaning on the Archangel's shoulder, the man wept bitterly.

THE MYSTIC BLOOD

TO FÉLIX JEANTET

THE MYSTIC BLOOD

La Bocca sua non diceva se non Jesù e Caterina, e cosi dicendo ricevatti el capo nelle mani mie, fermando l'occhio nella Divina Bontà, e dicendo: lo voglio....

(Le lettere di S. Caterina da Siena. —xcvii, Gigli e Burlamacchi.)1

The good town of Sienna was like a sick man that seeks vainly for a restful place in his bed, and thinks, by turning about and about, to cheat his pain. Again and again had she changed the government of the Republic, which passed from the Consuls to the Assemblies of the Burghers, and, originally entrusted to the Nobles, was subsequently exercised by the money-changers, drapers, apothecaries, furriers, silk-mercers and all such citizens as were concerned with the superior arts and crafts. But these worthies having shown themselves weak and self-seeking, the

People expelled them in their turn and entrusted the sovereign power to the petty artisans. In the year 1368 of the glorious Incarnation of the Son of God, the Signory was composed of fourteen Magistrates chosen from among the hosiers, butchers, locksmiths, shoemakers, and stonemasons, who together formed a Great Council known as the Mount of the Reformers. They were a plebeian band, rough and hard as the bronze She-Wolf, emblem of their city, which they loved with an affection at once filial and formidable. But the People, which had set them up over the Commonwealth, had suffered another body to continue in existence, though subordinate to them, the Twelve to wit, who came from the class of Bankers and wealthy Merchants. These men were in conspiracy with the Nobles, at the Emperor's instigation, to sell the City to the Pope of Rome.

The German Kaiser was the life and soul of the plot, promising the aid of his landsknechts to guarantee success. He was in the utmost haste to have the affair ended, hoping with the price of the bargain, he might be able to redeem the Crown of Charlemagne, pledged for sixteen hundred florins with the Florentine Bankers.

Meantime, they of the Reformers' Mount, who formed the Signory, held firm the rod of government and watched heedfully over the safety of the Republic. These artisans, officers of a free People, had refused the Emperor, when he came within their walls, bread, water, salt and fire; they had driven him forth the city groaning and trembling, and they now condemned the conspirators to death. Guardians of the town founded by Remus long ago, they copied the sternness of the first Consuls of Rome. But their city, which went clad in silk and cloth-of-gold, was ever ready to slip betwixt their fingers, like a lascivious, false-hearted wanton; and fear and anxiety made them implacable.

In the year 1370 they discovered that a nobleman of Perugia, Ser Niccola Tuldo, had been sent by the Pope to stir up the Siennese, in connivance with the Kaiser, to deliver up the city to the Holy Father. The young Lord in question was in the prime

of manly beauty, and had learned in the company of fair ladies those arts of flattery and seductive compliment he now proceeded to practise in the Palace of the Salimbeni and the shops of the money-changers. And, for all his light heart and empty head, he gained over to the Pope's side many burghers and some artisans. Informed of his intrigues, the Magistrates of the Mount of the Reformers had him brought before their august Council, and after questioning him underneath the gonfalon of the Republic, which shows a Lion rampant for device, they declared him guilty of attempted outrage against the liberties of the City.

He had answered with mere smiling scorn to the questions of these cobbler fellows and butchers. But when he heard his sentence of death pronounced, he fell into ecstasy of deep astonishment, and was led away to prison as if in a trance. No sooner was he locked up in his cell than, awaking from his stupor, he began to regret the life he was to lose with all the ardour of his young blood and impetuous character; visions of all its pleasures, arms, women, horses, crowded before his eyes, and at the thought he would never enjoy the delights more, he was carried away by so furious a despair he beat with fists and forehead on the walls of his dungeon, and gave vent to such wild howls as were audible over all the neighbourhood, even in the burghers' houses and the drapers' booths. The gaoler coming in to know the cause of the uproar, found him covered with blood and foaming at the mouth.

Ser Niccola Tuldo never left off howling with rage for three days and three nights.

The thing was reported to the Mount of the Reformers. The members of the most august Signory, after despatching their more pressing business, examined into the case of the unhappy man in the condemned cell.

Leone Rancati, brickmaker by trade, said:

"The man must pay with his head for his crime against the Commonwealth of Sienna; and none can relieve him of this debt, without encroaching on the sacred rights of the City our mother. He must needs die; but his soul is his Maker's, and it is

not meet that through our fault he die in this sinful state of madness and despair. Therefore should we use all the means within our competence to assure his eternal salvation."

Matteino Renzano, the baker, a man famed for his wisdom, rose in his turn and said:

"Well spoken, Leone Rancati! The case demands we send to the condemned man Catherine, the fuller's daughter."

The advice was approved by all the Signory, who resolved to invite Catherine to visit Niccola Tuldo in his prison.

In those days Catherine, daughter of Giacomo the fuller, filled all the city of Sienna with the perfume of her virtues. She dwelt in a little cell in her father's house and wore the habit of the Sisters of Penitence. She carried girt about her under her gown of white linen an iron chain, and scourged herself an hour long every day. Then, showing her arms covered with wounds, she would cry, "Behold my pretty red roses!" She cultivated in her chamber lilies and violets, wherewith she wove garlands for the altars of the Virgin and the Saints. And all the while she would be singing hymns in the vulgar tongue to the praise of Jesus and Mary His Mother. In those mournful times, when the city of Sienna was a hostel of sorrow, and a house of joy to boot, Catherine was ever visiting the unhappy prisoners, and telling the prostitutes: "My sisters, how fain would I hide you in the loving wounds of the Saviour!" A maiden so pure, fired with so sweet charity, could nowhere have budded and blossomed but at Sienna, which under all its defilements and amid all its crimes, was still the City of the Blessed Virgin.

Apprised by the Magistrates, Catherine betook herself to the public gaol on the morning of the day Ser Niccola Tuldo was to die. She found him stretched on the stone floor of the dungeon, bellowing blasphemies. Raising the white veil the blessed St. Dominic himself had come down from Paradise to lay upon her brow, she showed the prisoner a countenance of heavenly beauty. As he gazed at her in

wonder, she leant over him to wipe away the spume that defiled his mouth.

Ser Niccola Tuldo, turning on her eyes that still retained their savage ferocity, cried out:

"Begone! I hate you, because you are of Sienna, the city that slays me. Oh! Sienna, she-wolf indeed, that with her vile claws tears out the throat of a noble gentleman of Perugia! Horrid she-wolf! unclean and inhuman hell-hound!"

But Catherine made answer:

"Nay! brother, what is a city, what are all the cities of the earth, beside the City of God and the holy Angels? I am Catherine, and I am come to call you to the everlasting nuptials."

