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K.K. Venugopal

The Decameron

VOLUME TWO



Boris Valleau

The Decameron

of GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO

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VOLUME TWO

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Fourth Tale

RICCIARDO MANARDI IS DISCOVERED BY MESSER LIZIO DA VALBONA WITH HIS DAUGHTER, WHOM RICCIARDO MARRIES, AND REMAINS ON GOOD TERMS WITH THE FATHER.

AFTER Elisa was silent the queen listened to the praise given to her tale by the company, and then ordered Filostrato to tell one; and he began laughingly as follows:

I have been condemned so often by so many of you because I imposed upon you subjects of cruel tales and tears that I think I am obliged—in order to try to repair the trouble I have caused—to tell you something to make you laugh a little. So I intend to tell you a short little tale about a love affair which came to a happy ending after no more woe than a few sighs and a brief fear mingled with shame.

Not long ago, worthy ladies, there lived in Romagna a wealthy and accomplished knight, named Messer Lizio da Valbona. On the verge of old age a daughter was born to him by his wife, Madonna Giacomina, and this daughter as she grew up became more beautiful and charming than any girl of that country. Since she was the only child she was greatly beloved by her father and mother, and watched over with the greatest care, for they hoped to make a great match of her.

Now it happened that Messer Lizio's house was much frequented by a handsome and comely young man named Ricciardo, belonging to the family of the Manardi of Brettinoro, whom Messer Lizio and his wife treated as if he were their son. As the young man was continually seeing this very beautiful and charming girl, who was so accomplished and delightful and already of marriageable age, he fell deeply in love with her, and concealed his love with the greatest care. But the girl noticed it, and without making any resistance, began to love him too, which naturally delighted Ricciardo. He often made up his mind to speak to her, but was silent from fear of offending her; however, one day he found the opportunity and courage to say:

"Caterina, I beseech you not to let me die of love."

And the girl promptly answered:

"I hope to God you will not let me die of it."

This answer gave Ricciardo great pleasure and eagerness, and he said:

"I shall never refuse anything which pleases you, but you must find some means of saving your life and mine."

"Ricciardo," said the girl, "you see how carefully I am watched, and for that reason I do not see how you can come to me, but if you can see anything I can do without shame to myself, tell me, and I will do it."

After thinking for a time, Ricciardo said abruptly:

"My sweet Caterina, I can see no other way unless you can sleep or manage to be on the balcony overlooking your father's garden. If I knew you would be there at night, I would find some means of getting there, however high it might be."

"If you have the courage to come there," said Caterina, "I think I can arrange to sleep there."

Ricciardo said he had; and so they hastily kissed once, and parted.

It was about the end of May, and next day the girl began to complain to her mother that she had not been able to sleep on account of the excessive heat. Said the mother:

"What heat do you mean, my child? It was not hot at all."

"Mother," said Caterina, "you ought to add 'in my opinion,' and then perhaps you would be right. But you should remember how much warmer girls are than elderly women."

"That's true, my child," said the mother, "but I cannot make it hot and cold at will, as you perhaps might like. You must endure the weather the season brings. Perhaps it will be cooler tonight, and you will sleep better."

"God grant it," said Caterina, "but it doesn't usually happen that the nights get cooler as the summer comes on."

"Well," said the mother, "what do you want done?"

"If my father and you are willing," replied Caterina, "I should like to have my bed on the balcony beside the bedroom overlooking the garden; and there I could sleep, and listen to the nightingales, and be in a

cooler place, and be much more comfortable than in your bedroom.”

“Well,” said the mother, “cheer up, my child. I will speak to your father, and we will do what he wishes.”

Now Messer Lizio was an old man and therefore perhaps a little crossgrained; so when he heard about this, he said:

“What’s this about a nightingale and wanting to sleep to its singing? I’ll make her sleep to the cricket’s song too.”

The night after Caterina was told this, she not only did not sleep herself—more from annoyance than from the heat—but did not allow her mother to sleep, and kept complaining of the great heat.

So next morning the mother went to Messer Lizio, and said:

“Messer, you cannot care much for the child; what does it matter to you which balcony she sleeps on? She could not keep still all night for the heat. Besides, why should you wonder that she wants to hear the nightingale singing, when it’s a girl’s whim? Young people like those things which are like them.”

Hearing this, Messer Lizio said:

“Go, make her up whatever bed will go there, and hang it round with some serge, and let her sleep there and listen to the nightingale’s singing as much as she wants.”

As soon as the girl heard this, she had a bed made up at once. And, since she was to sleep there that night, she so arranged matters that she saw Ricciardo, and made him a sign agreed upon between them, whereby he understood what he had to do.

When Messer Lizio heard the girl go to bed he locked a door which led from the bedroom to the balcony, and went to bed also. And when Ricciardo saw that everything was quiet, he climbed on to a wall with the help of a ladder, and then clinging to the brick projections of another wall, he reached the balcony—with great difficulty, and great danger if he had fallen—and was greeted softly but with the greatest delight by the girl. After many kisses they lay down together, and took delight and pleasure of each other almost the whole night, making the nightingale sing many times.

Nights are short and their delight was great, and already the day

was at hand, though they did not know it. They were so warm with the weather and their play that they both went to sleep almost at once, Caterina with her right arm round Ricciardo's neck and her left hand holding the thing you are ashamed to mention among men.

Thus they slept without waking until dawn came and Messer Lizio got up. Remembering that his daughter was sleeping on the balcony, he softly opened the door, saying to himself:

"Let us see how the nightingale made Caterina sleep last night."

He crept up and gently lifted the serge curtain round the bed, and saw Ricciardo and Caterina sleeping naked and uncovered in the embrace I have just described. He recognized Ricciardo, and then departed to his wife's bedroom, and called to her:

"Get up at once, wife, and come and see how your daughter is so fond of the nightingale that she has caught it and is still holding it in her hand."

"How can that be?" said the lady.

Said Messer Lizio:

"You will see if you come at once."

The lady dressed hurriedly, and softly followed Messer Lizio. When they came to the bed and the serge was lifted, Madonna Giacomina could plainly see how her daughter had caught and was holding the nightingale, which she had so much wanted to hear sing. Whereat the lady, considering herself basely deceived by Ricciardo, wanted to scream and insult him; but Messer Lizio said:

"Wife, if you value my love, say nothing of this. In truth, since she has caught him, he shall be hers. Ricciardo is a gentleman and a rich young man. We can have nothing but good from an alliance with his family. If he wants to escape from me, he must first marry her. So he'll find he has put the nightingale in his own cage, and not in anyone else's."

This consoled the lady; and when she saw that her husband was not angered by what had happened, and when she considered that her daughter had spent a good night and had rested well and caught the nightingale, she was silent.

They had scarcely spoken these words when Ricciardo awoke and saw



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it was bright day; thinking himself certain of death, he woke Caterina and said:

"Alas, my heart, what shall we do? The daylight has come and caught me."

At these words Messer Lizio stepped forward, lifted the serge, and replied:

"We shall do well."

When Ricciardo saw him, he felt as if the heart had been torn from his body. He sat up in the bed, and said:

"Sir, I beg you mercy for God's sake. I know I have merited death, as a wicked and treacherous man, and therefore do with me as you will. But, if it may be, I beg you will have pity on my life, and not have me die."

"Ricciardo," said Messer Lizio, "this is not the reward I should have had for my love of you and my trust in you. But, since it is so, and since youth has made you commit this fault, take Caterina as your legitimate wife to save yourself from death and me from shame, so that, as she has been yours this night, she may be yours so long as she lives. In this way my peace and your safety may be achieved. And if you will not do this, recommend your soul to God."

While all this was being said, Caterina loosed her hold of the nightingale, and covering herself over began to weep and to beg her father to forgive Ricciardo. And, on the other hand, she begged Ricciardo to do what Messer Lizio wanted, so that they might long and securely enjoy such nights.

But there was no need of many entreaties. On the one side shame for the fault committed and desire to amend it, on the other side the fear of dying, the desire to escape, and moreover ardent love and the desire to possess the beloved, made him say freely and without hesitation that he was ready to do what Messer Lizio wanted. So Messer Lizio borrowed one of Madonna Giacomina's rings, and without getting out of bed Ricciardo took Caterina as his wife in their presence. After which, Messer Lizio and his wife went away, saying:

"Rest for a while, perhaps you need it more than to get up."

When they had gone, the two young people embraced each other, and, since they had not travelled more than six miles that night, they went on another two; and so ended the first day.

When they got up, Ricciardo made more definite arrangements with Messer Lizio, and a few days later, as was fitting, he again wedded the girl in the presence of friends and relatives, and took her home with great rejoicing, and honourably made a great wedding festival; and afterwards for a long time in peace and quietness hunted birds with her day and night as much as he pleased.

Fifth Tale

GUIDOTTO DA CREMONA BEQUEATHS HIS DAUGHTER TO GIACOMINO DA PAVIA AND DIES. GIANNOLE DI SEVERINO AND MINGHINO DI MINGOLE BOTH FALL IN LOVE WITH HER IN FAENZA AND QUARREL OVER HER; THE GIRL IS DISCOVERED TO BE GIANNOLE'S SISTER AND IS GIVEN TO MINGHINO AS HIS WIFE

EACH of the ladies laughed so much as they listened to the tale of the nightingale that although Filostrato had ended his tale they could not stop laughing. But when everyone had done laughing, the queen said:

“Certainly, if you distressed them yesterday, you have tickled them so much today that no one can reasonably complain.”

And as it was Neifile's turn to speak, she ordered her to tell a tale, which she began merrily as follows:

Since Filostrato went to Romagna for his tale, I also want to go somewhat afield with my story telling. In the city of Fano dwelt two Lombards, one of whom was named Guidotto da Cremona and the other Giacomino da Pavia, old men who had spent almost all their youth as soldiers in feats of arms. When Guidotto was at the point of death, having no son or any friend or relative whom he trusted more than Giaco-

mino, he bequeathed him his daughter (who was about ten years old), and his possessions; and, after settling all his affairs, he died.

About this time the city of Faenza, which had long been at war and in disasters, returned to a better frame of mind, and permission was freely given to all who wished to return there. And so Giacomino, who had lived there in the past and liked the place, returned there with all he had and took with him the child Guidotto had bequeathed him, whom he loved and treated as his own daughter.

When the child grew up she was as beautiful a girl as any in the town; and she was as modest and well behaved as she was beautiful. So, many began to court her, but two handsome and excellent young men especially fell deeply in love with her, so much so that through jealousy they began to hate each other extremely. One of them was named Giannole di Severino and the other Minghino di Mingole. As she was now fifteen years old, either of them would gladly have taken her as his wife, if his relatives had permitted. But, seeing that honest means were forbidden, each of them began to look for some other way of getting her.

Giacomino had in his household an old woman servant and a man servant named Crivello, a pleasant and friendly man. Giannole was very familiar with him and, when he thought the time ripe, confessed his love to him and begged him to give aid in attaining his desire, promising him great things if he succeeded. Said Crivello:

"The only thing I can do for you is to take you to her when Giacomino has gone out to dinner, because she would not listen to me if I spoke to her on your behalf. If that pleases you, I promise to do it; do then what you think is best."

Giannole said that he wanted nothing better, and so they agreed.

Minghino on the other hand had become familiar with the old woman, and had gone so well to work with her that she had several times carried messages from him to the girl and had almost inflamed her with love for him. Moreover, she had promised to bring him to the girl when Giacomino happened to be away from home in the evening.

Not long after this, through Crivello's arrangements, Giacomino went out to sup with a friend. He informed Giannole, and arranged with him

that on a given signal he was to come, and would find the door open. On the other hand, the old woman servant, knowing nothing about this, sent to tell Minghino that Giacomino would not sup at home, and told him to remain near the house so that when he saw her signal he could come in.

Evening came, and the two lovers, knowing nothing about each other but mutually suspicious, went with some armed friends to get possession of the girl. Minghino and his friends awaited the signal in a friend's house close to the girl's; Giannole and his companions remained at a little distance.

When Giacomino had gone, Crivello and the servant each tried to get the other out of the way.

"Why don't you go to bed?" said Crivello. "What are you wandering about the house for?"

"Why don't you go for your master?" replied the woman. "What are you waiting here for, now you've had supper?"

Thus they each tried to make the other go away. But Crivello saw that the time arranged with Giannole had come, and said to himself: "Why do I bother about her? If she doesn't keep quiet she may have a rough time." He made the signal, opened the door, Giannole immediately went in with two of his friends, found the girl in the great hall and seized on her to carry her off. The girl resisted and screamed loudly, and so did the old woman. Hearing this, Minghino and his friends immediately rushed up. Seeing the girl already being dragged out of the door, they drew their swords and shouted:

"Ah! Traitors, you are dead men! This shall not be. What do you mean by this violence?"

So saying, they began the fight. The neighbours also came out with arms and lights at the noise, and condemning the violence began to help Minghino. After a long contest, Minghino rescued the girl from Giannole, and took her back to Giacomino's house. Before the riot was over the sergeants of the police force arrived and arrested many of them. Among the captured were Minghino, Giannole and Crivello, who were taken to prison. Things quieted down, and Giacomino returned home. He was greatly depressed by the occurrence and made enquiries as to how it

had happened; but finding that the girl was entirely blameless he became calmer, and determined to marry her off as quickly as possible to prevent any repetition of the event.

Next morning, the relatives of both parties, having learned the truth and knowing what disaster might fall on the two imprisoned young men if Giacomino proceeded against them as he might reasonably have done, went to him and begged him with soft words not to be too angry at the injury he had received from the two young men's lack of common sense, but rather to consider the friendship and good will which they believed he bore to them. And they proposed that they themselves as well as the young men should make any amends he liked to ask. Giacomino, who had seen much of the world and was a kindly man, replied briefly:

"Gentlemen, if I were in my own country as I am in yours, I hold myself so much your friend that I would do what I could to please you either in this or in other matters. In this case, I ought especially to bow to your wishes since here you have done an injury to one of yourselves—the girl is not from Cremona or Pavia, as many people perhaps think, but from Faenza. And neither I nor she nor the man who bequeathed her to me knows whose daughter she is. So what you ask shall be done, as far as I am concerned."

The worthy men were astonished to learn that she came from Faenza, and, after thanking Giacomino for his generous answer, they begged him to tell them how she had come into his hands, and how he knew she came from Faenza. Said Giacomino:

"Guidotto da Cremona was my friend and brother in arms, and at the point of death he told me that when this city was captured by the Emperor Frederick, he went after spoils and entered a house with his friends which he found full of property but abandoned by its inhabitants except for this girl, who was then about two years old and came down the stairs calling him 'father'. This aroused his pity, and he took her and everything in the house to Fano. When he died, he left me all he had and the girl, on condition that in due time I should marry her to someone and give her what rightfully belonged to her as a dowry. She has reached

marriageable age, but I have not been able to find anyone to whom I should like to give her. I should be glad to do it so that what happened last evening may not be repeated."

Among those present was one Guiglielmino da Mudicina, who had been with Guidotto at that time, and knew whose house it was Guidotto had robbed. Seeing the man there, he went up to him and said:

"Bernabuccio, do you hear what Giacomino says?"

"Yes," replied Bernabuccio, "and I was thinking the more about it because I remember that in the confusion of that day I lost a little girl about the age Giacomino speaks of."

"She certainly is the same," said Guiglielmino, "because I was there and heard Guidotto speaking of the spoil he had made, and knew it was your house. Try to think if there is any mark by which you can recognize her, and look for it, for you will certainly find she is your daughter."

Bernabuccio pondered, and then remembered that over her left ear she had a cross-shaped scar, the result of a tumour which had been cut out a little before this accident. So, without any hesitation he went up to Giacomino, who was still there, and asked to be taken to his house to see the girl. Giacomino gladly took him along, and had the girl brought before him. As soon as Bernabuccio saw her, he seemed to be looking at the face of her mother who was still a handsome woman. But, not relying on this, he asked Giacomino's permission to lift the hair above her left ear; to which Giacomino consented.

Bernabuccio went up to her as she stood there modestly, lifted her hair with his right hand, and saw the cross. He then knew she was his daughter, and began to weep and to embrace her tenderly; and, as she resisted, he turned to Giacomino, saying:

"Brother, this is my daughter. The house robbed by Guidotto was mine, and in the confusion this child was forgotten in the house by my wife and her mother. Hitherto we have always thought that she was burned that day along with the house."

When the girl heard this and saw he was an old man, she believed him and, moved by secret impulses, accepted his embraces and began tenderly to weep with him. Bernabuccio immediately sent for her mother and

other relatives and her sisters and brothers, and showed her to them and related what had happened. After great rejoicing and a thousand kisses, he took her off to his house, to Giacomino's great content. The city magistrate, who was a very worthy man, heard about this, and knowing that Giannole (whom he had in prison) was Bernabuccio's son and the girl's brother, he determined to pass lightly over the crime he had committed. He intervened, together with Bernabuccio and Giacomino, and made peace between Giannole and Minghino. With the consent of Minghino's relatives, he made a match between him and the girl, whose name was Agnesa. At the same time he liberated Crivello and the others who had been arrested in this concern. Minghino very happily made a great wedding feast, and took the girl to his home, and thereafter lived many years with her in peace and content.

Sixth Tale

GIANNI DI PROCIDA IS FOUND WITH A GIRL HE LOVES AND IS HANDED OVER TO KING FEDERIGO TO BE BOUND TO A STAKE AND BURNED; HE IS RECOGNISED BY RUGGIERI DELL' ORIA, ESCAPES, AND MARRIES THE GIRL

WHEN Neifile's tale, which pleased the ladies, was finished, the queen ordered Pampinea to prepare to tell the next; and she at once raised a smiling face and began:

Fair ladies, very great is the power of love, which brings lovers to great exertions and into excessive and unsuspected dangers, as we may perceive from many events related today and earlier; but still it pleases me once more to show it with the tale of a young man in love.

Ischia is an island near Naples, where among others was a very beautiful and gay girl whose name was Restituta, the daughter of a gentleman on the island, named Marin Bolgaro. This girl was deeply in love with a

young man called Gianni from an island named Procida, near Ischia; and he with her. He not only came from Procida to Ischia to see her during the day, but often came by night; and when he could not find a boat he would swim from Procida to Ischia to see at least the walls of her house, if nothing more.

While this eager love affair was going on, the girl happened to be alone one day on the sea shore, going from rock to rock, getting the shell fish with a knife. She came to a place among the rocks which was shady and near a stream of cool water, where certain young Sicilians from Naples had landed in their boat. When they saw how beautiful the girl was and that she was alone and had not seen them, they determined to seize her and to carry her off; which they accordingly did. In spite of her screams, they caught her, put her on the boat, and made off. When they reached Calabria, they began to discuss which of them should have her; and each of them wanted her. Since they could not agree and were afraid that they might quarrel and ruin their affairs, they decided to give her to Federigo, King of Sicily, at that time a young man who took great delight in such things. And this they did when they came to Palermo.

The King was charmed with her beauty; but since he was rather sickly, he ordered that until he was stronger she should be placed in certain handsome apartments in his garden, which had the name Cuba, and there be waited upon. And this was done.

The carrying off of the girl caused a great uproar among the people of Ischia, and what was particularly annoying to them, they could not find out who had done it. But Gianni, who was more deeply interested in it than anyone, did not wait to hear news in Ischia, but having found out in which direction the boat had gone, he armed one himself, went on board, and as rapidly as possible scoured the whole coast from the Minerva to Scalea in Calabria. He enquired everywhere among the young men, and was told at Scalea that she had been taken to Palermo by Sicilian sailors. Gianni made his way there as swiftly as possible, and after much seeking he there found that the girl had been given to the King and was lodged in the Cuba. This greatly distressed him, and made him lose nearly all hope, not only of getting her back, but even of seeing her again.

But love kept him there; and seeing that no one knew him, he sent away his ship, and remained alone. He was always passing by the Cuba, and one day he happened to see her at a window, and she saw him, which was a great delight to both. Gianni saw it was a solitary place, managed to approach and speak to her, and discovered what he must do if he wanted to speak to her again. He then departed, after having carefully studied the arrangement of the building. He waited until nightfall and allowed part of the night to pass, and then returned. Climbing up a wall where a tree climber would not have found anything to hold, he entered the garden, where he found a plank, which he placed against the girl's window, and by that means easily got to her.

The girl felt she had lost her honour, which in the past she had guarded most jealously, and thought she could give it to no more worthy man; so she had determined to satisfy all his desires, to induce him to take her away. And therefore she had left the window open, so that he could quickly get in. Finding the window open, he softly got in and lay down beside the girl, who was not asleep. Before proceeding further, the girl told him her whole intention, and begged him to get her out of the place and away. Gianni said that nothing would please him better, and that after he had left her he would without fail make such arrangements that the next time he returned there, he would take her away with him. After this, they embraced each other with great delight and took that pleasure beyond which love can give no more. And when they had repeated it several times, they unawares fell asleep in each other's arms.

The King, who had been pleased with her first appearance, recollected her, and, feeling better, decided to go and spend some time with her, although it was nearly morning. So he went secretly to the Cuba with some of his attendants. He went to her apartments and ordered that the room in which he knew the girl was sleeping should be quietly opened; and went in with a large candlestick borne alight before him. Looking at the bed, he saw her and Gianni lying asleep naked and embraced. This annoyed him so much and put him into such a rage that he very nearly killed them both with a knife lying near at hand, without saying a word. But, recollecting that it is a most vile thing in any man, above all in a

King, to slay two naked people asleep, he restrained himself and determined they should be burned alive in public. Turning to one of his attendants, he said:

“What do you think of this guilty woman, in whom I once put my hopes?”

He then asked if he knew who the young man was who had had such impudence to come into his house and commit such an outrage and displeasure to himself; and the man replied that he did not ever remember to have seen him.

The angry King then went back to his room, and ordered that the two lovers should be taken and bound, naked as they were, and as soon as it was day they should be taken to the market place of Palermo, bound back to back to a stake, kept there until the hour of Terce so that all might see them, and then burned as they had deserved. After giving these orders, he returned to his room in Palermo in deep anger.

As soon as the King had gone, a number of men set upon the lovers, awakened them, and immediately seized and bound them without pity. When the two young people found what had happened, they were woeful and feared for their lives and wept and lamented, as you may well suppose. In accordance with the King's orders, they were taken to Palermo, bound to a stake in the market place, and faggots and fire were prepared before their eyes to burn them at the hour the King had fixed.

All the people of Palermo, both men and women, flocked to see the two lovers. The men drew to one side to look at the girl, and just as they all praised her as beautiful and well made, so all the women, who had run to look at the young man, commended him as a handsome and well-built young man. The unfortunate lovers, consumed with shame, stood with their heads hanging down, and wept for their misfortune, every moment expecting cruel death by fire.

While they were kept there until the hour fixed, the crime they had committed was bawled about by everyone and came to the ears of Ruggieri dell' Oria, a man of the greatest valour and at that time the King's admiral. He went to the place where they were bound, to see them; and having arrived he first looked at the girl and praised her beauty, and then

went to look at the young man whom he recognized without much difficulty. He went nearer, and asked if he were Gianni di Procida. Gianni lifted his head, and recognising the admiral, said:

"Sir, I was once he whom you name, but I am now about to be nothing."

The admiral then asked him what had led him to that plight, and Gianni replied:

"Love and the King's wrath."

The admiral then made him tell the tale more fully. And when he had heard how everything had happened, and was about to depart, Gianni called him, and said:

"Sir, if it may be, beg me one favour from him who has set me here."

Ruggieri asked what that was, and Gianni said:

"I see that I must soon die. Now, since I am bound back to back with this girl whom I have loved more than my life, and she me, I ask as a favour that we may be turned face to face, so that I may gaze at her face as I die, and depart in peace."

Said Ruggieri laughing:

"Willingly. And I will so act that you will see her so much you will be weary of it."

As the admiral left he ordered those who had been appointed to carry out this execution, not to proceed any further without express orders from the King. And then he hastened to the King without further delay. And although he saw the King was angry he did not fail to speak his mind, and said:

"King, how have you been injured by the two young people whom you have commanded to be burned in the market place?"

The King told him, and Ruggieri went on:

"The fault they committed deserved punishment, but not from you. As faults deserve punishment, so benefits deserve reward, apart from favour and pity. Do you know who they are whom you want to burn?"

The King said he did not; and Ruggieri then said:

"I wish you to know so that you may see how wisely you allow yourself to be carried away by a fit of anger. The young man is the son of

Landolfo di Procida, the brother of Messer Gianni di Procida, by whose aid you are King and lord of that island. The girl is the daughter of Marin Bolgaro, whose power alone prevents your rule from being driven out of Ischia. Moreover, these two young people have long been in love, and they committed this sin (if what two young people do in love can be called a sin) because they were compelled by love and not because they wished to insult your majesty. Why then will you have them die, when you ought to honour them with the greatest pleasure and gifts?"

When the King heard this and was certain that Ruggieri was telling the truth, he not only felt ashamed to proceed to further cruelty, but regretted what he had done. He at once ordered that they should be unbound from the stake and brought before him. And having enquired into their condition, he decided to compensate for the injury he had done with honours and gifts. He had them honourably garbed, and knowing they were both consenting, married the girl to Gianni, gave them magnificent gifts, and sent them happily home, where they were received with the greatest rejoicing, and long lived together in peace and joy.

Seventh Tale

TEODORO FALLS IN LOVE WITH VIOLANTE, THE DAUGHTER OF MESSER AMERIGO, HIS MASTER, MAKES HER PREGNANT, AND IS CONDEMNED TO THE GALLOWS. WHILE HE IS BEING WHIPPED TO EXECUTION, HE IS RECOGNISED BY HIS FATHER AND SET FREE, AND AFTERWARDS MARRIES VIOLANTE

THE ladies were trembling with suspense to know whether the lovers would be burned, but when they heard of their escape, they praised God and became cheerful again. The queen, having listened to the end of the tale, imposed the task of the next upon Lauretta, who began merrily as follows:

Fairest ladies, in the reign of good King Guiglielmo of Sicily, there lived on the island a gentleman named Messer Amerigo Abate da Trapani, who, among other worldly possessions, was well furnished with children. He therefore needed servants, and when certain Genoese galleys of the Levant arrived with a cargo of children they had captured along the coast of Armenia, he bought some of them in the belief that they were Turks. They all seemed to be peasants, except one, who looked of better blood and appearance, and was named Teodoro.

Although as this boy grew up he was treated as a slave, yet he was bred along with Messer Amerigo's children. He inclined more to his own nature than to his present state, and became so well-bred and well-behaved and thereby pleased his master so much that he was made a free man. Amerigo thought he was a Turk, and so had him baptized under the name of Pietro, set him in charge of his affairs, and had great confidence in him.

Along with Messer Amerigo's other children there grew up a daughter named Violante, a beautiful and delicate girl. As her father was slow in marrying her off, she fell in love by chance with Pietro; but though she loved him, and thought highly of his manners and actions, she was ashamed to let him know it. But love eased her of this trouble. Pietro had often looked covertly at her, and had fallen so much in love with her that he was only happy when he saw her. But he was afraid lest somebody should find this out, for he thought it a wrong thing to have done. But the girl, who liked to watch him, discovered this; and, to give him more confidence, showed herself delighted with it, as indeed she was. And in this way some time passed, neither attempting to say anything to the other, although both desired it. But while they were both equally burning in the flames of love, Fortune, as if she had determined that it should be so, found a way for them to get rid of the fear which impeded them.

About a mile outside Trapani, Messer Amerigo had a fine estate, which his wife and daughter with other girls and women often visited for recreation. One very hot day when they had gone there, taking Pietro with them, the sky suddenly became overcast with dark clouds, which we often see occurs in the summer. To avoid being caught there, the lady

and her companions set out for Trapani as quickly as they could. But Pietro and the girl, both being young, got far ahead of the mother and her friends, urged no doubt as much by love as by fear of the weather. When they were so far ahead of the lady and the others that they were almost out of sight, there came several claps of thunder followed by thick and very large hail. The lady and her friends took refuge in a workman's cottage. Pietro and the girl, having no nearer shelter, ran to an old, almost ruined hut, where nobody lived. They both huddled under the little piece of roof yet remaining, compelled to touch each other by the narrowness of the shelter. This contact was sufficient to strengthen their spirits a little and enable them to reveal their amorous desires. Pietro began first:

"If I could stay where I am, I would to Heaven that this hail would never cease."

"I should like it too," said the girl.

From these words they came to holding and squeezing hands, and from that to putting their arms round each other, and then to kissing, while the hail continued. Not to relate everything in detail—the weather did not clear up until they had tasted the last delights of love, and had arranged to meet each other secretly again for their delight. The bad weather ceased, they waited for the lady at the entrance to the town, which was near at hand, and returned home with her.

They met several times secretly in the same place, to their mutual pleasure. The good work proceeded so well that the girl became pregnant, which was highly displeasing to them both. She tried many means to procure an abortion, contrary to the course of nature, but could not succeed. So Pietro, in fear of his life, determined to run away, and told her so. But when she heard this, she said:

"If you go away, I shall certainly kill myself."

Pietro, who was greatly in love with her, said:

"How can you want me to remain, lady mine? Your pregnancy will reveal our fault. You will easily obtain pardon, but the penalty for your sin and mine will have to be borne by wretched me."

"Pietro," replied the girl, "my sin will indeed become known. But unless you speak of it, be sure that yours never will."

"Since you make me the promise," said Pietro, "I will stay, but be careful not to break it."

The girl concealed her pregnancy as much as she could, but when she saw from the swelling of her body that it could be concealed no longer, she confessed it one day with great lamentations to her mother, begging for her help. In her distress the mother said very sharp things to her, and wanted to know how it had happened. The girl made up a story, revealing the truth in a different form, in order to protect Pietro.

The mother believed her, and sent her to one of their farms to conceal her daughter's slip. Now, when the time of birth came, the girl was screaming as women are wont to do. The mother never thought that Messer Amerigo would come there, since he scarcely ever did so; but it just happened that as he was returning from hawking he passed close by the room where his daughter was shrieking, and in his astonishment suddenly entered and asked what was the matter. When the lady saw her husband come in, she rose up sadly and told him what had happened to her daughter. But he was less credulous than his wife, said it was false that she did not know by whom she was pregnant, and that he meant to know. Only by revealing it could she obtain his pardon; otherwise he would let her die without pity.

The lady did her best to make her husband satisfied with what she had said, but failed completely. He flew into a rage, rushed with a drawn sword in his hand to his daughter (who had borne a male child while her mother was holding him in talk), and said:

"Either tell me the name of this child's father or you shall die at once."

In fear of her life the girl broke her promise to Pietro, and revealed all that had happened between him and her. When the knight heard it, he was fiercely vindictive, and could scarcely refrain from killing her. But when he had said to her what anger dictated, he mounted his horse, rode to Trapani, and related the injury done him by Pietro to one Messer Currado, who was then governor for the King. The unsuspecting Pietro was immediately arrested, and, when put to the torture, confessed everything.

A few days later he was condemned by the governor to be whipped

through the town and then hanged by the neck. So that the same hour should remove from the earth the two lovers and their child, Messer Amerigo (whose anger was not satiated by having brought Pietro to death), mixed poison with wine in a cup and gave them, together with an unsheathed dagger, to a servant, saying:

"Take these two things to Violante and tell her for me that she is immediately to choose death either by poison or steel. If not, tell her I will have her burned in the sight of all her townsmen, as she has deserved. After that, take the child she bore recently, dash its head against the wall, and throw its body to the dogs."

The servant departed, being one more disposed to evil than to good, after receiving this cruel sentence of an angry father on his daughter and grandchild.

The condemned Pietro was whipped on his way to execution, and those who were conducting him chanced to take him past an inn where lodged three noblemen of Armenia. They had been sent as ambassadors to the Pope by the King of Armenia, to treat of most important matters concerning a crusade which was planned; they had dismounted there to rest and refresh themselves for a few days, and had received great honours from the noblemen of Trapani, particularly from Messer Amerigo. When they heard the executioners passing by with Pietro, they went to the window to look at them. Pietro was naked to the waist and his hands were tied behind his back. Among the ambassadors was an old man of great authority, by name Fineo. As he gazed at Pietro, he saw on his breast a large red mark, not dyed but naturally imprinted in the skin, like those which women call "strawberry marks." Looking at it, he suddenly remembered his son who fifteen years before had been carried off by pirates on the coast of Laiazzo, of whom he had never been able to get any news. He estimated the age of the captive being whipped, and knew that if his son were alive he would be about the age this man appeared to be. He began to suspect from the birthmark that this was his son, and thought that if he were he must still remember his name and his father and the Armenian language. So when Pietro came near, he called out:

"Teodoro!"

On hearing the voice, Pietro immediately lifted his head, and Fineo, speaking in Armenian, said:

"Where do you come from? Whose son are you?"

Out of respect for this worthy gentleman the soldiers halted, and Pietro replied:

"I was from Armenia, the son of one Fineo, and I was brought here when a child by men I did not know."

By this Fineo knew for certain that this was his lost son. So he descended, weeping, with his companions and ran among the soldiers to embrace him. Fineo threw on his shoulders a cloak of the richest material from his own back, and begged those who were leading him to execution to wait there until they received orders to take him back. And they replied that they would do so willingly.

Fineo already knew the reason why he was condemned to death, for the story was about everywhere. So he went at once with his friends and their followers to Messer Currado, and said to him:

"Messer, the man you have condemned to death as a slave is a free man and my son, and he is ready to take as his wife the girl he is said to have devirginated. Be pleased to delay the execution until we know whether she will take him as her husband, for if she will, you cannot then break the law which sets him free."

Messer Currado was amazed when he heard that Pietro was the son of Fineo. He was ashamed of his mistake, confessed that what Fineo said was true, and hurrying back to his house, sent for Messer Amerigo and told him what had happened. Messer Amerigo, who believed his daughter and grandchild were already dead, was the unhappiest man alive because of what he had done, for he realised that if she were not dead everything could be happily mended. But nevertheless he sent posthaste to his daughter countermanding what he had ordered. The man who took the message found the servant sent by Messer Amerigo had put the knife and the poison before her; and because she would not choose quickly, he was abusing her and trying to force her to take one or the other. But when he heard his master's orders, he left her, returned to him, and told him how matters stood. Messer Amerigo was glad to hear it, and hastened

to Fineo. In the best terms he knew, he apologised almost in tears for what had happened, begged his pardon, and said that if Teodoro would take his daughter to wife, he would be glad to give her. Fineo gladly accepted the apology, and said:

“I mean that my son shall take your daughter. If he will not, let the sentence against him be carried out.”

Fineo and Messer Amerigo being thus in agreement, they went to Teodoro who was still in fear of death, yet glad to have found his father; and asked him what he wanted to do. And when Teodoro heard that Violante would be his wife if he wished, he was so happy that he felt as if he had leaped from hell to heaven, and said that this would be the greatest of all favours to him, provided it pleased both of them.

They then sent to the girl to find out her wishes. When she heard what had happened and would happen to Teodoro she ceased to be a wretched woman awaiting death, and, after a time, putting trust in their words, became a little more cheerful, and replied that if she could follow her own desire nothing would make her happier than to be Teodoro's wife; but that nevertheless she would do what her father commanded.

Thus the girl was betrothed in concord, and a great feast was made, to the delight of all the citizens. The girl became happier and put her child out to nurse; and not long afterwards returned more beautiful than ever. She went to meet Fineo, whose return from Rome was expected, and greeted him with the reverence due to a father. He was happy to have so beautiful a daughter-in-law, and celebrated the wedding with great pomp and rejoicing, accepting and always holding her as his daughter. A few days later he went on board ship with her, his son and his little grandson, and took them to Laiazzo, where the two lovers remained in peace and quietness for the rest of their lives.

Eighth Tale

NASTAGIO DEGLI ONESTI IS IN LOVE WITH ONE OF THE TRAVERSARI AND SPENDS ALL HIS POSSESSIONS WITHOUT OBTAINING HER LOVE. AT THE REQUEST OF HIS RELATIVES, HE GOES TO CHIASSI, AND THERE SEES A HORSEMAN HUNTING A GIRL WHO IS KILLED AND DEVoured BY TWO DOGS. HE INVITES HIS RELATIVES AND THE LADY HE LOVES TO DINE WITH HIM, AND SHE SEES THE GIRL TORN TO PIECES. FEARING THE SAME FATE, SHE MARRIES NASTAGIO AND LIVES HAPPILY WITH HIM

WHEN Lauretta was silent, Filomena, at the queen's command, began thus:

Charming ladies, as pity is commended in us, so divine justice rigidly punishes cruelty in you. To display this to you and cause you to drive it wholly from you, I desire to tell you a tale no less full of compassion than of delight.

In Ravenna, that most ancient city of Romagna, there were of old many nobles and gentlemen, among whom was a young man named Nastagio degli Onesti, who became exceedingly rich on the death of his father and an uncle. As happens to young men without a wife, he fell in love with a daughter of Messer Paolo Traversaro, a girl of far more noble birth than he, whom he hoped to win by his actions. But however fair and praiseworthy they were, they not only failed to please her but actually seemed to displease her, so cruelly, harshly, and unfriendly did the girl behave, perhaps on account of her rare beauty, perhaps because her lofty and disdainful nobility of birth made her despise him and everything he liked.

This was so hard for Nastagio to bear that for very grief he often desired to slay himself. But, dreading to do this, he very often determined to leave her or, if he could, to hate her as she hated him. But in vain, for it seemed that the less hope he had, the more his love grew.

As the young man continued to love and to spend money recklessly,

his friends and relatives felt that he was wasting both himself and his possessions. So they often advised and begged him to leave Ravenna, and to go and live somewhere else for a time, to diminish his love and his expense. Nastagio several times made mock of this advice; but unable to say "No" to their repeated solicitations, he agreed to do it. He made great preparations, as if he were going to France or Spain or some other far off land, mounted his horse, and left Ravenna accompanied by many of his friends. He went to a place about three miles from Ravenna, called Chiassi; and having set up tents and pavilions there, told his friends he meant to stay there and that they should return to Ravenna. There Nastagio led the most extravagant life, inviting different parties of people to dine or sup, as he had been accustomed to do.

Now, in very fine weather about the beginning of May, he began to think of his cruel lady, and ordered his attendants to leave him alone so that he could dream of her at his ease; and in his reverie his footsteps led him into the pine woods. The fifth hour of the day was already spent, and he was a good half mile inside the woods, forgetful of food and everything else, when suddenly he thought he heard a loud lamentation and the wild shrieks of a woman. Breaking off his sweet reverie, he raised his head to see what it was, and to his surprise found himself in the pine forest. But, in addition, as he looked in front of him he saw coming towards him a very beautiful girl, naked, with disordered hair, and all scratched by the thorns and twigs of the brambles and bushes in the wood. She was weeping and calling for mercy. Beside her he saw two very large, fierce mastiffs, savagely pursuing her, and frequently snapping cruelly at her; and behind her on a black horse was a dark knight, with grief and anger in his face, with a sword in his hand, who often threatened her with death in dreadful and insulting terms.

This aroused astonishment and terror in his soul, and finally compassion for the unfortunate lady, from which was born the desire to set her free from such agony and such a death, if he could. But, finding himself unarmed, he ran to tear off a tree bough in place of a cudgel, and began to advance towards the dogs and the knight. But the knight saw him, and called to him from a distance:

"Nastagio, don't meddle here, let me and these dogs do what this wicked woman has deserved."

As he spoke the dogs seized the girl by the thighs, bringing her to the ground, and the knight dismounted from his horse. Nastagio went up to him, and said:

"I do not know who you are, though you seem to know me; but I tell you it is baseness in an armed knight to want to kill a naked woman, and to have set dogs at her, as if she were a wild beast. I shall certainly defend her as far as I can."

