The Well Of Saint Clare

Anatole France

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Prologue. The Reverend Father Adone Doni

[Greek quote][1]

[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."

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 Caecilia 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.

San Satiro

To Alphonse Daudet}

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Consars paterni luminis,
Lux ipse lucis et dies,
Noetem canendo rumpimus;
Assiste postulantibus.

Aufer tenebras mentium;
Fuga catervas daemonum;
Expelle somnolentiam,
Ne pigritantes obruat. [1]
        (Breviarium Romanum
        Third day of the week: at matins.)
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[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."

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 th~ir 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 bussed 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, Mnais; come, AEgle, Neaera and Meliboea.

"On! on!" returned Mnais, "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. AEgle, sister mine, say, what must be done with him?"

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

"Not so!" said Meliboea. "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 Neaera 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! Mnais, AEgle, Meliboea, 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," Neaera 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: "0! 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 short, 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

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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.
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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 shade 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 0f 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 AEgle, Neaera, Mnais and Meliboea 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, "may be 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* .[1]

[1] Now the Virgin too returns.

On the window−sill a tail 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. Anfirst 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 Cumaean, 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 Erythraean 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 Neaera 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 determine 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.

Messer Guido Cavalcanti

To Jules Lemaitre

Guido, di Messer Cavalcante de Cavalcanti, fu un de migliori loici che avesse il mondo, et ottimo filosofo naturale. . . . E percio 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 Jddio non fisse. [1] —

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

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      DIM
NON.   FVI.   ME
MINI. NON.    SVM.
NON.  CVRO.   DO
NNIA. ITALIA. AN.
NORVM         XX.     HIC.
      QVIESCO. [2]
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(Inscription from the *Cippus of Donnia Italia*, as read by M. Jean−Francois Blade.)

[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."

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, me−thinks, 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 bat−like 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 Qf 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 fetes 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 Cavalcanti de Cavalcanti did them by refusing to share their society. They began to tally 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, arid 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 Lapithae 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 Laeta. I lost the light on my marriage−day, at tile 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., 0 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 tile 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 tfind 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 ~' 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, tile other the Gilibellines. 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 Laeta, 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 I" 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.

Lucifer

To Louis Ganderax

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E Si compiacque tanto Spinello di frrlv orribile e contrafatto, che
si dice (tanto puo 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.")
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[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 Vasan. — "Life of 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 Qr 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 I" exclaimed the Angel of Darkness; well I 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."

"1 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 w?ong 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.

The Loaves Of Black Bread

To Mademoiselle Mary Finaly

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.)

[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.

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 ~pulsed 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 I" 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 I 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 I" 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 I" 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.

THE MYSTIC BLOOD

To Felix Jeantet

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La Bocea sua non diceva se non Jesu e Caterina, e cosi dicendo
ricevatti el capo nelle mani mie, fermando l'occhio nella Divina
Bonta, e dicendo: lo voglio. — (Le lettere di S. Caterina da Siena.
                xcvii, Gigli e Burlamacchi.)[1]
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[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.)

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 Cathenne, 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 it's 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 I 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 Granayoia 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 — 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!"

A Sound Security

To Henri Lavedan

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. . . . . . . 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 Ct U. Robert.)[1]
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[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.)

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.

History Of Dona Maria D'Avalos And Don Fabrico, Duke D'Andria

To Henry Gauthier−Villars

Done Marie d'Avalos, fune des belles princesses du pays, mariee avec le prince de renouse, laquelle s'estant enamourachee du comte d'Andriane, l'un des beaux princes du pals aussy, et s'estans tous deux concertez a la jouzssance et le man l'ayant descouverte . . . les fit tous deux massacrer par gens appostez; si que le lendemain on trouva ces deux belles moictiez et creatures exposees et tendues sur le pave devant la porte de la maison, toutes mortes et froides, a la veue de tous les passants, qui les larmoyoient et plaignoient de leur miserable estat.[1] — (Pierre de Bourdeille, abbe et Seigneur de Brantome. Recueil des dames, seeonde partie.)

[1] "Dona 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,"

IT was a day of high rejoicing at Naples, when the Prince of Venosa, a rich and puissant Lord, was wed to Dona 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, Dona 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 Dona 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 Dona 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 Dona 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 Dona Mana 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 when as 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 Dona 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, Dona 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 Dona 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 mc 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; Dona 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 Dona 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, Dona 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 Dona 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, Dona 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 Don a 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 Dona 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 Don a

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 hare like the other.

The men did as they were bidden. And all the day the bodies of the Duke d'Andria and Dona 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.

Dona 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 coveflngs 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 Dona Maria, and offend in their tomb so many great Captains of whose blood the said lady was descended. But he withdrew 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 Dona Maria lay, and threw himself on her corse.

Bonaparte At San Miniato

To Armand Genest

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Quand, simple citoyen, soldat d'un peuple libre,'
Aux bords de l'Eridan, de l'Adige et du Tibre,
Foudroyant tour a tour quelques tyrans pervers,
Des nations en pleurs, sa main brisait les firs. . .
(Marie−Joseph Chenier, La Promenade.)[1]
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[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. . .

Napoleon, apres son expedition de Livourne, se rendant a Florence, coucha a San Miniato chez un vieil abbe Buonaparte. . . (Memorial de Saint−Helene, par le comte de Las Cases, reimpression de 1823, 1824, t. Ier, p. 149.)[2]

[2] "Napoleon, visiting Florence after his Leghorn expedition, lay one night at San Miniato at the house of an old Abbe Buonaparte. . . ." (Memorial of St. Helena, by the Count de Las Cases — reprint of 1823, i824, VoL 1, p. 149.)

"Je fus sur le soir a San Miniato. J'y avais Un vieux chanoine deparent. . . (Memoires du docteur F. Antommarchi, sur les derniers moments de Napoleon 1825, t. Ier, p 155)[3]

[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.)

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. Re 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 Thezard. He regaled them with a supper *a 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 Thezard 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 i3th Vendemiaire 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 Thezard 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 fetes, 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 Thezard, "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 Niccolo, 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, td 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 Millesiino 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 t kinsman, you can be of the greatest use to Fra Bonaventura, who in his present situation needs your help. Re 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 smile and said:

"Mio caro fighuolo 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 I 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.

THE END