The sweet voice and beaming face shed a sudden peace and radiance over the savage soul of Niccola Tuldo. He remembered the days of his innocence, and cried like a child.

The sun, rising above the Apennines, was just whitening the prison walls with its earliest rays. Catherine said:

"Look, the dawn! Up, up, my brother, for the eternal nuptials! Up, I say!"

And raising him from the ground, she drew him into the Chapel, where Fra Cattaneo confessed him.

Ser Niccola Tuldo then listened devoutly to the holy Mass and received the body of Our Lord. This done, he turned to Catherine and said:

"Stay with me; do not leave me, and I shall be well, and shall die content."

The bells began to toll the signal for the execution.

Then Catherine answered:

"Gentle brother, I will wait you at the place of Justice."

At this, Ser Niccola smiled and said, as if ravished with bliss:

"Joy! joy! the Delight of my soul will wait me at the holy place of Justice!"

Catherine pondered and prayed, finally saying:

"Gracious Lord, Thou hast indeed wrought in him a great enlightenment, seeing he calls holy the place of Justice."

Ser Niccola went on:

"Yes! I shall hie me thither, strong in heart and rejoicing. I weary, as though I had a thousand years to wait, to be there, where I shall find you once more."

"Farewell till the nuptials, the everlasting nuptials!" Catherine cried again, as she left the prison.

The condemned man was served with a little bread and wine, and supplied with a black cloak; then he was led forth along the precipitous streets, to the sound of trumpets, between the city guards, beneath the banner of the Republic. The ways swarmed with curious onlookers, and women lifted their little ones in their arms, showing them the man doomed to die.

Meantime Niccola Tuldo was dreaming of Catherine, and his lips, that had so long been bitter, opened softly as though to kiss the likeness of the blessed maid.

After climbing for some while the rude brick-paved road, the procession reached one of the heights dominating the city, and the condemned man saw suddenly, with his eyes that were soon to see no more, the roofs, domes, cloisters, and towers of Sienna, and further away the walls that followed the slope of the hills. The sight reminded him of his native town, the gay city of Perugia, surrounded with its gardens, where springs of living water sing amid the fruits and flowers. He saw once more in fancy the terrace that looks over the vale of Trasimene, whence the eye drinks in the light of day with delight.

And the yearning for life tore his heart afresh, and he sighed:

"Oh! city of my fathers! Oh! house of my birth!"

But presently the thought of Catherine re-entered his soul, filling it to the brim with gladness and sweet peace.

Finally they arrive in the Market Square, where each Saturday the peasant girls of Camiano and Granayola display their citrons, grapes, figs, and pomegranates, and hail the housewives with merry appeals to buy, not unmixed with high-spiced jests. It was there the scaffold was erected; and there Ser Niccola beheld Catherine kneeling in prayer, her head resting on the block.

He climbed the steps with eager joy. At his coming, Catherine rose and turned toward him with all the look of a bride once more united to her spouse; she insisted on baring his neck with her own hands and placing her dear one on the block as on a marriage bed.

Then she knelt down beside him. Thrice he repeated in fervent tones, "Jesus, Catherine!"—after which the executioner struck with his sword, and the maiden caught the severed head within her hands. Hereupon all the victim's blood seemed to be suffused in her, and to fill her veins with a flood as soft as warm milk; a fragrant odour set her nostrils quivering, while before her swooning eyes floated the shadows of angels. Filled with wonder and joy unspeakable, she fell softly into the depths of celestial ecstasy.

Two women of the third Order of St. Dominic, who stood at the foot of the scaffold, seeing her stretched there motionless, hastened to raise her up and support her in their arms. The holy maid, coming to herself, told them: "I have seen the heavens opened!"

One of the women made as though to wash away with a sponge the blood that covered St. Catherine's robe, but she stopped her, crying out eagerly:

"No, no! leave the blood, leave it; never rob me of my purple and my perfumes!"

1 "His mouth spake no word but only Jesus and Caterina, and with these words I received his head in my two hands, as he closed his eyes in the Divine Goodness,

and said: I will...." (Letters of St. Catherine of Sienna—xcvii, ed. Gigli e Burlamacchi.)

A SOUND SECURITY

TO HENRI LAVEDAN

A SOUND SECURITY

. . . . . Par cest ymage Te doing en pleige Jhesu-Crist Qui tout fist, ainsi est escript: il te pleige tout ton avoir; Ne peuz nulz si bon pleige avoir.

(Miracles de Notre-Dame par personnages, publ. par. G. Paris et U. Robert.)1

Of all the merchants of Venice, Fabio Mutinelli was the most exact in keeping his engagements. In all cases he showed himself free-handed and sumptuous in his dealings,—above all where ladies and churchmen were concerned. The elegance and honesty of his character were renowned throughout the State, and all admired at San Zanipolo an altar of gold he had offered to St. Catherine for the love of the fair Catherine Manini, wife of the Senator Alesso Cornaro. Being very wealthy, he had numerous friends, whom he entertained at feasts and helped at need from his purse. However, he incurred heavy losses in the war against the Genoese and in the Naples troubles. It fell out, moreover, that thirty of his ships were taken by the Uscoque pirates or foundered at sea. The Pope, to whom he had lent great sums of money, refused to repay a doit. The result of all was, the magnificent Fabio Mutinelli was stripped bare in brief space of all his riches. After selling his Palace and plate to pay what he owed, he found himself left without anything. But clever, bold, well practised in affairs and in the vigour of his powers, his only thought was to make head once more against fortune. He made careful calculation and judged that five hundred ducats were needful for him to take the sea again and attempt fresh enterprises for which he augured happy and sure success. He asked the Signor

Alesso Bontura, who was the richest citizen of the Republic, to oblige him by lending him the five hundred ducats. But the good Bontura, holding that if daring wins great gains, 'tis prudence only keeps the same, refused to expose so great a sum to the risks of sea and shipwreck. Fabio next applied to the Signor Andrea Morosini, whom he had benefited in former days in a thousand ways.

"My dear Fabio," answered Andrea, "to any one else but you I would willingly lend this sum. I have no affection for gold, and on this point act according to the maxims of Horace the Satirist. But your friendship is dear to me, Fabio Mutinelli, and I should be running the risk of losing it, if I lent you money. For more often than not, the commerce of the heart comes to a bad end betwixt debtor and creditor. I have known but too many instances."

So saying, the Signor Andrea kissed the Merchant with all seeming tenderness, and shut the door in his face.

Next day, Fabio went to see the Lombard and Florentine bankers. But not one of them would agree to lend him so much as twenty ducats without security. All day long he hurried from one counting-house to another, but was everywhere met by much the same answer:

"Signor Fabio, we all know you well for the most upright merchant of this city, and it is with regret we must refuse you what you ask. But the morality of trade requires it."