Then said the knight:

"Nastagio, I am of the same country as yourself, and you were still a little child when I, whose name was Messer Guido degli Anastagi, was more deeply in love with this woman than you now are with your Traversaro. Owing to her cruelty and pride, my misfortune caused me in despair to kill myself with the sword you see in my hand, and I am damned to eternal punishment. Not long afterwards, she, who had rejoiced exceedingly at my death, died also, and died unrepentant, believing that she had not sinned but done well; but for the sin of her cruelty and of her rejoicing at my torments, she too was and is damned to the punishments of hell. When she descended into hell, the punishment imposed upon us was that she should fly from me and that I, who once loved her so much, should pursue her as a mortal enemy, not as a beloved woman. As often as I catch her I kill her with the very sword with which I slew myself, and split her open, and drag out (as you will soon see) that hard cold heart, wherein love and pity could never enter, together with her entrails, and give them to these dogs to eat.

"After no long space of time, in accordance with the justice and the will of God, she rises up again as if she had not been dead, and once more begins her anguished flight, and I and the dogs pursue her. Every Friday at this hour I catch up with her here and slaughter her as you will see. And do not think that we rest on other days. I catch her in other places where she thought or wrought cruelly against me. Having changed from a lover to an enemy, as you see, I am condemned in this way to pursue her for as many years as the months she was cruel to me. Now let

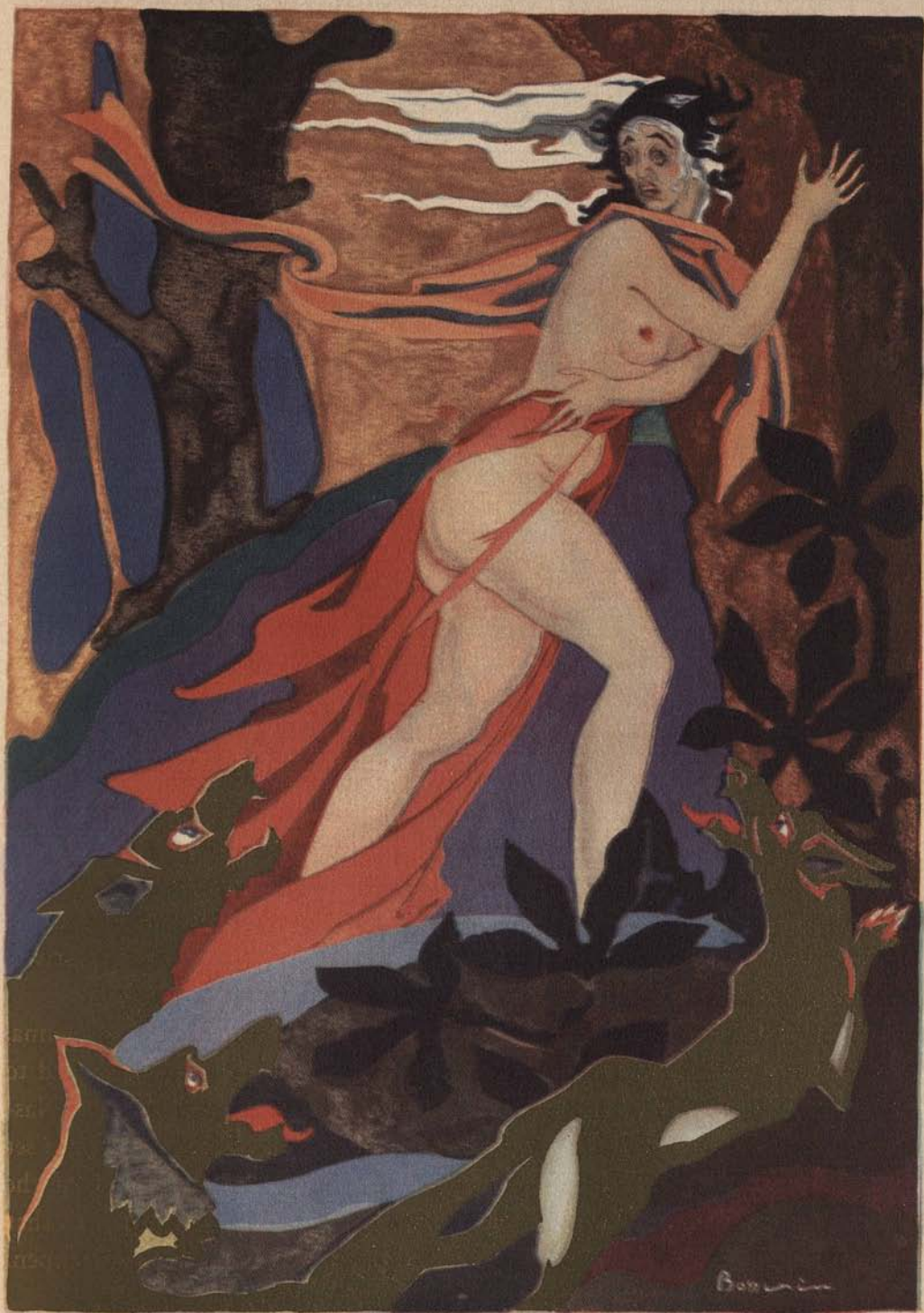
me execute divine justice, and strive not to oppose what you cannot prevent."

Nastagio was terrified by these words, and there was scarcely a hair of his body which did not stand on end. He drew back and gazed at the miserable girl, awaiting fearfully what the knight would do. When the knight had done speaking, he rushed like a mad dog at the girl with his sword in his hand, while she, held on her knees by the mastiffs, shrieked for mercy. But he thrust his sword with all his strength through the middle of her breast until it stood out behind her back. When the girl received this thrust, she fell forward still weeping and shrieking. The knight took a dagger in his hand, slit her open, took out her heart and everything near it, and threw them to the mastiffs who hungrily devoured them at once.

But before long the girl suddenly rose to her feet as if nothing had happened, and began to run towards the sea, with the dogs continually snapping at her. The knight took his sword, remounted his horse and followed; and in a short time they were so far away that Nastagio lost sight of them. After seeing these things, Nastagio hesitated a long time between pity and fear; but after some time it occurred to him that it might be useful to him, since it happened every Friday. So, having marked the place, he returned to his servants, and in due course sent for many of his relatives and friends, to whom he said:

"You have long urged me to refrain from loving my fair enemy and to cease my expense. I am ready to do so, if you will do me one favour—which is that next Friday you will come and dine with me, and bring Messer Paolo Traversaro, his wife, his daughter, all their women relatives, and any other women you like. Why I want this you will see later."

They thought this a small thing to do. So they returned to Ravenna, and invited those whom Nastagio wanted. And although it was hard to get the girl whom Nastagio loved, still she went along with the rest. Nastagio made preparations for a magnificent feast, and had the tables set among the pines near the place where he had seen the massacre of the cruel lady. He placed the men and women at table in such a manner that the girl he loved was exactly opposite the place where this would happen.



The last course had arrived when they all began to hear the despairing shrieks of the pursued lady. Everyone was astonished and asked what it was. Nobody knew. They stood up to look, and saw the agonized girl and the dogs and the knight. And in a very short time they all arrived in front of them. Great was the uproar against knight and dogs, and many started forward to help the girl. But the knight, speaking to them as he had spoken to Nastagio, not only made them draw back, but filled them with astonishment and terror. He did what he had done before; and all the women, many of whom were relatives of the suffering girl and of the knight, and remembered his love and death, wept as wretchedly as if it had been done to themselves.

When the massacre was over, and the lady and the knight had gone, those who had seen it fell into different sorts of discourse. But the most frightened was the cruel lady beloved by Nastagio, who had distinctly seen and heard everything, and knew that these things came nearer to her than to anyone else, for she remembered the cruelty with which she had always treated Nastagio. So that in her mind's eye she already seemed to be flying from his rage and to feel the mastiffs at her sides.

Such fear was born in her from this that, to avoid its happening to her, she could scarcely wait for that evening to change her hate into love and to send a trusted maid-servant secretly to Nastagio, begging him to go to see her, because she was ready to do anything he pleased. Nastagio replied that this was a happiness to him but that he desired his pleasure with honour, which was to take her as his wife, if she would agree. The girl knew that she herself had been the only obstacle to this hitherto, and replied that she was willing. So making herself the messenger, she told her father and mother that she was willing to marry Nastagio, which greatly delighted them. Next Sunday Nastagio married her and made a wedding feast, and lived happily with her for a long time.

Nor was this the only good which resulted from this terrifying apparition, for all the ladies of Ravenna took fear, and became far more compliant to the pleasures of the men than they had ever been before.

Thinth Tale

FEDERIGO DEGLI ALBERIGHI LOVES, BUT IS NOT BELOVED. HE SPENDS ALL HIS MONEY IN COURTSHIP AND HAS NOTHING LEFT BUT A FALCON, AND THIS HE GIVES HIS LADY TO EAT WHEN SHE COMES TO VISIT HIM BECAUSE THERE IS NOTHING ELSE TO GIVE HER. SHE LEARNS OF THIS, CHANGES HER MIND, TAKES HIM AS HER HUSBAND, AND MAKES HIM A RICH MAN

FILOMENA had ceased speaking, and the queen, seeing that nobody was left to speak except Dioneo (who had his privilege) and herself, began cheerfully as follows:

It is now my turn to speak, dearest ladies, and I shall gladly do so with a tale similar in part to the one before, not only that you may know the power of your beauty over the gentle heart, but because you may learn yourselves to be givers of rewards when fitting, without allowing Fortune always to dispense them, since Fortune most often bestows them, not discreetly but lavishly.

You must know then that Coppo di Borghese Domenichi, who was and perhaps still is one of our fellow citizens, a man of great and revered authority in our days both from his manners and his virtues (far more than from nobility of blood), a most excellent person worthy of eternal fame, and in the fullness of his years delighted often to speak of past matters with his neighbours and other men. And this he could do better and more orderly and with a better memory and more ornate speech than anyone else.

Among other excellent things, he was wont to say that in the past there was in Florence a young man named Federigo, the son of Messer Filippo Alberighi, renowned above all other young gentlemen of Tuscany for his prowess in arms and his courtesy. Now, as most often happens to gentlemen, he fell in love with a lady named Monna Giovanna, in her time held to be one of the gayest and most beautiful women ever known in Florence. To win her love, he went to jousts and tourneys, made and gave feasts, and spent his money without stint. But she, no less chaste than

beautiful, cared nothing for the things he did for her nor for him who did them.

Now as Federigo was spending far beyond his means and getting nothing in, as easily happens, his wealth failed and he remained poor with nothing but a little farm, on whose produce he lived very penuriously, and one falcon which was among the best in the world. More in love than ever, but thinking he would never be able to live in the town any more as he desired, he went to Campi where his farm was. There he spent his time hawking, asked nothing of anybody, and patiently endured his poverty.

Now while Federigo was in this extremity it happened one day that Monna Giovanna's husband fell ill, and seeing death come upon him, made his will. He was a very rich man and left his estate to a son who was already growing up. And then, since he had greatly loved Monna Giovanna, he made her his heir in case his son should die without legitimate children; and so died.

Monna Giovanna was now a widow, and as is customary with our women, she went with her son to spend the year in a country house she had near Federigo's farm. Now the boy happened to strike up a friendship with Federigo, and delighted in dogs and hawks. He often saw Federigo's falcon fly, and took such great delight in it that he very much wanted to have it, but did not dare ask for it, since he saw how much Federigo prized it.

While matters were in this state, the boy fell ill. His mother was very much grieved, as he was her only child and she loved him extremely. She spent the day beside him, trying to help him, and often asked him if there was anything he wanted, begging him to say so, for if it were possible to have it, she would try to get it for him. After she had many times made this offer, the boy said:

"Mother, if you can get me Federigo's falcon, I think I should soon be better."

The lady paused a little at this, and began to think what she should do. She knew that Federigo had loved her for a long time, and yet had never had one glance from her, and she said to herself:

“How can I send or go and ask for this falcon, which is, from what I hear, the best that ever flew, and moreover his support in life? How can I be so thoughtless as to take this away from a gentleman who has no other pleasure left in life?”

Although she knew she was certain to have the bird for the asking, she remained in embarrassed thought, not knowing what to say, and did not answer her son. But at length love for her child got the upper hand and she determined that to please him in whatever way it might be, she would not send, but go herself for it and bring it back to him. So she replied:

“Be comforted, my child, and try to get better somehow. I promise you that tomorrow morning I will go for it, and bring it to you.”

The child was so delighted that he became a little better that same day. And on the morrow the lady took another woman to accompany her, and as if walking for exercise went to Federigo's cottage, and asked for him. Since it was not the weather for it, he had not been hawking for some days, and was in his garden employed in certain work there. When he heard that Monna Giovanna was asking for him at the door, he was greatly astonished, and ran there happily. When she saw him coming, she got up to greet him with womanly charm, and when Federigo had courteously saluted her, she said:

“How do you do, Federigo? I have come here to make amends for the damage you have suffered through me by loving me more than was needed. And in token of this, I intend to dine today familiarly with you and my companion here.

“Madonna,” replied Federigo humbly, “I do not remember ever to have suffered any damage through you, but received so much good that if I was ever worth anything it was owing to your worth and the love I bore it. Your generous visit to me is so precious to me that I could spend again all that I have spent; but you have come to a poor host.”

So saying, he modestly took her into his house, and from there to his garden. Since there was nobody else to remain in her company, he said:

“Madonna, since there is nobody else, this good woman, the wife of this workman, will keep you company, while I go to set the table.”

Now, although his poverty was extreme, he had never before realised

what necessity he had fallen into by his foolish extravagance in spending his wealth. But he repented of it that morning when he could find nothing with which to do honour to the lady, for love of whom he had entertained vast numbers of men in the past. In his anguish he cursed himself and his fortune and ran up and down like a man out of his senses, unable to find money or anything to pawn. The hour was late and his desire to honour the lady extreme, yet he would not apply to anyone else, even to his own workman; when suddenly his eye fell upon his falcon, perched on a bar in the sitting room. Having no one to whom he could appeal, he took the bird, and finding it plump, decided it would be food worthy such a lady. So, without further thought, he wrung its neck, made his little maid servant quickly pluck and prepare it, and put it on a spit to roast. He spread the table with the whitest napery, of which he had some left, and returned to the lady in the garden with a cheerful face, saying that the meal he had been able to prepare for her was ready.

The lady and her companion arose and went to table, and there together with Federigo, who served it with the greatest devotion, they ate the good falcon, not knowing what it was. They left the table and spent some time in cheerful conversation, and the lady, thinking the time had now come to say what she had come for, spoke fairly to Federigo as follows:

“Federigo, when you remember your former life and my chastity, which no doubt you considered harshness and cruelty, I have no doubt that you will be surprised at my presumption when you hear what I have come here for chiefly. But if you had children, through whom you could know the power of parental love, I am certain that you would to some extent excuse me.

“But, as you have no child, I have one, and I cannot escape the common laws of mothers. Compelled by their power, I have come to ask you—against my will, and against all good manners and duty—for a gift, which I know is something especially dear to you, and reasonably so, because I know your straitened fortune has left you no other pleasure, no other recreation, no other consolation. This gift is your falcon, which has so fascinated my child that if I do not take it to him, I am afraid his present

illness will grow so much worse that I may lose him. Therefore I beg you, not by the love you bear me (which holds you to nothing), but by your own nobleness, which has shown itself so much greater in all courteous usage than is wont in other men, that you will be pleased to give it me, so that through this gift I may be able to say that I have saved my child's life, and thus be ever under an obligation to you."

When Federigo heard the lady's request and knew that he could not serve her, because he had given her the bird to eat, he began to weep in her presence, for he could not speak a word. The lady at first thought that his grief came from having to part with his good falcon, rather than from anything else, and she was almost on the point of retraction. But she remained firm and waited for Federigo's reply after his lamentation. And he said:

"Madonna, ever since it has pleased God that I should set my love upon you, I have felt that Fortune has been contrary to me in many things, and have grieved for it. But they are all light in comparison with what she has done to me now, and I shall never be at peace with her again when I reflect that you came to my poor house, which you never deigned to visit when it was rich, and asked me for a little gift, and Fortune has so acted that I cannot give it to you. Why this cannot be, I will briefly tell you.

"When I heard that you in your graciousness desired to dine with me and I thought of your excellence and your worthiness, I thought it right and fitting to honour you with the best food I could obtain; so, remembering the falcon you ask me for and its value, I thought it a meal worthy of you, and today you had it roasted on the dish and set forth as best I could. But now I see that you wanted the bird in another form, it is such a grief to me that I cannot serve you that I think I shall never be at peace again."

And after saying this, he showed her the feathers and the feet and the beak of the bird in proof. When the lady heard and saw all this, she first blamed him for having killed such a falcon to make a meal for a woman; and then she inwardly commended his greatness of soul which no poverty could or would be able to abate. But, having lost all hope of obtaining the

falcon, and thus perhaps the health of her son, she departed sadly and returned to the child. Now, either from disappointment at not having the falcon or because his sickness must inevitably have led to it, the child died not many days later, to the mother's extreme grief.

Although she spent some time in tears and bitterness, yet, since she had been left very rich and was still young, her brothers often urged her to marry again. She did not want to do so, but as they kept on pressing her, she remembered the worthiness of Federigo and his last act of generosity, in killing such a falcon to do her honour.

"I will gladly submit to marriage when you please," she said to her brothers, "but if you want me to take a husband, I will take no man but Federigo degli Alberighi."

At this her brothers laughed at her, saying:

"Why, what are you talking about, you fool? Why do you want a man who hasn't a penny in the world?"

But she replied:

"Brothers, I know it is as you say, but I would rather have a man who needs money than money which needs a man."

Seeing her determination, the brothers, who knew Federigo's good qualities, did as she wanted, and gave her with all her wealth to him, in spite of his poverty. Federigo, finding that he had such a woman, whom he loved so much, with all her wealth to boot, as his wife, was more prudent with his money in the future, and ended his days happily with her.

Tenth Tale

PIETRO DI VINCILO GOES OUT TO SUP. HIS WIFE BRINGS A LOVER INTO THE HOUSE; PIETRO RETURNS, AND SHE HIDES THE LOVER UNDER A CHICKEN COOP. PIETRO TELLS HER HOW, WHILE HE WAS SUPPING WITH ARCOLANO, A YOUNG MAN WHOM THE WIFE HAD HIDDEN WAS DISCOVERED. SHE BLAMES ARCOLANO'S WIFE, BUT AN ASS UNHAPPILY TREADS ON THE LOVER'S FINGER AS HE IS UNDER THE COOP, AND HE GIVES A SHRIEK; PIETRO RUNS OUT, SEES HIM, AND PERCEIVES HOW HIS WIFE HAS TRICKED HIM; BUT IN THE END HE PARDONS HER FAULT

THE queen finished her tale, and they all praised God for having worthily rewarded Federigo; and then Dioneo began, without waiting to be ordered.

I know not whether it be an accidental vice and the result of the corruption of men's manners, or whether it be a natural failing to laugh at bad things rather than at good deeds, especially when we are not directly concerned. Now since the task I undertook before and am about to carry out again, has no other object but to drive away melancholy from you and to raise mirth and merriment, I shall tell you this tale, enamoured ladies, although its matter in part be less than chaste, because it may amuse you. While you listen to it, do as you do when you enter a garden and, stretching out your delicate hands, pluck the roses and avoid the thorns. In so doing, leave the bad man in his misfortune with his woes, and laugh at the amorous tricks of the wife, and feel compassion for the misfortunes of others, where it is needed.

Not long ago in Perugia there was a rich man named Pietro di Vinciolo, who took a wife, more to deceive others and to avoid the general opinion of himself among the Perugians, than for any desire he had of her. And Fortune was so far conformable to his wish that the wife he took was a robust wench with lively red hair, who would rather have had two hus-

bands than one, whereas she had chanced upon a man who would rather have had to do with another man than with her.

In process of time she found this out. And since she was fresh and pretty, and felt herself friskish and robust, she got angry and often exchanged sharp words with her husband; and they led a miserable life together. But, seeing that this exhausted her without improving her husband, she said to herself:

"This man leaves me in sorrow and goes off in his vice in wooden shoes through the dry,¹ while I am trying to carry someone else in a ship through the rain.² I took him as my husband and gave him a good large dowry, knowing him to be a man, and thinking he wanted what men do and ought to want; and if I had not thought he was a man, I would never have taken him. He knew I was a woman; why did he marry me if he didn't like women? This is unendurable. If I had not wanted to live the life of the world, I should have become a nun. If I wait for delight and pleasure from him, I might perhaps wait in vain until I am an old woman, and then vainly regret my lost youth. He himself is an example to me, that I should find some consolation, and some pleasure as he does. In me this pleasure will be commendable, whereas in him it is blameworthy; for I only offend the laws, whereas he offends the laws and Nature too."

Having thought this over a good many times, the good woman, with an idea of carrying out her plan secretly, became familiar with an old woman, who yet seemed more like a pious old thing than a bawd, always going to church services with beads in her hand and never talking about anything but the lives of the Fathers or the stigmata of St. Francis, so that almost everybody thought she was a saint. And when she thought it a fitting time, the wife told her everything she intended.

"My child," said the old woman, "God, who knows everything, knows that in this you will do well. And if you did it for no other reason, yet you and every other young woman should do it, in order not to waste the time of your youth, because to those who have any understanding there is no grief like having wasted time. What the devil good are we when we are old, except to watch the supper on the hearth? If anyone knows it and

¹ I.e., is a sodomist.

² I.e., I am a normal woman.

can bear witness to it, I can. Now I am an old woman I realise with bitter soul-prickings how I wasted my time. And although I did not lose it all (for I don't want you to think I was a simpleton), still I did not do what I could have done. When I remember it, and see what I now am, and think how nobody would kindle up a spark of desire for me, God knows what grief I feel.

"The same thing does not happen to men. They are born fitted for a thousand things and not for this only, while the larger number of them are much better old than young. But women are only born to do it and make children, and so are esteemed. And if you haven't noticed anything else, you ought to have noticed this—that we are always ready for it, which does not happen with men. Moreover, one woman would tire out many men, whereas many men cannot tire one woman. Now, since we are born for this, I say once more you will be doing well to give your husband tit for tat, so that in your old age your mind will not have any reproach to bring against your flesh.

"Everyone gets from this world what he takes from it, especially women, who have far more necessity to make use of time while they have it than men, because, as you can see for yourself, when we get old, neither husband nor anyone else wants to see us, so we're chased in the kitchen to tell tales to the cat, and scour the pots and pans. Worse than that even, they make songs about us, saying: 'The best morsels for the girls, and quinsies to the old women'; and they say lots of other similar things.

"To keep you no longer in talk, I say now that you could not have spoken to anyone in the world who can be more useful to you than me; for however haughty a man may be I am not afraid to say what is necessary to him, and however harsh or boorish, I can smooth him down and bring him to the point I want. Tell me the one you want, and leave the rest to me. But remember, my child, that I am poor, and that you will be remembered in all my churchgoings and all the paternosters I say; and I shall pray God for the souls of all your departed dead."

Thus ended the old woman. And the young woman came to an agreement with the old one that, if she saw him, she was to bring her a young

man who often passed through the district; and she described him in such a way that the old woman knew who he was. Then she gave her a piece of salt meat, and sent her away.

Not many days afterwards the old woman brought the young man described to her room, and soon afterwards another, according as the young woman wanted. And, although in fear of her husband, she did not miss the opportunity.

One evening her husband was going out to supper with a friend of his, named Ercolano, and so the girl arranged with the old woman to bring her a young man, who was one of the handsomest and pleasantest in Perugia. Which was quickly done. The young woman and the young man were just sitting down to supper, when they heard Pietro at the door, shouting to her to open it. When she heard it, the wife gave herself up for dead. Wanting to hide the young man if she could, and not having the cunning to get him out of the house or hide him elsewhere, she hid him under a chicken coop in a shed next to the room in which they were supping, and threw over it a piece of straw sacking she had emptied that day. After which, she quickly opened the door to her husband. When he came into the house, she said:

“You’ve guzzled up that supper pretty quickly.”

“We never even tasted it,” said Pietro.

“How did that happen?” asked his wife.

“I’ll tell you,” said Pietro. “Ercolano and his wife and I were sitting down to table when we heard somebody sneeze near us, to which we paid no attention the first and second time. But the person sneezed a third, a fourth, a fifth and many other times, which greatly surprised us. Ercolano was already a little annoyed with his wife because she had kept him waiting a long time at the door, and said to her in a rage: ‘What does this mean? Who is it sneezing like this?’ He got up from the table, and went to the staircase near at hand, under which was a cupboard to store things away, as we see arranged in houses every day.

“It seemed to him that the sound of the sneezing came from this cupboard, so he opened a little door in it, and as soon as this was opened there suddenly came out the worst stink of sulphur imaginable, which he had

noticed before and had complained of, whereupon his wife had said: 'I am whitening my veils in there with sulphur, and the pots too, which I sprinkled with sulphur so that they would get the fumes, and put them under the staircase, and the smell still comes from them.' And after Ercolano had opened the door and the fumes had cleared off a little, he looked inside and saw the person who had sneezed and was still sneezing owing to the sulphur fumes. And as he sneezed, the sulphur had got such a hold on his chest, that he was not far from never sneezing or doing anything else again.

"As soon as Ercolano saw him, he shouted: 'Now I see, wife, the man for whose sake you kept us waiting at the door so long without opening when we came. But may I never have anything please me again, if I don't make you pay for this!' The wife, hearing this and seeing that her fault was discovered, fled from the table without attempting any excuse; and I don't know where she went. Ercolano, not noticing that his wife had fled, told the sneezing man to come out; but he was beyond all power of moving, and did not stir for anything Ercolano said.

"Thereupon Ercolano took him by one of his feet and dragged him out, and ran for a knife to kill him. But, fearing the police on my own account, I jumped up and prevented him from killing the man or doing him any harm. My shouting and defending him aroused the neighbours who came in and took the almost swooning young man, and carried him somewhere—I don't know where—out of the house. So our supper was quite spoiled by all this, and I not only haven't guzzled it but never even tasted it, as I said."

At this tale the wife perceived that there were others who knew as much as she did, although some had bad luck. She would have been glad to defend Ercolano's wife with words, but as blaming the faults of others seemed to her to make things easier for her own, she said:

"Here's fine doings! Here's a good and saintly woman! Here's the faith of a modest woman, who seemed to me so saintly that I would have confessed my sins to her. And, what's worse, she gives a mighty good example to the young, since she's getting old already. Cursed be the hour when she came into the world and the hour which allowed her to live, the

wicked deceitful woman that she must be, the universal shame and scorn of all women on this earth! Curse her for leaving her chastity and the faith promised to her husband and the honour of the world, he that is such a good man and an honourable citizen and treated her so well, for another man, and not being ashamed to bring him to scorn and herself with him! So help me God, I'd have no pity on such women. They ought to be killed. They ought to be thrown into the fire and burned to ashes."

Then, recollecting that her lover was near at hand, hidden under the hen-coop, she began to urge Pietro to go to bed, as it was then bedtime. But Pietro was more anxious to have something to eat than to go to bed, and asked if there were not something for supper.

"Ah!" said the wife, "yes, indeed, there's supper! We're quite accustomed to have supper when you're not here! Yes, I'm Ercolano's wife, am I? Why don't you go to bed? Go to sleep this evening!"

Now, it happened that during the evening some of Pietro's workmen had brought certain things in from the country, and had stalled their asses without giving them any water to drink, in a little stable next to the shed. One of the asses was very thirsty indeed, and, managing to get his head out of the halter, walked out of the stable and went snuffing at everything, trying to find some water. And so he came up to the hen-coop where the young man was hidden.

He was on his hands and knees, and one of his fingers was outside the hen-coop. Now, as luck or ill luck would have it, the ass trod on his finger; whereupon, in his anguish, he uttered a yell. Pietro was astonished to hear it, and knew that someone must be in the house. He went out of the room and heard the young man moaning, for the ass had not yet taken its hoof off his finger and was still pressing heavily on it. Said Pietro: "Who's there?" He ran to the hen-coop, lifted it up, and saw the young man who, in addition to the pain he felt from the ass treading on his finger, was trembling with fear lest Pietro should do him an injury.

Pietro recognized him as a young man he had long been prowling after for his vicious pleasures, and asked him: "What are you doing here?" but the youth made no answer, and only begged him for the love of God to do him no harm.

"Get up," said Pietro, "I won't do you any harm; but tell me, how do you happen to be here, and why?"

The young man confessed everything. Pietro, no less joyous than his wife was distressed at the discovery, took him by the hand and led him into the room, where the wife was waiting in the greatest terror imaginable. Pietro made her sit down opposite and said:

"So you cursed so hard Ercolano's wife, and you said she ought to be burned and that she was the shame of you all—why didn't you say it of yourself? Or, if you didn't want to confess that, how could your conscience endure to say it of her, when you knew you had done the same thing as she had? Nothing, indeed, induced you to do it, except that all you women are alike, and you hope to hide your own sins under the failings of others. May fire come down from heaven and burn you all, vile generation that you are!"

The wife, seeing that at the first onslaught he had hurt her with nothing worse than words, and noticing that he was in high glee at holding such a handsome youth by the hand, plucked up heart and said:

"I am very sure that you would like fire to come from heaven and burn up all us women, since you are as fond of us as a dog is of sticks. But, God's Cross! You won't see it happen. I should like to have a little discussion with you, to find out what you complain of. It is indeed well to compare me with Ercolano's wife, a hypocritical, snivelling old woman, who gets what she wants out of him, and he treats her as well as a wife can be treated, which doesn't happen to me. For, granted that I am well clad and shod, you know how I fare in other matters and how long it is since you lay with me. I'd go with rags on my back and broken shoes and be well treated by you in bed, rather than have all these things and be treated as you treat me. Understand plainly, Pietro, I'm a woman like other women, and I want what they want. So, if I go seeking for what I can't get from you, there's no need to abuse me. At least I do you so much honour that I don't go with boys and scrubby fellows."

Pietro saw that she could go on talking all night, and so, as he cared nothing about her, he said:

"That's enough, wife. I'll be content with that. Will you be so gracious

as to get us some supper, for I rather fancy this boy has had no more supper than I have.”

“No, indeed,” said the wife, “he has had no supper; for when you arrived in an ill hour, we were just sitting down to table to sup.”

“Go along then,” said Pietro, “and get us some supper, and afterwards I will arrange this affair in such a way that you will have nothing to complain of.”

Finding her husband so agreeable, the wife jumped up and re-laid the table, brought out the supper she had prepared, and supped merrily with her bad husband and the young man. What Pietro arranged after supper to satisfy all three of them has entirely gone out of my head. But I know that next morning the young man found himself in the piazza, not quite knowing whether the night before he had been with the wife or the husband. And so, dear ladies, I want to tell you: “He who does it to you, you do it to him.” And if you can’t, keep it in mind while you can, so that the ass may receive what he gets at home.

Dioneo’s tale was now ended, and the ladies’ laughter was restrained less from lack of amusement than from shame. The queen, seeing that the end of her reign was at hand, stood up and took off her garland, and gracefully placed it on Elisa’s head, saying:

“Madonna, it is now for you to give orders.”

Having received the honour, Elisa followed the adopted routine and first arranged with the steward for what was needed during the period of her rule; after which she said to the satisfaction of the company:

“We have already heard how many people by means of good sayings and prompt retorts and quick wits have been able to turn the teeth of others on themselves with a sharp nip or have averted threatened dangers. And since this is a good topic and may be useful, my will is that tomorrow, with God’s help, we tell tales within these limits—that is, of such persons who have retorted a witticism directed at them, or with a quick retort or piece of shrewdness have escaped destruction, danger or contempt.”

This was highly commended by them all. Whereupon the queen rose

to her feet, and gave them all to do as they chose until supper time. The merry company arose as the queen arose, and according to custom, each of them gave himself up to what pleased him most. But when the cicadas ceased their song, everyone was called, and they all went to supper. After this had been festively served, they went to singing and music. Emilia danced at the queen's command, and then Dioneo was ordered to sing a song. He immediately began: "Old mother Hale, lift up your tail, and see the good news I bring you." Whereat all the ladies burst out laughing, especially the queen, who ordered him to abandon that song and start another.

"Madonna," said Dioneo, "if I had cymbals, I would sing: 'Up with your petties, Monna Lapa,' or 'Under the olive tree springs the grass,' or would you like me to sing: 'The waves of the ocean make me ill with their motion'? But then I haven't any cymbals, so see which of these others you would like. Do you like: 'Out you go to be chopped to shreds, like a melon down in the garden beds'?"

"No," said the queen, "sing something else."

"Well," said Dioneo, "shall I sing: 'Monna Simona, put it up in the cask, it isn't the month of October'?"

"No, no," said the queen laughing, "sing a nice song, if you like, but not that one."

"Don't get angry, madonna," said Dioneo. "Which do you like best? I know over a thousand. Would you like: 'If I don't tickle my little prickle,' or 'Gently, gently, husband dear,' or 'I'll buy a cock for a hundred dollars'?"

"Dioneo," said the queen rather angrily, although all the others were laughing, "cease joking, and sing a pleasant song. If you don't, you will discover how angry I can be."

At this Dioneo left his jests, and began to sing as follows:

*Love, the fair light that issues from her eyes has made me slave to thee
and her.*

*The splendour of her lovely eyes, passing through mine, moved me before
your flame was kindled in my heart. However great your worth, I*

learned it through her beauteous face; imagining which, I found myself gathering every virtue and yielding them to her—another cause of sighs in me.

Now, dear my Lord, I have become one among your followers, and in obedience await your grace; but yet I know not if the high desire which you have set within my breast and my unshaken faith are wholly known to her, who so possesses all my mind that save from her I would not and I do not hope for peace.

Therefore I pray you, sweet my love, to show them to her, and make her feel a little of your flame, in grace to me who, as you see, am all consumed with love, and bit by bit worn down with pain. And then, when it is time, commend me to her, as you should, and gladly would I come with you to do it.

When Dioneo by his silence showed that his song was ended, the queen, after having highly praised it, had others sung. And when part of the night was spent and the queen felt that the heat of day was quenched in night's coolness, she ordered everyone to rest as he chose until the following day.

HERE ENDS THE FIFTH DAY

The Sixth Day

HERE BEGINS THE SIXTH DAY OF THE *DECAMERON*, WHEREIN, UNDER THE RULE OF ELISA, TALES ARE TOLD OF THOSE WHO HAVE RETORTED A WITTICISM DIRECTED AT THEM OR WITH A QUICK RETORT OR PIECE OF SHREWDNESS HAVE ESCAPED DESTRUCTION, DANGER OR CONTEMPT

THE moon in the middle sky had lost its radiance and already the whole hemisphere was bright with the new day, when the queen arose and the company was awakened. They strolled slowly down the hillside, talking on various topics, arguing about the merits of the various tales and laughing again over the different events related, until the rising sun grew hot and everyone saw it was time to return to the house, which accordingly they did.

There the tables were laid and the whole house strewn with scented plants and exquisite flowers; and the queen ordered them to eat before the day became too hot. After they had merrily dined, they sang several pleasant and amusing songs before doing anything else, and then some went to sleep, some to chess and some to draughts. Dioneo and Lauretta sang a song about Troilus and Cressida.

When the time came to return to their usual gathering, the queen had them all warned, and they sat down by the fountain. The queen was just about to order someone to tell the first tale, when something unusual occurred—the queen and all of them heard a great uproar among the servants and attendants in the kitchen. The steward was sent for and asked who was screaming and what was the cause of the uproar; and he replied that there was a dispute between Licisca and Tindaro, but he did not know the reason for it, since he had been trying to calm them down when he was sent for. So the queen ordered that Licisca and Tindaro should at once appear before her, and when they came, the queen asked what was the cause of their dispute.

Tindaro tried to answer, but Licisca, who was rather elderly and very

conceited, and warmed up with the dispute, interrupted him, saying:
"See what a brute of a man you are, trying to speak before I do! Let me speak."

She then turned to the queen, and said:

"Madonna, he wants to tell me about Sicofante's wife. And, as if I didn't know her well, he does nothing more nor less than try to make me believe that the first night Sicofante lay with her, Messer Mazza had to force his way into the Black Mountain with an effusion of blood. And I say it isn't true, but that he entered calmly and with the greatest ease. And the man is so foolish that he thinks girls are such idiots they waste their time attending to the warnings of their fathers and brothers, when six times out of seven they know all about it three or four years before they have to get married. God, they'd be in a pretty plight if they had to wait that long. By the faith of Christ (who knows what I'm saying when I swear), I never had a neighbour who was a virgin when she married. And the married ones too—I know what tricks they play on their husbands. And this great ox tries to tell me about women, as if I was born yesterday!"

While Licisca was talking the ladies laughed so heartily you could have pulled all their teeth out. Six times did the queen command silence, all to no avail—she wouldn't stop until she had said all she wanted to say. When she had finished her say, the queen turned laughingly to Dioneo, and said:

"Dioneo, this is a question for you. And so, when we have ended our tales, you shall pass sentence on it."

But Dioneo immediately replied:

"Madonna, the sentence is passed without hearing any further. I say that Licisca is right and I believe things are as she says, and Tindaro is an ass."

Licisca burst out laughing at hearing this, and said to Tindaro:

"Didn't I tell you? Go along with you. Do you think you know more than I do, when you haven't washed the sleep out of your eyes? Thank you, I haven't lived for nothing."

If the queen had not bidden them be silent with a stern face, and

ordered them not to quarrel any more and sent Tindaro and the woman away, under threat of reprimands, there would have been nothing else to do all day but attend to them. But when they had gone, the queen ordered Filomena to tell the first tale; and she began merrily as follows:

First Tale

A KNIGHT ASKS PERMISSION TO CARRY MADONNA ORETTA ON HIS PILLION AND PROMISES TO TELL HER A TALE; HE DOES IT SO BADLY THAT SHE ASKS HIM TO SET HER DOWN

YOUTHFUL ladies, even as the stars in the pure serene are the ornaments of heaven and the flowers of the green meadows in the spring and the trees of the hills, so witty sayings are to good manners and amusing conversation; and they are the more excellent in women since much speech is more befitting women than men. True it is, whatever the reason be, either the poorness of our genius or the singular enmity of the heavens to this our age, that few or no ladies now remain who can speak at the right moment, or, if they do so, say the right thing, which is a scandal to all of us. But since Pampinea has already enlarged on this topic, I shall say no more about it. However, to show you the beauty of the right thing said at the right moment, I intend to tell you of a courteous retort of a lady which imposed silence on a knight.

Many of you may have known by sight or have heard about a gentle and accomplished lady of our city whose merit was such that her name must not be concealed—she was then called Madonna Oretta, and was the wife of Messer Geri Spina. She was once in the country, as we now are, going for her amusement from one house to another in the company of ladies and knights who had dined at her own house that day; and since the road they had intended to traverse on foot was rather long, one of the knights in the party said:

"Madonna Oretta, I will tell you one of the finest stories in the world, if you like, which will make the way seem as short as if you were riding on a pillion."

"Messer," said the lady, "I beg you will do so, it will be most pleasant for me."

Our knight, who told a tale no better than he wore his sword, began his tale, which was indeed a very good one. But he kept repeating the same things three or four or six times, and then going back to the beginning, and saying: "No, I'm not telling it right," and then going wrong about names, putting one in place of another, so that he spoiled the tale nicely. Moreover, he articulated very badly in reproducing personalities and events. And so, as Madonna Oretta listened to him, she felt a sweat come over her and a sinking of the heart, as if she had been ill and about to die. And when she could endure it no longer, and saw that the knight had got into such a tangle he could not get out of it, she said:

"Messer, your horse trots too roughly. I beg you will allow me to go on foot."

The knight, who happened to have a quicker wit in understanding hints than in telling tales, saw the jest, and took it in the right spirit. He turned the conversation to other things, and left unfinished the tale which he had begun and continued so badly.