That evening, as he was making sadly for home, the courtesan Zanetta, who was bathing in the canal, hung on to his gondola and gazed amorously into his eyes. In the days of his prosperity he had had her one night into his Palace and had treated her very kindly, for he was of a gay and gracious humour.

"Sweet Signor Fabio," she said to him, "I am aware of your misfortunes; they are the talk of all the town. Hear me; I am not rich, but I have some jewels at the bottom of a little coffer. An you will accept them of a poor girl that would serve you, I shall

know God and the Virgin love me."

And it was a true word, that in the prime of her youth and fine flower of her beauty, the fair Zanetta was poor. Fabio answered her:

"Kind Zanetta, there is more nobility in the hovel where you dwell than in all the Palaces of Venice."

For three days longer Fabio visited the banks and fondacos without discovering any one willing to lend him money. Everywhere he received an unfavourable answer, and listened to speeches that always came to this:

"You did very wrong to sell your plate to pay your debts. Money is lent to a man in debt, but not to one without furniture and plate."

The fifth day he made his way, in despair, as far as the Corte delle Galli, which men also call the Ghetto, and which is the quarter the Jews inhabit.

"Who knows," he kept saying to himself, "if I may not get from one of the Circumcised what the Christians have denied me?"

He proceeded therefore between the Calle San Geremia and the Calle San Girolamo along a narrow evil-smelling canal, the entrance of which was barred with chains every night, by order of the Senate. While hesitating to know which Usurer he should first apply to, he remembered to have heard speak of an Israelite named Eliezer, son of Eliezer Maimonides, who was said to be exceedingly rich and of a wondrous subtle spirit. Accordingly, inquiring out the house of the Jew Eliezer, he stopped his gondola before the door. Above the entrance was seen a representation of the seven-branched candlestick, which the Jew had had carved as a sign of hope, in expectation of the promised days when the Temple should rise again from its ashes.

The Merchant now entered a hall lighted by a copper lamp with twelve wicks that were burning smokily. Eliezer the Jew was there, seated before his scales. The windows of the house were walled up, because he was an Unbeliever.

Fabio Mutinelli approached and thus accosted him:

"Eliezer, over and over again have I called you dog and renegade heathen. There have been times, when I was younger and in the flush of early manhood, I have cast stones and mud at folks going along the Canal who wore the round patch of yellow sewn on their shoulder, so that I may likely have struck one of your friends or perhaps yourself. I tell you this, not to affront you, but out of fairness, at the same instant I come to ask you to do me a very great service."

The Jew lifted his arm, which was as dry and gnarled as an ancient vine-stock:

"Fabio Mutinelli, the Father which is in Heaven shall judge us, one and the other. What is the service you are come to ask of me?"

"Lend me five hundred ducats for a year."

"Men do not lend without security. Doubtless you have learned this from your own people. What is the security you offer?"

"You must know, Eliezer, I have not a denier left, not one gold cup, not one silver goblet. Neither have I a friend left. One and all, they have refused to do me the service I ask of you. I have nothing in all the world but my honour as a merchant and my faith as a Christian. I offer you for security the holy Virgin Mary and her Divine Son."

At this reply, the Jew, bending down his head as a man does to ponder and consider, stroked his long white beard for a while. Presently he looked up and said:

"Fabio Mutinelli, take me to see this security you offer. For it is meet the lender be put in presence of the pledge proposed for his acceptance."

"You are within your rights," returned the Merchant, "rise therefore and come."

So saying, he led Eliezer to the Chiesa dell' Orto, near the spot called the Field of the Moors. Arrived there and pointing to the figure of the Madonna, which stood above the High Altar, the brow wreathed with a circlet of precious stones and the shoulders

covered with a gold-broidered mantle, holding in her arms the Child Jesus sumptuously adorned like his mother, the Merchant said to the Jew:

"Yonder is my security."

Eliezer looked with a keen eye and a calculating air first at the Christian Merchant, then at the Madonna and Child; then presently bowed his head in assent and said he would accept the pledge offered. He returned with Fabio to his own house, and there handed him the five hundred ducats, well and truly weighed:

"The money is yours for a year. If at the end of that time, to the day, you have not paid me back the sum with interest at the rate fixed by the law of Venice and the custom of the Lombards, you can picture yourself, Fabio Mutinelli, what I shall think of the Christian Merchant and his security."

Fabio, without a moment's loss of time, bought ships and loaded up with salt and other sorts of merchandise, which he disposed of in the cities of the Adriatic shore to great advantage. Then, with a fresh cargo aboard, he set sail for Constantinople, where he bought carpets, perfumes, peacock feathers, ivory and ebony. These goods his agents exchanged along the coasts of Dalmatia for building timber, which the Venetians had contracted for from him in advance. By these means, in six months' time, he had multiplied tenfold the amount the Jew had lent him.

But one day that he was taking his diversion with some Greek women, aboard his vessel, which lay in the Bosphorus, having put out too far to sea, he was captured by pirates and carried prisoner to Egypt, though, by rare good fortune, his gold and merchandise were in a safe place all the while. The pirates sold him to a Saracen lord, who putting him in fetters, sent him afield to till the wheat, which grows very finely in that country. Fabio offered his master to pay a heavy ransom, but the Paynim's daughter, who loved him and was fain to bring him to the end she desired, over-persuaded her father not to let him go at any price. Reduced to the necessity of trusting to himself alone for release, he filed his irons with the tools given him for

tilling the ground, made good his escape to the Nile and threw himself into a boat. Casting loose, he got to the sea, which was not far off, and when on the point of death from thirst and hunger, was rescued by a Spanish vessel bound for Genoa. But, after keeping her course a week, the ship was caught in a storm which drove her on the coast of Dalmatia. In making the shore, she was wrecked on a reef. All the crew were drowned except Fabio, who reached the beach after much difficulty, clinging to a hen-coop. There he lay senseless, but was presently succoured by a handsome widow, named Loreta, whose house was upon the seashore. She had him carried to it, put him to bed in her own chamber, watched over him and lavished every care for his recovery.

On coming to himself, he smelt the perfume of myrtles and roses, and looking out of window saw a garden that descended in successive declivities to the sea. Signora Loreta, standing at his bed's head, took up her viol and began playing a tender air.

Fabio, ravished with gratitude and pleasure, fell to kissing the lady's hands a thousand times over. He thanked her earnestly, assuring her he was less touched by the saving of his life than by the fact of his owing his recovery to the pains of so fair a benefactress.

Presently he rose and went to walk with her in the garden, and sitting down to rest in a thicket of myrtles, he drew the young widow on his knee and manifested his gratitude by a thousand caresses.