Second Tale

THE BAKER CISTI MAKES A JEST AND SHOWS MESSER GERI SPINA THAT HE HAD MADE AN UNREASONABLE REQUEST

EACH of the ladies and men highly praised Madonna Oretta's remark, and the queen then commanded Pampinea to follow next. And she began thus:

Fair ladies, I do not know which is worse—to see Nature joining a noble spirit to a vile body or Fortune giving a base occupation to a

body endowed with a noble soul, as you may observe in our fellow citizen, Cisti, and many others. This Cisti, who had a most lofty spirit, was made by Fortune a baker. Certainly I should curse both Nature and Fortune, if I did not know that Nature is most prudent and that Fortune has a thousand eyes, although fools figure her as blind. I think they behave as we often see mortals do, who, when dubious of the future, as opportunity serves, bury the most precious things they have in the vilest parts of their houses (as being the least likely to be suspected); and when in their necessity they take them out, they find a base hiding place has served them better than a fair room would have done. And so the two ministers of this world often hide their most valued possessions under the shadow of the occupations reputed base, so that when they are drawn forth at the fitting moment, their splendour will be the more apparent. The story of Madonna Oretta, the wife of Geri Spina, puts me in mind of how Cisti the baker showed what he was in a little affair which I shall relate to you in a short tale.

In the time of Pope Boniface, who held Messer Geri Spina in high esteem, certain of his noble ambassadors came to Florence on important business. They stayed at the house of Messer Geri and discussed the Pope's affairs with him. Whatever the cause may have been, it happened that almost every morning Messer Geri and these ambassadors passed by Santa Maria Ughi, where Cisti the baker had his oven and personally attended to his business.

Now, although Fortune had bestowed a humble occupation upon him, she had been so far kindly to him that he had become very rich. He would never abandon his trade for another, but lived extremely well; and among other good things he had the best white and red wine of Florence or the district. When he saw Messer Geri and the Pope's ambassadors pass his shop every day during the very hot weather, he thought it would be courteous to offer them some of his good white wine. But then, reflecting on his own station in life and that of Messer Geri, he felt it would not be fitting in him to presume to invite him. So he thought of a way to make Messer Geri invite himself.

Wearing a white doublet and a clean apron over it, which showed him

to be rather a miller than a baker, every morning at about the time he expected Messer Geri and the ambassadors to pass, he placed at the shop door a tin pail of fresh water and a small Bolognese jug of his good white wine, and two glasses which looked like silver, they were so bright. As they passed, he would be sitting beside these things, and after rinsing his mouth once or twice, he drank off some of the wine with such gusto that it would have made the very dead want to taste it. Messer Geri noticed this on one or two mornings, and the third time he said:

“What is it, Cisti? Is it good?”

Cisti sprang to his feet, and said:

“Messer, yes. But how can I make you understand it, unless you taste it?”

Messer Geri happened to be thirsty, either because of the weather or his fatigue or the gusto with which he saw Cisti drinking, so he turned smilingly to the ambassadors, and said:

“Gentlemen, let us taste this worthy man’s wine. Perhaps we shall not repent of it.”

And so he turned with them towards Cisti, who had a handsome bench brought from his shop, and begged them to sit down. Their servants came forward to wash the glasses, but Cisti said:

“Stand back, my friends, and leave that service to me. I can pour out wine as well as I can bake bread. And don’t you expect to taste a drop.”

So saying, he washed four handsome new glasses, and called for a small jug of his good wine, which he gave Messer Geri and his friends to drink. They thought the wine was better than any they had tasted for a long time, and highly praised it; and as long as the ambassadors were there Messer Geri went there to drink it with them nearly every morning. When they were about to leave, Messer Geri gave a magnificent banquet to which he invited all the most honourable citizens, including Cisti, who, however, refused to go. Messer Geri ordered one of his servants to go for a flask of Cisti’s wine, and to fill half a glass to every guest at the supper table. The servant who was perhaps irritated because he had never been allowed to taste the wine, took a huge flask; but when Cisti saw it, he said:

"My son, you weren't sent to me by Messer Geri."

The servant kept assuring him that he was so sent, but he could get no other answer, and so returned to Messer Geri, and told him. Said Messer Geri:

"Go back to him, and say you are sent from me. And if he says anything else, ask him to whom I have sent you."

The servant returned, and said:

"Cisti, Messer Geri did mean to send me to you."

"No, my boy, he did not," replied Cisti.

"Well," said the servant, "who did he send me to?"

"The Arno," replied Cisti.

The servant reported this to Messer Geri, whose eyes were suddenly opened to the truth; and he said to the servant:

"Show me the flask you took to him."

And when he saw it, he said:

"Cisti was right."

And he scolded the servant, and made him take a proper sized flask. And as soon as Cisti saw it, he said:

"Now I know that you come from him."

And Cisti willingly filled the flask. Soon after he had a cask filled with the same wine and tenderly carried to Messer Geri's house. And he followed it, and said:

"Messer, I don't want you to think that I was frightened by the large flask this morning. But, thinking that you had forgotten what I showed you with my small jugs—that this is not servants' wine—I thought I would remind you. But since I do not mean to hoard it any longer, I have brought it all to you. Do what you please with it."

Messer Geri was charmed with Cisti's gift, and made him what he thought were suitable thanks; and ever afterwards esteemed him highly as a friend.

Third Tale

MONNA NONNA DE' PULCI IMPOSES SILENCE ON THE LESS THAN MODEST REMARKS OF THE BISHOP OF FLORENCE

WHEN Pampinea had finished her tale and they had all highly praised Cisti's generosity and retort, the queen was pleased to order Lauretta to speak next; and she began cheerfully as follows:

Charming ladies, Pampinea and Filomena have both touched with truth upon our small merit and the happiness of retorts. There is no need then for me to return to them, but I should like to remind you that the nature of repartee is such that it should nip like the sheep, not snap like the dog. For if the retort bites like a dog, it is not a retort, but an insult. And this is admirably brought out by the retorts of Madonna Oretta and Cisti. True, if the person who retorts has at first been snapped at like a dog, he is not to be blamed for retorting in the same way, as he would otherwise be. And so we should always observe how and when and with whom and where we are jesting. One of our prelates, who failed to notice these rules, received back as good a bite as he gave, which I shall show you in a short tale.

Messer Antonio d'Orso, a learned and worthy prelate, was Bishop of Florence; and there came to Florence a Catalan gentleman, Messer Dego della Tata, general to King Roberto. He was a very handsome man and a great ladies' man, and he happened to be specially in love with a very pretty Florentine woman, who was niece to the Bishop's brother. He discovered that her husband was a base and miserly fellow, although of good family, and arranged to give him five hundred gold florins on condition that he (Dego) should spend a night with the wife. He had penny pieces gilded and, after lying with the wife against her will, gave the husband this false money. This became known to everyone, and the harm and the joke were on the bad husband. The Bishop, like a wise man, pretended to know nothing about it.

The Bishop and the General were great friends, and one St. John's

day as they were riding along together, they saw the ladies going through the streets to the horse race. The Bishop saw a young woman, who has since died in the present plague, whose name was Monna Nonna de' Pulci, a cousin of Messer Alessio Rinucci, whom you must all have known. She was then a fresh, handsome, well-spoken, high-spirited girl and not long before had married in Porta San Pietro. The Bishop pointed her out to the General and, putting his hand on the General's shoulder, said:

"Nonna, what do you think of him? Do you think you could make a conquest of him?"

Nonna felt that these words were a reflection on her chastity and would do her harm in the minds of the numerous people who heard the remark. So, determined not to endure the slight, but to give tit for tat, she retorted:

"Messer, perhaps he would not make a conquest of me, but I should want good money."

The General and the Bishop both felt themselves hit by this remark, the former because he had played this dishonest trick on the niece of the Bishop's brother, the latter as receiving the shame on behalf of his own brother's niece. Silently and ashamed they went away, without looking at each other, and spoke no more that day.

So, as the girl was snapped at, she did right to snap back with another jest.

Fourth Tale

CHICHIBIO, COOK TO CURRADO GIANFIGLIAZZI, CHANGES CURRADO'S ANGER TO LAUGHTER, AND SO ESCAPES THE PUNISHMENT WITH WHICH CURRADO HAD THREATENED HIM

LAURETTA was silent, and they all praised Nonna; whereupon the queen ordered Neifile to follow next. And she said:

Amorous ladies, although quick wits often provide speakers with use-

ful and witty words, yet Fortune, which sometimes aids the timid, often puts words into their mouths which they would never have thought of in a calm moment. This I intend to show you by my tale.

As everyone of you must have heard and seen, Currado Gianfigliuzzi was always a noble citizen of our city, liberal and magnificent, leading a gentleman's life, continually delighting in dogs and hawks, and allowing his more serious affairs to slide. One day near Peretola his falcon brought down a crane, and finding it to be plump and young he sent it to his excellent cook, a Venetian named Chichibio, telling him to roast it for supper and see that it was well done.

Chichibio, who was a bit of a fool, prepared the crane, set it before the fire, and began to cook it carefully. When it was nearly done and giving off a most savoury odour, there came into the kitchen a young peasant woman, named Brunetta, with whom Chichibio was very much in love. Smelling the odour of the bird and seeing it, she begged Chichibio to give her a leg of it. But he replied with a snatch of song:

"You won't get it from me, Donna Brunetta, you won't get it from me."

This made Donna Brunetta angry, and she said:

"God's faith, if you don't give it me, you'll never get anything you want from me."

In short, they had high words together. In the end Chichibio, not wanting to anger his lady-love, took off one of the crane's legs, and gave it to her. A little later the one-legged crane was served before Currado and his guests. Currado was astonished at the sight, sent for Chichibio, and asked him what had happened to the other leg of the crane. The lying Venetian replied:

"Sir, cranes only have one leg and one foot."

"What the devil d'you mean," said Currado angrily, "by saying they have only one leg and foot? Did I never see a crane before?"

"It's as I say, Sir," Chichibio persisted, "and I'll show it you in living birds whenever you wish."

Currado would not bandy further words from respect to his guests, but said:

"Since you promise to show me in living birds something I never saw or heard of, I shall be glad to see it tomorrow morning. But, by the body of Christ, if it turns out otherwise I'll have you tanned in such a way that you'll remember my name as long as you live."

When day appeared next morning, Currado, who had not been able to sleep for rage all night, got up still furious, and ordered his horses to be brought. He made Chichibio mount a pad, and took him in the direction of a river where cranes could always be seen at that time of day, saying:

"We'll soon see whether you were lying or not last night."

Chichibio, seeing that Currado was still angry and that he must try to prove his lie, which he had not the least idea how to do, rode alongside Currado in a state of consternation, and would willingly have fled if he had known how. But as he couldn't do that, he kept gazing round him and thought everything he saw was a crane with two legs. But when they came to the river, he happened to be the first to see a dozen cranes on the bank, all standing on one leg as they do when they are asleep. He quickly pointed them out to Currado, saying:

"Messer, you can see that what I said last evening is true, that cranes have only one leg and one foot; you have only to look at them over there."

"Wait," said Currado, "I'll show you they have two."

And going up closer to them, he shouted: "Ho! Ho!" And at this the cranes put down their other legs and, after running a few steps, took to flight. Currado then turned to Chichibio, saying:

"Now, you glutton, what of it? D'you think they have two?"

In his dismay Chichibio, not knowing how the words came to him, replied:

"Yes, messer, but you didn't shout 'ho! ho!' to the bird last night. If you had shouted, it would have put out the other leg and foot, as those did."

Currado was so pleased with this answer that all his anger was converted into merriment and laughter, and he said:

"Chichibio, you're right; I ought to have done so."

So with this quick and amusing answer Chichibio escaped punishment, and made his peace with his master.

Fifth Tale

MESSER FORESE DA RABATTA AND MASTER GIOTTO, THE PAINTER, RETURNING FROM MUGELLO, LAUGH AT EACH OTHER'S MEAN APPEARANCE

THE ladies were delighted by Chichibio's reply, and when Neifile had finished, Pamfilo then spoke by the queen's command.

Most dear ladies, it often happens, as Fortune hides great treasures of virtue under base occupations, as Pampinea just now showed us, that the marvellous minds of Nature are to be found in very ugly men. This will appear from two of our citizens, of whom I mean to tell you a short tale.

One of these was Messer Forese da Rabatta, small and deformed in his person, with a flat ugly face, as if he were worse than one of the nasty Baronci family; and yet he was so skilled in the laws that many worthy men considered him a repository of Civil Law. The other was Giotto, whose genius was of such excellence that with his art and brush or crayon he painted anything in Nature, the mother and mover of all things under the perpetual turning of the heavens, and painted them so like that they seemed not so much likenesses as the things themselves; whereby it often happened that men's visual sense was deceived, and they thought that to be real which was only painted.

Now he who brought back to light that art which for many centuries had lain buried under errors (and thus was more fitted to please the eyes of the ignorant than the minds of the wise), may rightly be called one of the shining lights of Florentine glory. And the more so since he performed it with the greatest humility, and, although the mas-

ter of all painters living, always refused to be called master. This title he refused shone the brighter in him, in that it was eagerly usurped by his disciples or by those who were less skilled than he. But although he was a very great artist, he was no more handsome in his person or aspect than Messer Forese. But let us come to the tale.

Messer Forese and Giotto had estates in Mugello. Messer Forese had gone to visit his in the summer time when the law courts have their vacation; and as he rode along on a poor hack of a horse he fell in with Giotto who was also returning to Florence, after visiting his own estate. He was no better dressed or horsed than the other. And the two old men rode along gently together.

As often happens in the summer, a sudden shower of rain came on. As quickly as possible they took shelter in the cottage of a workman, who was a friend to them both. But, as the rain showed no signs of abating and they wanted to reach Florence that day, they borrowed two old serge cloaks from the labourer and two hats all rusty with age, because he had no better, and set out on their way again. They had gone a long way, were wet through, and splashed with mud from their plodding horses (which is not wont to improve anyone's appearance), when the weather cleared up a little, and they began to talk after having been silent for a long time.

As Messer Forese rode along listening to Giotto, who was an admirable talker, he began to look at him from head to foot and, noticing how shabby and unkempt he was, he began to laugh, without remembering his own appearance, and said:

"Giotto, suppose we met a stranger who had never seen you before; do you think he would believe you are the greatest painter in the world, as you are?"

But Giotto immediately replied:

"Messer, I think he would believe if, when he looked at you, he could believe that you know your A B C."

Messer Forese at once recognized his error, and found himself paid back in the same coin for which he had sold the goods.

Sixth Tale

MICHELE SCALZA PROVES TO CERTAIN YOUNG MEN THAT THE BARONCI ARE THE GREATEST GENTLEMEN IN THE WORLD OR THE MAREMMA AND WINS A SUPPER

THE ladies were still laughing at Giotto's quick retort when the queen ordered Fiammetta to follow next, who began as follows:

Young ladies, Pamfilo's mention of the Baronci—whom you perhaps do not know as well as he does—reminds me of a tale which proves their nobility without deviating from our subject. And so I shall tell it to you.

Not long ago in our city was a young man named Michele Scalza, who was a most charming and amusing fellow, always with a handful of stories ready. So he was very popular with the young Florentines who liked to have him in their gatherings. One day when he was at Mount Ughi with some of them, there arose a discussion as to which was the oldest and most aristocratic family in Florence. Some said the Uberti, others the Lamberti, some this and some that, as the humour moved them. Scalza began to laugh at this, and said:

"Get along with you, you idiots, you don't know what you're talking about. The oldest and most aristocratic family, not only of Florence, but of the world or the Maremma, are the Baronci. All philosophers are agreed upon this, and every man who knows them as I do. And to avoid all mistake, I mean the Baronci our neighbours, near Santa Maria Maggiore."

When the young men, who had expected him to say something very different, heard this, they all laughed at him and said:

"You're joking—as if we didn't know the Baronci as well as you do."

"I'm not joking," said Scalza, "but telling the truth, and if anyone here would like to make a wager on it of a supper for six, I'll take him. And I'll do more, I'll abide by the judgment of anyone you like."

One of them, named Neri Manini, said:

"I'm ready to win that supper."

They agreed to take as their judge Piero di Fiorentino, in whose house they were. They went to him, accompanied by all the others to see Scalza lose his bet and to make fun of him; and related the whole thing to Piero. Piero was a sensible young man, and after hearing what Neri had to say, he turned to Scalza, and said:

“And how will you prove what you assert?”

“How?” said Scalza. “I’ll prove it in such a way that not only you, but my opponent, will admit that I am right. You know that the more ancient a family is, the greater its nobility, which is commonly admitted among nobles. Now, the Baronci are an older family than any in the world, and consequently more noble. If I can prove that they are the oldest family, I shall have won the wager.

“You must know that the Lord God made the Baronci when he was still a prentice hand at painting; but the remainder of mankind were made when God had learned to paint. To judge whether I am speaking the truth, consider the Baronci and the rest of mankind. You will see that all other men have well-composed and proportioned faces, whereas you will see some of the Baronci with long narrow faces, others with disproportionately wide faces, some with huge long noses and others with very short ones, some without any chins, and jaw-bones like an ass. You’ll see some of them with one eye larger than the other and bulging out further, like the faces made by children when they’re learning to draw. So, as I said, it is plain that the Lord God made them when he was learning to paint; therefore they are the oldest family in the world, and consequently the most noble.”

Piero the Judge, Neri who had laid the wager, and all the rest of them, having heard Scalza’s argument and remembered the Baronci, burst out laughing, and vowed that Scalza was right, that he had won the supper, and that undoubtedly the Baronci were the oldest and most aristocratic family, not only in Florence, but in the world or the Maremma.

And so Pamfilo was right when, trying to describe the ugliness of Messer Forese, he said he was uglier than one of the Baronci.

Seventh Tale

MADONNA FILIPPA IS DISCOVERED WITH A LOVER BY HER HUSBAND AND TAKEN BEFORE THE JUDGE; SHE ESCAPES SCOT-FREE BY A QUICK RETORT AND HAS THE LAW ALTERED

FIAMMETTA finished her tale, and everybody laughed at Scalza's new argument to prove that the Baronci were more noble than any other family. The queen then turned and ordered Filostrato to speak next, and he began thus:

Most worthy ladies, it is always a good thing to know how to speak well, but I think it best of all when it is called for by necessity. This was well done by a lady, of whom I intend to tell you, for she not only provided merriment and laughter to those who heard her, but saved herself from the snare of a shameful death, as you shall hear.

In Prato there was once a law, no less blameworthy than harsh, which without any distinction condemned to be burned alive any woman whose husband found her in adultery with a lover, just like a woman who lay with any other man for money.

While this law was in force a beautiful woman, named Madonna Filippa, who was very much in love, was found one night in her room by her husband, Rinaldo de' Pugliesi, in the arms of Lazzarino de' Guazzagliotri, a noble and handsome young man of that country, whom she loved beyond her own self. Rinaldo was exceedingly angry when he saw this, and could scarcely refrain from rushing at them and killing them. And if he had not feared the consequences to himself in following his anger, he would have done so.

He restrained himself from this, but could not refrain from claiming from the law of Prato what was forbidden him to take himself—his wife's life. He produced sufficient evidence, and the next day he brought the accusation against his wife and had her cited before the court, without consulting anyone.

The lady was a great-hearted woman, as usually happens with women

who are really in love; and although she was advised against it by her numerous friends and relatives, she determined to appear before the Court and rather die bravely confessing her fault than to live in exile by basely fleeing, and thus showing herself unworthy of such a lover as the man in whose arms she had lain the night before. She appeared before the judge accompanied by many men and women, who urged her to deny the fault; and asked him in a clear voice and with a firm countenance what he wanted of her.

The judge looked at her, saw she was beautiful and accomplished, and, as her speech showed, a woman of high spirit. He felt compassion for her, suspecting that she would make the confession which, for his honour's sake, would force him to condemn her to death. But, since he could not avoid putting the question to her, he said:

"Madonna, as you see, here is Rinaldo your husband, and he lays a plaint against you that he has found you in adultery with another man. And therefore he demands that in accordance with the law I punish you for it by death. But this I cannot do unless you confess it, and so beware of what you say in answer, and tell me if your husband's accusation is true."

The lady, without the slightest fear, replied in a pleasant voice:

"Messer, it is true that Rinaldo is my husband, and that last night he found me in the arms of Lazzarino, wherein I have often lain, through the deep and perfect love I have for him. Nor shall I ever deny it. But I am certain you know that the laws should be equal for both sexes and made with the consent of those who are to obey them. That is not so in this case, for it only touches us poor women, who are yet able to satisfy many more than men can; moreover, no woman gave her consent or was even consulted when this law was passed. And so it may reasonably be called an inequitable law.

"If, to the harm of my body and your own soul, you choose to carry out this law, it is for you to do so. But before you proceed to judgment, I ask one little favour of you—ask my husband whether or not I have not always wholly yielded him my body whenever and howsoever often he asked it."

Rinaldo, without awaiting the judge's question, immediately replied that beyond all doubt she had always yielded to his pleasure whenever he required it.

"Then," said the lady swiftly, "I ask you, Messer Judge, if he has always had from me what he needed and pleased, what should and shall I do with what remains over? Should I throw it to the dogs? Is it not far better to give it to a gentleman who loves me beyond himself than to let it spoil or go to waste?"

The case concerning so well known a lady had attracted to the Court almost all the inhabitants of Prato. When they heard this amusing question they laughed heartily, and then almost with one voice shouted that the lady was right and spoke well. Before they separated, with the judge's consent they modified this cruel law, and limited it only to those women who were unfaithful to their husbands for money.

So Rinaldo departed in confusion, and the lady returned home free and happy and in triumph, like one escaped from the flames.

Eighth Tale

FRESCO ADVISES HIS NIECE NOT TO LOOK IN THE MIRROR IF
IT WAS UNPLEASANT TO LOOK AT DISAGREEABLE PEOPLE

FILOSTRATO's tale at first touched the ladies' hearts with a slight feeling of shame, and the appearance of modest blushes in their faces gave evidence of it; but then, as they glanced at each other, they could scarcely refrain from laughing, and listened to the tale with demure smiles. When it was ended, the queen turned to Emilia, and ordered her to follow next. She started as if awakened from sleep, took a deep breath, and began thus:

Fair ladies, a long train of thought has for some time carried me far away from here; and so I shall make shift to obey our queen with a much

shorter tale than I should have told if I had had my wits about me, and shall tell you of the foolish error of a girl, which was reproved by an amusing remark from her uncle—if she had had sense enough to understand it.

A man named Fresco da Celatico had a niece nicknamed Ciesca, who, although handsome enough in face and body (yet she was not one of those angels we often see), thought herself so important and so noble that she fell into the habit of sneering at all men and women and everything she saw, without examining herself. And yet she was so tedious, annoying and irritating that nothing could be done to please her. Moreover, she was so conceited that it would have been quite superfluous for her to have been one of the Royal Family of France. When she walked in the streets she pretended such haughty disgust that she did nothing but turn up her nose, as if a stink had come from everybody she saw or met.

We will not dwell on her other disagreeable and irritating habits, but come to the point. One day she returned to the house and sat down beside Fresco with a great display of affectation, and did nothing but sniff.

“Ciesca,” asked Fresco, “why have you come home so early on a fête day?”

To which she replied with her fade-away airs: “It is true I have come home early, and that is because I think that the world never held such unpleasant and disgusting men and women as there are today. Everyone of them who passes by displeases me like ill luck itself. I don’t think there is a woman in the world who is more distressed by seeing horrible people than I am. I came home early to avoid looking at them.”

Fresco, who had had enough of his niece’s disgusting airs, said: “My girl, since you find it so trying to look at unpleasant people, you ought never to look in the mirror if you want to be happy.”

But she, who was as empty as a hollow cane, although she thought herself another Solomon in wisdom, understood Fresco’s real meaning no more than a sheep would have done, and said she intended to look in the mirror like anyone else. And so she remained in her clownishness, and does to this day.

Tenth Tale

GUIDO CALVALCANTI WITH A JEST POLITELY INSULTS CERTAIN FLORENTINE GENTLEMEN WHO CAME UPON HIM UNAWARES

EMILIA finished her tale, and the queen realised that if Dioneo's privilege was to be kept there was no one left but herself to tell a tale; and so she began:

Fair ladies, although you have deprived me beforehand of more than two of the tales I meant to tell, yet I still have one left whose conclusion contains a jest perhaps more stinging than any related.

You must know that in the past our city maintained many good and praiseworthy customs which have disappeared today, thanks to the avarice which has grown up with our wealth and driven them away. Among them was a custom for groups of gentlemen to meet together in different places in Florence, taking care to include only those who could afford the expense; and for each in turn to entertain the rest on his appointed day. In this way they entertained foreigners, when they were there, and their own fellow citizens. Similarly at least once a year they all dressed alike and rode through the city and jostled on notable days, especially during the great fête days or when the news of some victory or something of the kind came to the city.

Among these groups was that of Messer Betto Brunelleschi; and he and his friends made great efforts to obtain the company of Guido Calvalcante de' Calvalcanti, not without reason, for apart from the fact that he was one of the greatest logicians then in the world and an excellent philosopher (for which they cared little), he was also a most accomplished and charming and eloquent man, and better able to perform everything befitting a gentleman than anyone else. He was also very rich, and could reward beyond all expression those whom he thought deserved it. But Messer Bruno was never able to obtain his company, and he and his friends thought this was because Guido, who sometimes meditated, had become very much cut off from mankind. And because he held some of the opinions of Epicurus, the common run of mankind

said that his speculations were solely directed to discovering (if he could) that God does not exist.

One day Guido set out from Or' San Michele and made his way along the Corse degli Adimari to San Giovanni, which he often did. At that time all round San Giovanni were large tombs of marble and many others, now in Santa Reparata; and Guido was walking among the porphyry columns there and the tombs and the door of San Giovanni, which was locked, when Messer Betto and his friends arrived on horse-back by way of the Piazza di Santa Reparata. Seeing Guido among the tombs, they said:

"Let us go and tease him."

Spurring their horses, as if to a playful attack, they were upon him before he noticed them; and one of them said:

"Guido, you refuse to be one of our group. But suppose you do find that God does not exist, what good will that be?"

Guido, seeing that they had caught him, retorted promptly:

"Gentlemen, you may say what you please of me in your own house."

And putting his hand on one of the large tombs he vaulted over it (for he was a very active man) and so escaped from them. They remained staring at each other, and saying that he was out of his wits, and that what he had said had no meaning, since the place where they were standing had no more to do with them than any other of the citizens, and least of all with Guido. But Messer Betto turned to them, and said:

"It is you who are witless if you have failed to understand his words. In a few words he has politely insulted us extremely. If you consider, you will see that these tombs are the house of the dead, because the dead are laid there and dwell in them; and he calls them our house to show that we and other foolish and illiterate men are worse than dead in comparison with him and other men of learning, and so therefore we are in our own house."

Then each of them understood what Guido had meant, and was filled with shame, and never tried to tease him again, and henceforth considered Messer Betto as a quick-witted and clever knight.

Tenth Tale

FRIAR CIPOLLA PROMISES CERTAIN PEASANTS THAT HE WILL SHOW THEM A FEATHER OF THE ANGEL GABRIEL. INSTEAD OF WHICH HE FINDS ONLY SOME CHARCOAL, WHICH HE TELLS THEM IS SOME OF THAT WHICH ROASTED SAINT LORENZO

EVERY other member of the party had now told a tale, and Dioneo knew it was his turn. So, without waiting for a formal command, he began as soon as silence had been imposed on those who were praising Guido's retort.

Charming ladies, although I have the privilege of speaking on any subject I like, today I do not intend to depart from the subject on which you have all spoken so admirably. Following in your footsteps I mean to show you how skilfully one of the friars of Saint Antonio escaped with quick resource from the trap which two young men had prepared for him. You will not mind if I take some time in telling the tale, for if you will look at the sun you will see it is still in mid-heaven.

As you may have heard, Gertaldo is a small town in the Val d'Elsa, and although it is small was in the past inhabited by noblemen and wealthy families. Now, one of the friars of Saint Antonio was for a long time accustomed to go there once a year for the excellent pasture he found, gathering alms which fools give such people. His name was Friar Cipolla (Onion); and perhaps was welcomed as much for his name as his devotion, for that country produces onions famous throughout Tuscany.

This Friar Cipolla was a little, red-haired, merry-faced fellow, and the biggest rogue in the world. He was quite uneducated, and yet was such a prompt and able speaker that anyone who did not know him would have thought him not only a great scholar but another Cicero or perhaps Quintilien. He was gossip or friend or acquaintance to nearly everyone in the district.

Now one day in the month of August he went there, as was his custom, and on Sunday morning when all the good men and women of the

surrounding villages had gathered there for Mass at the canonical hour, he turned to them and said:

“Ladies and gentlemen, as you know you are every year accustomed to send some of your wheat and oats to the poor of my lord Messer Saint Antonio, some little and some more, according to their ability and devotion, so that the blessed Saint Antonio will protect your cows and asses and pigs and flocks. In addition you—and especially those of you who are written down as members of our confraternity—are wont to pay the little debt which is paid once a year. Now I am sent by Messer Abbot to collect these things to the best of my ability. And so, with God’s blessing, when you hear the bells ring after Nones, you will gather outside the Church and I will preach to you as usual and you shall kiss the cross. Moreover, since I know you are all most devoted to my lord Messer Saint Antonio, as a special favour I shall show you a beautiful and most holy relic, which I myself have brought overseas from the Holy Land. This is nothing less than one of the feathers of the Angel Gabriel, which he dropped in the bedroom of the Virgin Mary when he came to make the Annunciation to her in Nazareth.”

So saying, he ended his speech, and returned to the Mass.

When Friar Cipolla was saying this there happened to be along with many others in the church two smart young fellows, named Giovanni del Bragoniera and Biagio Pizzini. After they had laughed heartily together over Friar Cipolla’s relic, they determined to play a trick on him over this feather, although they were close friends of his. They knew that Friar Cipolla was going to dine in the town that day, and when they thought he was at table they went into the street and made their way to the inn where the Friar was staying. Their plan was that Biagio should hold the Friar’s servant in talk, while Giovanni searched through his traps for the feather and took it away, to see what he would say to the people when he found it out.

Friar Cipolla had a servant, called by some Guccio Whale, by others Guccio Dauber, and by others Guccio Pig. He was such an artful fellow that Lippo Topo himself never did as much, while Friar Cipolla often joked about him with his friends, saying:

“My servant has nine qualities, and if one of them had existed in Solomon or Aristotle or Seneca, it would have been sufficient to ruin all their virtue, wisdom and holiness. Think what sort of a fellow he must be then, when he has nine such qualities, and neither virtue, wisdom nor holiness.”

And when he was asked what these nine qualities were, he would reply as follows:

“I’ll tell you. He’s lazy, lying and lousy; negligent, disobedient and evil-speaking; reckless, heedless and bad-mannered. In addition he has several other little faults not worth mentioning. But the most amusing thing about him is that wherever he goes he wants to have a wife and set up house. Since he has a large, black, greasy beard, he thinks himself so handsome and charming that all the women who see him must fall in love with him. If he were allowed, he would be after them and think of nothing else. True, he is a great help to me, for however secretly anyone wants to speak to me, he must hear his share of it; and if I am asked a question he’s so much afraid that I shall not know what to answer that he immediately replies ‘Yes’ or ‘No,’ as he thinks fitting.”

Friar Cipolla had left this servant behind at the inn, and had ordered him to take great care that nobody touched his possessions, especially his knapsacks which contained the sacred matters. But Guccio Dauber liked to be in a kitchen more than a nightingale among green boughs, especially when he knew there was a servant girl there. He had seen the host’s servant, a fat, round, stumpy, ugly girl with a pair of breasts like two baskets of dung, and a face like one of the Baronci, all sweaty, greasy and smoky. Leaving Friar Cipolla’s room and abandoning all his traps, Guccio slipped into the kitchen like a vulture after carrion; and although it was August he sat down by the fire and began to talk to the girl, whose name was Nuta. He told her he was a gentleman by procuration, that he had an incredible number of florins, apart from those he had to give other people which were considerable, and that he could do and say so many things that it was abracadabra marvellous. Without considering his hood which had enough grease on it to suffice the great cauldron of Altopascio, or his torn and patched doublet all sweat-stained round the collar and

armpits, with more spots and colours in it than ever were in a Tartar or Indian garment, or his burst-out shoes, or his rent hose, he talked to her as if he had been the Lord of Castiglione and said he meant to set her up with new clothes and take her out of her wretched service to be with someone else, and that in addition to having his great possessions she might hope for even better fortune. These and a great many other things which he most amorously told her came to nothing, like most of his undertakings of this sort.

Meanwhile the two young men discovered that Guccio Pig was occupied with Nuta, which delighted them, for half their errand was thus already accomplished. With no one to stop them they walked into Friar Cipolla's open room, and the first thing they took up to search was the knapsack containing the feather. Opening the knapsack they found a little casket wrapped up in a large piece of silk; and, opening the casket, they found it contained a feather from a parrot's tail, which they guessed at once was the feather he had promised to show the people of Certaldo.

Certainly in those times it was easy for him to impose on their credulity, for the luxuries of Egypt had not then entered Tuscany, except to a very small extent, as they have since done so widely to the grave harm of all Italy. But even if these feathers had been known to a few people, they were not known at all to the inhabitants of Certaldo. Thus, while the rough virtues of our ancestors endured, not only had they never seen a parrot, but had never even heard one mentioned.

The young men were delighted to find the feather, and took it out. In order not to leave the casket empty, they picked up some charcoal they saw in a corner of the room, and filled the casket with that. They then shut it, and replaced everything as they had found it. They then went off merrily with the feather, without anyone seeing them, and waited to hear what Friar Cipolla would say when he found the charcoal in place of the feather.

The simple-minded men and women who were at church returned home from Mass, after hearing that they were to see a feather of the Angel Gabriel after Nones. One neighbour told another, one gossip another, and when everyone had had dinner, so many men and women

flocked to the town to see the feather that the place could scarcely hold them.

After a good dinner and a little nap Friar Cipolla got up a little after Nones. Hearing that a great multitude of peasants had come to see the feather he ordered Guccio Dauber to come along at once to the bells and to bring the knapsacks with him. Although it was hard to tear Guccio away from the kitchen and Nuta, he went along with the required things. Drinking water had inflated his body so much that Friar Cipolla at once sent him inside the church door, where he began to ring the bells loudly.

When all the people were assembled, Friar Cipolla began his sermon without noticing that his effects had been tampered with; he said a great deal about his own deeds, and when he came to the point of showing the Angel Gabriel's feather, he first made them recite the general confession, then had two candles lighted, and having first put back his cowl he unwrapped the silk and brought out the casket.

After saying a few words in praise of the Angel Gabriel and his relic, he opened the casket. When he saw it full of charcoal, he did not at all suspect that it had been done by Guccio Whale (whom he knew to be incapable of such an effort of imagination) nor did he even blame him for not having prevented others from doing it; but he silently cursed himself for having allowed his property to be looked after by Guccio whom he knew to be negligent, disobedient, reckless and heedless. But yet he did not change colour, but lifted up his hands and face to Heaven, and said in a voice heard by all:

"O Lord, for ever let Thy power be praised!"

He then closed the casket and, turning to the people, said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, you must know that when I was still very young I was sent by my superior to the lands of the rising sun, with the express charge to find out the secrets of Porcelain, which although they cost nothing to mark, are more profitable to others than to us.

"So I set out from Venice and went along Greek Street, and thence by road through the kingdom of Garbo and through Baldacca, thence reaching Parione, and afterwards at some expense of thirst,—Sardinia.

But why do I name all these countries I passed through? Passing the inlet of St. George I came to Truffia and Buffia, lands thickly inhabited with many people. From thence I came to the land of Falsehood where I found a great many friars and other religious, who all scorned poverty for the love of God, took little account of others' troubles, followed their own interests and spent none but uncoined money in those lands. I then came to the country of the Abruzzi, where the men and women walk over the mountains in clogs and dress up pigs in their own guts. A little further on I found people who carry bread in sticks and wine in bags. And thence I came to the mountains of the Bacchi, where all the water runs backwards.

"In short, I travelled so far that I came to Turnip India, and I swear to you by my sacred gown that I saw pens fly, a thing incredible to those who have not seen it. Witness will be borne to this by the great merchant, Maso del Saggio, whom I found there cracking nuts and selling the husks retail.

"But since I could not find what I sought there, and since I should have had to proceed by water thereafter, I turned back to the Holy Land where in summer a cold loaf is worth four cents and a hot one nothing. There I found the Reverend Father Nonmiblasmete Sevoipiace, the most worthy patriarch of Jerusalem. He, from reverence to the habit of my lord Messer Saint Antonio which I wore, showed me all the relics he had about him. And there were so many of them that if I told you everything I should never get to the end. But not to disappoint you, I shall tell you of some of them.

"First of all he showed me the finger of the Holy Ghost, as entire and sound as it ever was, and the forelock of the Seraph which appeared to Saint Francesco, and a nail of one of the Cherubim, and a rib of the Verbum Caro made at the factory, and clothes of the Holy Catholic Faith, and some of the rays of the Star which appeared to the wise men in the East, and a phial of Saint Michael's sweat when he fought with the Devil, and the jaw-bones of Saint Lazarus, and many others.

"Now, since I freely gave him some of the eminences of Monte Morello in the vulgar tongue and certain chapters of the Caprezio which

he had long been seeking, he also shared his holy relics with me, and gave a tooth of the Holy Cross, and a little bottle containing some of the noise of the bells in Solomon's Temple, and the feather of the Angel Gabriel which I spoke of to you, and one of the clogs of Saint Gherardo da Villamagna which not long ago in Florence I gave to Gherardo di Bonsi who holds it in extreme reverence; and he also gave me some of the coals over which the most blessed martyr Saint Lorenzo was roasted. Which things I most devoutly brought back with me, and have them all.

"My superior indeed never allow me to exhibit them until they proved to be genuine. But now that certain miracles have been performed by them and letters received from the Patriarch, which both make them certain, I am permitted to show them. But I always carry them with me, for I am afraid to trust them to anyone else.

"I carry the Angel Gabriel's feather in a small casket to prevent it from being harmed, and the charcoal of roasted Saint Lorenzo in another. These caskets are so much alike that I often mistake one for the other, and that is what has happened to me today. For, while I thought I had brought the casket containing the feather, I find I have brought the casket with the charcoal. And I cannot consider this an error but rather the will of God, Who Himself placed that casket in my hand, thereby reminding me that the anniversary of Saint Lorenzo occurs a couple of days hence.

"Thus God, desirous that I should show you the charcoal, to reawaken in your minds the devotion you ought to feel for Saint Lorenzo, caused me to take up, not the feather I meant to show you, but the blessed charcoal sprinkled with the sweat of that most holy body. And, my blessed children, remove your hoods and come forward devoutly to behold them.

"But first of all I wish you to know that whosoever has the sign of the cross made on him with this charcoal may live for a whole year secure from fire, and may touch it without feeling it."

After saying this he sang the lauds of Saint Lorenzo, opened the casket, and displayed the charcoal. When the foolish multitude had gazed at the charcoal for a time, they pressed round Friar Cipolla in crowds, giving him larger offerings than usual and begging him to touch them with the

charcoal. So Friar Cipolla took the charcoal in his hand and made huge crosses on their white shirts and doublets and on the women's veils, vowing that, as he had often proved, the charcoal miraculously recovered in the casket the weight it lost in forming the crosses."

Thus, having made crusaders of all the people of Certaldo, to his own benefit, Friar Cipolla turned the tables on those who thought they had put him in a quandary by stealing his feather. The two young men were present at his preaching, and when they heard his new trick and how far-fetched it was and what he said, they laughed until their jaws ached. After the mob had departed, they went up to him and told him what they had done with the utmost merriment, and then gave him back his feather, which next year brought him in as much as the charcoal had done that year.

This tale pleased and amused the whole party, and there was much laughter at Friar Cipolla, and especially at his pilgrimage and the relics he saw and brought back with him.

When the tale ended, the queen's reign ended with it; so she stood up, took the garland from her head and laughingly placed it on Dioneo's, saying:

"Dioneo, it is time for you to see what a burden it is to rule and direct women. Do you be king and rule in such a way that when your government is over we are able to praise it."

Dioneo took the garland, and replied laughingly:

"I dare say you have often seen better kings than I am among the chess-men; and certainly if you will obey me as a king should be obeyed, I will make you enjoy that without which no entertainment is really merry. But enough of words; I shall reign as well as I can."

He then called the steward, as usual, and made arrangements for what needed to be done during his reign. After which he said:

"Worthy ladies, we have discussed human nature and its different adventures in so many ways that if Licisca just now had not suggested a new topic to me for tomorrow's tales, I should have had to think a long time before I found us a new theme. As you heard, she said she never

had a woman neighbour who was a virgin when she married, and she added that she knew all about the tricks which wives play on their husbands. Setting aside the first part, which is child's play, I think that the second should make a pleasant subject for discourse. Therefore, since Donna Licisca has provided the opportunity, I desire that tomorrow we tell tales of the tricks played by wives on their husbands, either for love's sake or for their own safety, whether found out or not."

Some of the ladies thought that this was a subject ill-befitting them, and asked that it should be altered. But the king replied:

"Ladies, I know what I have ordered you, as well as you do. What you point out is powerless to make me change my command, in view of the fact that the times are such that any kind of talk is allowed, provided men and women abstain from wrongdoing. You know that, owing to the misery of the times, the judges have deserted the tribunals, the laws both human and divine are silent, and full license is granted everyone to save his own life. So, if you enlarge your chastity a little in talk, not to follow it with immodest actions but to amuse yourselves and others, I do not see how anyone in the future can find any plausible reason for condemning you.

"Moreover, from the very first day until now your gathering has been most chaste, whatever may have been said here, and I do not think it has been stained (or, with God's help, ever will be stained) by any act. Who does not know your chastity? Why, in my opinion it would not fail at the threat of death, let alone from a few merry tales.

"To tell you the truth, if anyone heard that you refrained sometimes from talking of these trifles, they might suspect that the reason you would not talk of them was that you were guilty of them. In addition, it is a small honour to me, who have obeyed you in everything, that when you have made me your king you want to take the law out of my hands and not talk on the subject I have determined. So put off a suspicion more befitting evil minds than yours, and let everyone think of a good tale to tell."

When the ladies heard this, they said it should be as he pleased. And the king then gave everyone permission to do as he pleased until supper

time. The sun was still high, because the tales told had been brief; and when Dioneo and the other young men had sat down to play games, Elisa called the women to one side, and said:

“Since we are here, I want to take you to a place not far from here which I believe you have never seen. It is called the Ladies’ Valley, and I have never had time to take you there before today, when it is still early. So, if you like to come, I have no doubt that you will enjoy the place when you get there.”

The ladies said they were ready. Without saying anything to the young men, they called one of the maids, and set out. They had not much more than a mile to go before they came to the Ladies’ Valley. They entered it by a narrow path, on one side of which ran a clear brook; and you may imagine how happy they were to see it so delicious and so beautiful, especially in that hot weather. According to what I heard from some of them, the hollow of the valley was as smooth as if it had been made with compasses, although it appeared to be the work of Nature, not of human hands. It was a little more than half a mile in circumference, with six moderately sized hills about it, on the summit of each of which was a country house built like a fine castle. The sides of the hills sloped down to the plain like the tiers in a theatre, which we see from above diminishing gradually in circumference. The slopes looking towards the south were full of vines, olives, almonds, cherries and other fruit-bearing trees, without the waste of a hand’s breadth of land. The slopes facing north were covered with straight and very green woods of dwarf oaks, ashes and other trees. The smooth ground at the foot had no more entrances than that by which the ladies had come in, and was full of firs, cypresses, laurels and pines, as well ordered and arranged as if they had been planted by the best gardener. When the sun was high, little or none of its rays reached the ground through them, while underneath was fine turf sprinkled with purple and other coloured flowers.

What delighted them no less was a stream which issued from the valley dividing two of the hills, and fell with a sound delightful to hear over a ledge of natural rock and seemed to sprinkle everything with quicksilver. When it reached the small plain, it ran swiftly through a fair

channel to the middle, and there formed a tiny lake, such as is made as a fishing pool by citizens who have the right to do so.

This lake was no deeper than a man's chest. It was untroubled and its clear waters showed the bottom to be formed of fine gravel, which could have been counted by anyone who wished to do so. Not only could you see the bottom when you looked in but quantities of fish moving hither and thither, that it was a wonder as well as a pleasure to see them. Its border was the turf of the meadow, which was the more beautiful there since it was kept moist by the lake. The overflow fell into another little channel and thus ran out of the lower end of the valley.

The ladies went to this lake and after looking at everything and praising the place, they decided to bathe since it was so hot and the lake was in front of them and there was no chance of their being seen. They told their servant to go and stand in the path by which they had entered, and to warn them if anyone came; and then all seven undressed and entered the water which veiled their white bodies as thin glass would a red rose. Their movements did not muddy the water, and so they pursued and tried to catch the fishes, which had much ado to conceal themselves. After they had caught some in this merriment, they came out and dressed, unable to praise the place more than they had praised it. Then, as it was time to return, they set out home at a gentle pace, talking of the beauty of the valley. It was still early when they got back, and found the young men playing as they had left them. Said Pampinea laughingly:

"Well, we've deceived you today."

"And how?" asked Dioneo. "Are you freer in your acts than you wanted to be in words?"

"Yes," said Pampinea; and then told them where they came from, what the place was, how far distant, and what they had done there. Hearing of the beauty of the place, the king was anxious to see it, and therefore ordered supper immediately. And when it had been served to the content of all, the three young men and their servants left the ladies and went to the valley. None of them had ever been there before, and after they had looked at it all they declared it to be one of the most beautiful spots in the world. When they had bathed and dressed, they returned

home, since it was getting late. There they found the ladies singing a song by Fiammetta in which they bore their part; and then they discussed the Ladies' Valley with them.

The king then called the steward, and ordered several beds to be prepared and carried there next morning, in case anyone wished to rest or sleep there in the afternoon. He ordered lights, wine and sweetmeats, and commanded every man to dance. When Pamfilo had obeyed him with a dance, the king turned to Elisa and said gaily:

"Fair lady, today you honoured me with the crown, and I mean to honour you this evening by asking for a song. So sing one you like."

Elisa smilingly replied that she was happy to do so, and began in a soft voice as follows:

Love, if I escape your clutch, I do not think that any other grasp could hold me.

I was but a girl when I entered Love's battle, thinking it sweet and deepest peace, and laid my weapons on the ground, as one who yields him in good faith. But you, O treacherous tyrant, harsh and fierce, were swiftly upon me with your arms and clutch.

You bound me in your chains to him who was born to cause my death. He seized me, filled as I was with bitter tears and woes, and holds me in his prison. So cruel is his lordship that no sigh nor piercing plaint of mine can move him.

All my laments are scattered to the winds; none hears or cares to hear them. From hour to hour my torment grows, and life is weary to me—yet I cannot die. Ah, Lord, have pity on my woe, and do what I can never do—give him to me, bound captive in your chains.

If this you will not do, at least take from me the knotty bonds of hope. Ah! this I beg of you, my lord; if you will do it, I trust I shall be beautiful again, and throw off grief, and deck myself with white and scarlet flowers.

Elisa ended her song with a piteous sigh, and although they marvelled

at the words none of them could think what was the cause of her singing them. But the king, who was in a good humour, called for Tindaro, and bade him bring his bagpipes, to the sound of which they danced. But when the night was far advanced he bade them all go to rest.

HERE ENDS THE SIXTH DAY

The Seventh Day

HERE BEGINS THE SEVENTH DAY OF THE *DECAMERON*, WHEREIN, UNDER THE RULE OF DIONEIO, TALES ARE TOLD OF THE TRICKS PLAYED BY WIVES ON THEIR HUSBANDS, FOR LOVE'S SAKE OR FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY, WHETHER FOUND OUT OR NOT

EVERY star had vanished from the eastern sky except only that star we call Lucifer which still shone in the whitening dawn, when the steward arose and went to the Ladies' Valley with much baggage, and there arranged everything as his master had ordered. Very soon after his departure the king arose too, awakened by the noise of the baggage train and the horses, and had the ladies and the other two men called. The sun's rays had scarcely begun to dart forth when they all set out. Nor had the nightingales and other birds ever sung so gaily as they seemed to sing that morning, to whose accompaniment they went to the Ladies' Valley, where they were greeted by yet more birds which seemed to rejoice at their coming.

As they explored it once more and gazed at it anew, it seemed more beautiful to them even than before, since the time of day was even more favourable to its beauty. When they had broken their fast with good wine and delicate food, they began to sing (for they would not allow the birds to outdo them in song) while the valley echoed back the sounds they uttered; and the birds, determined not to be beaten, added new and sweet notes to the songs.

But when the dinner hour arrived the tables were set under the gay and beautiful trees near the lake, and at the king's pleasure they sat down and ate and watched the shoals of fish in the water, which they discussed as they watched them. And when dinner was over, the tables were removed; and they sang more songs even more lively than before. Beds were then set out in different parts of the little valley, and each was enclosed in curtains and canopies of French stuffs. The king then gave permission for anyone who chose to go and rest on them. Those who did

not want to sleep could choose any other amusement they liked. But when they were all afoot again, and it was time to begin tale-telling, the king had carpets laid on the grass not far from where they had dined near the lake, and then ordered Emilia to begin. And she began smilingly as follows:

First Tale

GIANNI LOTTERINGHI HEARS A KNOCK AT HIS DOOR BY NIGHT;
HE WAKES HIS WIFE AND SHE MAKES HIM THINK IT IS A GHOST.
THEY GO AND EXORCISE IT, AND THE KNOCKING CEASES

It would have pleased me better, Sir, if such had been your pleasure that some other person than I should have begun on the excellent topic of which we are to speak. But since you wish me to set an example to the others, I shall gladly do so. And I shall endeavour, dearest ladies, to say something which may be useful to you in the future; for if other women are as timorous as I am, especially of ghosts—though God knows I don't know what they are and never found anyone who did, and yet we all equally fear them—by carefully listening to my tale you will learn a good and holy prayer which will be most useful in driving them away when they come to you.

In the district of San Brancazio in Florence there lived a wool-comber named Gianni Lotteringhi, a man who was more skilled in his art than wise in other matters. Being a simple sort of man he was often made leader of the singers of Santa Maria Novella, and had to oversee their school. He filled many other such trivial offices, which gave him a high opinion of himself. This came about because he was a fairly wealthy man, and frequently made presents to the good friars. Now since he gave some of them hose, and some hoods, and some scapularies, they taught him useful prayers and the Paternoster in the vulgar tongue and the song of Saint Alesso, and the lament of San Bernardo, and the lauds of Madonna

Matelda, and the like idiocies, which he esteemed greatly, and made much use of for the salvation of his soul.

His wife was a very beautiful, clever and charming woman, by name Monna Tessa, the daughter of Mannuccio da la Cuculia. Perceiving that her husband was a simpleton, and having fallen in love with a handsome young man named Federigo di Neri Pegolotti who was also in love with her, she arranged with her maid servant that Federigo should come to speak with her in a house which her husband had in Camerata. She spent the whole summer in this place; and Gianni sometimes came to stay there, and next morning returned to his business and his church singing.

Federigo, who desired her greatly, went there one evening by arrangement when Gianni was away, and with great delight dined and slept with the lady; and as she lay in his arms that night she taught him six of her husband's psalms. But, since neither she nor Federigo intended this to be the last time they were together, and since they did not want to send the servant for him each time, they made the following arrangement: every day when he visited or returned from a house he owned near there, he was to look into a vineyard near her house where he would see the skull of a donkey on one of the poles in the vineyard, and when the skull was turned in the direction of Florence he could come to her that evening in all security, and if he did not find the door open, he was to knock softly three times and she would open it for him; but when he saw the donkey's skull turned towards Fiesole, he was not to come, because Gianni would be there. And in this way they often managed to see each other.

But on one occasion when Federigo was to sup with Monna Tessa it happened that Gianni arrived late at night, after saying that he would not come. The lady was greatly distressed, and he and she supped on a little salted meat which she had had cooked separately; she ordered the servant to put into a white napkin two boiled fowls and a number of new laid eggs and a flask of good wine, and to lay them down at the foot of a peach tree which stood beside a lawn in the garden, that could be reached without going through the house—a place where she had more than once supped with Federigo. And she was so upset about all this that she quite forgot to tell the servant to wait until Federigo came and to

tell him that Gianni was there, and that he was to take the things she had put in the garden. She and Gianni and the servant had not been long in bed when along came Federigo and tapped gently at the door, which was so near the bedroom that Gianni heard it at once, and so did the lady; but she feigned sleep to prevent any suspicion of herself in Gianni's mind. After waiting a little, Federigo tapped a second time, and Gianni in surprise poked his wife, and said:

"Tessa, can you hear what I hear? Someone seems to be knocking at our door."

The lady, who had heard it better than he had, pretended to wake up, and said:

"What? Eh?"

"I say," persisted Gianni, "that someone seems to be knocking at our door."

"Knocking?" said the lady. "Why, dear Gianni, don't you know what it is? It's the ghost which has terrified me so much these last nights that as soon as I hear it I put my head under the clothes, and haven't dared to look out again until it was broad daylight."

"Come now," said Gianni, "don't be afraid. Before we went to bed I said the *Te lucis* and the *Intemerata* and other prayers, and blessed the bedposts in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; so there's no need to fear that it can do us any harm, whatever power it has."

The lady did not want Federigo to feel any suspicions about her and be angry, so she determined to get up and let him know that Gianni was there. She therefore said to her husband:

"Your words may have made you safe, but I shall never think myself safe and sound until we have exorcised it while you are here."

"But how can it be exorcised?" said Gianni.

"I know how to exorcise it," said the lady, "for when I went to the special church service at Fiesole the other day, one of those women hermits—who is the most holy woman in the world, Gianni—seeing me so much terrified, taught me a holy and efficacious prayer; and she said she had made use of it more than once before she became a hermit, and

had always found it worked. But God knows I never dared to go and test it by myself; but now that you are here, let us go together and exorcise it."

Gianni said he was quite ready; so they got up and went softly to the door where Federigo, already rather suspicious, was waiting. Said the lady to Gianni:

"Spit when I tell you to."

"Right!" said Gianni.

The lady then began the exorcism, and said:

"Spirit, spirit, who goest by night, by the path you came here, depart. Go to the garden, and there at the foot of the peach tree you will find a filthy dirty thing and a hundred droppings of my hen. Put a cork in the wine flask and depart, and do no harm to me and my Gianni."

She then said to her husband: "Spit, Gianni"; and Gianni spat. Federigo outside the door heard all this, and immediately recovered from his jealousy and consequent ill-temper; indeed he was bursting with laughter and when Gianni spat he said softly:

"Your teeth!"

When the lady had exorcised the ghost three times in this way, she returned to bed with her husband.

Federigo, who had been expecting a supper and had none, understood the words of the exorcism perfectly well. He went into the garden, found the two fowls, the wine, and the eggs, at the foot of the large peach tree, took them home, and supped heartily. And afterwards, when he was with the lady, he often laughed over the exorcism with her.

True it is that some people say that the lady had turned the donkey's skull in the direction of Fiesole but that a workman passing through the garden gave it a knock with his stick, and turned it round in the direction of Florence, so that Federigo thought she had given the signal, and therefore came, and that the lady's exorcism was after this fashion:

"Spirit, spirit, depart in God's name, for I didn't turn the donkey's skull, someone else did, God punish him, and I'm here with my Gianni."

And so Federigo had to go away without supper or bed. But a neighbour of mine, a very old lady, tells me that both versions are true, ac-

ording to what she heard when a child. But the second did not happen to Gianni Lotteringhi but to a man named Gianni di Nello, who lived by the Porta San Piero, and was as big a fool as Gianni Lotteringhi.

And so, dear ladies, it is for you to choose which of the two you like best, or both of them. They are most useful in such cases, as you have just heard. Try them, and you may yet be glad of them.

Second Tale

PERONELLA HIDES HER LOVER IN A BUTT WHEN HER HUSBAND COMES HOME; AND WHEN THE HUSBAND SEES IT, SHE SAYS THAT SHE HAS SOLD IT TO A MAN WHO IS INSIDE IT SEEING WHETHER IT IS SOUND. THE LOVER JUMPS OUT, MAKES THE HUSBAND CLEAN IT, AND THEN CARRIES IT HOME

EMILIA's tale was listened to with great mirth, and the exorcism was commended by them all as both efficacious and holy. And when the tale was ended, the king ordered Filostrato to follow next, and he began as follows:

Dearest ladies, men, and especially husbands, play so many tricks upon you that whenever a woman plays one on her husband you should not only be glad that it has occurred and that you are hearing it talked of, but you should go about repeating it to everyone, so that men may know that women know as much about such things as they do. This cannot but be useful to you, for when any person knows that another is aware of such things he does not lightly attempt to deceive him. Who then can doubt that, when what we say on this topic today is known to men, it can fail to restrain them from such deceits, since they will discover that you too can play tricks when you wish? So I intend to tell you what a young woman—although of base extraction—did to her husband almost in a twinkling, to save herself from his anger.

Not long ago in Naples a poor man married a pretty and charming girl named Peronella. He was a bricklayer and she a wool-comber, and

together they earned enough to live moderately well. One day a handsome young man saw this Peronella, and liked her so much that he fell in love with her; and he made up to her so successfully in one way and another that he became familiar with her. They agreed upon the following arrangement for meeting: that when her husband got up each morning to go to work or to find work the lover should hide somewhere to see him depart, and when he had gone the lover was to come into the house, since Avorio, the place where they lived, was very little frequented. And this they often did.

But one day when the husband had gone out for the whole day and Giannello Strignario (this was the young man's name) had gone into the house and was with Peronella, the husband unexpectedly returned, and, finding the house barred from within, knocked; and, as he knocked, said to himself:

"O Lord, praise be to Thee for ever, for although Thou hast made me a poor man, Thou hast consoled me with a good and chaste young wife who bars the door from inside while I am away, so that nobody can enter and do her harm."

Peronella knew it was her husband from his way of knocking, and said:

"Alas, Giannello, I am as good as dead! Here is my husband—bad luck to him—and I don't know what his coming back means, for he never returns at this hour. Perhaps he saw you when you came in. But in any case, for the love of God get into this butt and be silent, and I will go and open the door, and find out what brings him back home so early today."

Giannello quickly got into the butt, and Peronella went down and opened the door to her husband, and said sharply:

"What new idea of yours is this to come home so early today? From what I can see, you don't intend to do any work today, since you've brought back your tools. If you go on like this, how are we to live? How shall we get our bread? Do you think I'll let you pawn my petticoat and other clothes? I do nothing but spin day and night and work my fingers to the bone to earn at least enough oil to keep our lamp burning. Hus-

band, husband, every woman in the place is amazed and mocks at me for all my labour, and you come back here with your hands dangling when you ought to be at work."

Then she began to weep, and went off again:

"Alas, poor me, unhappy me, what an unlucky hour I was born in! I could have married such a good young man and I wouldn't have him for the sake of a man who thinks nothing of the woman he has brought into his house. Other women enjoy themselves with their lovers, and there's not one of them but has two or three, and has a good time, and makes her husband think the moon is the sun. But poor me! because I'm good and pay no heed to such things, life goes wrong and I have bad luck. I don't know why I don't have lovers like other women. Understand me, husband. If I wanted to do wrong I could easily find someone to do it with, for there are plenty of gay young men in love with me, and they've offered me money or dresses or jewels if I preferred, but I'd never take anything of the kind, for I'm not the daughter of a woman of that sort; and here you come back home when you ought to be at work."

"Wife," said the husband, "don't be angry, for the love of God. You must believe that I know your value, and indeed only this morning I partly realised it. I did indeed start out to work this morning, but all this shows that you did not know, any more than I did, that today is the festival of Santo Galeone, and as there's no work to be done I've come home at this early hour. And yet I've found a way to provide us with bread for more than a month, for the man you see here with me has bought the butt, which, as you know, has been littering up the house, and he's giving me five florins for it."

"And all that's the more woe to me," said Peronella, "you're a man, and go about the world and should know things, and you've sold the butt for five florins, while a little woman like me who hardly ever goes out of the door and knew what a nuisance the butt was in the place, has sold it for seven florins to a man who, when you returned, had just got inside to see if it were sound."

The husband was more than delighted when he heard this, and said to the man who had come for the butt:

"God be with you, good man. You hear how my wife has got seven florins for the butt which you would only pay five for."

"Very well," said the man, and went away.

Then Peronella said to her husband:

"Come along, since you are here, and attend to our affairs."

Giannello had kept his ears pricked up to know if he had to fear or invent anything, and since he had heard what Peronella said he jumped quickly out of the butt, and pretending to know nothing about the husband's return said:

"Where are you, good woman?"

The husband came up to him, and said:

"Here I am, what do you want?"

"Who are you?" said Giannello. "I want the lady with whom I made the bargain for this butt."

"You can do what you want with me," said the good man, "I'm her husband."

Then Giannello said:

"The butt seems quite sound to me, but I think you must have kept wine lees in it, for it's all encrusted with some dry matter which I can't scrape off with my nails. But I won't take it unless I first see it cleaned."

"The bargain shan't be called off for that," said Peronella. "My husband will clean it all."

"Yes, indeed," said the husband.

He put down his tools, stripped himself to his shirt-sleeves, got a light and a scraper and, getting into the butt, began to scrape it. Peronella, as if she wanted to see what he was doing, put her head and shoulder and one arm into the large opening of the butt, and kept saying:

"Scrape here, scrape there, and there too. A little bit's left there."

As she stood there pointing things out to her husband, Giannello, who had scarcely satisfied his appetite that morning when the husband returned, saw that he could not do so, as he wanted, and determined to do it as he could. He went up behind her as she stood over the mouth of the butt, and, even as the unbridled and love-heated stallions of Parthia assail the mares, so did he satisfy his young desire, which was brought to its

summit and himself removed precisely at the moment when the scraping of the butt was ended, and Peronella drew her head out, and the husband climbed out. And so Peronella said to Giannello:

“Take the light, good man, and see if it’s cleaned as you want.”

Giannello looked in, said it was all right, and that he was content. He paid the seven florins, and had the butt taken to his house.

Third Tale

FRIAR RINALDO LIES WITH HIS GODCHILD’S MOTHER. THE HUSBAND FINDS HIM WITH HER, AND THEY MAKE HIM BELIEVE THAT THE FRIAR IS CHARMING AWAY THE CHILD’S WORMS

FILOSTRATO’s reference to the Parthian mares was not so obscure that the ladies failed to laugh at it, although they pretended to be laughing at something else. When the king saw the tale was ended, he ordered Elisa to speak next, and she began obediently as follows:

Charming ladies, the exorcism of Emilia’s ghost reminds me of another exorcism about which I shall tell you, for although it is not so good as hers, I cannot at present think of any other tale on our subject.

You must know that there was in Siena a pleasant young man of honourable family, by name Rinaldo. He was deeply in love with the beautiful wife of a rich neighbour. He hoped that if he could manage to speak with her he could obtain what he desired from her, but could find no way of doing it. However, as the lady was pregnant, he thought it a good idea to become the child’s godfather; so he made up to the husband, presented his request in the best way he could, and was accepted.

Rinaldo thus became the godfather of Madonna Agnesa’s child, and so had a better pretext for seeing her, and speaking to her. He therefore told her in words what she had long before known by the language of his eyes. But this was very little help to him, although the lady was not displeased to hear his declaration.

Not long afterwards, for some reason or other, Rinaldo became a friar; and whatever may have been the satisfaction he found in that profession, he persevered in it. Now, although at the time when he became a friar he put aside his love for this lady along with other vanities, yet in the course of time he returned to them all, without however putting off his gown. He delighted to dress himself in fine cloth and to be handsome and well furnished in everything about him, and to make songs and sonnets and ballads, and to sing, and to occupy himself with many similar things.

But why do I say so much of this Friar Rinaldo? Are they not all alike? Ah! shame of this wicked world! These friars do not blush to appear fat and florid, curious in their garments and all their possessions. They strut along, not like doves, but like cocks with their crests up. Their cells are full of boxes of ointments and creams, boxes of various sweetmeats, phials and bottles of distilled waters and oils, flasks of Malvoisie and Greek wine and other very expensive wines, so that they look less like friars' cells than the shops of apothecaries and perfumers. What is worse, they are not ashamed to let it be known that they are gouty, and think that other people do not know that fasting, plain and scanty fare, sober living, make thin, meagre and more healthy men. And if such men fall ill, it is not with the gout, which is medicined by chastity and all the other abstinences befitting a friar's life. They think that other people do not know that a strict life, long vigils, prayers and scourgings should make men look pale and sad, and that San Domenico and San Francesco never had four cloaks for one, and never dressed themselves in fine cloth but with coarse undyed wool, to keep out the cold and not to make a display. May God dispose of these things and enlighten the simple souls who provide them!

Thus, Friar Rinaldo returned to his former desires, and began to visit the lady frequently. As his boldness grew, he began to urge her more insistently than ever to satisfy his desires. The lady, being thus solicited and perhaps finding Friar Rinaldo a more handsome man than she had thought at first, one day when she was more stiffly urged had recourse to what all women do when they want to yield what is asked of them, and said:

"What! Friar Rinaldo, do friars do such things?"

"Madonna," replied Friar Rinaldo, "when I take this gown off my back—which I should be very glad to do—I am a man like other men, and not a friar."

The lady pretended to laugh, and said:

"Ah! But you are my child's godfather. How could it be, then? It would be very wrong; and I have often heard it said that this is a great sin. Otherwise, I would certainly do what you want."

"You are very foolish," said Friar Rinaldo, "if you let that stop you. I don't say it isn't a sin, but God pardons the greatest sins to those who repent. But tell me, who is more nearly related to your child, I who held him at the font, or your husband who begat him?"

"My husband," replied the lady.

"You are right," said the friar, "and does not your husband lie with you?"

"Why, yes," said the lady.

"Very well," said the friar, "I am less nearly related to your child than your husband is, and so I ought to be able to lie with you like your husband."

The lady knew nothing of logic and required little persuasion; so she believed or pretended to believe that what the friar said was true, and replied:

"How can I reply to your learned arguments?"

And immediately, without any regard for their spiritual relationship, she prepared to do him pleasure. Nor was this the only time, for under cover of their spiritual relationship—which gave them more opportunity, since the suspicion was less—they often lay together. One day Friar Rinaldo came to the lady's house and found no one else there except a pretty and very agreeable maid-servant. He sent his companion off to the dove-cote with the maid-servant, to teach her the Lord's Prayer, and himself went with the lady and her little child to her bedroom, locked the door, and began to enjoy himself with her on a day-bed. While they were in this posture, the husband came into the house without any of them

hearing him, went to the bedroom door, knocked, and called to his wife. When Madonna Agnesa heard him, she said:

"I am as good as dead, here's my husband! He'll now see the reason for our familiarity."

Friar Rinaldo was undressed—he was in his tunic, without gown or scapulary.

"You say truly," said he, "if I were dressed, we might find a way out. But if you open the door, and he finds me here like this, no excuse is possible."

A sudden idea flashed on her mind, and she said:

"Put on your clothes. As soon as you're dressed take your godchild in your arms, listen carefully to what I say to my husband, so that your tale tallies with mine, and leave the rest to me."

The husband was still knocking, and the wife called out:

"I'm coming."

She got up, and went and opened the door and said cheerfully:

"Husband, Friar Rinaldo, the child's godfather is here; and indeed he was sent by God. If he had not come, we should certainly have lost our child."

The silly man was amazed to hear this, and said:

"What? What?"

"O husband," said the lady, "he fell into a swoon, and I thought he was dead, and did not know what to do or to say. But Friar Rinaldo, the child's godfather, happened to come in, picked the child up, and said: 'Gossip, there are worms in his body which oppress his heart, and they would have killed him; but don't be afraid, I will speak a charm and kill them all, and when I go away you will find the child as healthy as ever.' We wanted you to say certain prayers, but the girl could not find you; so he made his companion say them in the highest part of the house, and he and I came to this room. Only the child's mother could do him this service; and we locked the door to prevent anyone else from disturbing us. He still has the child in his arms, and I think he is only waiting for his companion to finish his prayers, which I think must be done, for the child has already regained his senses."

The silly man was so occupied with love for his child that he believed it all and did not see his wife's deceit. He heaved a deep sigh, and said:

"I want to go and see him."

"Don't go yet," said the wife, "or you will spoil what has been done. Wait. I'll see if you can come in, and I'll call you."

Friar Rinaldo by now was dressed. He had heard everything, had taken the child into his arms, and arranged matters as he wished.

"Gossip," said he, "do I not hear your husband?"

"Yes, Messer," replied the silly man.

"Then come here," said Friar Rinaldo.

The silly man went in, and Friar Rinaldo said:

"Take your son, who by God's grace is in good health, although just now I thought you would not see him alive at sundown. You must make a wax statue of the child's size to the glory of God and place it in front of the figure of Santo Ambrugio, through whose merits God has granted you this favour."

Seeing his father, the child ran to him affectionately, as little children do. The father picked him up, weeping as if he had snatched the child from the grave, and kissed him, and thanked the godfather for having saved his life.

Friar Rinaldo's companion had taught the maid-servant four Lord's Prayers instead of one, and had given her a purse of white thread which a nun had given to him, and had made the girl his devotee. He had heard the silly husband calling at the wife's door, and had gone down softly to see and hear what was going on.

Seeing things had turned out well, he came forward, entered the room, and said:

"Friar Rinaldo, I have said all four of the prayers you told me to recite."

"Brother," said Friar Rinaldo, "you have good wind, and did well. For my part, when the child's father arrived, I had only said two. But God has rewarded your labours and mine and has granted the grace that the child should be healed."

The silly husband then sent for good wines and sweetmeats, and enter-

tained the godfather, and his companion, who needed it more than the former. Then he left the house with them, and took leave of them, and went immediately to have the wax statue made, which was fastened in front of the figure of Santo Ambrugio, but not the one at Milan.

Fourth Tale

ONE NIGHT TOFANO SHUTS HIS WIFE OUT OF THE HOUSE AND, SINCE HE WILL NOT LET HER IN FOR ALL HER ENTREATIES, SHE THROWS A LARGE STONE INTO THE WELL AND MAKES HIM THINK SHE HAS DROWNED HERSELF. TOFANO RUSHES OUT OF THE HOUSE TO THE WELL. SHE RUNS IN AND LOCKS THE DOOR AND SCREAMS INSULTS AT HIM

WHEN Elisa's tale was ended, the king turned immediately to Lauretta to show it was his pleasure she should speak next; and accordingly she began as follows:

O Love, how great and varied are your powers! What resources and shrewdness you have! What philosopher, what artist ever could or will be able to show the sagacity, the shrewdness, the skill which you suddenly bestow upon those who follow your footsteps! Indeed the knowledge of all others is tardy compared with yours, as we may perceive from the tales which have already been told. To these, amorous ladies, I shall add one concerning what was accomplished by a simple woman who could have been taught by none save Love.

In Arezzo there lived a rich man named Tofano. His wife was a very beautiful woman named Ghita, of whom he very soon became jealous for no special reason. She was angry when she observed this, and often asked him what was the reason for his jealousy. But since he could give only poor and general reasons, the lady made up her mind to make him die of the sickness which he dreaded without any reason.

She had noticed that she was courted by a young man, whom she considered attractive, and cautiously began to come to an understanding with him. Things advanced so far between them that they needed only to transform their words into acts, and the lady thought of a way to do this. Among her husband's other bad habits was drinking, and she not only commended it, but often artfully urged him to it. She went about it so well that she was able to make him drunk nearly every time she wished; and when she saw he was drunk, she put him to bed, and went to her lover, and this not once but many times. And she felt such confidence in the drunkenness of her husband that she not only brought her lover to her own house, but often went and spent most of the night in his house, which was not far distant.

The amorous lady went on in this way for some time when the husband noticed that although she encouraged him to drink, she hardly ever drank herself. So he suspected that the lady made him drunk so that she could do what she wanted while he was asleep. He determined to test whether his suspicions were justified, and so, one evening, after having drunk nothing at all, he pretended in speech and behaviour to be completely drunk. The lady was deceived, and thinking he needed no more drink quickly put him to bed. After which, as she had often done before, she left the house and went to her lover's house, and remained there until midnight.

When Tofano found the lady had gone, he got up and locked the door from the inside, and went and sat at one of the windows so that he could see his wife when she returned and let her know that he had found her out. At last she came home, and found herself locked out. In great distress she tried to force her way in, but Tofano, after letting her try for a time, called to her:

"Woman, you labour in vain, for you cannot enter here again. Go back to the place whence you come, and be sure you shall never return until, in the presence of your relatives and neighbours, I have done you the honour befitting this affair."

The lady begged him to let her in for the love of God, saying that she did not come from where he thought but from sitting up with a woman

neighbour because the nights were so long she could not sleep all through them, and could not sit up alone in the house. Her entreaties were of no avail, because the fool was in a mood to let all the people of Arezzo know his shame, when none of them knew it. Finding her prayers useless, the lady began to threaten, and said:

"If you don't let me in, I'll make you the unhappiest man alive."

"And what can you do to me?" retorted Tofano.

The lady, whose wits were sharpened by love, replied:

"Before I will endure the shame you are determined wrongfully to inflict on me, I'll throw myself into the well here, and when my body is found everyone will think that you threw me in when you were drunk. So you will either have to fly and lose all you have and become a thief, or your head will be cut off for murdering me, which indeed you will have done."

But these words had no effect on Tofano's silly determination. And so the lady said:

"Ah! I can't endure your scorn; may God forgive you; I leave my spindle here for you to take up."

The night was so dark that people could scarcely see one another in the street; so the lady went to the well, took up a large stone lying beside it and let the stone fall into the well, shrieking, "God forgive me!" The stone fell into the water with a loud splash; and when Tofano heard it, he thought that she had thrown herself in. Seizing the bucket and the rope, he rushed out of the house to the well to rescue her. The wife had hidden herself near the door, and ran into the house and locked the door as he rushed out to the well. She went to the window, and said:

"You should drink water when you're drinking other things, and not the night afterwards."

At this mockery Tofano ran back to the door, but not being able to get in, told her to open the door. The lady now ceased talking in the low tones she had hitherto used, and almost shrieked at him:

"By God's Cross, you foul drunkard, you shall not come in tonight! I can't endure your habits any longer—everyone must see the sort of man you are and at what hours you come home."

Tofano in his rage also began to shout insults at her, so that the neighbours, hearing the noise, got up and went to their windows, and asked what it was all about. The lady began to cry, and said:

"It's this wicked man, who comes home drunk at night or else sleeps in taverns and comes home at this hour. I've put up with it for a long time, but I can't stand it any longer, so I've shamed him by locking him out of the house to see whether that will not amend him."

The fool Tofano, on the other hand, told them what had really happened, and threatened her violently. Then the lady said to the neighbours:

"See what kind of a man he is! What would you say if I were in the street as he is, and he in the house as I am? God's faith, I doubt you will believe what he says. You can now judge of his wits. He says I have done what I think he must have done himself. He thought he would frighten me by throwing something into the well. Would to God he had thrown himself in and been suffocated, and then the wine he had drunk too much of would have been well watered."

All the neighbours, both men and women, then began to reprove Tofano, and laid the blame on him, and abused him for what he said against his wife. In short, the noise spread from neighbour to neighbour until it reached the lady's relatives. Hearing of the affair from different persons, they rushed up and beat Tofano until he was bruised all over. They then entered the house, took the lady's property, and returned home with her, threatening Tofano with worse to follow. Seeing things had turned out ill and that his jealousy had led him astray, and having still some affection for his wife, he employed his friends as intermediaries, and managed to arrange that she should come back to him in concord, promising her that he would be jealous no longer. Moreover, he gave her permission to do anything she chose, but so discreetly that he should know nothing about it. Thus, after strife was peace. Long life to love, and death to jealousy and all cuckolds!

Fifth Tale

A JEALOUS HUSBAND DISGUISES HIMSELF AS A PRIEST AND HEARS HIS WIFE'S CONFESSION; SHE GIVES HIM TO UNDERSTAND THAT SHE LOVES A PRIEST WHO COMES TO HER EVERY NIGHT. WHILE THE HUSBAND WATCHES AT THE DOOR, SHE BRINGS HER LOVER IN THROUGH THE ROOF AND LIES WITH HIM

WHEN Lauretta had finished her tale and everyone had praised the lady for having done what was right and befitting such a fellow, the king, not to lose time, turned to Fiammetta, and gaily laid upon her the task of telling the next tale. Accordingly she began thus:

Most noble ladies, the preceding tale induces me to tell another of a jealous husband, for I think that whatever their wives do to them—especially when they are jealous without cause—is well done. And if the lawmakers had well considered the matter I think that they should have imposed no further penalty upon women who thus defend themselves than they impose upon those who have committed no fault; for jealous husbands are plotters against the lives of young women and most diligent seekers after their death.

Women pass the whole of the week shut up in the house, attending to domestic and family affairs, hoping—like everyone else—for a little rest and amusement on feast days, such as are enjoyed by field labourers, town artisans and the rulers of courts. Thus God did when he rested the seventh day, and thus we are required to do by civil and canon laws which, considering the glory of God and the common weal, have laid down distinctions between working days and feast days. But jealous husbands will in no wise consent to this; and by keeping their wives more closely shut up they make the days, which for others are happy days, more miserable and more painful than other days for their wives. How wretched this is for the poor women, only those who have endured it can know. Therefore in conclusion I say that the wrong which a woman does a jealous husband is not to be condemned but rather commended.

In Armenia there was a merchant, rich both in money and goods, whose wife was a most beautiful woman. He became madly jealous of her, for no other reason than this—that he loved her greatly and thought her very beautiful and knew that she did all she could to please him, and so he thought every other man must love her and think her beautiful, and that she also tried to please them—which is the reasoning of a silly man with little feeling. Being thus jealous, he kept such watch over her and restrained her so closely that many a man who is condemned to death is less jealously watched by his warders.

The lady was not allowed to go to marriages or to feasts or to church or to set foot out of the house; nor did she even dare go to the window or look out of the house for any reason. Thus her life was miserable, and she endured it the more impatiently since she knew she was guiltless. Therefore, seeing herself wrongfully harmed by her husband she determined (if she could) to give him some reason for it. Since she could not go to the window and thus have an opportunity of showing herself pleased with the love of any man who attracted her as he passed through the countryside, and since she knew there was a handsome and pleasing young man in the house next door, she thought that if there were any crack in the wall dividing the two houses she would look through it so often that she would see the young man and be able to speak to him and to give him her love if he wanted it. Moreover she determined that, if it were possible, she would sometimes be with him and in this way endure her wretched life until the devil of jealousy left her husband. When her husband was out, she searched up and down the wall, and at last found a fissure in an unfrequented part of the house. Looking through it, although she had difficulty in seeing plainly, she was able to make out that the fissure looked into a room; and she said to herself: "If this is Filippo's room, my task is half completed." (Filippo was the name of the young man.) And so she made her servant—who was sorry for her—look cautiously through the fissure, and thus found that the young man did indeed sleep there alone.

She therefore went frequently to the crack in the wall and, when she heard the young man there, dropped in gravel and splinters until he came

up to see what the noise was. She then called softly to him, and he, recognising her voice, answered her. She soon told him what was in her mind, and the young man in great delight widened the fissure on his side of the wall, but in such a way that nobody would notice it. There they often talked together and touched hands, but could advance no further owing to the close watch kept by the jealous husband.