He found her not insensible to his efforts and spent some hours by her side drowned in amorous delight. But soon he grew pensive, and suddenly asked his hostess what month they were in, and what day of the month precisely it then was.

And when she told him, he fell to groaning and lamenting sore, finding it lacked but twenty-four short hours of a full year since he had received the five hundred ducats of Eliezer the Jew. The thought of breaking his promise and exposing his pledge to the reproaches of the Circumcised was intolerable to him. Signora Loreta inquiring

the reason of his despair, he told her the whole story; and being a very pious woman and an ardent votress of the Holy Mother of God, she shared his chagrin to the full. The difficulty was not to procure the five hundred ducats; a Banker in a neighbouring town had had such a sum in his hands for the last six months at Fabio's disposition. But to travel from the coast of Dalmatia to Venice in four-and-twenty hours, with a broken sea and contrary winds, was a thing beyond all hope.

"Let us have the money ready to begin with," said Fabio.

And when one of his hostess's serving-men had brought the sum, the noble Merchant ordered a vessel to be brought close in to the shore. In her he laid the bags containing the ducats, then went to the Signora Loreta's Oratory in search of an image of the Virgin with the Infant Jesus—an image of cedar-wood and greatly revered. This he set in the little bark, near the rudder, and addressed in these words:

"Madonna, you are my pledge. Now the Jew Eliezer must needs be paid to-morrow; 'tis a question of mine honour and of yours, Madonna, and of your Son's good name. What a mortal sinner, such as I, cannot do, you will assuredly accomplish, unsullied Star of the Sea, you whose bosom suckled Him who walked upon the waters. Bear this silver to Eliezer the Jew, in the Ghetto at Venice, to the end the Circumcised may never say you are a bad surety."

And pushing the bark afloat, he doffed his hat and cried softly:

"Farewell, Madonna! farewell!"

The vessel sailed out to sea, and long the merchant and the widow followed it with their eyes. When night began to close in, a furrow of light was seen marking her wake over the waters, which were fallen to a dead calm.

At Venice next morning Eliezer, on opening his door, saw a bark in the narrow canal of the Ghetto laden with full sacks and manned by a little figure of black wood, flashing in the clear morning sunbeams. The vessel stopped before the house where the seven-branched candlestick was carved; and the Jew recognized the Virgin Mary

with the infant Jesus, pledge of the Christian Merchant.

1 "... By this image I take Jesus Christ in pledge for you, Him who wrought all men's salvation, as is writ in Scripture: He is pledge against all your fortune; so good a pledge can no man have." (Miracles of Our Lady, as they Fell out to Sundry—G. Paris and U. Robert.)

HISTORY OF DOÑA MARIA D'AVALOS AND DON FABRICIO, DUKE D'ANDRIA

TO HENRY GAUTHIER-VILLARS

HISTORY OF DOÑA MARIA D'AVALOS AND DON FABRICIO, DUKE D'ANDRIA

Done Marie d'Avalos, l'une des belles princesses du païs, mariée avec le prince de Venouse, laquelle s'estant enamourachée du comte d'Andriane, l'un des beaux princes du païs aussy, et s'estans tous deux concertez à la jouissance et le mari l'ayant descouverte ... les fit tous deux massacrer par gens appostez; si que le lendemain on trouva ces deux belles moictiez et créatures exposées et tendues sur le pavé devant la porte de la maison, toutes mortes et froides, à la veue de tous les passants, qui les larmoyoient et plaignoient de leur misérable estat.1

(Pierre de Bourdeilles, abbé et Seigneur de Brantôme. Recueil des dames, seconde partie.)

It was a day of high rejoicing at Naples, when the Prince of Venosa, a rich and puissant Lord, was wed to Doña Maria, of the illustrious house of Avalos.

Drawn by horses bedizened with scales, feathers or furs, in such wise as to figure forth dragons, griffins, lions, lynxes, panthers and unicorns, were twelve cars which did bear through all the city an host of naked men and women, gilded all over, for to represent the Gods of Olympus, come down to Earth to do honour to the Venosian

nuptials. On one of these cars was to be seen a young lad with wings treading underfoot three old hags of an hideous ugliness. A tablet was fixed up above the car to display the meaning thereof, to wit: LOVE VANQUISHETH THE FATAL SISTERS. Whereby 'twas to be understood that the new-wedded pair would enjoy many a long year of happiness by each other's side.

But this presage of Love, more strong than the Fates, was false withal. Two years after her marriage, one day she was gone abroad a-fowling, Doña Maria d'Avalos saw the Duke d'Andria, which was a gallant, handsome and well-knit man, and did straight love the same. An honest girl and a well-born, heedful of her noble name and still in that callow youth when women have not gotten boldness yet to match their naughty desires, she sent no go-between to the nobleman for to make assignation in Church or at her own abode. She never told her love, but did bide the time when her good star should bring beside her him which had grown in the twinkling of an eye more dear to her than the day. She had not to tarry long. For the Duke d'Andria had noted her beauty, and went straightway to pay his court to the Prince of Venosa. Encountering Doña Maria in the Palace with no other by, he did beseech her in right gentle, and withal gallant and masterful wise, that very favour she was herself well disposed and well resolved to grant him. She did lead him to her chamber instantly, and did there refuse him naught of all he was fain to have of her.

But when he did proffer her his thanks for that she had graciously yielded to his desires, she made answer:

"My Lord, the desire was mine own more than it was yours. I, it was, was fain we should lie in the arms one of the other, as we be now laid, in this bed, to the which I will aye make you dearly welcome, as oft as it shall please you to come thither."

Every time she was able so to do, from that day forth Doña Maria d'Avalos would receive in her chamber the Duke d'Andria and this was many a time and oft, for the

Prince of Venosa went much to the chase and would sometimes spend whole weeks together diverting him with his friends in one of his pleasure houses he had in the country parts.

The whole while that Doña Maria was abed with her lover, her nurse Lucia would stand a-watching at the chamber door, telling of her beads and trembling sore lest the Prince perchance should return home against all expectation.

'Twas indeed a nobleman mightily feared by reason of his jealous and grim humour. His enemies did reproach him for his cunning and cruelty, naming him mongrel cur of fox and she-wolf, stinking hound, if ever stinking hound was. But his friends would commend him, for that he kept ever in sure memory whatsoever of right or wrong folk did him, and would in no wise suffer patiently any injury wrought him or his.

During the space of three full months which were now gone by the lovers had great joy of each other and content of their desires without or let or hindrance, when one morning the Nurse came to seek Doña Maria in her chamber, and spake thus to her:

"Listen, my pearl of pearls; albeit my words this day will be neither of flowers nor sugar-plums, but of a right serious and fearsome matter. My Lord the Prince of Venosa hath heard some ill report concerning you and the Duke d'Andria.

"But now I saw him in the Palace court, as he was a-mounting his horse. He was gnawing his moustache—a fell sign with him. He was in talk with two fellows, which had little of the air about them of leading honest lives; all I heard him tell them was, 'See ye, without being seen!' Of such sort the orders the noble Prince was charging them withal. And the worst is, he did stop dead whenas he set eyes on me. My own little pearl of price, so true as God is in the Holy Sacrament, an if the Prince find you with the Lord Duke d'Andria, he will kill both the twain of you. You will be a dead woman; and ah! me, what will become of me?"

The Nurse spake on in this wise and besought her mistress long and sore; but Doña

Maria d'Avalos did send her away without deigning so much as one word of answer.

As it was Springtide she went forth that same day a-walking in the country with some ladies of the city. They were following a path bordered with thorn-trees all a-bloom, when one of the ladies said thus to her:

"Dogs will sometimes come and stick at travellers' heels, Doña Maria. Well! look, to-day we be dogged by a great black and white hound!"

And the Princess, turning her head to see, did recognize a certain Dominican monk which was used to come each day to the courtyard of the Palazzo Venosa for to rest in the shade there, and in winter-time to warm him in the great kitchen.

Meanwhile the Nurse, seeing her lady mistress paid no heed to her words, ran to warn the Duke d'Andria. Moreover the said Duke had reasons of his own to fear the sweet secret of his loves had been unhappily discovered. The very evening afore, finding himself followed by a pair of ruffians armed with arquebuses, he had killed one of the twain with a sword-thrust, whiles the other had taken to his heels. The Duke felt no doubt now but these two rascals had been set at him by the Prince of Venosa.

"Lucia," he said to the Nurse, "I must needs shudder at this danger, seeing it doth threaten my Lady Maria d'Avalos no less than myself. Tell her I will not return again to her chamber, cost me what regrets it will, before that the Prince's suspicions be lulled asleep."

These words the Nurse did report the same evening to Doña Maria, which did hearken to them with impatience, biting her lip till the blood came.

Learning that the Prince was at the moment abroad, she bade her Nurse go straight to fetch the Duke d'Andria, and bring him into her chamber; and so soon as he was come spake thus to him:

"My gracious Lord, a day spent apart from you is to me the cruellest of torments. I shall not fear to die; but I have not the fortitude to endure your absence. You should

not have loved me, if you had not the hardihood to brave all for love of me. You should not have loved me if there were aught else in all the world you set above my love, even mine own honour and mine own life. Choose; either you shall see me every day as aforetime, or you shall never see me more."

He made answer:

"Well and good then, Lady, and so be it; for, indeed, there is no room for ill or evil henceforth betwixt us twain! Verily I do love you as you would have me love you, even more than your own life."

And that day, which was a Thursday, they did tarry a long time, close pressed one against the other. Naught of moment fell out ere the Monday of the next week, on the which day the Prince did apprise his wife how that he was setting forth with a numerous train for Rome, whither he was called by the Pope, which was his kinsman. And in very deed a score of horses were then standing ready saddled and bridled in the Great Court. Then did the Prince kiss his wife's hand, as he was used to do on taking leave of her for any lengthy absence. Last of all, when he was now a-horseback, he did turn his face to her and say:

"God have you in His keeping, Doña Maria!" and so rode forth with his company behind him.

Soon as ever she thought her husband's troop to be gotten forth of the walls, the Princess bade her Nurse summon the Duke d'Andria to her. The old woman besought her to defer a meeting that might easily be cause of such sore calamity.

"My dove," she cried, falling on her knees, her hands uplifted in supplication, "receive not the Duke to-day! All night long I heard the Prince's men grinding swords. Yet another thing, my flower of flowers, the good brother that cometh day by day to our kitchen to seek his dole of bread, hath but now overset a salt-cellar of salt with the sleeve of his gown. Give your lover a little repose, little one. Your pleasure will be all the greater to have him again presently, and he will love you all

the better for the respite."

But Doña Maria d'Avalos said:

"Nurse, an if he be not here in one quarter of an hour, I will send you back home to your brethren in the mountains."

And when the Duke d'Andria was by her side she did welcome him with an exceeding great joy.

"My Lord," cried she, "this will be a good day for us, and the night better still. I shall keep you till the dawn."

And straightway did they exchange betwixt them an host of kisses and fond caresses. Presently, after doffing their clothes, they gat them to bed, and held each the other close embraced so long that evening found them yet pressed in each other's arms. Then, for that they were sore hungered, Doña Maria drew forth of her marriage chest a pasty, dried conserves, and a flask of wine, the which she had been heedful to lay by therein.

After the twain had eaten and drunk their fill, playing the while all sorts of pretty plays, the moon rose and did look in so friendly at the window that they were fain to wish her welcome. So they went forth upon the balcony, and there, breathing the freshness and softness of the night, did watch the fireflies dancing in the dark bushes. All were still save only the shrilling of the insects in the grass. Then there came a sound of footsteps along the street, and Doña Maria did recognize the poor monk which was wont to haunt the kitchen and the Palace courtyards, the same she had encountered one day in the flowery path where she was a-walking with two ladies—her companions. She shut to the window softly, and to bed again with her lover. 'Twas deep in the night, and they were lying so, kissing and murmuring the softest nothings ever were inspired by Love, whether at Naples or any other spot in all the wide world, when of a sudden they caught a noise of steps mounting the stairway and the rattle of arms; at the same time they beheld a red glow shining

through the chinks of the door. And they heard the Nurse's voice shrieking, "Jesu Maria! I am a dead woman." The Duke d'Andria sprang up, leapt upon his sword, and cried:

"Up, Doña Maria! We must leap forth by the window."

But, rushing to the balcony and leaning out, he saw how the street was guarded and all bristling with pikes.

Thereupon he came back to Doña Maria, which said:

"'Tis the end of all! But know this, I do not regret aught of what I have done, my dear, dear Lord!"

And he made answer:

"Well and good then, and so be it!" and did haste to don his trunks.

Cracking and crunching under the mighty blows struck by them outside, the door was meantime a-trembling, and the panels began to gape.

He spake again and said:

"Fain would I know who hath betrayed and sold us thus."

At the instant he was seeking his shoon, the one half of the door gave way, and a troop of men, bearing arms and torches, threw themselves into the chamber. The Prince of Venosa was in their midst, shouting: "Have at the traitor! Kill! Kill!"

Lustily did three swordsmen attack the Duke, but he set him in front of the bed, where was Doña Maria, and made valiant stand against the caitiffs.