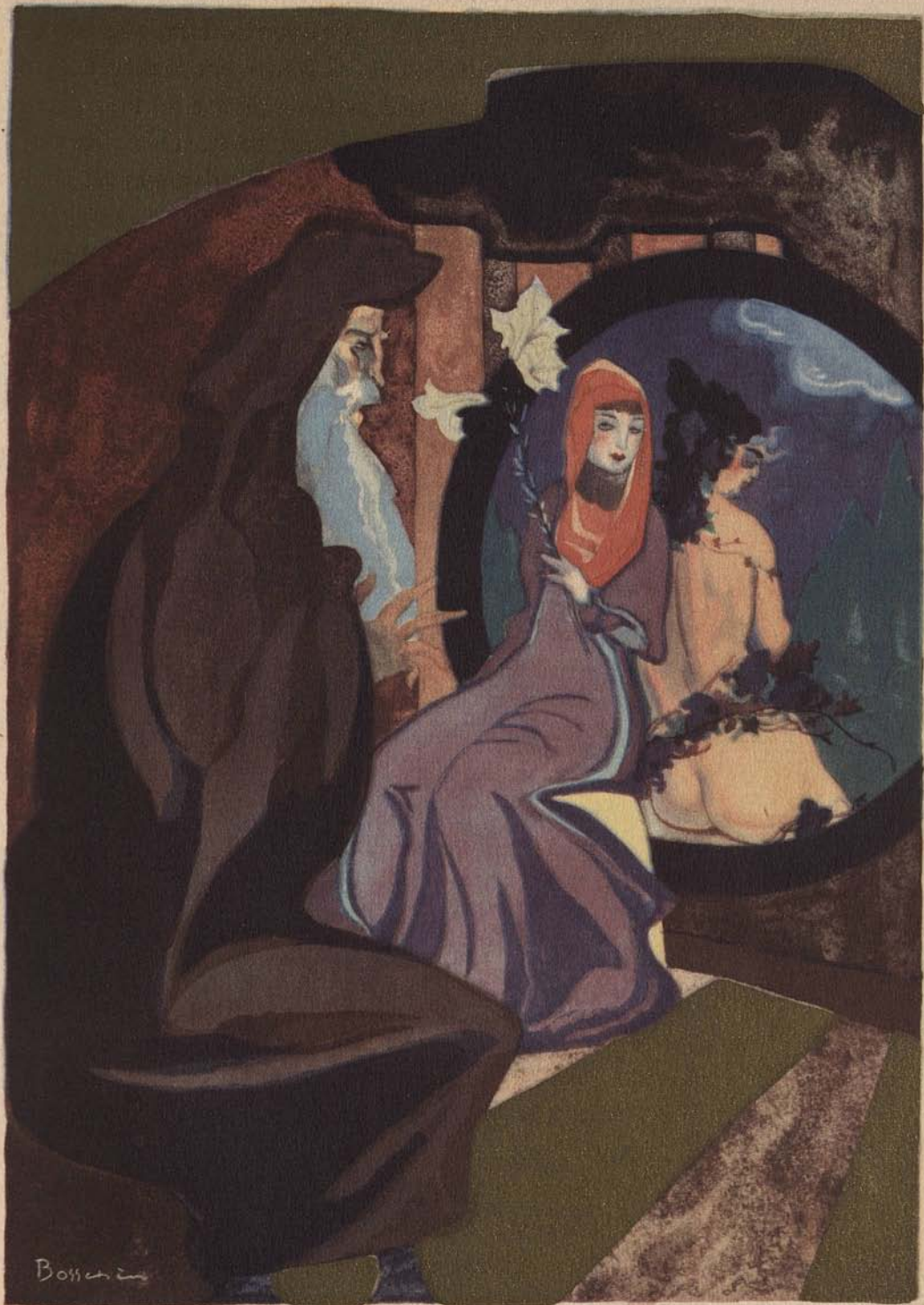
Christmas was approaching, and the lady told her husband that, with his permission, she would go to church and confess and take the sacrament like other Christians. But the jealous husband said:

“What sins have you committed that you need to confess?”

“What!” said the lady. “Do you think I am a saint, because you keep me so closely mewed up? You know well enough that I commit sins like every other living person. I shan’t tell them to you, but to a priest.”

These words aroused the jealous husband’s suspicions, and he thought he would try to find out what sins she had committed, and hit upon a way of doing so. He replied that she might do as she wished, but that she was not to go to any other church save their own private chapel, that she was to go there in the morning, and confess either to the chaplain or to a priest whom the chaplain would bring there, and not to anybody else; and that then she was to return to the house. The lady half guessed his plan, but without saying anything further replied that it should be done in this way.

On Christmas morning the lady got up at dawn and dressed herself and went to the church selected by her husband. The jealous husband also got up and went to the same church before she got there. He had already arranged with the priest there to be allowed to do what he wanted, so he put on one of the priest’s gowns with a large falling hood such as we see priests wear, and having pulled the hood over his face he sat down in the choir. When the lady came to the church, she asked for the priest, who came, and in response to the lady’s request for a confessor said that he could not hear her confession himself but that he would send her a brother priest. And so he departed, and sent the jealous husband to her. He came to her highly pleased with himself; but although the day was not very bright and he had pulled the cowl far over his eyes, his disguise



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was not so good as to prevent the lady from recognizing him at once. As soon as she saw who he was, she said to herself: "Praised be God, the jealous man has turned priest; but let him go, I'll give him what he's looking for."

She pretended not to know him, and kneeled at his feet. Master Jealous had put some little stones in his mouth to impede his speech and prevent his wife from recognizing his voice, and thought he had disguised himself so well in other respects that she could not possibly recognize him. When they came to the confession, the lady among other things told him that she was married and in love with a priest, who came and lay with her every night. To hear this was a dagger in the heart of the jealous husband; and if he had not wanted to hear more, he would have abruptly ended the confession and gone away. But he remained seated, and asked the lady:

"What? But does not your husband lie with you?"

"Yes, messer," replied the lady.

"Well then," said the jealous husband, "how can the priest lie with you too?"

"Messer," said the lady, "I don't know what arts the priest uses, but however closely a door is locked, it opens as soon as he touches it. And he also tells me that when he comes to the bedroom door, he repeats certain words which throw my husband into a deep sleep; and when he knows my husband is asleep, he opens the door and comes in and lies with me, and this never fails."

"Madonna," said the jealous husband, "this is ill done, and must not continue."

"Messer," said the lady, "I think that is impossible, because I love him too much."

"Then," said the jealous husband, "I cannot absolve you."

"That grieves me," said the lady. "I did not come here to tell you lies. If I thought I could do what you require, I would say so."

"In truth, madonna," said the jealous husband, "I am sorry for you, for I see you are damning your soul by this. To help you I will labour on your behalf with special prayers to God which may assist you. From time

to time I will send you one of my acolytes, and you will tell him whether the prayers have aided you or not; if they have helped you, we will proceed further."

"Messer," said the lady, "do not send anyone to the house, for if my husband knew it, it would not go out of his head for anyone in the world but that the man came for some ill purpose, he is so jealous, and I should have no peace with him for a year."

"Madonna," said the jealous husband, "have no fear; I can certainly arrange it in such a way that you will never have a harsh word from him about it."

"If that is what you can do," said the lady, "I am content."

She ended her confession and received her penance; then arose and went to hear Mass. The jealous husband, suffocating at his misfortune, threw off the priest's robe and returned home, eager to find some means of catching his wife and the priest together so that he could play a shrewd trick on them both.

The lady returned from church, and saw by her husband's face that she had given him something to think about; but he tried to conceal from her what he had done and what he thought he had found out. He determined to wait for the priest that night at the street door, and said to the lady:

"Tonight I must go out and sup. I shall sleep away from home. So lock the street door and the door on the stairway and the bedroom door, and go to bed when you like."

"Very well," replied the lady.

As soon as she had time she went to the crack in the wall and made the accustomed signal, and as soon as Filippo heard it he came towards her and the lady told him what she had done that morning, and what her husband had said after dinner, and added:

"I am certain he will not leave the house, but will stand guard over the doorway; therefore do you find some way of getting into the house tonight by the roof, so that we can be together."

"Leave that to me, madonna," said the young man, delighted at all this.

When night came the jealous husband armed himself and hid in a ground floor room, while the lady locked all the doors, particularly that

on the stairway so that the husband could not get in. And when the young man thought it a fitting time he cautiously came into the house from his side; the two then went to bed together and gave each other pleasure and a good time, and when it was day the young man returned to his own house.

The jealous husband, supperless and afflicted and dying of cold, spent almost the whole night, weapon in hand, waiting for the priest to come to the door. Towards daytime he fell asleep, unable to watch any longer. He got up about the hour of Terce when the outer door of his house was open, and pretended to come from somewhere outside, entered his house and breakfasted. A little later he sent a small boy, disguised as if he were the acolyte of the priest who had heard her confession, to ask if the person she knew of had been to her again. The lady, who saw quite well from whom the messenger was, replied that he had not come that night, and that if he acted in this way she might come to forget him, although she did not want to do so.

What more need I tell you? The jealous husband wasted many nights waiting for the priest at the entrance, and the lady continued to enjoy herself with her lover. Finally, the husband could endure it no longer and angrily asked his wife what she had said to the priest the morning she had gone to confession. The lady replied that she would not tell him, since it was neither right nor proper that she should do so.

"You vile woman," said the jealous husband, "despite you, I know what you said to him. And it is perfectly fitting that I should know who is the priest with whom you are so much in love and who lies with you every night by enchantment; otherwise I shall cut your veins."

The lady replied that it was not true that she was in love with any priest.

"What!" said the jealous husband. "Did you not say this and that to the priest who confessed you?"

"Not for him to tell it you," said the lady, "but it suffices if you were present; and yes, I did say so."

"Then," said the jealous husband, "tell me who the priest is, and quickly."

The lady smiled and said: "It pleases me when a wise man is led by a simple woman as a sheep is led to the slaughter by its horns, although you are not a wise man and have not been since the hour when you allowed the evil spirit of jealousy to enter you without knowing why. And the more foolish and stupid you are, the less is my glory.

"Do you think, husband, that I am as blind in the eyes of my head as you are in the eyes of your mind? Indeed no. When I saw you I knew you were the priest who confessed me, and I decided to give you what you were looking for, and did give it you. But if you had been as wise as you think you are, you would not have attempted to know your good wife's secrets that way; moreover without nourishing useless suspicions, you would have perceived that what I confessed was the truth, and yet there was no sin in it.

"I told you I loved a priest; and you, whom I love so unwisely, had you not made yourself into a priest? I said that no door of my house could remain locked when he wanted to lie with me; and what door of your house has ever been locked against you when you wanted to come in where I was? I said that the priest lay every night with me; and when did you not lie with me? Every time you sent the messenger to me when, as you know, you had not been with me, I replied that the priest had not been with me.

Who but you, who have allowed yourself to be blinded with jealousy, would have been so foolish as to misunderstand this? You spent the night watching the house door, and thought you had persuaded me that you had gone out to supper and to spend the night.

"Repent now, and become a man as you used to be, and do not allow yourself to be duped by those who know your ways as I do, and give up this tedious watch you have been keeping. I swear to God that if I wanted to give you horns, you might have a hundred eyes instead of the two you have, and yet I should find means to have my pleasure without your knowing it."

The jealous husband, who had thought himself very clever in finding out his wife's secret, found he had been mocked at, and without making any further reply felt convinced that his wife was a wise and chaste

woman. He put away his jealousy at the very moment when he ought to have taken it on, just as he had been jealous when there was no necessity. So the clever woman, having now permission to do as she liked, no longer brought her lover in over the roof like a tom-cat, but through the door, and by acting prudently often enjoyed herself with him and lived a happy life.

Sixth Tale

MADONNA ISABELLA IS WITH LEONETTO AND AT THE SAME TIME IS VISITED BY ONE MESSER LAMBERTUCCIO. HER HUSBAND COMES HOME; SHE SENDS MESSER LAMBERTUCCIO OUT OF THE HOUSE WITH A DRAWN SWORD IN HIS HAND, WHILE HER HUSBAND GUARDS LEONETTO HOME

FIAMMETTA's tale pleased them all greatly, and they all said the lady had acted quite rightly and had done what such a man deserved. The king then ordered Pampinea to speak next, and she began as follows:

Many people, speaking unthinkingly, say that love destroys good sense and makes a lover a fool. To me this seems a foolish opinion. It has been proved so by the tales already told, and I intend to prove it once more.

Our city, so well provided with all good things, contained a young and beautiful woman who was the wife of a valiant and worthy knight. It often happens that a man grows tired of one sort of food, and desires variety. Thus, the lady was not content with her husband, and fell in love with a young man named Leonetto, who was pleasant and well behaved, although not of noble birth; and he similarly fell in love with her. As you know it rarely happens that there is no result when both of the parties want the same thing, so no long time elapsed before their love was fulfilled.

But as she was a fair and charming woman, a knight named Messer Lambertuccio fell in love with her also; and as she thought him a displeasing and tedious man, nothing could induce her to like him. He sent

many messages to her which profited him not at all; but since he was a man of power, he then threatened to destroy her reputation if she did not do what he wanted. So the lady, knowing and fearing him, made up her mind to do what he desired.

As our custom is in the summer, the lady (whose name was Isabella) went to spend some time on a handsome estate she had in the country; and one morning when her husband had gone somewhere on horseback for several days, she sent a message to Leonetto to come and stay with her. And he gladly did so.

When Messer Lambertuccio heard that her husband had gone away, he mounted his horse and went and knocked at her gate. The lady's maid-servant saw him and went at once to the bedroom where she was lying with Leonetto, and called to her:

"Madonna, Messer Lambertuccio is here quite alone."

At this the lady was grievously distressed, but in great fear she begged Leonetto not to mind if she hid him behind the bed curtains until Messer Lambertuccio had gone away. Leonetto hid himself, for he was just as much afraid as the lady, who ordered the maid to go down and open the door to Messer Lambertuccio. He dismounted from his horse in the courtyard, tied it to a ring, and went inside. The lady went to meet him at the stair-head with a smiling face, and greeted him as cheerfully as she could, asking him for what purpose he had come. The knight embraced and kissed her, saying:

"My love, I heard your husband was not here, and so I have come to spend a little time with you."

After these words, they entered her bedroom and locked the door; and Messer Lambertuccio began to enjoy her. Just at this point the husband returned, quite contrary to the lady's expectations. When the servant saw him coming to the house, she ran to the bedroom and said:

"Madonna, here's the master coming back! I think he's in the courtyard already."

When the lady heard this she gave herself up for dead, knowing that she had two men in the house, and that the presence of the knight could not be concealed on account of his horse in the courtyard. But she imme-

diately leaped out of bed and, making up her mind as to what she should do, said to Messer Lambertuccio:

"Messer, if you have the slightest love of me and wish to save me from death, do as I tell you. Take your drawn sword in your hand, and rush down the stairs with an angry threatening face, saying as you go: 'I vow to God I'll get him somewhere else.' And if my husband tries to stop you or asks you any question, say nothing but what I've told you to say, mount your horse; and on no account stay with him."

Messer Lambertuccio said he would gladly do so. He drew his sword and did as the lady commanded, while his face was aflame with his recent exercise and anger at the return of the lady's husband. The husband, already dismounted in the courtyard, was amazed to see the other horse, and then he saw Messer Lambertuccio coming out of the house just as he was about to enter. Surprised by his visage and words, the husband said:

"What does this mean, Messer?"

Messer Lambertuccio put his foot in the stirrup and mounted, saying not a word except: "By God's body, I'll meet him somewhere else." And so rode away.

The gentleman went in and found his wife at the head of the stairs, in dismay and alarm, and said to her:

"What is all this about? Whom is Messer Lambertuccio threatening so angrily?"

The lady took him to the bedroom so that Leonetto could hear her words, and said:

"Messer, I was never so much afraid before. A young man whom I do not know came rushing in here followed by Messer Lambertuccio with a drawn sword. The young man found this room open and said trembling all over: 'Madonna, for God's sake help me, and let me not be killed in your arms.' I jumped up at once, and as I was about to ask him who he was and what was the matter, in came Messer Lambertuccio, saying: 'Where are you, traitor?' I ran to the door and when he tried to enter I opposed him, and he was so courteous that when he saw I did not wish him to enter he talked to me and then went away as you saw."

"You did well," said the husband. "It would have been a great misfortune if anyone had been killed here; and Messer Lambertuccio behaved very badly by following someone who had taken refuge in the house."

He then asked where the young man was, and the lady replied:

"I don't know where he hid, Messer."

"Where are you?" said the knight. "You can come out in safety."

Leonetto who had listened to all this in terror, as if fear had been a duty for him, came out of his hiding place.

"What is your quarrel with Messer Lambertuccio?" asked the knight.

"Messer," replied the young man, "I do not know at all. I think he must be out of his senses or has mistaken me for somebody else. He saw me in the street not far from your house, drew his sword and said: 'Traitor, you shall die!' I did not stay to enquire why, but fled as swiftly as I could and came in here, where, thank God and this lady, I escaped him."

Then said the knight:

"Have no further fear; I will take you back safe and sound to your own house, and you can then find out what it is all about."

So, after they had supped, he lent the young man a horse, and took him back to Florence to his house. In accordance with the lady's instructions, Leonetto saw Messer Lambertuccio that same evening in secret, and so arranged matters with him that although there was much talk about the affair, the knight never found out the trick played upon him by his wife.

Seventh Tale

LODOVICO TELLS MADONNA BEATRICE OF HIS LOVE FOR HER. SHE SENDS HER HUSBAND INTO THE GARDEN DISGUISED AS HERSELF AND LIES WITH LODOVICO WHO AFTERWARDS GOES AND BEATS EGANO, THE HUSBAND

MADONNA ISABELLA'S readiness of wit, as related by Pampinea, was thought wonderful by the whole company. But Filomena, whom the king ordered to speak next, said:

Amorous ladies, if I am not deceived I think I can now tell you a better. You must know that in Paris there lived a Florentine merchant who through poverty had become a merchant, and who had prospered so well in trade that he became very rich. By his wife he had an only son, whom he named Lodovico. Since the boy inclined rather to his father's nobility than to trade, the merchant would not put him into any business but placed him along with other gentlemen in the service of the King of France where he learned good manners and other excellent things.

While he was at Court, certain knights just returned from the Holy Land came to a gathering of young men, among whom was Lodovico. They were discussing the fair women of England and France, and other parts of the world. One of the knights said that in all the parts of the world he had visited and among all the ladies he had seen, none could equal in beauty the wife of Egano de' Galluzzi of Bologna, by name Beatrice. And all his companions who had been to Bologna agreed with him.

When Lodovico, who had never been in love, heard this, he was taken with such a desire to see her that he could think of nothing else. Making up his mind to go to Bologna to see her and to stay there for some time if she pleased him, he told his father that he wanted to go to the Holy Land. And with great difficulty he obtained permission to go.

Assuming the name of Anichino, he went to Bologna; and as luck

would have it, the very next day he saw the lady at a feast and thought her more beautiful than he had ever imagined. He fell violently in love with her, and determined never to leave Bologna if he could not gain her love. He pondered upon what means to adopt and, putting all others aside, decided that if he could become familiar with her husband—who kept her closely guarded—he might be able to achieve what he wanted. He therefore sold his horses and arrayed his servants, whom he ordered to pretend that they did not know him. He then entered into conversation with his host and told him that he would be glad to enter the service of some lord, if such could be found. Said the host:

“You are just the man who would suit a gentleman of these parts named Egano, who thinks much of his attendants and would wish them all to be like you. I will speak to him.”

This he did, and before leaving Egano the host arranged for him to employ Anichino, who pleased him greatly. He remained with Egano and had plenty of opportunity for seeing his wife; moreover, he served Egano so well that Egano became extremely fond of him and could do nothing without him and gave him the overseeing not only of his person but of all his property.

One day when Egano had gone hawking without Anichino, the latter was playing at chess with Madonna Beatrice. She had not yet become aware of his love, although from observing his behaviour she had inwardly come to think highly of him and to like him. Anichino, who wished to please her, very skilfully allowed himself to be beaten, which greatly delighted the lady. All the other ladies of the party went away and left them playing alone, whereupon Anichino heaved a deep sigh. The lady looked at him, and said:

“What is the matter, Anichino? Are you grieved because I beat you at chess?”

“Madonna,” replied Anichino, “a much greater matter than that was the cause of my sighing.”

“If you have any liking for me, tell me about it,” said she.

When Anichino heard himself requested by his liking for her—from the woman he loved above everything—he heaved a deeper sigh than

before. And so the lady again begged him to tell her the reason for his sighs.

"Madonna," said Anichino, "I fear it may annoy you if I tell you; and then I fear you may reveal it to someone else."

"It will certainly not annoy me," said the lady, "and you may be quite sure that I shall not repeat what you tell me to anyone unless you wish me to do so."

"Since you make me this promise," said Anichino, "I will tell you about it."

Then with tears in his eyes, he told her who he was, what he had heard about her, how and why he had fallen in love with her, and why he had taken service with her husband. He then humbly besought her to have pity upon him, if she could, and to keep his secret and gratify his desire. If she could not do this, he begged her to allow matters to remain as they were and to let him go on loving her.

Strange softness of Bolognese blood! How greatly you are to be praised in these matters! Never do you desire tears and sighs, but ever yield to soft entreaties and amorous desires! Had I worthy praise to bestow upon you, my voice would never be weary of commending you!

The lady gazed at Anichino as he talked and believed his words. His entreaties impressed his love so forcibly upon her mind that she too began to sigh, and after several sighs, she said:

"My sweet Anichino, be of good heart. Neither gifts nor promises nor the courtship of gentlemen, lords and others (for I have been, and still am, courted by many men) could ever move my heart to love them. But in the short space of time while you were speaking you have made me more yours than mine. I think you have well earned my love, and so I give it you, and promise you that you shall enjoy it before tonight has passed.

"To effect this, come to my bedroom at midnight. I will leave the door open. You know on which side of the bed I sleep; come there, and if I am asleep touch me until I awake, and I will console you for your long desire. To make you quite sure of me, I will give you the first fruits of a kiss."

And she threw her arms about him and kissed him amorously, and he her.

After this, Anichino departed from the lady to perform his duties, awaiting the night with the greatest joy imaginable. Egano returned from hawking and, since he was tired, went to bed after supper. The lady soon followed him, and left the bedroom door open as she had promised.

At the appointed hour Anichino came and softly entered the room, locking the door behind him. He went to the side where the lady slept and, placing his hand on her breasts, found that she was awake. She took Anichino's hand in both hers and held it tightly, and turned so sharply in the bed that Egano awoke, and she said to him:

"I said nothing about it last night because I thought you were tired, but tell me truthfully, Egano, among all your servants who is the best and the truest and the one you love most?"

"Why do you ask me that?" asked Egano. "Don't you know? I never had any friend or confidant whom I loved and trusted as much as Anichino. For what reason do you ask?"

When Anichino found that Egano was awake and that they were talking about him, he tried several times to withdraw his hand and go away, fearing that the lady had deceived him. But she held him so tightly that he could not get away.

"I will tell you why," said the lady to Egano. "I thought it was as you say and that he was more faithful to you than anyone. But he has deceived me, for when you were away hawking and he remained here, he was not ashamed to ask me to yield to his desires. To convince you of it and to avoid having to bring all sorts of proofs, I replied that I consented, and that after midnight tonight I would go into the garden and wait for him at the foot of the pine. I have no intention of going; but if you wish to know your servant's loyalty you can easily do so, by putting on one of my gowns and a veil over your face and going there to see if he will come, which I am sure he will do."

"I will certainly go to the rendezvous," said Egano. And getting up he put on one of the lady's dresses and a veil over his head, as well as

he could in the dark; and then went down into the garden to wait for Anichino at the foot of the pine.

As soon as he had gone, the lady got out of bed and locked the bedroom door. Meanwhile Anichino had been in the greatest fear he had ever felt in his life, and had struggled hard to escape from the lady's grasp, a hundred thousand times cursing her and her love, and himself for trusting her. But when he saw why she had done all this, he was the happiest man in the world. And when the lady got back into bed, he undressed and got in with her, and together they took their joy and pleasure for a long time.

Finally, the lady thought that Anichino should stay no longer, and so made him get up and dress, and said to him:

"My sweet love, take a stout stick and go down into the garden. Pretend that you made love to me to test me, and abuse Egano as if you thought him to be me, and give him a good thrashing, from which will result marvellous delight and pleasure."

Anichino went down into the garden with a good willow stick in his hand, and when Egano saw him coming to the foot of the pine tree he got up as if to greet Anichino with delight. But Anichino said:

"You wicked woman, so you've come, and you thought I would do such a wrong to my lord? A thousand curses on you!"

And lifting his stick he began to beat Egano, who without uttering a word tried to escape when he heard these words and saw the stick. But Anichino went after him saying:

"God punish you, you wicked woman; tomorrow I shall tell Egano."

Egano, after receiving a good beating, got back to his bedroom as quickly as he could; and his wife asked him if Anichino had come to the garden. Said Egano:

"I wish he hadn't, because, thinking I was you, he beat me all over with a stick, and said the most insulting things ever said to a bad woman. I was certainly surprised that he should have said such things to you with the idea of doing what would shame me; but he wanted to put you to the test, since he saw you so merry and open."

"Praised be God," said the lady, "that he tested me with words and you

with acts. I think he will be able to say that I bore his words more patiently than you his deeds. But since he is so faithful to you, you should value and cherish him."

"You say truly," replied Egano.

Convinced by what had happened, he believed he had the truest wife and the most faithful servant that ever a gentleman had. And so, though Anichino and the lady often laughed over the scene together, they had much more liberty than they would otherwise have had, to take their delight and pleasure together for as long as Anichino chose to remain in Bologna.

Eighth Tale

A MAN BECOMES JEALOUS OF HIS WIFE. SHE TIES A THREAD TO HER TOE AT NIGHT SO THAT SHE CAN KNOW WHEN HER LOVER COMES. THE HUSBAND FINDS IT OUT; BUT WHILE HE IS PURSUING THE LOVER, THE WIFE PUTS ANOTHER WOMAN IN BED IN HER PLACE. THE HUSBAND BEATS THIS WOMAN AND TEARS HER HAIR AND THEN GOES FOR HIS WIFE'S BROTHERS; FINDING WHAT HE SAYS TO BE FALSE, THEY UPBRAID HIM

THEY all thought that Madonna Beatrice had been extremely cunning in tricking her husband, and everyone said that Anichino must have been in great fear when he found the lady grasping him tightly and telling her husband that he had made love to her. But after Filomena had finished, the king turned to Neifile, and said:

"Speak next."

Smiling a little, she began thus:

Fair ladies, it is a heavy task for me to tell you a tale which will please you as much as those already related, but with God's help I hope to accomplish it.

You must know that in our town there was once a very rich mer-

chant named Arriguccio Berlinghieri, who, as we still see merchants doing every day, foolishly thought to ennoble himself by marrying a lady of quality. So he married a suitable girl, whose name was Monna Sismonda. Now, since her husband—like other merchants—was often away and spent little time with her, she fell in love with a young man named Ruberto, who had long courted her.

She became familiar with him, and perhaps acted imprudently through her great delight in him, but Arriguccio either heard something about the affair or had some other reason, for he became exceedingly jealous. He gave up his journeys abroad and almost the whole of his business, and gave practically all his attention to watching over her. He would never go to sleep until she had first got into bed; and this was very grievous to the lady, because she now could never be with Ruberto.

Ruberto earnestly urged her to find a means of meeting, and after much thought she hit upon a plan. The bedroom was distant from the street, and she had noticed that although Arriguccio took a long time in going to sleep, he slept very soundly; so she decided to make Ruberto come to the door of the house in the middle of the night, when she would go down and open it, and spend some time with him while her husband slept. In order to know when Ruberto arrived and yet allow no one else to know, she arranged to lower a thread out of the bedroom window so that one end touched the ground, while she brought the other end along the bedroom floor to her bed, and when she was in bed tied it to her big toe under the clothes. She let Ruberto know about this plan, and told him when he came to pull the thread. If her husband were asleep, she would let the thread go, and come down and open the door; but if he were not asleep she would hold the thread tight and pull it towards her, which would mean that Ruberto was not to wait. Ruberto liked the plan, and thus when he came they were sometimes able to meet, and sometimes not.

This plan was successful for some time; but one night when the lady was asleep Arriguccio stretched himself in bed and touched the thread with his foot. He put his hand down and found the thread was attached to his wife's toe, whereupon he said to himself: this must be some trick.

When he discovered that the thread passed out through the window, he was convinced of it. He therefore gently untied it from his wife's toe and fastened it to his own, and waited to see what would happen. Not long afterwards along came Ruberto and pulled the thread as usual. Arriguccio felt it, but as he had tied the thread loosely and Ruberto had pulled it hard, the thread remained in Ruberto's hand, and so he thought he was to wait. Arriguccio immediately got up, armed himself, and ran to the street door to see who it was and to fight him, for although Arriguccio was only a merchant, he was a fierce, powerful man. He did not open the door gently as the lady did, and so Ruberto, who was listening outside, guessed that the door was being opened by Arriguccio. He therefore took to flight at once, with Arriguccio after him. Finally, after Ruberto had fled for some distance with the other man after him, he drew his sword and turned round, and they began to fight, one attacking and the other defending.

The lady was awakened by Arriguccio's opening the bedroom door, and when she found that the thread had gone from her toe she immediately realised that her trick had been found out. She heard Arriguccio running after Ruberto, and immediately made up her mind what she ought to do. She jumped out of bed, and called to her maid-servant who knew all about the affair, and persuaded her with many entreaties to take her mistress' place in the bed and to endure Arriguccio's blows without making herself known, telling her that she (Sismonda) would be so grateful that she would see the maid had no reason to regret doing it. She extinguished the light in the bedroom and went and hid in another part of the house, awaiting the event.

The neighbours heard the fight going on between Arriguccio and Ruberto and, getting out of bed, began to abuse them. Arriguccio was afraid of being recognized and had to let the young man go without having discovered who he was or doing him any injury; and so returned home full of anger and fury and burst tempestuously into the bedroom, saying:

"Where are you, vile woman? You've put out the light so that I shan't find you, but you've made a mistake!"

He went over to the bed, seized the servant (whom he thought to be his wife) and kicked and beat her with his hands and feet until her face was black with bruises. Finally he tore her hair, all the time abusing her as the vilest of women. The servant maid cried shrilly, as well she might; and although she screamed: "Oh, mercy, for God's sake; Oh, no more!" her voice was so broken with sobs and Arriguccio was so blinded with rage, that he did not notice she was not his wife. After beating her and cutting off her hair in this way, he said:

"Vile woman, I won't touch you any further, but I shall go for your brothers and tell them of your fine doings. After that let them come for you and do with you what they think their honour requires, and take you away, for you shall certainly stay no longer in this house."

So saying, he went off, locking the room behind him. Monna Sismonda had heard everything, and, as soon as Arriguccio had gone, she came into the room, lighted the lamp, and found the poor maid-servant weeping bitterly. She consoled her as well as she could, and put her in her own room, where she had her waited on and looked after and gave her enough of Arriguccio's money to make her quite contented. When she had put the servant in her room, she quickly remade the bed and put the whole room in order and relighted the lamp, as if no one had been to bed there that night. She then dressed herself, as if she had not been to bed, lighted a lamp, took some sewing, and sat down to sew at the head of the stairs and to wait for what would happen.

Arriguccio rushed out of the house and went to his wife's brothers as quickly as he could, and there beat at the door until they heard him and let him in. The lady's mother and three brothers all got up when they heard Arriguccio was there, and went down to him with lights, and asked him why he came to them alone at that time of night. Arriguccio then told them the whole story, beginning with the thread which he had found tied to Monna Sismonda's toe, down to the end. And to prove the truth of what he said, he showed them the hair which he cut (as he thought) from his wife's head, adding that they were to come back with him and do what their honour demanded, because he would no longer have her in his house.

The lady's brothers, who naturally believed him, were greatly annoyed, and full of anger against her, called for torches and set out with Arriguccio for his home, intending to deal harshly with her. The mother followed them in tears, beseeching first one and then another not to believe this too quickly without further enquiry, because the husband might have been angry with her and have harmed her for some other reason, and have accused her to clear himself. She also said that she was amazed that such a thing could have happened, since she knew her daughter well and had brought her up from a baby, and many such words.

Finally they reached Arriguccio's house and, entering, began to ascend the stairs. When Monna Sismonda heard them, she said:

"Who's there?"

"You'll soon know, you vile woman," answered one of the brothers.

"What does this mean?" said Monna Sismonda. "Lord help me!"

She then stood up, and said:

"My brothers, you are welcome; what do you seek at this hour?"

As soon as they saw her seated there sewing, with not a mark on her face which Arriguccio had told them he had bruised all over, they were amazed, and curbed the first impulse of their anger. They then asked her what was the affair of which Arriguccio had complained to them, threatening her savagely if she did not tell everything. Said the lady:

"I don't know what I have to say or why Arriguccio should have any reason to complain of me."

Arriguccio gazed at her as if out of his senses, remembering how he had beaten her in the face and scratched her and hurt her, whereas now he saw her quite unscathed, as if nothing had happened. The brothers then related everything Arriguccio had told them, about the thread and the beating and all the rest. The lady turned to Arriguccio, and said:

"Why, husband, what is this I hear? Why do you make me out a vile woman to your own shame, when I am not one, and make yourself out a cruel and harsh man, which you are not? When were you here in the house with me tonight? When did you beat me? I don't remember anything about it."

"What!" said Arriguccio, "you vile woman, did we not go to bed together? Didn't I beat you and cut off your hair?"

"But you didn't go to bed in this house tonight," replied the lady. "Let us leave that, for I can bring no other proof of it save my true words, and let us come to the other things you say—that you beat me and cut off my hair. You never beat me, and everyone here present, including yourself, may see whether I have any marks of a beating on my person. And I warn you not to be so bold as to lay a hand upon me, for, by God's Cross, I'd give you back as good as you gave. Nor did you ever cut off my hair, as you can feel or see. But perhaps you did it when I was unaware; let me see whether my hair is cut off or not."

And, lifting the veil from her head, she showed that she had all her hair, uncut.

When the mother and the brothers heard and saw these things, they turned to Arriguccio, and said:

"What do you mean, Arriguccio? This is not what you came and told us you had done—how will you prove the remainder?"

Arriguccio stood like a man in a dream, trying to speak. But, seeing that what he had thought he could show was otherwise, he remained silent. The lady then turned to her brothers, and said:

"Brothers, I see he has gone about seeking for me to do what I never wished to do—which is to tell you his baseness and cruelties. But now I shall do it. I quite believe that what he told you he did has happened, and I will tell you how.

"This worthy man, to whom you gave me as wife in an ill hour, calls himself a merchant and would like to be in good repute. Such a man should be more temperate than a monk and chaster than a virgin, and yet there are few evenings when he does not go drinking in taverns, sometimes going with one bad woman, sometimes with another. And I have to sit up for him, in the way you found me, until the middle of the night, and sometimes till dawn. I am certain that in his drunkenness he lay with some woman, and then woke up and found the thread tied to her toe. He then performed the bold feats of which he tells us, came back to her, beat her and cut off her hair. Not having come to himself, he

believed (and I am sure, still believes) that he did these things to me. But still whatever he may have said of me, I don't want you to look upon him as anything but a drunkard. And since I forgive him, you also must pardon him."

At this the lady's mother took up the tale, and said:

"By God's Cross, daughter, this cannot be endured. This ungrateful and beastly cur should be killed; he's not worthy to have a girl like you. Why, look you! It would have been too much if he had taken you out of the gutter. The foul fiend run away with him if you are to be at the mercy of the words of a little donkey's dung tradesman, who comes from a pig-sty in the country dressed in shoddy, with hose like a bell-tower and a feather in his backside, and when he has three cents wants to marry the daughter of gentle people, and takes a coat of arms and says: 'I belong to such a family, and my people do this and that.' I wish my sons had followed my advice, for they could have married you into the house of the Counts of Guidi with a hunk of bread as a dowry; but they would marry you to this pearl among men. If you were the best daughter in Florence and the most chaste, he would not be ashamed to call you a whore, as if we did not know you. God's faith, if they did what I wanted, they would beat him until he stank!"

She then turned to her sons, and said:

"My sons, I told you this could not be so. Have you heard how your good brother-in-law treats your sister? The little four-cent tradesman that he is! What! If I were you, after he has said what he has about her and done what he has done, I should never think myself content or repaid until I had despatched him from this earth. And if I were a man I would not let anyone else prevent me from doing it. God punish him! The foul drunkard! And he isn't even ashamed!"

The young men then turned upon Arriguccio, and gave him the worst abuse that ever fell upon a criminal, and said finally:

"We forgive you this because you are drunk. But, as you value your life, don't ever let us hear anything of the kind again; for if anything like it comes to our ears, be sure we will pay you for both!"

So saying, they departed. Arriguccio was like a man dazed; and, not

knowing whether what he had done was true or a dream, he said not another word, and left his wife in peace. And she, by her cunning, not only escaped the immediate danger but prepared the way to do anything she wanted in the future, without the least fear of her husband.

Ninth Tale

LIDIA, THE WIFE OF NICOSTRATO, IS IN LOVE WITH PIRRO WHO ASKS OF HER THREE THINGS (ALL OF WHICH SHE PERFORMS) TO TEST HER SINCERITY. MOREOVER, SHE LIES WITH HIM IN THE PRESENCE OF NICOSTRATO AND MAKES NICOSTRATO BELIEVE THAT WHAT HE SAW WAS NOT TRUE

NEIFILE's tale was so much liked that the ladies could not stop laughing and talking about it, although the king several times imposed silence on them and ordered Pamfilo to tell his tale. Finally, when they were silent, Pamfilo began thus:

Revered ladies, I believe that those who are deeply in love are prepared to do anything, however doubtful and troublesome. Although this has been showed in several tales, yet I think I can prove it to you still further with the tale I intend to tell, wherein you will hear of a lady whose luck was better than her common sense. Nor do I advise you to take the risk of following in her footsteps, because luck is not always favourable and all men cannot be blinded in the same way.

In Argos, that most ancient city of Achaia, much more renowned for its dead kings than for its size, there lived a nobleman named Nicostrato. When he was on the verge of old age, Fortune bestowed upon him as wife a noble lady, no less ardent than beautiful, named Lidia. Nicostrato, being a rich nobleman, possessed numerous servants and dogs and hawks, and took the greatest delight in hunting. Among his servants was a charming young man named Pirro, accomplished, handsome and skilled

in everything he had to do; and Nicostrato loved and trusted him above all men.

Now Lidia fell in love with this young man, so that day and night she could think of nothing else. Pirro either did not perceive, or did not want, her love, for he gave no sign that he cared about her, which filled the lady's spirit with intolerable woe. Determined that he should know about it, she called a maid-servant named Lusca, in whom she had great confidence, and said:

"Lusca, the benefits you have received from me ought to make you faithful and obedient. Therefore take care that what I am about to tell you shall be known to nobody except the person whom I shall order you to tell.

"As you see, Lusca, I am a fresh young woman, abounding in all those things which any woman would desire. In short, I can make no complaint, save of one thing, which is that my husband is too old in comparison with me, so that I am not well contented in that which is most pleasing to young women. Yet, like other women, I desire it, and for some time I have determined that since Fortune has been so much my foe as to give me an old husband I will not be my own enemy by refusing to discover some means of obtaining my delight and salvation. After estimating these as well as other things I have made up my mind that Pirro is more worthy than any other to supply this want with his embraces; and I am so much in love with him that I am never happy except when I see him or am thinking about him. And I think I shall die if I do not have him soon.

"Therefore, if you value my life, make known my love to him in whatever way you think best, and beg him for me that he will come to me when you send for him."

The maid-servant replied that she would gladly do this. Choosing a suitable place and time, she drew Pirro aside, and gave him her lady's message in the best terms she could. Pirro was greatly surprised to hear this, for he had never noticed anything of the kind and feared that the lady had sent the message to test his fidelity. So he replied abruptly and rudely:

"Lusca, I cannot believe that these words come from my lady, so beware what you say. If they do come from her, I do not believe she meant you to speak to me. And even if she did mean you to do so, my lord honours me more than I deserve and I will not for my life do him such an outrage. Therefore take care never to speak to me of such matters again."

Undismayed by these austere words, Lusca persevered:

"Pirro, I shall speak of these or any other matters ordered by my lady as often as she chooses to command me, whether it pleases you or not. But you're a fool."