Six men were there in all, led on by the Prince, being of his bosom friends every one or his own varlets. Albeit blinded by the dazzle of the torches, the Duke d'Andria did contrive to parry several thrusts, and gave back some shrewd blows himself. But catching his foot in the platters lying on the floor, with the remains of the pasty and conserves, he fell over backward. Finding himself on his back, a sword's point at his throat, he did seize the blade in his left hand; the man, snatching it back, cut off

three of his fingers, and the sword was bent. Then, as the Duke d'Andria was heaving forward his shoulders to rise, one of the fellows struck him a blow over the head which did break in the bones of his skull. At this all six did hurl them upon him, and slew him, lunging with such savage haste they did wound each other.

Whenas the thing was done, the Prince of Venosa bade them stand quietly aside; and marching upon Doña Maria, which till now had tarried still beside the bed, he drave her before his sword's point into the corner of the chamber where was the marriage chest. And there, holding her at bay, he did hiss in her face one word:

"Puttana!" (Harlot!)

Shamed by reason of her nakedness, she went to drag to her some of the bedclothes, which were hanging over the bedside. But he stayed her with a thrust of his sword, which did graze her white side.

Then, leaning against the wall, hands and arms held up to veil her eyes, she stood waiting.

The other never left off crying:

"Puttaccia! Puttaccia!" (Whore! Whore!)

Then, forasmuch as he did yet tarry, and slew her not, she was afraid. He saw that she was afraid, and said gleefully:

"You are afraid!"

But pointing her finger at the dead body of the Duke d'Andria, she made answer:

"Fool! what think you I can have to fear now?"

And, to make a seeming of being no more terrified, she sought to recall a song-tune she had sung many a time as a girl, and began humming the same, or rather hissing it, betwixt her teeth.

The Prince, furious to see how she defied him, did now prick her with his point in the belly, crying out:

"Ah! Sporca-puttaccia!" (Fie! Filthy trull!) Exultant, she stayed her singing, and said:

"Sir, 'tis two years sithence I have been to confession."

At this word the Prince of Venosa bethought him how that, an if she died and were damned, she might return by night and drag him down to Hell along with her. He asked her:

"Will you not have a Confessor?"

She did ponder an instant, then shaking her head:

"'Tis useless. I cannot save my soul. I repent me not. I cannot, and I will not, repent. I love him! I love him! Let me die in his arms."

With a quick movement, she did thrust the sword aside, threw her on the bleeding corse of the Duke d'Andria, and lay clipping her dead lover in her arms.

Seeing her so, the Prince of Venosa did lose what patience he had kept till then, to the end he might not kill her ere he had made her suffer. He drave his blade through her body. She cried, "Jesu!" rolled over, sprang to her feet, and after a little shudder that shook her every limb, fell to the floor dead.

He struck her several blows more in the belly and bosom; then said to his varlets:

"Go throw these two pieces of carrion at the foot of the Great Staircase, and open wide the Palace doors, that men may note my vengeance at the same time as the insult done mine honour."

He bade strip the lover's corse bare like the other.

The men did as they were bidden. And all the day the bodies of the Duke d'Andria and Doña Maria lay naked at the bottom of the steps. The passers-by drew near to see them. And the news of the bloody deed being spread about the city, a great press of curious onlookers came crowding before the Palace. Some said, "Lo! a good deed well done!" Others, and these the more part, at sight of so lamentable a spectacle,

were filled with ruth. Yet durst they not openly commiserate the Prince's victims, for fear of evil handling by his armed dependents, which were set to guard the bodies. Young men gazed at the Princess's corse, for to discover the traces of that beauty which had been her undoing, while the little children would be expounding one to the other the meaning of that they saw.

Doña Maria lay stretched on her back. The lips were drawn back, displaying the teeth in a ghastly smile. Her eyes stood wide open, the whites only showing. Six wounds were upon her, three in the belly, which was greatly swollen, two in the bosom, one in the neck. The last had bled profusely, and the dogs kept fawning up to lick it.

Towards nightfall, the Prince bade set torches of resin, like as on days of festival, in the bronze rings fixed in the Palace walls, and eke kindle great fires in the Courtyard, to the end all men might see the criminals plain. At midnight, a pious widow brought coverings and spread the same over the dead bodies. But, by the Prince's commandment, these were incontinent torn away again.

The Ambassador of Spain informed of the unseemly treatment meted to a lady of the Spanish house of Avalos, came in person urgently to entreat the Prince of Venosa to stay these outrages, which did insult the noble memory of the Duke de Pescara, uncle to Doña Maria, and offend in their tomb so many great Captains of whose blood the said lady was descended. But he with drew after profiting naught by his intercession; and writ a letter thereanent to his Catholic Majesty. The poor bodies were left shamefully exposed as before. Toward the latter end of the night, the curious having ceased to come any more, the guards were withdrawn.

Then a Dominican monk, which had all the day lurked about the great doors, did slip within the vestibule by the smoky light of the dying torches, crept to the steps where Doña Maria lay, and threw himself on her corse.

1 "Doña Maria d'Avalos, one of the fair Princesses of the land, and married to the

Prince of Venosa, was enamoured of the Count d'Andriane, likewise one of the noble Princes of the country. So being both of them come together to enjoy their passion, and the husband having discovered it ... had the twain of them slain by men appointed thereto. In such wise that next morning the fair and noble pair, unhappy beings, were seen lying stretched out and exposed to public view on the pavement in front of the house door, all dead and cold, in sight of all passers-by, who could not but weep and lament over their piteous lot."

BONAPARTE AT SAN MINIATO

TO ARMAND GENEST

BONAPARTE AT SAN MINIATO

Quand, simple citoyen, soldat d'un peuple libre, Aux bords de l'Éridan, de l'Adige et du Tibre, Foudroyant tour à tour quelques tyrans pervers, Des nations en pleurs, sa main brisait les fers....

(Marie-Joseph Chénier, La Promenade.)1

Napoléon, après son expédition de Livourne, se rendant à Florence, coùcha à San Miniato chez un vieil abbé Buonaparte....

(Mémorial de Saint-Hélène, par le comte de Las Cases, réimpression de 1823, 1824, t. I'er, p. 149.)2

"Je fus sur le soir à San Miniato. J'y avais un vieux chanoine de parent...."

(Mémoires du docteur F. Antommarchi, sur les derniers moments de Napoléon 1825, t. I'er p. 155.)3

After occupying Leghorn and closing that port against the English men-of-war, General Bonaparte proceeded to Florence to visit the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Ferdinand, who alone of all the princes of Europe had honestly and honourably fulfilled his engagements with the French Republic. In token of esteem and

confidence, he went there without escort, accompanied only by the officers of his Staff. Amongst other sights he was shown the arms of the Buonapartes carved over the gateway of an old house. He was already aware that a branch of his family had been fruitful and multiplied at Florence in days of yore, and that a last descendant of this the ancient race was still alive. This was a certain Canon of San Miniato, now eighty years of age. In spite of all the pressing affairs he had to attend to, he made a point of paying him a visit. Napoleon Bonaparte was always strongly moved by feelings of natural affection.

On the eve of his departure from Florence, he made his way with some of his officers to the hill of San Miniato, which crowned with its walls and towers, rises from the plain at half a league's distance from the city.

Old Canon Buonaparte welcomed with agreeable and dignified politeness his young kinsman and the French officers who accompanied him—Berthier, Junot, Orderly Officer in Chief Chauvet and Lieutenant Thézard. He regaled them with a supper à l'italienne, which lacked neither the cranes of Peretola nor the little sucking-pig scented with aromatic herbs, nor the best vintages of Tuscany, Naples and Sicily. Uncompromising Republicans as Brutus himself, they drank to France and Freedom. Their host acknowledged the toast; then turning to the General whom he had seated on his right hand;

"Nephew!" said he, "are you not curious to examine the genealogical tree painted on the wall yonder? You will be gratified to see from it that we are descended from the Lombard Cadolingians, who from the tenth to the twelfth centuries covered themselves with glory by their fidelity to the German Emperors, and from whom sprung, prior to the year 1100, the Buonapartes of Treviso and the Buonapartes of Florence, the latter stock proving by far the more illustrious."

At this the officers began to whisper together and laugh. Orderly Officer Chauvet asked Berthier behind his hand if the Republican General felt flattered to possess

amongst his ancestors a lot of slaves serving the Two-headed Eagle, while Lieutenant Thézard was ready to take his oath the General owed his birth to good sans-culottes and nobody else. Meanwhile the Canon went on with a long string of boasts concerning the nobility of his house and lineage.

"Know this, nephew," he finished by saying, "our Florentine ancestors well deserved their name. They were ever of the bon parti, and steadfast defenders of Mother Church."

At these words, which the old fellow had uttered in a high, clear voice, the General, who so far had been scarcely listening, gathered his wandering wits together, and raising his pale, thin face, with its classically moulded features, threw a piercing look at his interlocutor, which closed his lips instantly.

"Nay! uncle," he cried, "let us have done with these follies! the rats of your garret are very welcome to these moth-eaten parchments for me."

Then he added in a voice of brass:

"The only nobility I vaunt is in my deeds. It dates from the 13th Vendémiaire of Year IV, the day I swept the Royalist Sections with cannon-shot from the steps of St. Roch. Come, let us drink to the Republic! 'Tis the arrow of Evander, which falls not to earth again, and is transformed into a star!"

The officers answered the appeal with a shout of enthusiasm. It was a moment when Berthier himself felt a Republican's and a Patriot's fire.

Junot exclaimed: "Napoleon had no need for ancestors; 'twas enough for him his soldiers had acclaimed him Corporal at the Bridge of Lodi."

The wines had the dry smack of gunflint and the bouquet of powder, and the company imbibed freely. Lieutenant Thézard was soon in a condition that rendered him incapable of concealing his sentiments. Proud of the wounds and the kisses of women he had enjoyed in lavish abundance in this campaign, at once so heroic and so gallant and gay, he informed the Canon without more ado, that following in the

steps of Bonaparte, the French were going to march round the world, upsetting Thrones and Altars in every land, giving the girls bastards and ripping up the bellies of all fanatics.

The old Priest only went on smiling, and replied he was willing enough to sacrifice to their noble rage, not indeed the pretty girls, whom he besought them rather to treat cannily, but the Fanatics, the chiefest foes, he said, of Holy Church.

Junot promised him to deal leniently with the Nuns; he could heartily commend some of them, having found them to possess tender hearts and the whitest of skins.

Orderly Officer Chauvet maintained we should take account of the influence exercised by the cloistered life on the complexion of young women; you see, he was a student of natural philosophy.

"Between Genoa and Milan," he went on, "we tasted largely of this sort of forbidden fruit. One may profess to be without prejudices; still, a pretty bosom does look prettier half hid by the Veil. I set no value on religious vows, yet I am free to confess I attach a very special value to a fine leg if it belongs to a Nun. Strange contradictions of the human heart!"

"Fie! fie!" put in Berthier; "what pleasure can you find in upsetting the wits and troubling the senses of these unhappy victims of fanaticism? What! are there no women of condition in Italy, to whom you could offer your vows at fêtes, under the Venetian cloak that favours little intrigues so admirably? Is it nothing that Pietra Grua Mariani, Madame Lambert, Signora Monti, Signora Gherardi of Brescia, are fair and gallant dames?"

As he ran over the names of these Italian toasts, he was thinking of the Princess Visconti. This great lady, finding herself unable to enthral Bonaparte, had given herself to his Chief of the Staff, whom she loved with a fire of wantonness and a refined sensuality which left their mark on the weak-kneed Berthier for the rest of his days.

"For my own part," interrupted Lieutenant Thézard, "I shall never forget a little water-melon seller on the steps of the Duomo, who...."

The General rose from his chair with a gesture of impatience. A bare three hours was left them for sleep, as they were to start at dawn.

"Never trouble, kinsman, about our sleeping accommodation," he said, addressing the Canon. "We are soldiers; a bundle of hay is good enough for us."

But their excellent host had had beds prepared. His house was bare and unornamented, but of vast proportions. He conducted the French officers, one after the other, to the rooms assigned them, and wished them a good night.

Left alone in his chamber, Bonaparte threw off his coat and sword, and proceeded to scrawl a pencil note to Josephine—twenty illegible lines, in which his violent, yet calculating, spirit spoke loudly. Then, folding the letter, he abruptly drove the woman's image from his mind, as you push-to a drawer. He unrolled a plan of Mantua, and selected the point on which he should concentrate his fire.

He was still absorbed in his calculations when he heard a knock at the door. He thought it was Berthier; but it proved to be the Canon, who came to ask him for a few minutes' conversation. Under his arm he carried two or three parchment-covered portfolios. The General looked at these documents with something of a quizzical air. He felt certain they contained the genealogy of the Buonapartes, and anticipated their leading to a never-ending talk. However, he suffered no trace of his impatience to appear.

He was never morose or angry but when he deliberately made up his mind to be so. Now he had no sort of wish to offend his worthy kinsman; on the contrary, he was anxious to make himself agreeable to him. Moreover, he was not really sorry to learn the nobility of his race, now his Jacobin officers were no longer there to laugh or take umbrage at the matter. He begged the Canon to take a seat, who did so, and, laying his registers on the table, said:

"I made a beginning during supper, nephew, of telling you about the Buonapartes of Florence; but I gathered by the look you gave me, it was not then the place or time to enlarge on such a subject. I broke off therefore, reserving the essential part of what I have to say for the present moment. I beg of you, kinsman, to hear me with great attention.