And, being rather angry at Pirro's words, she returned to her lady, who wanted to die when she heard them. A few days later, however, she spoke again to the maid-servant:

"Lusca, you know the oak does not fall at the first blow. So I want you to go again to the man who has chosen so curious a way of fidelity, to my harm; and at a fitting time tell him of my desire and do all you can to achieve success. If things are left as they are, I shall die and he will think himself mocked, and I shall only receive his hatred when I seek his love."

The servant consoled her lady, and went to look for Pirro, whom she found in a cheerful mood, and said to him:

"Pirro, a little time ago I told you how my lady and yours was burning with love for you; and once more I tell you that if you remain as hostile as you were the other day, you may be certain that she will not live long. Therefore I beg you to console her in her desire. If you remain in this obstinacy, I shall think you a gross fool when I had thought you to be a wise man. What can be more flattering for you than to be loved by so beautiful, so charming a lady as she is? Moreover, how much you should think yourself indebted to Fortune when you realize that she has prepared such a thing for you, fitting the desires of your youth and forming such a remedy for your material needs? Which of your equals do you know who will be better off than yourself, if only you are wise? If you give her your love, what other man will equal you in arms, horses, possessions and money?"

“Open your mind to my words and reflect. Remember that generally Fortune comes only once to a man with gay face and open bosom. And when such a man fails to receive her and then becomes a poor beggar, he can only blame himself and not Fortune. Moreover, in these matters there is no need of the same fidelity between servants and masters as there is between friends and relatives. Thus, servants are wont to treat their masters—as far as they can—just as their masters treat them. If you had a fair wife or mother or daughter or sister, and Nicostrato was in love with her, do you think he would feel the sense of loyalty to you that you think you have about his wife? More fool you, if you believe it. Whatever you may think, you can be sure that he would use force, if flattery and prayers failed. Let us treat them and their affairs as they treat us and ours. Take the chance Fortune brings you. Don’t drive her away, but go to meet her as she comes to you. Be sure that if you don’t do so, not only will my lady inevitably die but you will repent it so often that you will want to die yourself.”

Pirro had many times reflected on the words which Lusca had first spoken to him, and had made up his mind that if she came to him again he would make a different reply and would do all he could to please the lady, if he could be certain that she was not merely making a test of him. So he said:

“Lusca, I know that everything you say is true. But, on the other hand, I know my lord to be a very wise and careful man who has full control of all his affairs; I am afraid that Lidia is doing this to test me with his knowledge and at his request. But if she will do three things to reassure me, certainly she can command nothing of me that I will not promptly perform. The three things I ask are these: first, that she will kill Nicostrato’s best falcon before his eyes; second, that she will send me a lock of Nicostrato’s beard; third, one of his best teeth.”

These things seemed difficult to Lusca and most difficult to the lady. But love, who is a good comforter and a great master of skilful devices, determined her to attempt them; and so she sent the maid to tell Pirro that what he required should be done, and soon. Moreover (she added), whereas he thought Nicostrato such a wise man, she promised to lie with

Pirro in his presence and yet to make Nicostrato believe it had not happened.

Pirro therefore waited to see what the lady would do.

A few days later Nicostrato gave a big dinner, as he often did, to certain gentlemen. When the tables were drawn, Lidia came out of her room dressed in a green velvet robe and her jewels. She came into the room where they were assembled and, in the presence of Pirro and them all, went to the perch where sat the falcon which Nicostrato prized so highly, took up the bird as if she wanted it to perch on her hand, and then holding it by the jesses dashed it against the wall and killed it.

"Why, wife, what have you done?" exclaimed Nicostrato.

"Nothing," she answered him, and then turning to the gentlemen who had dined there, she said: "Gentlemen, I could ill revenge myself upon a King who injured me if I could not take my revenge on a falcon. You must know that this bird has deprived me of much of the time which men usually give up to ladies' pleasures, for as soon as the dawn appears Nicostrato is up and out on horseback with his falcon on his wrist, to watch it fly over the broad plains. And I, such as you now see me, must remain alone and discontented in bed. Therefore, I have often desired to do what I have now done, and my only reason for waiting was that I wanted to do it in the presence of men who would judge my quarrel justly, as I believe you will."

The gentlemen thought her affection for Nicostrato was such as her words pretended, and so they turned laughingly to the angry husband, and said:

"Why! The lady was right to avenge her wrong by killing the falcon!"

After the lady had returned to her room, they made so many jokes about it all that they changed Nicostrato's annoyance to laughter. And Pirro said to himself: "The lady has made a lofty beginning to my fortunate love—pray God she may persevere."

Not many days after Lidia had killed the hawk she was in her room with Nicostrato caressing him and jesting with him. He in jest pulled her by the hair, which gave her an opportunity to carry out the second test imposed by Pirro. She quickly grasped a little lock of his beard and

laughingly pulled it so hard that it came away from his chin. And when Nicostrato complained, she said:

"What makes you put on such a look? Because I have pulled about six hairs from your beard? You didn't feel what I felt when you pulled my hair just now."

So from one speech to another they continued their love-play, and the lady carefully preserved the lock from the beard and sent it that same day to her dear lover.

The third thing caused the lady more thought. But as she was of a high spirit and love gave her wits, she thought out a way of achieving it. Nicostrato had two pages, whose fathers had given them to him so that they might be bred up in his house and learn the manners befitting gentlemen, which they were. When Nicostrato sat at table, one of them carved before him and the other served him with drink. She sent for them both and told them that they had bad breath, and commanded them to turn away their heads when they were serving Nicostrato, and never to speak of the matter to anyone. The boys believed her, and thereafter behaved as the lady had told them. So one day she said to Nicostrato:

"Have you noticed what those boys do when they are waiting on you?"

"Yes," said Nicostrato, "and I mean to ask them why they do it."

"Don't do that," said the lady, "for I can tell you why. I have kept silence about it a long time in order not to annoy you. But now that I see other people are beginning to notice it, I shall conceal it no longer. The only reason for their behaviour is that your breath smells so badly. I don't know what the cause can be, for it is not customary with you. But it is a vile thing, since you consort with gentlemen; we must find some means of curing it."

"What can it be?" said Nicostrato. "Has one of my teeth gone rotten?"

"Perhaps that's it," said Lidia.

She took him over to the window, made him open his mouth, and after looking here and there, she said:

"Oh! Nicostrato. How could you endure it so long? Why, you've

a tooth there which looks to me not only eaten away but quite rotten. If you keep it any longer in your mouth it will infect those beside it. I advise you to have it out, before the harm goes any further."

"Since you think so," said Nicostrato, "I am content. Send for a chirurgeon at once to take it out."

"In God's name," said the lady, "don't send for any chirurgeon. It seems to me to be in such a state that I can draw it myself without the help of any doctor. Moreover, these doctors are so heartless in performing such services that I could not bear to see you in their hands. So I'll do it all myself. For, if it's too painful, I'll stop at once, which no doctor would do."

She then sent for the necessary implements and ordered everyone out of the room except Lusca. She locked the door and made Nicostrato lie down on a table. She then put the forceps in his mouth round one of his teeth, and, in spite of his yells, one of the women held him down while the other pulled out a tooth by main force. She hid the good tooth at once and took another rotten tooth which she had held concealed and showed it to him as he lay there half dead with pain, saying:

"Look what you've had in your mouth for so long."

Although Nicostrato had suffered great pain and complained bitterly of it, he believed her, and since the tooth was out thought himself cured. They comforted him with one thing and another, and, when the pain was assuaged, he left the room.

The lady immediately sent the tooth to her lover; and he, being now certain of her love, said he was ready to do her pleasure. The lady wished to give him further assurance while every hour seemed like a thousand hours until she could be with him. She wanted to carry out what she had promised him herself, and so pretended to be ill. One day Nicostrato, attended only by Pirro, came to visit her after dinner; and she begged him to help her into the garden as some diversion to her sickness. So Nicostrato on one side and Pirro on the other carried her into the garden, and sat her down on a lawn at the foot of a large pear tree. After sitting there a little time, the lady—who had already informed Pirro of what he had to do—said:

"Pirro, I very much want to have one of those pears; so climb up the tree and throw some of them down."

Pirro climbed nimbly up and began to throw pears down; and then he said:

"Messer, what are you doing? And you, madonna, are you not ashamed to allow it in my presence? Do you think I'm blind? Just now you were very ill; how can you be cured so quickly that you are able to do such things? And if you want to do them, you have plenty of bedrooms—why don't you go and do it there, which would be more chaste than to do it in my presence."

The lady turned to her husband, and said:

"What's Pirro talking about? Is he raving?"

"I'm not raving, madonna," said Pirro, "do you think I can't see?"

Nicostrato was amazed, and said:

"Why, Pirro, I think you must be dreaming."

"My lord," replied Pirro, "I'm not dreaming at all, nor are you dreaming. You're moving so hard that if this pear tree moved in the same way, not a pear would be left on it."

"Whatever can this be?" said the lady. "Can it really be that what he says seems to be true to him? God help me, if I were as well as I used to be I would climb up to see the marvels which he says he sees."

Pirro remained in the tree and went on in the same strain. Then said Nicostrato: "Come down." And he came down. Then Nicostrato asked:

"What do you say you saw?"

"You must think me out of my mind or wandering," said Pirro. "I saw you lying on your lady, and had to tell you so. And as I came down I saw you get up and sit down where you now are."

"You certainly were out of your mind," said Nicostrato, "for we have not moved from where we are since you climbed up the pear tree."

"Why do we argue about it?" said Pirro, "I saw you. And if it's true I see you now, I then saw you on your wife."

Nicostrato was more and more amazed, and finally said:

"I should like to see whether this pear tree is bewitched, and what are the wonders seen by those who climb it."

And he climbed up the tree. As soon as he was in it, the lady began to make love with Pirro; and as soon as Nicostrato saw them, he shouted:

"You vile woman, what are you doing? And you too, Pirro, in whom I had such trust!"

So saying, he began to climb down the tree. The lady and Pirro said: "We're sitting still."

As he came down, they returned to the places where they had been sitting. As soon as Nicostrato was on the ground and saw them in the positions where he had left them, he began to denounce them. But Pirro said:

"Nicostrato, I confess that you were right in what you said, and that I saw wrongly when I was in the pear tree. I know it from this—that I see and know that you also saw wrongly. No further proof is needed that I speak truth save only for you to consider that if your lady, who is most chaste and wise, desired to outrage your honour, she would certainly not do it before your eyes. I say nothing of myself, for I would rather be torn in pieces than even think of it, let alone perform it in your presence. The error of this vision must therefore necessarily come from the pear tree, for the whole world would not have convinced me that you were not carnally lying with your wife here if I had not heard you say that you believed I was doing what I know I have never thought of, nor ever have done."

Thereupon, the lady rose to her feet as if in anger, and said:

"You must be crazed if you think I am so stupid as to commit this folly before your very eyes, supposing I wanted to do what you say you saw. You may be sure that if I wanted to do it I should not come here; I should have sense enough to do it in one of our rooms in such a way that I think it improbable you would ever know about it."

Nicostrato believed both of them when they said they would never do such a thing in his presence, and therefore ceased his upbraiding and began to talk about the strangeness of the fact and the miracle of the vision, which so changed things for everyone who climbed the tree. But the lady pretended to be angry at Nicostrato's suspicions of her, and said:

"This pear tree shall never again cause such shame to me or any other

lady, if I can prevent it. Pirro, go and get an axe, and avenge yourself and me at once by cutting it down, although it would be better to knock Nicostrato on the head with the axe for having allowed the eyes of his intellect to be blinded so easily. For, however much the eyes in your head might believe what you say, yet your judgment ought never to admit that it is so."

Pirro immediately went for an axe and cut down the pear tree. And when the lady saw it fall, she said to Nicostrato:

"Now I have seen the fall of my honour's enemy, my anger has departed."

And, at his earnest entreaty, she forgave Nicostrato, commanding him never to assume that such a thing could happen, since she loved him more than herself. So the poor deceived husband returned to the house with her and her lover; and Pirro and Lidia often took delight and pleasure of each other at their ease. May God grant the like to us!

Tenth Tale

TWO SIENESE ARE IN LOVE WITH THE SAME WOMAN, AND ONE OF THEM IS GODFATHER TO HER CHILD. THE GODFATHER DIES AND, AS HE HAD PROMISED, HIS SPIRIT RETURNS TO HIS FRIEND AND TELLS HIM HIS STATE IN THE NEXT WORLD

THE king alone was now left to tell a tale; and when the ladies—who were regretting the pear tree which was cut down for no fault of its own—were silent, he began thus:

'Tis most manifest that every just king ought to be the first to observe the laws he himself has made; and if he does otherwise he should be considered a slave worthy of punishment, and not a king. Now I, your king, am almost compelled to fall into this fault and censure. It is true that yesterday when I made the law for our tale-telling today, I had no

intention of making use of my privilege, but intended to submit myself to the same law and to speak on the same subject as yourselves. But what I intended to say has been said, and moreover so many other and finer things have been related that however much I ransack my memory I cannot think of anything to say on this topic which equals the tales already told. Therefore, since I must break the laws I made myself, I confess myself worthy of punishment and ready to make any amends you impose upon me, and so fall back upon my privilege.

The tale Elisa told about the godfather and the child's mother and also the stupidity of the Sieneſe ſuggeſt that I ſhall depart from the theme of the tricks played on fooliſh huſbands by their wives and ſhall tell you, deareſt ladies, a tale of the Sieneſe; for although it contains certain matters contrary to faith, yet in part you will be amused to hear it.

There lived in Siena two young men of the people, one named Tingoccio Mini and the other Meuccio di Tura. They lived by the Porta Salaia and hardly frequented anybody but each other, which leads one to ſuppoſe that they were very fond of each other. They went to church and to ſermons, as people do, and often heard of the glories and the miſeries which are allotted to the ſouls of the dead in the next world according to their deſerts. Deſirous of obtaining ſure information of all this and ſeeing no other means, they promiſed each other, and confirmed it with a ſolemn oath, that whichever of them died firſt would, if he were able, return and give the other the information he deſired.

After they had made this promiſe, and continued their familiarity, Tingoccio became godfather to the child of Ambruogio Anſelmini, who lived with his wife Monna Mita in Campo Reggi. Tingoccio, accompanied by Meuccio, often viſited his godchild's mother, who was a moſt beautiful and charming woman, and fell in love with her, deſpite their ſpiritual kinſhip. And Meuccio, who liked her very much and often heard Tingoccio praiſe her, alſo fell in love with her. Neither ſpoke of his love to the other, though not for the ſame reaſon. Tingoccio refrained from ſpeaking of it to Meuccio becauſe he himſelf thought it wrong to love his godchild's mother and would have been aſhamed for anyone to know it. Meuccio, on the other hand, was ſilent, becauſe he

had noticed how much Tingoccio liked her. And he said to himself: "If I reveal it to him, he will be jealous of me; and since he can speak to his godchild's mother whenever he wants, he would be able to prejudice her against me, and thus I should not obtain anything I want from her."

The two young men being thus in love, it happened that Tingoccio, who had more opportunity of showing the lady his desire, laboured so well by word and deed that he had his pleasure of her. Meuccio soon noticed this, and although it annoyed him, yet he pretended not to see it, and the hope of one day obtaining his desire determined him to give Tingoccio no chance to thwart him. One of the two young men was thus more fortunate in love than the other; and Tingoccio, having found the happy land, dug and ploughed it so hard that he fell ill. And in a few days the illness became so serious he could not rally from it, and departed this life.

The third day after his death (for perhaps he could not come sooner) he kept his promise and appeared in Meuccio's bedroom while he was in a deep sleep, and called to him. Meuccio awoke and said:

"Who are you?"

"I am Tingoccio," replied the other, "and in accordance with my promise I have returned to give you news of the other world."

Meuccio was rather terrified to see him, but pulled himself together, and said:

"You are welcome, my brother."

And then asked him if he were lost. Said Tingoccio:

"The things which cannot be found are lost; and how could I be here if I were lost?"

"I don't mean that," said Meuccio. "I ask whether you are among the damned souls in the penal fires of hell."

"No, not there," answered Tingoccio, "but for the sins I have committed I am in great pain and anguish."

Meuccio then asked Tingoccio what punishments were allotted in the next world for each sin which is committed here, and Tingoccio told him. Meuccio then asked him if there were anything he could do for him. Tingoccio said there was, and asked him to have Masses and prayers

said for him and to give alms, since these things are a great comfort to the dead. Meuccio said he would gladly do so and, as Tinguccio was leaving, Meuccio remembered the mother of the child to whom Tinguccio was godfather, and lifting his head, said:

"I remember something, Tinguccio. What punishment has been allotted you for lying with the woman to whom you were spiritually akin?"

Said Tinguccio:

"Brother, when I arrived there, I found a man who seemed to know all my sins by heart, and he ordered me to go to a place where I bewail my faults in very great pain, along with many companions who are condemned to the same punishment. As I stood there among them, I remembered what I had done with my godchild's mother, and trembled with fear, for I expected some much greater punishment would be inflicted on me for that, although I was then in a large burning fire. Someone who was beside me, said: 'What woe have you more than the others here that you tremble so much in the fire?' And I said: 'My friend, I am afraid of the judgment which will be passed upon me for a great sin I have committed.' He then asked me what the sin was. And I replied: 'The sin was that I lay with my godchild's mother, and lay with her so much that I exhausted myself.' He then mocked at me, saying: 'Away, you fool, have no fear; no one troubles about spiritual kinship here.' And this completely reassured me."

And then, as the day was at hand, he said:

"Meuccio, God be with you; I can stay no longer."

And so departed in haste.

Meuccio, hearing that in the next world no account was made of spiritual kinship, began to laugh at his own folly for having respected such things. So, abandoning his ignorance, in this matter he became wise. If Friar Rinaldo had known this, there would have been no need for him to use syllogisms when he converted his godchild's mother to his desires.

The West Wind arose as the sun drew nearer to setting, and when the king had finished his tale and no one else remained to speak, he took the garland from his head and placed it on Lauretta's head, saying:

"Madonna, I crown you queen of our company with your namesake leaf; now command, as Sovereign Lady, what you think will please and divert us all."

Lauretta, being made queen, sent for the steward, and ordered him to set the tables in the beautiful valley earlier than usual, so that they might return home at more leisure. And then discussed with him what needed to be done during her reign. She then turned to the gathering, and said:

"Yesterday Dioneo desired us to tell tales of the tricks which wives play upon their husbands. But for the fact that I don't want to show myself one of the race of snarling dogs, I should say that tomorrow we ought to tell tales of the tricks which men play upon their wives. And so I say that everyone must think of a tale about the tricks played every day by women upon men, by men upon women and by men upon men. I think this will be as pleasant a theme for tale-telling as today's."

So saying, she arose, and left the company at liberty until dinner time. The men and women therefore arose also, and some of them waded barefoot in the clear water, while others amused themselves by wandering among the tall beautiful trees above the green lawns. Dioneo and Fiammetta sang together a long piece about Palemon and Arcite. And so in various ways they passed the time delightfully until supper. They then supped merrily and at ease from tables set at some distance from the lake, untroubled by flies, sung to by a thousand birds, and cooled by a soft wind which breathed from the little hills about them.

The tables were drawn while the sun was yet in the sky, and at the queen's desire they walked about the beautiful valley, and then slowly turned their footsteps homeward. Laughing and jesting at a thousand things, both from the tales told that day and others, they came to the mansion a little before nightfall. There they refreshed themselves after the short walk with cool wine and sweetmeats, and then began to dance near the fountain to the sound of Tindaro's Sicilian bagpipes or to other instruments. Finally the queen ordered Filomena to sing a song, and she began thus:

Ah! Luckless life! Shall I ever be able to return whence I was reft by bitter parting?

So fierce is the desire within my breast, and yet I know not if ever I shall be again where once, alas, I was. O my dear love, my only peace, who hold my heart in duress, ah! tell me—for I dare not ask another and know not whom to ask—alas! my love, alas! give me some hope, give me some comfort for my wandering spirit.

I cannot tell what was the delight which set this fire in me so that by day and night I have no rest, for hearing, seeing, feeling, each with unwonted force lights stronger fire wherein I burn; and none but you can comfort me or give me back my shaken courage.

Tell me if this shall be, and when—that I shall be where I can kiss those eyes that murdered me. Tell me, my heart, my love, when you will come, and tell me soon, to comfort me. Let Time until you come be short, and long your staying, for Love has wounded me so deeply.

If ever once again I hold you, I shall not be so foolish as I was, and let you go again. I shall hold you in my arms, and let come what may; and on your lovely mouth let my desire feed full. I say no more of all the rest—only come soon, for but to think of it invites my singing.

This song made the whole company feel that Filomena was held by some new and pleasant love; and since it appeared from her words that she had gone further than mere looking, those who were present thought her fortunate and envied her. But when the song was over the queen remembered that the next day was Friday, and so said cheerfully:

“Noble ladies, and you young men, you know that tomorrow is the day consecrated to the Passion of Our Lord; and if I remember aright we devoutly commemorated it during the reign of Neifile, and ceased our pleasant tale-telling, as also upon the ensuing Saturday. Therefore, being desirous to follow the example set by Neifile, I consider it would be right for us to do tomorrow and the day after what we did formerly and that we should abstain from telling of tales, and consecrate

our thoughts upon what was done on those days for the salvation of our souls.”

This devout speech of the queen pleased them all; and as a good portion of the night was already spent she set them at liberty, and all went to their rest.

HERE ENDS THE SEVENTH DAY

The Eighth Day

HERE BEGINS THE EIGHTH DAY OF THE *DECAMERON*, WHEREIN, UNDER THE RULE OF LAURETTA, TALES ARE TOLD OF THE TRICKS PLAYED EVERY DAY BY MEN UPON WOMEN OR WOMEN UPON MEN OR MEN UPON MEN

It was Sunday morning, and the rays of rising light already appeared on the tips of the highest hills. The shadows departed and all things became clear to see. The queen and her companions arose and walked out over the dewy grass, and about the midst of Terce visited a little church near at hand, where they heard divine service. Returning home they dined merrily, sang and danced, and then the queen gave them permission to rest. But when the sun had passed mid-heaven they all by the queen's command gathered together and sat down by the beautiful fountain for their wonted tale-telling; and Neifile, being ordered by the queen, began thus:

First Tale

GULFARDO BORROWS MONEY FROM GUASPARRUOLO AND THEN GIVES HIS WIFE THE SAME SUM OF MONEY TO LIE WITH HER. IN THE PRESENCE OF GUASPARRUOLO AND HIS WIFE HE CLAIMS TO HAVE PAID HER BACK THE SUM AND SHE HAS TO ADMIT IT

God has ordained that I should tell the first tale today, and I am content it should be so. We have said much, amorous ladies, of the tricks played upon men by women, and so I mean to tell you of a trick played upon a woman by a man; not that I mean to blame the man or to say that the woman did not deserve it, on the contrary I mean to commend the man and to blame the woman and to show that men can trick those who trust in them even as they are tricked by those in whom they trust.

Properly speaking, this should not be called a trick but a merited reproof. The reason is this:

A woman should be wholly modest and guard her chastity as her life, and on no account allow it to be corrupted. But our fragility does not always permit us to do this. I assert therefore that the woman who yields for money is deserving of the stake and fire, whereas she who submits to love, whose very great power is known, deserves pardon from a judge who is not too austere—as Filostrato told us a few days ago happened in the case of Madonna Filippa at Prato.

There was once in Milan a German soldier named Gulfardo, a bold man and faithful to those he served, which rarely happens with Germans. And since he most honestly repaid any sums of money lent him, he could always find merchants ready to lend him any quantity of money at a low rate of interest. This soldier fell in love with a beautiful woman named Madonna Ambruogia, the wife of a friend of his, a wealthy merchant named Guasparruolo Cagastraccio. He was so prudent that his love was perceived neither by the merchant nor by anyone else; and one day he spoke to her, begging her that she would be pleased to be gracious to his love, and saying that he for his part was ready to do anything she commanded him.

After much discussion the lady came to this decision—she was ready to do what Gulfardo wanted on two conditions, the first of which was that nobody should ever hear anything about the affair, while the second was that she needed two hundred gold florins for certain needs and that if he, who was a rich man, would give her that sum, she would always be at his service.

When Gulfardo, who had thought her a high-spirited woman, saw her avarice, he felt deep scorn at her baseness, and his fervent love was changed to hate. He determined to play a trick upon her, and told her he would gladly do that and anything else he could to please her. Therefore, she was to let him know when she wanted him to go to her and he would bring her the money; nobody should ever hear about it except a friend of his, in whom he had great confidence and who always accompanied him whatever he did.

The lady, like the bad woman she was, felt glad when she heard this, and sent back word that her husband Guasparruolo would have to go to Genoa on business a few days later, that she would let him know the time, and send for him.

Gulfardo thereupon went to Guasparruolo and said:

"I need two hundred gold florins for a certain affair, and I want you to lend them to me at the same rate of interest you lend to others."

Guasparruolo said he would gladly do so, and counted him out the money at once. A few days later he went to Genoa, as his wife had said; and so she sent to Gulfardo and told him to come, bringing the two hundred gold florins with him. Gulfardo, taking his friend with him, went to the lady's house, and found her waiting for him. The first thing he did was to put the two hundred gold florins in her hand in the presence of his friend, saying:

"Madonna, take this money, and give it to your husband when he returns."

The lady took the money and did not see why Gulfardo used those words. On the contrary, she thought he spoke thus so that his friend would not know that he was giving her the money as the price of her person. And so she said:

"I will gladly do so, but I must count them first."

She emptied them out on to a table and found there were two hundred. She put them away in great delight, and took Gulfardo to her bedroom, where she let him satisfy himself on her person, not only that night but many others, until her husband returned from Genoa.

When Guasparruolo returned from Genoa, Gulfardo at once went to him, and finding him with his wife, said in her presence:

"Guasparruolo, I did not need the two hundred gold florins you lent me, because I was unable to carry out the affair for which I borrowed them. I brought them back at once to your wife and gave them to her. So you must cancel my debt."

Guasparruolo turned to his wife, and asked if this were true. And she, seeing the witness present, could not deny it, and had to say:

"Yes, I had the money, and forgot to tell you about it."

"Gulfardo," said Guasparruolo, "I am satisfied; good-bye; I will cancel your debt."

Gulfardo departed, and the tricked woman gave her husband the dishonest price of her wickedness; and thus the cunning lover enjoyed his mercenary lady for nothing.

Second Tale

THE PRIEST OF VARLUNGO LIES WITH MONNA BELCOLORE AND LEAVES HER HIS CLOAK AS A PLEDGE. HE BORROWS A MORTAR OF HER AND, WHEN SHE ASKS FOR IT, HE CLAIMS HIS CLOAK WHICH HE SAYS HE HAD LEFT AS A PLEDGE FOR THE MORTAR, AND SO THE GOOD WOMAN IS LEFT GRUMBLING

BOTH the men and the ladies commended the trick which Gulfardo played on the greedy Milanese lady. The queen then turned smilingly to Pamfilo and ordered him to follow next; and so he began thus:

Fair ladies, I mean to tell you a little tale about those who are constantly injuring us without our being able to injure them in the same way—I mean the priests, who have declared a Crusade against our wives, and seem to think that when they can get on one of them they have obtained forgiveness of their sins as much as if they had brought the Sultan captive from Alexandria to Avignon. We poor men of the world cannot do the like to them, although we should avenge ourselves by attacking no less eagerly the mothers, sisters, female friends and daughters of priests. So I mean to tell you about a pleasant love affair, which is not long but amusing from its conclusion; and you may at least learn from it that priests are not to be believed in everything.

In Varlungo, a village which is not far from here (as each of you knows or has heard) there was a worthy priest, most valiant of person in the service of ladies. Although he could not read much, every Sunday

at the foot of an elm tree he comforted his parishioners with good and holy discourses. And when the male parishioners were absent, there never was a priest who more willingly visited their wives, taking them fairings and holy water and a few candle-ends, and giving them his blessing.

Now, among all his female parishioners one especially charmed him. This was one Monna Belcolore, the wife of a labourer, who went by the name of Bentivegna del Mazzo. She was a pleasant, fresh, brown-skinned, buxom peasant-girl, who knew how to grind the mill better than anyone. Moreover, she was a skilled performer on the cymbals and could sing: "The water flows in the cleft," and, waving a pocket handkerchief in her hand, dance Sellinger's Round better than any of her neighbours. All these things so charmed our priest that he was frantic about her, and rambled about all day trying to catch a glimpse of her. When he knew she was in church on Sunday morning, he lifted up his voice with a *Kyrie* or a *Sanctus* to show her what a fine singing voice he had, and brayed like an ass; whereas, if she were not there, he passed over them very hurriedly. But yet he acted in such a way that neither Bentivegna del Mazzo nor any other man observed him.

In order to become more familiar with Monna Belcolore, he was continually sending her gifts. At one time he sent her a bunch of fresh garlic bulbs, for he grew the best of anyone in the district in his garden, which he dug with his own hands; then a little basket of peas in their pods or a bunch of fresh onions or shalots. Choosing his time, he would gaze at her in a gloomy way and heap amorous reproaches on her, while she with rustic awkwardness pretended not to notice and went her way disdainfully; so that messer priest could not come to the point.

One afternoon when the priest was sauntering along he met Bentivegna del Mazzo with a laden ass; and after joking with him, asked him where he was going. Bentivegna replied:

"Why, father, I'm going into the city on business and I'm taking these things to Ser Bonacorri da Ginestreto, who is helping me about some lawsuit where I've got to appear before the clerk to the justice of the 'Sizes.'"

Said the priest:

"Well done, my son, go, with my blessing, and come back soon. And

if you see Lapuccio or Naldino don't forget to tell them to bring the straps for my harness."

Bentivegna said it should be done, and as he went off in the direction of Florence the priest thought that now was the time to go to Belcolore and try his luck. So, putting his best foot forward, he made no pause until he reached her cottage, which he entered, saying:

"God bless this house—who is within?"

Belcolore, who was in the hay shed, heard him and said:

"O father, you're kindly welcome. But what are you doing out in this heat?"

"So God be good to me," replied the priest. "I came to spend a little time with you, for I met your good man going into the town."

Belcolore came down and took a seat and began to sift some cabbage seed which her husband had gathered.

"Ah, Belcolore," said the priest, "must you always make me die in this way?"

Belcolore giggled, and said:

"Why, what do I do?"

"You don't do anything," said the priest, "but you won't let me do to you what I want to do and what God commands."

"Get away with you!" said Belcolore. "Priests don't do such things."

"Yes, we do," said the priest, "and better than other men. Why not? And we are better workers than other men. Do you know why? Because we only grind at harvest time. But you'll find it out for yourself if you'll only lie still and let me go."

"What good would it do me," said Belcolore, "when all you priests are as mean as you can be?"

"I don't know," said the priest. "Ask what you want. Do you want a pair of shoes or some ribbons or a piece of fine cloth, or what do you want?"

"Right you are, brother!" said Belcolore. "I don't want any of those things, but if you are so fond of me will you do me a service, and I'll do what you want?"

"Say what you want," said the priest, "and I'll gladly do it."

Then said Belcolore:

"On Saturday I have to go to Florence, to hand in the wool I have spun and to have my spinning-wheel mended. If you'll lend me five lire, which I know you have, I can take out of pawn my dark petticoat and my best girdle which I had to take to uncle, and you know that without them I can't go to church or anywhere else; and then I'll always do what you want."

"So help me God," said the priest. "I haven't them with me; but trust me, and you shall have them gladly before Saturday."

"Yes," said Belcolore, "you're all great promisers, and keep your word not at all. Do you think you can treat me like Biliuzza, who went away with nothing but promises? God's Faith, it was that sent her on the streets. If you haven't got them, go and get them."

"Ah!" said the priest, "don't make me go back home now. I see that my luck has been so good that no one else is here, and perhaps when I came back someone would be here and interrupt us. I don't know when there will be such a good chance as now."

"Ah well!" said she. "If you want to go, go; if not, stay as you are."

The priest saw that she would not do what he wanted unless she were *salvum me fac*, and would do nothing *sine custodia*; so he said:

"I see you don't believe I would get them; to convince you I'll leave with you my cloak of Turkish cloth."

Belcolore lifted her head, and said:

"Yes? And what is your cloak worth?"

"What's it worth?" said the priest. "Why, it comes from Douai in Touai and some of our people would call it Fourai. Not a fortnight ago I paid seven lire for it to Lotto the old clothes man and made five soldi on the bargain, according to what Buglietto told me, and you know he's an expert in all such cloths."

"Oh, is it?" said Belcolore. "God help me, I should never have thought so; but give it me first."

Messer priest, who had shot his bolt, took off his cloak and gave it to her. And when she had put it away, she said:

"Father, come along to the hayloft. Nobody ever goes there."

There the priest gave her the sweetest flopping kisses and enjoyed her for a long space of time, making her a relative of the Lord God. He then departed in his cassock, as if he had been to a wedding; and returned to his church.

But when he reflected that all the candle-ends he collected in a whole year were not worth one half of five lire, he felt he had made a mistake, regretted having left his cloak behind, and began to think of some means of getting his cloak back for nothing. And since he was a very cunning fellow, he thought of a way of getting it back, which succeeded. The next day was a festival, and he sent a little boy to Monna Belcolore's house to ask her to lend him her stone mortar, because that morning Binguccio dal Poggio and Nuto Buglietti were going to dine with him and he wanted to make sauce. Belcolore sent him the mortar. And at dinner time when the priest knew Bentivegna del Mazzo and Belcolore would be eating, he sent for the parish clerk, and said:

"Take this mortar to Belcolore and say: 'The parson thanks you and will you send him back the cloak which the little boy left as a pledge?'"

The clerk went off to Belcolore's cottage with the mortar and found her at table with Bentivegna. He laid down the mortar and delivered his message. When Belcolore heard him ask for the cloak she tried to speak, but Bentivegna interrupted her angrily:

"So you take pledges from the parson, do you? By Christ, I'd like to give you a good wipe in the nose. Give it back at once, and a pox on you. And henceforth if he wants anything of ours, even the ass, don't you say 'No' to him!"

Belcolore got up grumbling and went to the chest under the bed, took out the cloak, and as she gave it to the clerk, she said:

"Say to the priest: 'Belcolore says that she prays God you may never again grind sauce in her mortar, not having done her any honour in this.'"

The clerk went off with the cloak and delivered the message to the priest, who said, laughing:

"When you see her, tell her that if she won't lend the mortar, I won't lend the pestle—tit for tat."

Bentivegna supposed his wife said these words because he had scolded her, and thought no more about them. But Belcolore was furious with the parson, and would not speak to him until vintage time. Then, after threatening to send the priest into the biggest devil's mouth, she made it up with him over new wine and hot chestnuts, and thereafter they often gorged together. Instead of the five lire the priest mended her cymbals and hung her up a large bell; and she was well satisfied.

Third Tale

CALANDRINO, BRUNO AND BUFFALMACCO GO ABOUT MUGNONE LOOKING FOR THE MAGIC STONE, HELIOTROPE, AND CALANDRINO THINKS HE HAS FOUND IT. HE RETURNS HOME LADEN WITH STONES AND HIS WIFE SCOLDS HIM; IN ANGER HE BEATS HER AND TELLS HIS COMPANIONS WHAT THEY KNOW BETTER THAN HE

THE ladies laughed extremely at Pamfilo's tale, and the queen then ordered Elisa to follow next. Still laughing, she began thus:

Fair ladies, I do not know if my little tale, which is as true as it is amusing, will make you laugh as much as Pamfilo's; but I shall do my best.

Our city has always abounded in strange and various odd customs. Not so long ago there lived in it a painter called Calandrino, a simple-minded man of eccentric habit who spent much of his time with two other painters, named Bruno and Buffalmacco. They were very amusing men, but in other respects alert and sensible, and passed their time with Calandrino because they found his habits and simple-minded ways very funny.

At the same time there lived in Florence a young man named Maso del Saggio, who had an exceptional charm in everything he did, and who moreover was very astute and clever. Hearing of Calandrino's simplicity,

he determined to amuse himself by playing some trick on the man or by making him believe some fantastic thing.

One day this young man saw Calandrino in the church of San Giovanni, looking at the paintings and the inlay work of the canopy which is over the high altar in that church, not long before erected there; and he thought this was a good place and time to carry out his idea. He informed the person with him of what he intended to do, and together they halted near the place where Calandrino was seated; pretending not to see him, they began to talk about the occult qualities of certain stones, of which Maso talked as confidently as if he had been some great and famous jeweller. Calandrino listened to what they were saying, and, perceiving after a time that their talk was not intended to be secret, joined them, much to Maso's delight. Calandrino, following up their talk, asked Maso where these magic stones could be found. Maso replied that they occurred in Nomansland, a country of the Baschi, in a district which is called Bengodi, where they tie the vines with sausages and you can buy a goose for a cent and have the gosling with it. Moreover, in that country there was a mountain of grated Parmesan cheese, inhabited by people who did nothing but make macaroni and ravioli, which they cooked in chicken broth and then threw on the ground, and those who can pick up most get most. Nearby there was a stream of white wine, the best ever drunk, without a drop of water in it.

"Oh," said Calandrino, "that sounds a great country. But what do they do with all the chickens they cook?"

"All the Baschi eat them," replied Maso.

"Were you ever there?" asked Calandrino.

"Was I ever there?" said Maso. "I've been there thousands of times."

"How many miles away is it?" asked Calandrino.

"More than a thousand, going night and day," replied Maso.

"It must be further off than the Abruzzi," said Calandrino.

"Ah! indeed," replied Maso, "that it is."

The simple-minded Calandrino, observing that Maso made these remarks with a sober face and without laughing, believed them as the most manifest truth, and said:

"It's too far off for me. But if it were nearer, I should like to go there once with you to see the macaroni tumbling down, and get a bellyful of it. But tell me, are there none of those occult stones in that country?"

"Yes," replied Maso, "it contains two stones of the greatest occult powers. One is the grinding-stone of Settignano and Montisci, by whose virtue flour is made; and so they say in that country that favours come from God and the millstones from Montisci. But there are so many of these stones here that we think as little of them as they do of emeralds, of which they have a mountain higher than Mount Morello which shines by night, good Lord! And you must know that anyone who embellishes millstones and sets them in a ring before a hole is bored in them, and takes them to the Sultan, may have anything he asks for. The other is a stone which we jewellers call Heliotrope, a stone of the greatest powers, for whoever carries it about on him is invisible to others."

"These are great virtues," said Calandrino, "but where is the second stone found?"

Maso replied that they could be found in the district of Mugnone.

"How large are they?" asked Calandrino. "And what colour?"

"They're of different sizes," replied Maso, "some large and some small, but they're all of a blackish colour."

Calandrino noted all these things and then left Maso, pretending that he had business, but determined to look for these stones. But he made up his mind to do nothing without the knowledge of Bruno and Buffal-macco, who were his special friends. So he went looking for them at once, and wasted the whole morning doing so, in order that they might go and look for the stones before anybody else. Finally, when it was already past Nones, he remembered that they were working in the monastery of the nuns of Faenza, and in spite of the great heat he abandoned his own work and almost ran there. He called them down, and spoke to them thus:

"My friends, if you will trust in me, we can become the richest men in Florence, for I have heard from a man worthy of belief that in Mugnone there exists a stone which makes everyone who wears it invisible. Therefore I think that we ought to go and look for it before anyone

else goes. We shall certainly find it, because I know it. When we've got it, all we have to do is to put it in our pockets and go up to the tables of the money-changers (which, as you know, are always covered with crowns and florins) and take as many as we want. Nobody will see us. And so we shall suddenly get rich, without having to spend the whole day daubing walls like snails."

Bruno and Buffalmacco laughed inwardly when they heard this, and, after exchanging glances, pretended to be greatly surprised and praised Calandrino's plan. Buffalmacco asked what was the name of the stone. Calandrino, who was a stupid fellow, had already forgotten the name, but he replied:

"What does the name matter when we know its powers? I think we ought to go and look for it at once."