"The Tuscan branch of our family produced some excellent representatives, among whom should be named Jacopo di Buonaparte, who witnessed the sack of Rome in 1527 and wrote an account of that event, also Niccolò, author of a Comedy entitled La Vedova that was declared the work of another Terence. However, it is not of these two famous ancestors I now wish to speak, but rather of a third, who eclipses them as much in glory as the sun outshines the stars. Know then that your family counts amongst its members a man of saintly life, deemed worthy of Beatification and the title of blessed, Fra Bonaventura, disciple of the reformed Order of St. Francis, who died in 1593 in the odour of Sanctity."

The old man bent his head reverently as he pronounced the name. Then he resumed with a fire scarcely to have been expected from one of his years and easy character:

"Fra Bonaventura! Ah, kinsman! 'tis to him, to this good Father, you owe the success of your arms. He was beside you, doubt it not, when you annihilated, as you told us at supper, the enemies of your party on the steps of St. Roch. This Capuchin Friar has been your helper 'mid the smoke of battles. But for him, be assured, you would not have been victorious, whether at Montenotte or Millesimo or Lodi. The marks of his patronage are too striking and self-evident to be ignored, and in your success I plainly discern a miracle of the good Fra Bonaventura. But what is most important you should know, is this; the holy man had a purpose of his own in view when, giving you the advantage even over Beaulieu himself, he led you from victory to victory to this antique roof under which you rest to-night with an old man's blessing to keep you. I am here for the very purpose of revealing his intentions to you. Fra

Bonaventura wished you should be informed of his merits, that you should hear of his fasts and austerities and the whole year's silence he once condemned himself to endure. He would have you touch his hair-shirt and scourge, and his knees stiffened so at the altar-steps that he walked bent double like the letter Z. For this it was he has brought you into Italy, where he was for contriving you an opportunity of returning him benefit for benefit. For you must know, good kinsman, if the Friar has helped you greatly, in your turn, you can be of the greatest use to him."

With these words, the Canon laid his hands on the heavy portfolios that loaded the table, and drew a deep breath.

Bonaparte said nothing, but waited quietly for the Canon to go on with his remarks, which diverted him greatly. Never was any one easier to amuse than Napoleon.

After recovering breath, the old man resumed:

"Why, yes! kinsman, you can be of the greatest use to Fra Bonaventura, who in his present situation needs your help. He was beatified many years ago, but is still waiting his admission to the Calendar of Saints. He is thinking long, is the good Father Bonaventura. Yet what can I, a poor Canon of San Miniato, do for him to secure him the honour he has earned? His enrolment demands an outlay that goes far beyond my fortune and even the resources of the Bishopric! Poor Canon! Poor Diocese! Poor Duchy of Tuscany! Poor Italy! they are all poor together. It is you, kinsman, must ask the Pope to recognize Fra Bonaventura's claim. He will certainly grant you so much. His Holiness will never refuse, for your sake, to add another Saint to the Calendar. Great honour will accrue to yourself and your family, and the good Friar will always be ready to afford you his patronage. Do you not realize the advantages of having a Saint in the family?"

And the Canon, pointing to the portfolios, urged the General to put them in his valise and take them with him. Their contents consisted of the memorial relating to the Canonization of the Blessed Friar Bonaventura, together with documents in

corroboration of his claim.

"Promise me," he added, "that you will see to this matter, the most important that can concern you."

Bonaparte restrained his strong inclination to laugh.

"I am unfortunately situated," he objected, "for undertaking a case for Canonization. You are aware that the French Republic is taking measures to exact compensation from the Court of Rome for the murder of her Ambassador Bassville, foully assassinated."

The Canon protested eagerly:

"Corpo di Bacco! the Court of Rome will find excuses enough; all due compensation will be accorded, and our kinsman will be placed on the Calendar, never fear."

"The negotiations are far from being concluded at present," replied the Republican General. "The Roman Curia has yet to recognize the civil constitution of the French clergy and to break up and abolish the Inquisition, which is an offence to humanity and an unjustifiable encroachment on the rights of Nations."

The old man only smiled and said:

"Mio caro figliuolo Napoleone, the Pope knows perfectly well folk must both give and take. He will be reasonable, and yield a point where necessary. He is for all time, long-suffering and a man of peace."

Bonaparte pondered deeply awhile, as though a series of quite new ideas were taking muster in his powerful brain. Then suddenly breaking silence,

"You do not realize," he said, "the spirit of the age. We are highly irreligious in France; impiety is deeply rooted in our soil. You do not know the progress achieved by the ideas of Montesquieu, Raynal and Rousseau. Public worship is abolished; veneration is a thing of the past. You must have seen this from the scandalous talk my officers indulged in just now at your own table."

The good Canon shook his head:

"Ah, yes! those fine young men, they are wild fellows enough, dissipated and reckless! It is only a passing phase. Ten years more, and they will be thinking less of the girls and more of going to Mass. The Carnival is a matter of a few days, and even this mad one of your French Revolution will not last for long. The Church is eternal."

Napoleon declared bluntly he cared too little about Religion himself to meddle in a purely ecclesiastical matter like this.

Thereupon the Canon looked him in the eyes and told him:

"My son, I understand men. I can divine your nature; you are no sceptic. Take up this case, the Blessed Father Bonaventura's case. He will repay you the services you may render him. For myself, I am over old to witness the success of this noble enterprise. I must die soon; but knowing it to be in your hands, I shall die happy. Above all, never forget, my kinsman, that all power comes of God by the instrumentality of his priests."

He rose to his feet, raised his arms to bless his young kinsman and withdrew.

Left alone, Bonaparte turned over the leaves of the ponderous Memorial by the smoky light of his candle, as he pondered over the power of the Church, and told himself the Papacy was a more enduring institution than ever the Constitution of the Year III was likely to be.

A knock was heard at the door. It was Berthier, come to inform the General that all was ready for their departure.

1 "When, a plain citizen, soldier of a free people, by the banks of the Eridanus, the Adige and the Tiber, blasting with his lightnings one after another recalcitrant tyrants, his hand brake the fetters of the nations that wept...."

2 "Napoleon, visiting Florence after his Leghorn expedition, lay one night at San

Miniato at the house of an old Abbé Buonaparte...." (Memorial of St. Helena, by the Count de Las Cases—reprint of 1823, 1824, Vol. I, p. 149.)

3 "I stayed for the night at San Miniato. I had a relative living there, an old Canon...." (Memoirs of Dr. F. Antommarchi on the Last Moments of Napoleon, 1825, vol. I, p. 155.)

THE END

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE WELL OF SAINT CLARE ***

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