"Well," said Bruno, "but what is its shape?"

"They're of no particular shape," said Calandrino, "but they're all blackish. So I think we simply have to pick up all the black stones we see until we come upon it. Don't let's waste any more time, but start now."

"Wait a moment," said Bruno; and turning to Buffalmacco, he added: "I think Calandrino speaks well. But I don't think this is the time to go, because the sun is high over Mugnone and has dried all the stones, so that the stones there now look white whereas in the morning, before the sun has dried them, they look black. Moreover, there are a lot of people now working in the Mugnone who would see us and might guess what we were after and do the same themselves and perhaps find the stones, so that we should have our labour for nothing. If you agree, I think we should go in the early morning when it is easier to distinguish the black from the white, and on a feast day when there will be nobody to see us."

Buffalmacco praised Bruno's idea, and Calandrino agreed to it. They arranged that they would all meet on Sunday morning, and go to look for the occult stone. But above everything Calandrino besought them not to speak of the matter to anyone, because he was sworn to secrecy. And when they had promised this, he told them what he had heard about the country of the Bengodi, vowing on his oath that it was all true.

After Calandrino left them, they arranged together what they would do. Calandrino looked forward eagerly to Sunday morning; and when it came he got up very early, called his friends, and set out for Mugnone by way of the Porta San Gallo to look for the stone. Calandrino in his eagerness went on ahead of them, darting to one side and the other, and whenever he saw a black stone he fell upon it and put it in the fold of his gown.

His friends followed after him, occasionally picking up a stone, but Calandrino had not gone far before he had already filled his bosom with stones. Therefore he tucked up the skirts of his tunic (which was not in the narrow Flemish style) and fastened them to his girdle to make a large bag, which he soon filled; and after that he made another bag of his cloak which he also filled.

Buffalmacco and Bruno saw that Calandrino was laden with stones and that it was near dinner time, and so, in accordance with their plan, Bruno said:

“Where’s Calandrino?”

Buffalmacco could see him close at hand but turned round, looking in every direction, and said:

“I don’t know. But he wasn’t far away just now.”

“Well,” said Bruno, “I think he’s now at home having dinner, and has left us like idiots to go looking for black stones all over Mugnone.”

“He was quite right,” said Buffalmacco, “to play a trick on us and leave us here, since we were so silly as to believe him. Bah! Who but ourselves would have been so stupid as to believe that such a valuable stone could be found in Mugnone?”

Hearing their talk, Calandrino imagined that he had found the stone and that its magic virtue prevented them from seeing him, although he was near at hand. Delighted at his luck, he said not a word but made up his mind to go home, and turned his steps in that direction. Seeing this, Buffalmacco said:

“What shall we do? Shall we go home?”

“Let us go,” said Bruno, “but I vow to God that Calandrino shall never catch me again. If he were here, as he was all morning, I’d give him such

a knock on the heel with this stone that he'd remember this trick for a month."

As he spoke he lifted his arm and gave Calandrino a whack on the heel. At the pain Calandrino lifted his foot and gasped, but yet was silent, and went on his way. Buffalmacco then took one of the stones he had picked up, and said:

"Look at this stone. I wish I could hit Calandrino in the back with it."

And he threw the stone so that it hit Calandrino full in the back. In short, with one thing and another, they pelted Calandrino all the way from Mugnone to Porta San Gallo. There, they threw down the stones they had been carrying, went over to the customs guards and let them into the joke. And, pretending not to see Calandrino, the guards let him pass through amid shouts of laughter. Without halting, Calandrino went straight to his home, which was in the Canto alla Macina. And Fortune so favoured the jest that nobody spoke to him while he was going through the streets, for hardly anyone was about, and they were all at dinner. And so Calandrino entered his house with his burden. His wife, a handsome and worthy woman named Tessa, happened to meet him at the head of the stairs; and, being angry at his long absence, said to him scoldingly:

"What the devil brings you back when everyone else has finished dinner?"

At these words Calandrino saw that he was visible to her, and full of rage and grief said:

"Ah! You vile woman, are you there? You've ruined me, but by God's faith I'll pay you back!"

Whereupon he ran into a little room and got rid of all the stones he had brought with him, and then rushed at his wife in beastly wise, took her by the hair, threw her on the ground, kicked and beat her all over with his fists and feet, and left no cap on her head and not a bone unbruised, in spite of all her begging for mercy with clasped hands.

Buffalmacco and Bruno laughed over the joke with the guards for a time, and then slowly followed at some distance behind Calandrino. When they reached his door they heard the fierce beating he was giving his wife, and called to him as if they had only just met him. Calandrino came to

the window, all breathless and red-faced and sweaty, and told them to come up. Pretending to be a little annoyed, they went upstairs and found the room full of stones, and in one corner the wife pitifully weeping, all ruffled and torn and bruised and pale, and Calandrino sitting unbuttoned in the other, panting like a man exhausted. After gazing at him, they said:

"What's all this, Calandrino? Are you going to build a wall with all these stones?" And then they added: "And what's the matter with Monna Tessa? You seem to have beaten her. What's it all about?"

Calandrino, wearied with the weight of the stones and by the rage with which he had beaten his wife and by grief at having lost (as he thought) his good luck, could not fetch up breath enough to form words for an answer. And so Buffalmacco went on:

"Calandrino, if you were angry with someone else, you shouldn't make a fool of us in this way. You took us out to look for precious stones and then without a word left us in Mugnone and came home, which displeases us very much. But this shall be the last time you do such a thing to us."

Calandrino made an effort and replied:

"Don't be angry, my friends, it all happened differently from what you think. Unlucky that I am! I found the stone! Do you want me to prove it? When you first asked each other where I was, I was standing not ten yards from you; and when I saw you start home and that you could not see me, I went on a little ahead, and so reached here just before you."

Then, beginning at the start, he told them everything they had said and done, and showed them the marks made on his back and heel by the stones; and then went on:

"I came in the town gate with all these stones and no one said a word to me, though you know how annoying and fussy those customs guards are about seeing everything. Moreover, I met several of my friends in the streets who always have a joke for me and offer me a drink, and not one of them said a word to me, but passed without seeing me. Finally I got home, and that devil of a cursed woman appeared before me and

saw me, because, as you know full well, women deprive all things of their virtue. And so I, who might have called myself the luckiest man in Florence, became the most unlucky. So I beat her as hard as I could, and I don't know why I didn't slit her veins for her. Cursed be the hour when first I saw her and when she came into this house!"

And, his anger rising up again, he was about to get up and beat her once more.

As Buffalmacco and Bruno listened to him, they pretended to be greatly amazed and confirmed all Calandrino said; and wanted so much to laugh that they nearly burst. But when he got up in a fury to beat his wife again, they restrained him, saying that it was no fault in her, but rather in him, for, since he knew that women make things lose their virtue, he ought to have told her not to come near him that day. This piece of foresight God had not vouchsafed him, either because the luck was not to be his or because he had it in mind to cheat his friends, whom he should have told as soon as he discovered that he had found the stone.

After many words and much trouble they reconciled the weeping wife with him and departed, leaving him all melancholy in a house full of stones.

Fourth Tale

THE CANON OF FIESOLE FALLS IN LOVE WITH A WIDOW WHO DOES NOT LOVE HIM. HE LIES WITH HER MAID, THINKING IT IS SHE; THE LADY'S BROTHERS BRING THE BISHOP TO SEE HIM

ELISA told her tale to the great delight of the company, and when she had brought it to an end the queen turned to Emilia and thus showed her that she was to follow Elisa. Accordingly, she began thus:

Worthy ladies, several of the tales we have told have showed how priests, friars and other clerics torment our minds. But since whatever we may say, more will remain to say, I mean to tell you a tale of a Canon who, despite the whole world, determined to have a certain lady, whether

she wanted him or not. And she, like a wise woman, treated him as he deserved.

As you all know, Fiesole, whose hilltop we can see from here, is a very ancient city and was once very large. Now it has fallen into ruins, but still has its Bishop. Near its chief church, a widowed lady, named Monna Piccarda, had a farm with a small house. Since she was a wealthy woman, she spent most of the year there with her two brothers, who were courteous and pleasant young men.

The lady was still young and pretty and attractive, and as she frequented his church the Canon fell violently in love with her. After some time his passion reached such a height that he told the lady how much he loved her, and begged her to content his love, and to love him as he loved her.

This Canon was a man old in years, but very young in wits, offensive and haughty, thinking himself capable of anything. His manners and behaviour were so ungainly and displeasing, and he himself so tedious and boring that nobody liked him. There was nobody who liked him less than this lady, who hated him more than a headache. And so, being a wise woman, she replied:

“Messer, it should be very dear to me to have your love, and I ought to love you and will gladly love you; but there should never be any unchastity in the love between us. You are my spiritual father and a priest, and close upon old age, all of which things ought to make you modest and chaste. Moreover, I am no longer a girl, to whom such love affairs are suitable, but a widow. You know yourself what modesty is demanded of widows, and therefore you must excuse me if I never love you in the way you request, nor ever wish to be loved in that way by you.”

The Canon could get no more out of her at that time, but did not allow himself to be cast down or overcome at the first attack. With his wonted impudence he solicited her by letter and message, and by word of mouth when he saw her come to church. This courtship became so annoying to the lady that she made up her mind to get rid of him in the way he deserved, since she could do so in no other way. But she did nothing until she had first informed her brothers. She told them what the Canon had

proposed to her and what she intended to do, and obtained full permission from them to proceed. A few days later she went to church; as soon as the Canon saw her he came to meet her, and as usual entered into familiar talk with her. When the lady saw him coming, she looked at him kindly, and let him draw her to one side. After the Canon had talked a great deal in his usual style, the lady heaved a deep sigh and said:

"Messer, I have heard it said that if any castle is attacked every day it is bound to be taken at last; and I see the same thing has happened to me. You have attacked me at one time with soft words, and then with one charming thing and another, until you have broken down my determination, and I am ready to be yours since you care so much for me."

The Canon in great joy replied:

"Madonna, all my thanks! To tell you the truth, I have marvelled how you held out so long, since this never happened to me with any woman before. I've often said to myself: 'If women were silver, they would not be coined into money, since none of them can resist the hammer.' But never mind that—when and where can we be together?"

"My sweet lord," replied the lady, "the 'when' may be whenever you please, since I have no husband to whom I must render an account of my nights; but I don't know where."

"Why not," said the Canon, "in your house?"

"Messer," replied the lady, "you know I have two young brothers, who go in and out of the house day and night with their friends. My house is not very large and so it cannot be there, unless you will be quite mute without saying a word or making any noise, and act in the dark like the blind. If you agree to this, it may be in my house, for they never come into my room; but their room is so near mine that you cannot utter a word without being overheard."

"Madonna," said the Canon, "never mind that for one or two nights, until I can think of somewhere we can be together more comfortably."

"Messer," said the lady, "it is for you to decide. But I beg you that all this may be secret, and no word of it ever breathed."

"Madonna," replied the Canon, "have no fear about that; and if possible, let us be together tonight."

"It shall be so," said the lady; and then after arranging with him how and when he should come, she returned home.

The lady had a maid-servant, who was not very young and had the ugliest and most deformed face you ever beheld. She had a large snub nose and a wry mouth and thick lips and large irregular teeth, and squinted; her eyes were always running, and her colour was green and yellow; so she looked as if she had lived in an unhealthy place like Sinigaglia, instead of in Fiesole. Moreover, she had hip disease and was deformed on one side. Her name was Ciuta, but everyone called her Ciutazza, on account of her yellow complexion. Although she was deformed in person, she was rather mischievous. The lady sent for her, and said:

"Ciutazza, if you will do me a service tonight, I shall give you a fine new chemise."

"Madonna," said Ciutazza at the mention of the chemise, "I would throw myself into the fire for a new chemise."

"Well," said the lady, "I want you to lie with a man tonight, in my bed, and to caress him. Take care not to speak a word, so that you are not heard by my brothers who sleep in the next room, as you know. And then I'll give you the chemise."

"Oh!" said Ciutazza. "If necessary, I'd sleep with six men, let alone one."

That evening the Canon came along as arranged, and the two young brothers in concert with the lady were in their room and made themselves heard. So the Canon entered the lady's room very quietly in the dark and went to bed as she had told him to do; and Ciutazza, who had been well coached by the lady in what she was to do, also got into bed. Messer Canon, thinking he had the lady beside him, took Ciutazza in his arms and kissed her without saying a word, and she kissed him. The Canon then began to take his pleasure of her, enjoying the possession of what he had so long desired.

After this, the lady made her brothers do the remainder of what she had arranged, and so they softly left their room and went out to the public square. Here Fortune was more favourable to them than they expected; for, since it was very hot, the Bishop had asked for the two

young men so that he might rest and drink with them at their house. But when he saw them, he told them what he wished; and so they went into a small cool courtyard with many lights round them, and drank their good wine in peace. After drinking, the young men said:

“My lord, you have done us the favour of visiting our little house, to which we meant to invite you when we met you. And now you are here we should like you to look at a little thing we want to show you.”

The Bishop replied that he would gladly do so. One of the brothers took a torch and went ahead, followed by the Bishop and all the others; and led them to the bedroom where Messer Canon was lying with Ciutazza. To make up time he had ridden posthaste and before they arrived he had already ridden more than three miles. But being consequently a little tired, he was resting with Ciutazza in his arms, in spite of the heat.

The young man entered the room with the torch in his hand, and then the Bishop and all the others; and they were showed the Canon lying with Ciutazza in his arms. This awoke Messer Canon; and when he saw the light and so many people about him, he plunged his head under the bed-clothes in great shame and terror. But the Bishop reproved him sternly, and made him look out from the clothes and see with whom he had been lying.

The Canon saw the lady's deceit, and was in the deepest distress at this and at the insult which he felt had been offered him. At the Bishop's command he was forced to dress himself, and was sent off to his own house under a guard to endure severe punishment for the sin he had committed.

The Bishop then wished to know how this had come about, and why he had come there to lie with Ciutazza. The two brothers then told him the whole story; and when the Bishop had heard it he greatly commended the lady and the two young men who, being unwilling to stain their hands with a priest's blood, had treated him in the way he deserved.

The Bishop made the Canon bewail his sin for forty days, but love and shame made him bewail it more than forty-nine days. Moreover, for a long time he could never go out in the street without the little boys pointing at him and screaming:

“Look at the man who lay with Ciutazza!”

Which angered him so much that it nearly sent him crazy. Thus the worthy lady rid herself of the impudent Canon, and Ciutazza earned a chemise and a good night.

Fifth Tale

THREE YOUNG MEN TAKE THE BREECHES FROM A JUDGE OF THE MARCHES IN FLORENCE WHILE HE IS ON THE BENCH

WHEN Emilia finished her tale, the widow was praised by them all; the queen then looked at Filostrato, saying:

“It is now your turn.”

He immediately replied that he was ready, and began thus:

Delightful ladies, the young man named Maso del Saggio, mentioned just now by Elisa, has caused me to abandon the tale I meant to tell you for another one about him and his friends; for although it is immodest, since it contains words which you blush to use, yet it is so amusing that I shall tell it.

As you all know, there often come to our city, Rectors from the Marches, who are usually mean-spirited men of such wretched and poverty-stricken lives that they seem mere lousy fellows. In their wretched avarice they bring along with them a train of judges and notaries, who seem to have come from the plough and the last rather than from the law schools.

Well, one of these men came to us as Governor, and among the many judges he brought with him was one named Messer Niccola da San Lepidio who looked more like a locksmith than anything else; and this man sat with the other judges to hear criminal cases.

Although the citizens may have nothing whatever to do in the Court, yet they often go there; and so one morning Maso del Saggio happened

to be there, looking for a friend of his. He saw Messer Niccola as he sat there and thought him a queer looking bird, and so gazed more closely at him. He saw that Messer Niccola had a dirty judge's cap on his head and a pen-case at his girdle, and a waistcoat longer than his coat, and a number of other things unbecoming a respectable man. But the most notable thing of all in Maso's opinion was the judge's pair of breeches, for as he sat there his robes were so narrow that they opened in front while the seat of his breeches came halfway down his legs. Without spending more time in gazing, Maso abandoned his search for the first friend and went to look for others. He found two, named Ribi and Matteuzzo, who were just as merry fellows as Maso himself, and said to them:

"Come along to the Court with me, I want to show you the strangest scarecrow you ever beheld."

So he took them to the Court, and showed them the judge and his breeches. They laughed long at the sight, and then going nearer to the bench where the judge sat, they saw they could easily get underneath it. Moreover, they saw that the plank on which the judge's feet rested was so rotten that they could easily get a hand and an arm through it. Thereupon Maso said to his friends:

"Let's pull his breeches off—it can easily be done."

Each of the friends saw at once how it could be done. So, having arranged what they would do and say, they returned there next morning. When the Court was full of people Matteuzzo, without letting anyone see him, got under the bench and placed himself just under the point where the judge's feet rested. Maso went up to the judge on one side and Ribi on the other, and each of them took hold of part of his garments. Said Maso:

"Messer, O messer! I beg you, in God's name, before that great thief on the other side of you escapes, make him give me back the pair of my gaiters he's sneaked from me, and he says he didn't, and not a month ago I saw him repairing them."

Ribi, on the other side, protested loudly:

"Messer, don't believe him, he's a low glutton, and because he knows I came to claim a bag he stole from me, he brings up this business of

gaiters which I've had in my house for ages. And if you don't believe me I can bring my witnesses, Trecca my neighbour, and Grassa the tripe-woman, and a man who sweeps up the dirt from Santa Maria a Verzaia who saw him when he came back from the country."

Maso kept interrupting Ribi, and he yelled and Ribi yelled. As the judge stood up nearer to them to hear them better, Matteuzzo chose his time and, putting his hand through the rotten board, grasped the seat of the judge's breeches, and pulled hard. The breeches came off at once because the judge was a very thin man. As soon as he felt them go, in his bewilderment he tried to draw the folds of his robe about him and then sit down. But Maso and Ribi kept pulling at his robe, and shouting:

"Messer, you do basely not to right me here and not to listen to me and to try to send me away. In this country such small matters as this are dealt with summarily."

And they continued pulling at his robes until everyone in Court saw that he had no breeches on. As for Matteuzzo, he dropped them as soon as he got them, and went off without being seen by anyone. Ribi, thinking matters had gone far enough, said:

"I vow to God I'll appeal to the higher Court."

And Maso, dropping the robe, said:

"No, I shall keep coming back here until I find you less perplexed than you seem to be today."

And then they both got away as quickly as they could. The judge, whose breeches had been pulled off in everyone's presence, then seemed to awake from sleep and discovered the trick played on him. He asked what had become of the men who were disputing about the gaiters and the bag. When they could not be found, he swore by God's guts that he would know whether it was a custom in Florence to pull off a judge's breeches when he was seated on the bench of justice.

The governor made a great uproar about the matter when he heard of it. But when his friends pointed out to him that this had only been done to show him that the Florentines knew he had brought ploughmen instead of judges with him, for cheapness' sake, he said no more, and the affair went no further.

Sixth Tale

BRUNO AND BUFFALMACCO STEAL A PIG FROM CALANDRINO. THEY PERSUADE HIM TO TRY TO DISCOVER THE THIEF WITH GINGER PILLS AND WHITE WINE; THEY GIVE HIM TWO PILLS MADE OF ALOES, WHEREBY IT APPEARS THAT HE STOLE THE PIG. THEY MAKE HIM PAY UNDER THREAT OF TELLING HIS WIFE

As soon as Filostrato's tale—which aroused much laughter—was finished, the queen ordered Filomena to speak next, and she began thus:

Graceful ladies, Filostrato was led by Maso's name to tell the story you have just heard, and in the same way I am led by Calandrino's name to tell you a tale about him and his friends which I think will amuse you.

There is no need for me to tell you who Calandrino, Bruno and Buffal-macco were, for you have already heard. So, proceeding, I say that Calandrino had a little farm not far from Florence, which came to him as his wife's dowry. Among the things he derived from it he had a pig every year, and in December he and his wife always went to the country to kill and salt down the pig.

On one occasion, when his wife was unwell, Calandrino went down alone to kill the pig. When Bruno and Buffalmacco heard of it and knew that his wife would not be with him, they went and stayed with a priest, a great friend of theirs, who was a neighbour of Calandrino's. On the morning of the day they arrived, Calandrino had killed the pig; and when he saw them with the priest, he said:

"You are very welcome. I'd like you to see what a good farmer I am."

So he took them to his house, and showed them the pig. They saw the pig was a very fine one, and heard from Calandrino that he intended to salt it down for his family. Then said Bruno:

"Bah! What a fool you are! Sell it and let us enjoy the money, and you can tell your wife it was stolen."

"No," said Calandrino, "she wouldn't believe me, and she'd drive me out of the house. Don't bother me, I won't do it."



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They talked to him a great deal, but unavailingly. Calandrino asked them to supper, but so grudgingly that they refused and went away. Said Bruno to Buffalmacco:

"Shall we steal the pig tonight?"

"How can we?" asked Buffalmacco.

"I can see how to do it," said Bruno, "if it is not moved from where it is now."

"Very well," said Buffalmacco, "we'll do it. Why shouldn't we? And then we can make merry over it with the priest."

The priest said he liked the idea, and Bruno said:

"We must make use of a little art here. Buffalmacco, you know how mean Calandrino is, and how much he likes to drink when other people pay. Let us go and take him to the tavern, and there the priest will pretend to pay for us all to do him honour and will refuse to let him pay anything. He'll get drunk, and it will then be easy to steal the pig since he's alone in the house."

And they did as Bruno suggested. When Calandrino saw that the priest would not allow him to pay, he went at the drink, and although he didn't need a great deal he tanked himself up well. It was already late when they left the tavern and without eating any supper, Calandrino went home to bed. He thought he had locked the door, but in fact left it open.

Buffalmacco and Bruno went and supped with the priest, and after supper they took certain tools to break into the house as Bruno had planned, and set out quietly. But when they found the door open, they went straight in, took down the pig and carried it to the priest's house. There they hid it, and went to bed.

Next morning, when the wine had cleared from Calandrino's head, he got up; and as soon as he went downstairs he found his pig gone and the door open. So he went about asking first one and then another if they had got his pig, and when he could not find it, he began to make a great uproar—oh! alas! his pig was stolen!

Bruno and Buffalmacco got up and went to Calandrino's house to hear what he would have to say about the pig. As soon as he saw them, he called to them, almost in tears, and said:

"Alas, my friends, my pig has been stolen!"

Bruno went up and whispered to him:

"A wonder that you've been wise once in your life!"

"Alas," said Calandrino, "I'm speaking the truth."

"That's the way," said Bruno, "make a fuss, and it'll look as if it were true."

Calandrino yelled louder at him:

"By God's body, I say it really has been stolen from me!"

"That's right, that's right," said Bruno, "that's the way to do it, shout, make a noise, and it'll look as if it were true."

"You'll make me wish my soul to the devil!" said Calandrino. "I say you don't understand me. May I be hanged if the pig hasn't really been stolen."

"Why!" said Bruno, "how can that be? I saw it here last night. Do you want to make me believe it has flown away?"

"It's as I say," said Calandrino.

"Bah!" said Bruno. "Can it really be?"

"It certainly is," said Calandrino. "I've been robbed, and I don't remember how I came home last night. My wife will never believe me, and even if she does I shall never get any peace again."

"God help me," said Bruno, "this is a misfortune, if it's true. But you know, Calandrino, that last night I told you to behave in this way. I don't want you to deceive your wife and us at the same time."

Calandrino then shrieked:

"Why do you put me in despair, and make me curse God and the Saints and those with them? I tell you the pig was stolen from me last night."

"If that's so," said Buffalmacco, "we must try to find some way to get it back, if possible."

"And what way can be found?" asked Calandrino.

"Well," said Buffalmacco, "the person who stole your pig did not come from India to do it. It must have been one of your neighbours. If you can get them together, I could make the test of bread and cheese on them, and we should see at once who has it."

"Yes," said Bruno, "you could easily make some of the gentry round here take bread and cheese! I'm certain one of them has it, and they would guess what we were about, and refuse to come."

"Then what's to be done?" said Buffalmacco.

"You will see me do it," said Bruno, "with ginger pills and white wine, which you must invite them to drink. They won't suspect that and will come. We can have the ginger pills blessed, like bread and cheese."

"You're right," said Buffalmacco. "What do you think about it, Calandrino? Do you want us to do it?"

"I beg you to do it for the love of God," said Calandrino. "I feel I should be half consoled if I knew who has the pig."

"Very well," said Bruno, "I'm ready to go to Florence to get you the necessary things, if you will give me the money."

Calandrino had about forty soldi, which he gave to Bruno, who went off to a special friend of his in Florence and bought a pound of ginger pills and got his friend to make him up two strong aloe pills. He then made him cover them with sugar like the other pills, and put a certain mark on them so that he might recognise them and not lose or mislay them. In addition he bought a flask of good white wine, and returned to Calandrino in the country, and said:

"Tomorrow, invite everyone you suspect to come and drink with you. Tomorrow is a festival, so everyone will come. Tonight Buffalmacco and I will put the right spell on the pills and bring them to your house tomorrow. For love of you I myself will administer them, and I'll say and do everything necessary."

Calandrino invited them, and the next morning collected together under the elm near the church a large gathering of young Florentines (who were in the country), and of peasants. Bruno and Buffalmacco came along with their box of pills and the flask of wine, and when they had arranged everyone in a circle, Bruno said:

"Gentlemen, I must tell you the reason why you are here, so that if you are displeased you may have no reason to complain of me. Last night Calandrino here had his pig taken from him, and cannot find who has it. Now, nobody can have taken it except one of us here present, and so, to

find out who took the pig, I am going to give a pill to each of us and a drink of wine. You must know that whoever has the pig will not be able to chew the pill but will find it more bitter than poison and will spit it out. Therefore, to avoid this shame falling on one of you in public, it would perhaps be better for the man who took the pig to confess it to the priest, and I will refrain from this test."

But everyone present said he was willing to eat a pill. So Bruno ranged them up, Calandrino among them, and beginning at one end gave each of them a pill. When he came to Calandrino he took one of the bitter pills and put it in his hand. Calandrino at once lifted it to his mouth and began to chew it, but as soon as his tongue tasted the aloes he could not endure the bitterness, and spat it out. Everyone was watching everyone else to see who would spit out the pill. Bruno had not finished handing them out, and pretended not to notice; but when he heard them saying: "Why, Calandrino, what does this mean?" he turned round, and, seeing that Calandrino had spat out his pill, said:

"Wait a minute, perhaps something else made him spit it out; take another one."

And he put the second bitter pill in his mouth, and went on handing out the others. Calandrino found this pill far more bitter than the first. But, being ashamed to spit it out, he kept it in his mouth after chewing it a little, and the bitterness made him shed tears as big as hazel-nuts. Finally, unable to endure it any longer, he spat it out like the first pill.

Buffalmacco was giving drinks to Bruno and the rest of the company; and when they saw this they all said that Calandrino must certainly have stolen his own pig. And some of those present sharply reprovved him. When they had all gone, and only Bruno and Buffalmacco were left with Calandrino, Buffalmacco said:

"I was certain all along that you had it, and that you pretended you were robbed so that you wouldn't have to stand us a drink."

Calandrino, who had not yet got rid of the bitterness of the aloes, swore that he had not got the pig, but Buffalmacco said:

"How much did you get for it, you dirty fellow? Six florins?"

At this Calandrino was in despair, and Bruno said:

“Now look here, Calandrino, there was a fellow here that ate and drank with us and who told me that you have a little girl here whom you keep and give what you can. He was certain that you had sent her this pig. You are very skilled at taking people in. You once took us out to Mugnone to collect black stones, and after sending us on a fool’s errand you left us in the lurch and tried to make us believe that you had found the stone. Now, with all your vows you try to make other people believe that the pig was stolen, when you’ve given it away or sold it. We have had enough of your tricks and know them. You can’t play them any longer. Now, we spent a lot of time and trouble in saying spells over the pills, and either you must give us a couple of brace of capons or we shall tell Monna Tessa the whole story.”

Calandrino saw they would not believe him, and felt that he had had enough trouble without having his wife’s scoldings into the bargain; so he gave them the two brace of capons. After they had salted the pig, the pair of them returned to Florence, leaving Calandrino with the loss and the laugh against him.

Seventh Tale

A SCHOLAR IS IN LOVE WITH A WIDOW WHO LOVES SOMEONE ELSE AND MAKES HIM WAIT FOR HER A WHOLE WINTER’S NIGHT IN THE SNOW. BY A DEVICE OF HIS HE MAKES HER SPEND A WHOLE JULY DAY NAKED ON A TOWER IN THE SUN, EXPOSED TO FLIES AND GADFLIES

THE ladies laughed greatly at poor Calandrino, and would have laughed still more if they had not been sorry to see him lose the capons as well as the pig. When the tale was ended, the queen ordered Pampinea to tell her tale; and she immediately began thus:

Dearest ladies, it often happens that the trickster is tricked, and so

it is not very wise to delight in such games. In several tales we have laughed at the tricks played, but no one has told us of vengeance taken for a trick. Now, I intend that you shall feel some sympathy for the just retribution which fell upon a woman of our town, whose trick recoiled on her own head and put her in danger of death. It will not be useless for you to hear this, because it will make you cautious in playing tricks on others; and thus will make you wise.

Not many years ago in Florence there was a young woman named Elena, beautiful in person, haughty in spirit, well born, and suitably provided with this world's goods. She was a widow, but would never remarry, for she was in love with a handsome and pleasant young man of her choice. Being free from all other cares, she frequently enjoyed herself with him, by the assistance of a maid-servant whom she greatly trusted.

About this time a young nobleman of our city named Rinieri, returned to Florence, after studying for a long time in Paris, not to peddle out his learning again for money as so many do, but to know the reason of things and their causes, a thing most befitting gentlemen. And there he lived decently, much honoured for his noble birth and learning.

But as often happens, those who have most intelligence in these deep matters are most swiftly snared in love. Thus it befell with Rinieri. One day as he was going along the street to a feast, this Elena appeared before his eyes, dressed in black as our widows are wont to be; and in his judgment she was more beautiful and charming than any woman he had ever seen. He thought to himself that the man to whom God granted the favour of holding her naked in his arms might indeed call himself blessed. He gazed at her secretly time and again; and, knowing that great and precious things are not to be acquired without labour, he determined to give all his attention and care to pleasing her, so that by pleasing her he might obtain her love and thereby enjoy her.

The young lady did not keep her eyes fixed on the ground, but esteeming herself as much as (and indeed more than) she was worth, gazed about her with artful glances; and soon noticed the delight with which he looked upon her. She said laughingly to herself about Rinieri: "I shall not have come here in vain today, for, if I am not mistaken, I have caught

a simpleton by the nose." She then began to glance at him out of the corners of her eyes, and as far as she could, strove to show him that she was interested in him. Moreover, she thought that the more men were taken with her beauty the more highly it would be prized, especially by the man to whom she had given her love.

The learned scholar put aside all his thoughts of philosophy, and turned his mind wholly upon her. Thinking to please her he began to pass to and fro before her house, under various pretexts. The lady, who was vainglorious of this conquest for the reasons before mentioned, often allowed him to see her. The scholar therefore found means to speak with her maid-servant, and, telling her of his love, begged her to use her influence with the lady to obtain him her favours. The servant made large promises, and told everything to the lady, who heard it all with shrieks of laughter, and said:

"Did you see where he lost the wisdom he brought back from Paris? Well, let us give him what he wants. The next time he speaks to you, tell him I love him much more than he loves me, but I must guard my chastity so that I may go about among other women with an open countenance; and he, if he is as wise a man as they say, ought to think the more of me for it."

Ah, the bad silly woman! She did not know, ladies, what it is to contend with a scholar.

The happy scholar then proceeded to more urgent entreaties, to writing letters and sending gifts. They were all accepted, but only general answers were returned. And in this way he was kept dangling for a long time. Finally, she told her lover all about it, and he was a little angry with her and rather jealous; so, to show him that he was wrong to suspect her, she sent her servant to the scholar (who was becoming more urgent) to say to him that she had never had time to do anything to please him since he had told her of his love, but that she hoped to be with him at Christmas, which was then near at hand. Therefore, if he wished, he should come to her courtyard on the evening after Christmas, and she would meet him there as soon as she could.

The scholar was the happiest of men at this, and went to the lady's

house at the appointed time. The servant took him to a courtyard and locked him in, and he there awaited the lady. She had sent for her lover that evening, and, after supping merrily with him, told him what she had planned to do that night, adding:

“And you will be able to see how much I love the man of whom you have been so foolishly jealous.”

The lover heard this with great satisfaction, and was eager to see carried out what the lady had told him she meant to do. The day before there had been a heavy fall of snow and everything was covered with it, so that the scholar had not been long in the courtyard when he began to feel colder than he would have wished. But he put up with it patiently, expecting speedy comfort.

After some time the lady said to her lover:

“Come into this room and let us look through the little window and see what the man you are jealous of is doing, and hear what he says to the servant whom I have sent down to talk to him.”

They therefore went to the little window where they could see without being seen, and heard the servant talking to Rinieri, and saying:

“Rinieri, my mistress is in the greatest trouble. One of her brothers has arrived here tonight and has been talking to her for a long time, and after that had supper with her, and still has not gone. But I think he’ll go soon. That is why she could not come to you before, but she’ll soon be coming. She begs that you will not be angry at having to wait.”

Believing this to be true, the scholar replied:

“Say to my lady that she must have no thought of me until it is convenient for her to come, but let her do so as quickly as she can.”

The servant returned to the house, and went to bed. The lady then said to her lover:

“Well, what have you to say? Do you think that if I cared for him as you fear, I would allow him to remain there freezing all this time?”

The scholar tried to keep warm by walking up and down the courtyard. He had nowhere to sit down and no shelter from the sky, and cursed the brother for staying so long with the lady. At every noise he thought the lady was coming to open the door for him, but he hoped in

vain. About midnight, when the lady had taken her pleasure with the lover, she said:

"My love, what do you think about our scholar? Which do you think the greater—his wisdom or my love for him? Will the cold I am causing him to suffer make you get rid of the jealousy which came into your breast the other day from my jests?"

"Heart of my body," replied the lover, "yes! I know that you are my happiness and my peace and my delight and all my hope, even as I am yours."

"Then," said the lady, "kiss me a thousand times to see whether you speak the truth."

So the lover held her close to him and kissed her, not a thousand, but a hundred thousand times. And when some further time had elapsed in these dalliances, the lady said:

"Let us get up for a while, and see if there is any diminishing of that fire in which my new lover writes me he burns all day long."

They got up and went to the same little window; and looking into the courtyard saw the scholar hopping about in the snow with teeth chattering so fast owing to the cold, that the like has never been seen.

Then said the lady:

"What say you to this, my sweet? Do you think now that I can make men dance without the noise of trumpets or Sicilian bagpipes?"

"Yes, dear love," replied the lover laughingly.

"Let us go down to the door," said the lady; "you will remain quiet and I will speak to him, and we'll hear what he has to say. Perhaps that will be as amusing as watching him."

They went softly out of the room down to the door, and there, without opening it at all, the lady called to him through a crack in a low voice. When the scholar heard her call to him, he gave thanks to God, believing too hastily that he was to be let in; and, going over to the door, he said:

"Here I am, madonna; open the door, for God's sake, I'm dying of cold."

"Oh, yes," said the lady, "I know you're chilly, and the cold is very

great because there happens to be a little snow! I happen to know that it's much worse in Paris. I can't let you in yet because that cursed brother, who came to sup with me last evening, has not yet gone. But he will soon go, and I'll come down at once and let you in. With great difficulty I've managed to get away from him a moment to come down and cheer you up, so that you are not weary with waiting."

"Ah! madonna," said the scholar, "I beg you to let me in, for God's sake, so that I can wait under shelter, because it began to snow heavily just now, and is still snowing. I'll wait as long as you wish."

"Alas, my sweet," said the lady, "I can't; this door makes such a noise when it's opened that my brother would easily hear it if I opened it; but I will go and tell him to leave so that I can come down and let you in."

"Go quickly then," said the scholar, "and I beg you will have a good fire made for me to warm myself when I come in, for I am so cold I have hardly any sensation left."

"That cannot be," said the lady, "if what you have often written to me is true—that you are burning up with love of me. But I'm sure you make fun of me. Now I must go. Wait, and be of good heart."

The lover was delighted to hear all this, and went back to bed with her, where they slept little that night but spent most of it in pleasure and in making fun of the scholar.

The poor scholar (whose teeth chattered so hard that he seemed like a crane) at last realised that he had been tricked. He made several attempts to open the door and tried to find some other means of escape; but finding none he raged up and down like a lion in a cage, cursing the weather, the lady's malice, the length of the night and his own stupidity. In his rage with her, the long and ardent love he had felt for her was suddenly changed to sharp and bitter hatred, and he kept revolving different means of vengeance in his mind, for he now more desired to be revenged than he had formerly desired to be with the lady.

After long and dreary waiting the night drew towards day, and the dawn began to appear. The lady's maid-servant, acting on her instructions, then came down and opened the courtyard, and, pretending to pity him, said:

"The devil take the man who came here last night! He kept her in suspense all night and made you freeze. But you know how it is! Go in peace, and be sure that another night will give you what you could not have last night. I know that nothing could have happened to displease my mistress more."

The angry scholar, who knew that threats are simply weapons to the person threatened, like a wise man kept to himself everything which his unrestrained passion would have expressed; and, without showing his anger, said in a low voice:

"Indeed I spent the worst night I ever knew, but then I know your mistress was not to blame, because in her pity for me she came down herself to explain and to comfort me. And, as you say, what did not happen last night will happen another night. Commend me to her, and so good-bye."

He then returned home as best he could, almost paralysed with cold. Weary and dying of sleep he threw himself down on his bed, and awoke to find that he had almost lost the strength of his arms and legs. So he sent for a doctor and told him the chill he had suffered, and asked him to look after his health. The doctor applied prompt remedies and in a very short time cured him of his cramps, and enabled him to stretch his limbs. If he had not been young and if the warm weather had not soon arrived, he would have died. But, having regained his health and strength, he pretended to be more in love with the lady than ever, in order to gratify his hatred.

Now, some time later, Fortune gave the scholar an opportunity of satisfying his desire. The young man whom the widow loved, disregarding the love she bore him, fell in love with another woman and would say and do nothing to please her, so that she wasted away in tears and bitterness. But her servant, who was very fond of her, finding no means of distracting her mistress from the grief caused her by the loss of her lover, formed a most foolish plan. And this was that the lady's lover might be brought to love her again by the arts of black magic, of which the scholar must be a great master. This plan she told her mistress, and the foolish lady, not stopping to think that if the scholar knew black magic

he would have employed it on his own behalf, listened to the servant's words and immediately told her to find out if the scholar would do it and to promise him that she would do anything he wanted in return.

The servant well and truly delivered the message, and when the scholar heard it, he said exultantly to himself: "Praised be God! The time has come when, with Thy aid, I may punish the wicked woman for the injury she did me in exchange for the great love I bore her." And to the servant he said:

"Say to my lady that she must not be troubled any longer about this. If her lover were in India I could make him come to her at once and ask her pardon for what he has done to displease her. But I must wait for her to fix the time and place when I can tell her what she must do in this matter. Tell her this from me, and bid her be of good cheer."

The maid took back the answer, and arranged that they should meet in Santa Lucia del Prato. There the lady and the scholar met. Forgetting that she had brought him almost to the point of death, she openly told him everything and what she wanted, and begged him to help her. Said the scholar:

"Madonna, true it is that black magic is among the arts which I learned in Paris, and I am certain I understand it. But since it is highly displeasing to God, I had sworn never to make use of it for myself or for another. But the love I feel for you is so great that I cannot deny you anything you wish me to do. Therefore, even if I should go to hell for this only, yet I am ready to do it, if you want it. But I must warn you that this is a more difficult thing to do than you perhaps realize, especially when a woman wishes to regain a man's love or a man a woman's, because it must be carried out by the person interested. The person who does it must be of firm mind, because it must be carried out at night in a solitary place without company. I do not know whether you are ready to accept these conditions."

The lady, who was more amorous than wise, replied:

"Love spurs me so much that I would do anything to get back the man who has wrongfully abandoned me; but, if you please, tell me how I must show firmness of mind."

"Madonna," said the artful scholar, "I must make a tin image of the man you wish to recapture. When I send it to you, at the waning of the moon you must go naked and alone at night and seven times bathe with it. After that you must climb naked upon a tree or an uninhabited house; then turning to the north with the image in your hand, you must seven times repeat certain words I shall give you in writing. When you have recited them, there will come to you the two loveliest girls you ever saw, who will greet you and ask you what you wish them to do for you. Then you must tell them plainly what you desire, taking care not to give one person's name to another. When you have done this, they will depart and you can return to the place where you left your clothes, dress, and return home. And, of a certainty, half the next night will not have elapsed before your lover comes to you weeping and asking for your mercy and pity; and thereafter he will never again leave you for another woman."

The lady implicitly believed all this, and felt she already had her lover in her arms again. So, already half happy, she said:

"Doubt not, I will do all these things, and I have a most fitting place for them. In the Val d'Arno I have a farm which is close to the river bank; and it is now July, when bathing is delightful. I also remember that not far from the river is an uninhabited tower, where there is a ladder of chestnut wood, by which the shepherds climb to an earthen platform to look for their lost sheep. The place is solitary and out of the way, and I shall climb up on it and I hope I can perfectly execute what I have to do."

The scholar knew all about the lady's farm and tower, and was delighted to know her intention, but he said:

"Madonna, I never visited that district, and so I know neither the farm nor the tower. But if they are as you say, nothing could be better. So, when the time comes, I will send you the image and the prayer. But when you have what you desire, and know that I have served you well, I beg that you will remember me and keep your promise."

The lady said she would do so without fail, and, taking her leave of him, returned home. The scholar, delighted that his plan seemed to be

succeeding, made the image and wrote out a fanciful incantation, which he sent to the lady when he thought the time ripe. He informed her that she was to carry out what he had told her the next night without any delay. He then secretly went with his servant to the house of a friend which was not far away from the tower, in order to carry out his plan.

On her side, the lady set out with her maid and went to the farm. When night came, she pretended to go to bed, and sent her maid to bed also. Then in the night she quietly went out of the house and walked down to the bank of the Arno, near the tower. She gazed about her, and, seeing and hearing nobody, undressed herself and hid her clothes under a bush. She then dipped seven times with the image and, holding it in her hand, went naked to the tower.

At nightfall the scholar had hidden with his servant among the willows and other trees near the tower, and saw everything. When she passed naked before him and he saw how the whiteness of her body overcame the shadows of night and then gazed at her breasts and other parts of her body and saw how beautiful she was, he felt pity for her, thinking of what would soon happen to them. Moreover, he was suddenly assailed by the desires of the flesh, which made that which was lying down stand up, and urge him to leave his hiding place and go and take her, and have his pleasure of her. And between pity and desire he was nearly overcome. But then he remembered who he was and the injury she had done him and why and for whom; and so his anger was rekindled and he drove away pity and desire, and held to his plan, and let her go.

The lady climbed up the tower, turned to the north, and began to repeat the words which the scholar had given her. Very soon he went softly into the tower and gradually removed the ladder leading up to the platform on which the lady was standing. He then waited to find what she would say and do.

Having repeated the incantation seven times, the lady waited for the two girls. It was much colder than she would have liked, and she waited so long that the dawn began to appear. Sad that things had not happened as the scholar had foretold, she said to herself: "I fear he has tried to give me a night such as I gave him; but he has avenged himself but poorly,

for this has not been a third as long as his night, and the cold very different." She then turned to come down from the tower, to avoid being caught in daylight, but found the ladder had gone. She felt as if the ground had failed beneath her feet, and her spirit deserted her, and she fell down on the platform of the tower. When her strength returned, she began to weep and lament. She perceived that this must be the scholar's work, and regretted having offended him and then having trusted him, when she ought to have known he was her enemy. And thus a long time passed away. She then looked about for some other means of descending, but found none, and began to lament once more, for bitter thoughts came to her, and she said to herself: "O luckless woman, what will be said of you by your brothers and relatives and friends and all the Florentines, when it is known that you were found naked here? Your modesty will be discovered to be false; and even if you could think of lies to excuse yourself, they would be useless, for this cursed scholar who knows all about you would unmask your lies. Wretched woman! In the same hour you have lost the man you loved too well and your honour!" And then she fell into such agony of mind that she was tempted to throw herself down from the tower.

The sun was now risen, and she got up on to one of the walls of the tower to look for a shepherd boy with his flock whom she could send for her servant. The scholar, who had been asleep under a bush, then awoke and saw her and she saw him. And the scholar said:

"Good morning, madonna. Have the beautiful girls come yet?"

At this the lady began to weep bitterly again, and begged him to come to the tower and speak to her. And the scholar was so courteous as to do this.

The lady, lying down on the platform so that only her face appeared at the trap-door, said weeping:

"Indeed, Rinieri, if I made you spend a bad night, you have been well avenged. Although it is July, I thought I should freeze, for I'm naked. And I have wept so much for the deceit I practised on you and my own folly in trusting you that it is a marvel my eyes are still in my head. I beg you—not for love of me, whom you cannot now love—but for love

of yourself as a gentleman, that this may suffice you as vengeance for the injury I did you, that you will bring me my clothes and let me down from here, and that you will not take from me what you could never give me back if you wanted to—my honour. I did indeed deprive you of a night with me, but whenever you please I can give you back many nights for that one. Let this suffice you, and like a gentleman, be content that you have avenged yourself and made me know it. Do not abuse your strength upon a woman. It is no glory for an eagle to overcome a dove. Therefore, for the love of God and your own honour, have pity upon me.”

The scholar, remembering the injury she had done him and seeing her weep and entreat him, felt both pleasure and pain—pleasure at his vengeance which he had desired above everything; pain because his humanity was moved to pity by her suffering. But humanity could not overcome the savagery of his love of vengeance, and he replied:

“Madonna Elena, if my prayers, which in truth I was unable to mingle with tears and to make honied as you now make yours, had so far availed me on the night when I was dying of cold in your snowy courtyard that you had given me a little shelter, it would now be easy for me to grant your request. If now you have more concern for your honour than in the past and find it grievous to stay here naked, make your entreaties to the man in whose arms you lay naked on the night you remember, when I went trampling up and down your courtyard in the snow with chattering teeth. Let him help you, let him bring you your clothes, let him put the ladder for you to come down; strive to make him tender for your honour, since now and a thousand other times you have not hesitated to put it in peril for his sake.

“Why do you not call upon him to help you? And who indeed ought to help you more than he? You are his. Whom indeed should he protect and aid, if he does not aid and protect you? Call to him, foolish woman that you are, and find whether his love for you and his wisdom added to yours can free you from my foolishness. For you remember that when you lay with him you asked him which he thought greater—my stupidity or your love for him. Do not now offer me what I do not want and what

you could not refuse me if I desired it. Reserve your nights for your lover, if you happen to get away from here alive. Let them be yours and his. I had enough of one of them, and it is enough for me to have been duped once.

“Again, using your cunning in words, you strive to gain my kindness by praising me and calling me a worthy gentleman, and you secretly labour to withdraw me from punishing your malice by flattering my magnanimity. But your flatteries shall no longer darken the eyes of my intellect as your false promises did in the past. I know myself, and I did not learn so much about myself all the time I was in Paris as I learned of you in a single night.

“But, supposing I were magnanimous, you are not the person to whom magnanimity should be shown. The end of penitence and of vengeance with wild beasts like you should be death, whereas with men it should be as you say. I am no eagle and you no dove, but a poisonous serpent; and so, like a very old enemy I mean to persecute you with all my hatred and strength. Indeed, what I do to you cannot fittingly be called vengeance but is rather a punishment, because vengeance should exceed the offence, whereas this does not equal it. Considering what you did to me, my vengeance (if I wanted it) would not be satisfied by taking away your life or that of a hundred women like you; for I should only be killing a vile, base and wicked woman.

“Setting aside your slight beauty of face, which a few years will ruin by covering it with wrinkles, what the devil are you more than any other poor creature? No thanks to you that a ‘worthy gentleman’ (as you called me just now) did not die, one whose life might be more useful to the world in a single day than a hundred thousand like you could be as long as the world endures. The pain you are suffering may teach you that it is one thing to dupe men of no understanding, and a very different thing to dupe a scholar. And if you escape, let this teach you never to fall into the same folly again.

“But if you want to come down so much, why don’t you throw yourself down? With God’s aid you would break your neck and escape from the pain you feel, and at the same time make me the happiest of

men. I shall say no more. I managed to make you climb up there; do you contrive to get down, as you contrived to trick me."

While the scholar was saying all this the poor woman wept continually, and time passed by, and the sun rose higher and higher. But when at last he was silent, she said:

"Ah! cruel man, if that cursed night angered you so much and my fault seems to you so great that you can be moved to pity neither by my young beauty nor bitter tears nor humble entreaties, at least you should be touched and your austere harshness softened by the fact that I trusted you and let you know all my secrets, whereby I enabled you to gratify your desire to make me conscious of my sin. For if I had not trusted you, there would have been no way for you to take that vengeance which you show me you desired so eagerly.

"Ah! Curb your anger, and forgive me. If you will forgive me and let me come down, I am ready to abandon that faithless man and to take you only as my lord and lover, although you despise my beauty, and call it brief and worthless. It is indeed so, like the beauty of other women; and yet I know that, though it should be valued for no other reason, it is the delight and pleasure and charm of men's youth. You are not an old man. You have treated me cruelly, and yet I cannot believe that you wish to see me suffer so base a death as to have me cast myself in despair from this tower before your very eyes, which I should delight so much if you had not become so false as you are. Ah! For God's sake, have pity upon me. The sun grows hot and the heat begins to pain me, even as the cold distressed you that night."

The scholar was delighted to keep her in talk, and said:

"Madonna, you put your trust in my hands, not for any love you bore me, but to regain the man you had lost. So it deserves nothing but a worse return. And you think foolishly if you believe that this was the only way in which I could have the vengeance upon you I desired. I had a thousand others. By pretending to go on loving you I had set a thousand snares for your feet; and if this had not occurred, you must inevitably have been caught in one of them before much time had elapsed. Which ever I had caught you in, you would have fallen into greater pain and

shame than this now gives you. I chose this way, not to let you off more easily, but to be happy sooner. If all these had failed, I still have my pen, wherewith I should have written such things about you and in such a manner that when you heard them (as you would have done) you would have wished a thousand times a day that you had never been born.

“The power of the pen is greater than is supposed by those who have not personally endured it. I swear by God (and may He make me as happy at the end of this vengeance I am taking on you as He has made me in the beginning) that I would have written such things of you that you would have been made ashamed in yourself, as well as on account of other people, and you would have torn out your eyes so as not to see yourself any more. Therefore, don’t blame the sea for having made the little river overflow.

“As I said before, I care nothing for your love or for having you mine. Be his whose you were formerly, if you can! I once hated him, but I now love him when I think of what he has done to you. You go about falling in love, and desire the love of young men, because you see they have fresher skins and blacker beards than others, and go about dancing and jousting. Those who are older possess all these qualities, and know moreover what these young fellows have yet to learn. Moreover, you think them better riders and able to go more miles in a day than older men. I admit that they caper along more rapidly, but older men with more experience know where the ticklish places are. Short and sweet is far better and more enjoyable than long and tasteless. Hard trotting soon tires another, however young; whereas gentle going may bring you later to the inn, but at least brings you there comfortably.

“Senseless creatures, you don’t see how much evil is concealed under a little good appearance. Young men are not content with one woman, but want as many as they see, and think themselves worthy of them. Therefore, their love cannot be constant, and you yourself can bear witness to prove it. They think they should be honoured and caressed by their women, and think nothing is finer than to boast of the women they have had. This causes many women to lie with friars, who never wish to speak of it. You say that your love affairs are known only to me and

your servant, but you are wrong and believe falsely if you believe that. His part of the country and yours hardly talk of anything else; but as usually happens, the person concerned in such matters is the last to hear of them. Moreover, young lovers take gifts from you when older men pay you.

“You made a bad choice, so remain his to whom you gave yourself and leave me whom you scorned. I have found a woman much better than yourself, who knows me far better than you did. If you would be more certain of the desire of my eyes in the next world than you seem to feel in my words in this world, cast yourself down; I am convinced that your soul would be received in the devil’s arms and you would see whether my eyes were distressed or not by seeing you dismally fall. But I do not believe that you will give me this happiness, and so I say: if the sun begins to scorch you, remember the cold you made me suffer; mix that with the heat and you will certainly find the sun cooled down.”

The unhappy lady, finding that the scholar’s words tended to a cruel end, began to weep again and said:

“Since nothing in me can move you to pity, be moved by the love you bear that other lady whom you have found to be wiser than I, and by whom you say you are beloved. Forgive me for the love of her, and bring me my clothes so that I can dress, and let me down from here.”

The scholar laughed at this, but seeing it was past Terce, he replied:

“I cannot now say ‘No’, since you have besought me by my lady. Tell me where they are, and I will go for them, and let you down.”

Believing him, the lady took some comfort, and told him where she had left her clothes. The scholar left the tower, and ordered his servant to stay there and to take care that nobody else entered until he returned. So saying, he returned to his friend’s house, where he dined at leisure and then went to his siesta.

The lady was thus left on the tower, a little comforted by false hopes but still in great distress; she went and sat down by that part of the wall which threw a small shadow, and began to wait, a prey to the bitterest thoughts. Now thinking, now hoping for and now despairing of the scholar’s return with her clothes, she passed from one thought to another,

and at last fell asleep, overcome with grief and the fatigue of a sleepless night. The sun was now in mid-heaven and very hot, and beat down directly and fiercely on her tender delicate body and uncovered head with such power that her body was not only burned all over but her skin began to split. So fierce was the burning that it awakened her from a profound sleep. She moved slightly when she felt the burning, and when she moved it seemed as if all the burning skin opened and tore apart, as we see happens when someone pulls a piece of burnt parchment. Moreover she had such a pain in her head that it seemed splitting asunder; which was no wonder. The platform on the tower was so hot that she could not bear to touch it with her feet or anything else for long; so she kept shifting about in tears and could not keep still. There was not a breath of wind, and so quantities of flies and gadflies came and settled on her cracked skin and stung her so sharply that each sting seemed like the stab of a spear-point. Therefore she kept perpetually waving her hands about her, cursing herself, her life, her lover and the scholar.

Being thus agonized, stung and pierced by the terrible heat of the sun, by flies and gadflies, and by hunger and still more by thirst, she got to her feet and began to look and listen for any person to whom she could call for aid, for she was now prepared to risk any consequences. But her ill luck deprived her even of that. The workmen had all left the fields on account of the heat, and it so happened that nobody was working near the tower that day, but they were all threshing their wheat near their cottages. So she heard nothing but the cicadas and saw nothing but the Arno, which made her want its water, and thus increased her thirst. She saw woods and shade and houses, and they also were anguish to her, since she longed for them.

What more need be said of this unhappy lady? The sun over-head, the heat from the platform beneath her, the stings of flies and gadflies all over her, had tanned her to such an extent that whereas the night before her whiteness had conquered the darkness, she had now become as red as madder and all bloody, so that she would have seemed the most ugly thing imaginable to anyone who saw her. In this state she remained, without any plan or hope, rather expecting death than anything else, until

Nones were half sped. The scholar then awoke and remembered his lady. He therefore returned to the tower to see about her, and sent his servant off to get his food. The lady heard him, and came to the battlements, weak and suffering from pain, and sat down weeping, and spoke thus:

"Rinieri, you are over-vengeful. I did indeed make you freeze by night in my courtyard, but you have made me roast and burn by day on this tower and, in addition, make me die of hunger and thirst. I beg you in God's name to come up here and, since I have not the courage to kill myself, do you kill me; I desire death above all things, so great is the torment I endure. If you will not do me this favour, at least bring me a glass of water for me to moisten my mouth, for my tears do not suffice, so great are the dryness and heat within me."

Her voice showed the scholar how weak she was and he could see part of her body all burned by the sun. These things and her humble entreaties awoke some pity in him for her, and yet he replied thus:

"Wicked woman, you shall never die by my hands but by your own, if you want to die. You shall have as much water from me to soothe your heat as you gave me fire to comfort my cold. I greatly regret that the illness caused by my cold had to be cured by the warmth of stinking dung, whereas yours will be cured by the cold of rose water. Whereas I nearly lost my strength and person, you will only be skinned by this heat, and will become beautiful again like the snake when it sheds its skin."

"Wretched me!" replied the lady. "May God give beauty acquired in such a way to my worst enemies! But you, crueller than a wild beast, how can you bear to torture me thus? What worse could I expect from you or anyone else if I had slain all your family with the cruelest tortures? I know not what greater cruelty could be used against a traitor who had delivered up a whole city to the sword than that you have practised upon me, by roasting me in the sun and having me devoured by flies. And you refuse me even a glass of water, when condemned murderers going to their death are often given wine to drink if they ask for it. But, since I see you resolute in your harsh cruelty and that no suffering on my part can move you, I shall patiently await death, so that God

may have mercy upon my soul, Whom I pray to look upon these deeds with just eyes!"

So saying, she dragged herself in great pain to the middle of the platform, despairing of ever escaping alive from such heat. In addition to her other sufferings she thought she would swoon with thirst, not once but a thousand times, and yet continued weeping bitterly and bewailing her misfortune.

It was now Vespers, and the scholar thought he had done sufficient. He wrapped her clothes in his servant's cloak and went to the lady's house, and there found her maid-servant sitting disconsolate and sad and resourceless at the door. And he said to her:

"Good woman, what has happened to your mistress?"

"Messer," replied the servant, "I do not know. This morning I expected to find her in the bed where I thought she went last night. But I could not find her there or anywhere else, and I do not know what has become of her, and so I am in great grief. Can you tell me nothing of her, Messer?"

The scholar replied:

"Would I had had you with her so that I could have punished you as I have punished her! But you shall not escape me, and I will so repay you for your deeds that you will never again play tricks on any man without remembering me."

He then turned to his servant, and said:

"Give her the clothes and tell her where to go for her, if she wants."

The servant obeyed. And when the maid took and recognized the clothes and heard what they said, she was afraid they had murdered her mistress, and could hardly restrain a scream. The scholar then departed, and she went at once with the clothes to the tower.

Now, one of the lady's workmen had lost two of his pigs that day and was looking for them. Just after the scholar's departure he came to the tower, and as he looked about for his pigs he heard the unfortunate lady's wretched lamentations. So he climbed into the tower and shouted:

"Who is crying there?"

The lady recognized her workman's voice, and, calling to him by name, said:

"Ah! Go for my maid, and bring her up to me here."

The workman recognized who it was and said:

"Alas! Madonna, who took you up there? Your servant has been looking for you all day. But who ever would have thought that you were here?"

He took the sides of the ladder, placed them in position, and began to bind on the cross-pieces with osiers. Meanwhile the maid-servant arrived and entered the tower. Unable to keep silent longer, she clapped her hands and screamed:

"My sweet lady, where are you?"

The lady heard her and said as loudly as she could:

"My sister, I am here. Do not weep, but bring my clothes to me here at once."

When the maid heard her speak she was greatly comforted. She climbed up the ladder which the labourer had now mended, and with his assistance reached the platform. But when she saw her mistress, looking less like a human being than a burned log, lying on the floor naked and exhausted, she tore her face with her nails and began to weep over her as if she had been dead. But the lady begged her in God's name to be silent and to help her to dress. Having learned from the maid that nobody knew where she had been except those who had brought her clothes and the labourer, she took a little comfort from that, and begged them for God's sake never to speak of it to anyone.

After much talk, the labourer carried the lady, who was unable to walk, down from the tower. The poor maid, who had remained behind, came down less skillfully; her foot slipped and she fell from the ladder to the ground, breaking her thigh, and began to moan so much with the pain that it sounded like a lion. The labourer laid the lady on the grass and went back to see what was the matter with the maid; finding she had broken her thigh he took her to the same lawn, and laid her beside the lady. When the lady saw this added to her other woes and that the person from whom she most expected help had broken her thigh, she began to

lament so piteously that not only was the labourer unable to console her, but himself began to weep.

The sun was now low, and they did not want night to come upon them there. So, at the lady's wish, he went to his cottage and called his wife and his two brothers, and returned with them and a table, on which they laid the maid and so carried her home. He then comforted the lady with a little cold water and encouraging words, and carried her to her bedroom on his shoulders. The labourer's wife gave her soft bread to eat, and then undressed her and put her to bed; after which she made arrangements for the lady and her maid to be taken to Florence. There the lady, who was furnished with a great store of wiles, invented a tale quite different from what had really happened, and with the aid of her maid-servant persuaded her brothers and sisters and everyone else that all this had happened through the Devil's spells. The doctors were sent for, and with great pain and agony to the lady who several times lost the whole of her skin, they finally cured her of a severe fever and her other ills; and they also healed the maid's thigh. Wherefore the lady put her lover out of her mind, and thereafter was very careful neither to have lovers nor to play tricks on men. And when the scholar heard that the maid had broken her leg, he thought that sufficient vengeance; and so went on his way rejoicing, without saying anything more.

Thus it befell a foolish young woman and her tricks when she thought she could dally with a scholar as with any other man, not knowing that most of them know where the Devil keeps his tail.

Therefore, ladies, beware of playing such tricks, especially upon scholars.

Eighth Tale

TWO MEN ARE CLOSE FRIENDS, AND ONE LIES WITH THE OTHER'S WIFE. THE HUSBAND FINDS IT OUT AND MAKES THE WIFE SHUT HER LOVER IN A CHEST, AND, WHILE HE IS INSIDE, THE HUSBAND LIES WITH THE LOVER'S OWN WIFE ON THE CHEST

ELENA'S misfortunes were both pleasant and painful to the ladies to hear. But since they thought she had partly deserved them, they listened with less pity, although they considered the scholar harsh, fiercely determined and cruel. But when Pampinea had finished, the queen ordered Fiammetta to follow next, and, being ready to obey, she said:

Charming ladies, I think you are a little wounded by the severity of the offended scholar, and so I think I should soothe your irritated minds with something more amusing. I therefore intend to tell you a little tale about a young man who received an injury more gently and revenged it more moderately,—whereby you may learn that it should be enough for anyone if the ass receives as much in fodder as it gives in work, without desiring to inflict injury beyond the bounds of just vengeance when a man sets out to avenge an injury he has received.

You must know then that, as I have heard, there were in Siena two young men of the people in pretty good circumstances, named Spinelloccio Tanena and Zeppa di Mino. They lived near each other in the Cammollia, and each had a pretty wife. These two young men were always together and apparently loved each other like brothers, or even more.

Now, as Spinelloccio was always in Zeppa's house, sometimes when Zeppa was there and sometimes when he was not, he became so familiar with his friend's wife that he got to lying with her; and this went on for some time without anyone finding it out. But one day Zeppa happened to be in the house when his wife thought he was out, and Spinelloccio came to call for him. The wife said Zeppa was out, so Spinelloccio at once went in and found the wife in the main room. Seeing nobody else about,

he embraced and kissed her, and she him. Zeppa saw all this and said nothing, but remained hidden to see where this game would lead; and, in short, he saw his wife and Spinelloccio go arm in arm to the bedroom and there lock themselves in, which greatly enraged him. But knowing that if he created a disturbance he would not lessen his injury and would only increase his shame, he started to think out some way of avenging himself and so satisfying his mind, without it being known all round. After much thought, he believed he had found a way, and therefore remained hidden as long as Spinelloccio was with his wife.

When Spinelloccio had gone, Zeppa entered the bedroom where he found his wife still re-arranging her head-veils, which Spinelloccio had pulled off in their play. And he said: "What are you doing?"

"Can't you see?" said the wife.

"Yes, indeed yes," said Zeppa, "and I saw something else I did not want to see."

He then began to talk to her about what had happened, and after much talk she in great fear made a confession of it all, since she could not deny her familiarity with Spinelloccio; and then entreated his forgiveness with tears. Said Zeppa:

"Wife, you have done wrong, and if you want me to forgive you, be careful to do what I tell you. I want you to tell Spinelloccio that tomorrow about Terce you want him to find some means of leaving me and coming to you here. When he is here, I shall return; and as soon as you hear me, make him get into that chest and lock it. When you have done that, I will tell you what else you have to do. And don't be afraid, I promise you I will not do him any harm."

To satisfy him, the wife promised to do this. Next day about the hour of Terce, Spinelloccio and Zeppa were together, and Spinelloccio, who had promised the lady to go to her about that time, said to Zeppa:

"I'm going to have dinner with a friend today and don't want to keep him waiting; so good-bye."

"But it's a long time until dinner," said Zeppa.

"No matter," said Spinelloccio, "I have to talk to him about some business of mine, so I must get there early."

Spinelloccio then left Zeppa, took a turn, and went to the wife. They had not long been in the bedroom when Zeppa arrived. When the wife heard him, she pretended to be very much afraid, and made Spinelloccio get into the chest her husband had showed her, and locked him in. She then left the bedroom. Zeppa then said:

"Wife, is it time for dinner?"

"Yes," said she.

"Spinelloccio has gone out to dine with a friend," said Zeppa, "and has left his wife alone. Go to the window and call her, and tell her to come and have dinner with us."

The wife, still in fear for herself and therefore very obedient, did what her husband bade her. Spinelloccio's wife, urgently invited by Zeppa's, came in when she heard that her husband would not be dining at home. When she came in, Zeppa greeted her very affectionately and took her familiarly by the hand and whispered to his wife to go into the kitchen. He then took her into the bedroom, and as soon they were inside, he turned round and locked the door. Finding herself locked in the bedroom with him, she said:

"Zeppa, what is the meaning of this? So you got me in here for this? Is this your love and loyal friendship for Spinelloccio?"

Zeppa took her to the chest in which her husband was locked, and holding her tightly, said:

"Lady, before you begin to complain, listen to what I have to say. I have loved and love Spinelloccio like a brother; yesterday, without his knowing it, I discovered that my trust in him had come to this—that he was lying with my wife as he lies with you. Now, since I love him, I mean to exact no worse revenge than the offence itself. He has had my wife, and I mean to have you. If you refuse, I shall have to take it; and since I do not intend to let this offence go unpunished, I shall otherwise play such a trick on him that neither you nor he will ever be happy again."

After many reiterations by Zeppa, she finally believed what he asserted, and said: "Zeppa, since this revenge must fall upon me and I consent to it, do you remain at peace with your wife, as I intend to do, in spite of what she has done to me."

"Certainly I shall do so," replied Zeppa, "and, moreover, I will give you a jewel so valuable and beautiful that you have no other like it."

So saying, he embraced and kissed her and laid her upon the chest in which her husband was locked, and there took his fill of pleasure with her, and she with him.

Spinelloccio in the chest heard all Zeppa's words and his wife's answers and then the dance which went on over his head; and for a long time he felt such rage that he almost died of it. If he had not been afraid of Zeppa he would have shouted insults at his wife, closed in though he was. But then, remembering that the wrong had begun with him and that Zeppa was right in doing this and was behaving humanely and like a true friend to him, he vowed to himself that he would be more Zeppa's friend than ever if he wanted it. When Zeppa had taken his fill of pleasure with the lady, he got off the chest. She then asked for the jewel; and he called for his wife, who came in saying only with a laugh:

"Madonna, you have given me tit for tat."

Zeppa then said: "Open this chest."

She did so, and Zeppa then showed the lady her Spinelloccio. It would take long to say which of the two was more ashamed: Spinelloccio when he saw Zeppa and knew that he knew what Spinelloccio had done, or the wife when she saw her husband and realized that he had heard and felt what she had been doing above his head. Then said Zeppa:

"Here's the jewel I give you."

Spinelloccio got out of the chest and without too much beating about the bush, said:

"Zeppa, we are quits. Therefore it is good, as you said to my wife just now, that we should remain friends. Since nothing divides us but our wives, let us have them in common."

Zeppa agreed, and all four dined together in the most peaceful way imaginable. Henceforth each of the two women had two husbands and each of the two men had two wives; and no quarrel or dispute ever arose between them.

Ninth Tale

MASTER SIMONE, THE DOCTOR, IS PERSUADED BY BRUNO AND BUFFALMACCO TO JOIN AN IMAGINARY GATHERING AND WHEN HE GOES OUT TO THE RENDEZVOUS AT NIGHT BUFFALMACCO THROWS HIM INTO A DITCH OF FOULNESS

WHEN the ladies had chatted a little over the community of wives between the two Sieneſe, the queen, who was the only perſon left to ſpeak except Dioneo, began thus:

Amorous ladies, Spinelloccio well deſerved the trick which was played upon him by Zeppa; and, in ſpite of what Pampinea ſaid, I do not think we ſhould condemn thoſe who play tricks either upon thoſe who aſk for it or who deſerve it. Spinelloccio deſerved it, and I mean to tell you about a man who aſked for it, conſidering that thoſe who tricked him are not to be blamed but praiſed.

The man I mean was a doctor who went to Bologna a cow and returned to Florence clothed in fur. As we ſee frequently, our fellow-citizens return from Bologna as judges, doctors, or notaries, dressed in large ample robes with ſcarlet and fur and other impressive diſplays,—with reſults which we ſee daily. Among them was Maſter Simone da Villa, a man more wealthy in his inheritance than in learning, who returned not long ago dressed in ſcarlet with a large mantelet, calling himſelf a doctor of medicine, and took a houſe in the ſtreet we now call the Via del Cocomero.

Among the other notable habits of this newly returned Maſter Simone, was a cuſtom of aſking the perſon who happened to be with him about whomever he ſaw paſſing in the ſtreet. And he obſerved and noted everything as if the medicines he had to give his patients were to be composed from men's actions. Among thoſe whom he caſt his eyes upon moſt fruitfully were two perſons of whom we have already ſpoken twice today, the painters Bruno and Buffalmacco, who were his neighbours and always together. They ſeemed to him to care leſs about the world

than other people and to live more gaily; so he asked a number of persons about them. Everyone told him they were poor painters, but he took it into his head that they could not possibly live so happily in poverty, and, as he had heard that they were clever fellows, he decided that they must have some source of large profit unknown to other men. So he wanted to become acquainted with both or at least one of them if possible; and he managed to strike up a friendship with Bruno. It did not take Bruno long to find out that this doctor was an ass, and Bruno had a good time with his stupidities while the doctor took marvellous delight in Bruno. After inviting Bruno to dinner several times, and thereby conceiving that he might speak familiarly with him, the doctor told him how much he was surprised that poor men like Bruno and Buffalmacco could live so merrily, and begged him to say how they did it. Bruno thought the request one of the doctor's wonted stupidities, and, laughing to himself, determined to reply in a way suitable to such a cow, and said:

"Master, I would not tell many persons what we do, but since you are a friend and I know you will not tell anyone else, I shall not refrain. It is true that my friend and I live as well and as merrily as you think, and even more so. Neither our art nor any possessions we have would furnish us enough money to pay even for the water we consume. But you must not suppose that we steal it, but we go on expeditions, and from these we derive everything for our needs and pleasures with no harm to others; and that is the reason why we live so merrily, as you have noticed."

The doctor believed him without in the least understanding. He immediately had the greatest desire to know what this going-on-expeditions meant, and earnestly begged to be told, swearing that he would never tell anyone.

"Oh! Master," said Bruno, "what are you asking me? You want to know a very great secret, and if anyone else came to know it I might be ruined and lose my life and fall into the mouth of the Lucifer of San Gallo. But so great is my love for your supreme Woodenness and the trust I have in you that I cannot possibly deny you anything you want;

so I will tell you on condition that you swear by the Cross of Montisoni never to tell anyone."

The Master said he would not tell, and Bruno said:

"You must know then, sweet Master, that not long ago there dwelt in this city a great master of black magic named Michael Scott (because he came from Scotland), who was greatly honoured by many gentlemen, of whom few are now alive. When he was about to depart he yielded to their earnest entreaties and left behind two competent disciples, ordering them always to be ready to carry out the desires of the gentlemen who had entertained him.

"These two served the gentlemen aforesaid in certain love affairs and other slight matters. Finding that they liked the city and the manner of life in it, they determined to remain here permanently and formed close friendships with certain men, not considering whether they were gentle or common, poor or rich, but only whether they were men of their own sort. To please their friends they instituted a club of about twenty-five men who were to meet at least twice a month in some place determined by them. When they met, each one declared what he needed, and the two magicians quickly provided it that night.

"Buffalmacco and I were close friends of these two, and thus became and still remain members of their band. When we are gathered together, I tell you it is a marvel to see the hangings round the hall where we eat, and the tables royally spread, and the quantity of handsome servants both male and female subject to the whim of each person present, and the basins and jugs and flasks and cups and other gold and silver vessels from which we eat and drink, and the many varied dishes of food according to each man's desire which are set before us in due course.

"I could never describe to you the sweet sounds of infinite musical instruments and the songs full of melody which we hear; nor could I tell you all the wax candles which are burned at these feasts nor the quantity of sweetmeats consumed nor how precious are the wines we drink. And, by the pumpkin, I would not have you suppose that we wear the same clothes there as you see us in; the poorest of us seems an emperor, so rich are we in rare and beautiful garments.

“But above all our other pleasures is that of beautiful women, who are immediately brought to us at our pleasure from any part of the world. There you will see the lady of the Barbanicchi, the queen of the Baschi, the Sultan’s wife, the Empress of Osbech, the Ciancianfera of Nornieca, the Semistante of Osbech, and the Scalpedra of Narsia. How can I enumerate them? Why, we have all the queens in the world, down to the Schinchimurra of Prester John’s Land who has a horn in the middle of her backside. You see! And then when they have taken a drink and sweetmeats, each of them goes off to a room with the man at whose request they were fetched.

“You must know that these bedrooms are so beautiful they look like paradise. They are as scented as the spice-boxes in your shop when you pound cummin, and the beds we lie in would seem to you finer than those of the Doge of Venice. I leave you to imagine how the spinning girls handle the threads and draw the spindles to them to make thick cloth! But in my opinion the luckiest among us are Buffalmacco and I, because Buffalmacco nearly always sends for the Queen of France and I for the Queen of England, who are the two most beautiful women in the world. And we have so contrived it that they have eyes for no man but us. So you yourself can see how and why we live and go about more merrily than other men, since we possess the love of two such Queens; especially since, when we want a thousand or two gold florins from them, we immediately get them. All this we commonly call ‘going on an expedition,’ because we take things as people do on pirate expeditions, with this difference—that they never pay back, whereas we return everything after using it.

“Thus, most excellent Master, you have heard what we mean by going on expeditions; but you can see how necessary it is to keep this a secret, so I need not say any more about that or beseech you further.”

The doctor, whose science probably went no further than curing babies of milk-sickness, believed every word that Bruno told him was true; and wanted to join this band more than anything else in the world. So he told Bruno that it was no wonder they were so merry; and with great difficulty restrained himself from asking to be one of them,

but postponed this until his entreaties would acquire more weight by his having done Bruno more favours.

Having thus restrained himself, he cultivated the acquaintance more closely, invited Bruno to meals morning and evening, and displayed the greatest affection for him. And they were so continually together that it seemed as if the doctor could not live without Bruno.

Bruno was very well content, and since he did not want to seem ungrateful for the doctor's entertainment he painted the Passion in his dining-room and a Lamb of God over the entrance, and outside the shop door he painted a chamber-pot so that those who needed the doctor's advice should know where to look for it. And in a little loggia he painted the battle of the mice and cats, which the doctor thought extremely beautiful. And sometimes, after he had not supped with the doctor, he would say:

"Last night I was with the club, and since I'm a little tired of the Queen of England, I sent for the Grumeda of the Grand Khan of Tarisi."

"What does Grumeda mean?" asked the doctor. "I don't understand these names."

"O Master," said Bruno, "I don't wonder, for I've heard that neither Porcograsso nor Vannacenna mention them."

"You mean Hippocrates and Avicenna," said the doctor.

"Very likely," said Bruno. "I don't know, but I understand your names as little as you understand mine. But in the language of the Grand Khan the word Grumeda means Empress. Ah! You'd think her a pretty little woman! I know she'd make you forget your medicines and clysters and plasters!"

Bruno often talked in this way to whet his appetite, and one evening when he was holding the light for Bruno to paint the battle of the mice and cats, he felt that he had sufficiently involved Bruno with obligations, and determined to speak to him. And since they were alone, he said:

"Bruno, God knows there is no person alive for whom I would more willingly do anything than for you. Why, if you told me to go from here to Peretola I believe I would go; so you cannot be surprised that I have become so intimate with you. As you know, you told me not long ago

about the doings of your merry band, which gave me such a desire to belong to it that I never wanted anything so much. This is not without reason, as you will see if I ever become a member. You can laugh at me for the rest of time if I don't bring there the prettiest maid-servant you ever saw, a girl I came across last year at Cacavincigli and think the world of. I offered her ten Bologna pieces to lie with me, but she wouldn't. So I entreat you to tell me what I must do to become a member and that you will do all you can to get me in. Indeed you'll find me a true and loyal companion. You've seen from time to time what a handsome man I am and how well I stand on my legs and how I have a face like a rose; moreover, I'm a doctor of medicine, such as I think you have none equal to me, and I know many good things and songs. I'll sing you one."

And he immediately began to sing. Bruno wanted to laugh so much that he could scarcely restrain himself, but he managed to do so; and when the song was over, the doctor said:

"Well, what do you think of it?"

"Why," said Bruno, "you bawl so artistically that you beat the mandolins and the rest of the band."

"I'm sure you'd never have believed it if you hadn't heard me," said the doctor.

"You say truly," replied Bruno.

"I know lots of others," said the doctor, "but never mind them now. Such as you see me, my father was a gentleman although he lived in the country, and my mother came from Vallecchio. You've seen for yourself that I have the finest books and the handsomest gown of any Doctor in Florence. God's faith, I have goods which cost hundreds of cents ten years ago. So I beg you'll do all you can to get me in. God's faith, if you do that I'll never charge you a farthing for my services when you're ill."

Bruno thought him a poor tool of a fellow in this as in other matters, and replied: "Master, hold the light this way, and don't be angry if I don't answer until I have finished the tails of these mice."

When the tails were done, Bruno pretended to be greatly embarrassed by the request, and said:

“Master, I know that you have done great things for me, but still, the thing you ask of me, although small in comparison with the greatness of your brain, is very great to me. There is nobody in the world for whom I would rather do my utmost than for you, because I love you dearly, and on account of your words which are so wise they would draw two souls from one weaver as well as persuade me. The more I am with you, the wiser you seem to me. Moreover, if nothing else made me love you, I should love you because you are enamoured of the beautiful girl you mention. But I must tell you this—in this affair I have not the power you suppose and so I cannot do what is needed on your behalf. But if you will promise me on your true and Catholic faith to trust in me, I can show you what you have to do, and since you have such fine books and other things as you told me just now, I think it can certainly be done.”

“Speak out,” said the doctor, “I see you don’t really know me, and don’t know how well I can keep a secret. When Messer Guasparuolo da Saliceto was judge of the podestà of Forlimpopoli there were few things he did which he did not send and tell me about, so good at keeping secrets did he find me. Shall I tell you the truth? I was the first man he told that he was going to marry Bergamina—what do you think of that?”

“Very well,” said Bruno, “if he could trust in you, so can I! This is what you must do. In our gathering we always have a captain and two advisers, who are changed every six months. On the first of next month Buffalmacco will be captain, and I shall be adviser. The captain can do much to get you in and to have anyone he wants brought in, so I think that you should do your best to become intimate with Buffalmacco and to do him honour. He is a man who, when he sees how wise you are, will at once be taken with you; and when you have charmed him a little with your good sense and the fine things you have, you can ask him, and he won’t be able to refuse you. I have already mentioned you to him, and he is very well disposed towards you. When you have done what I suggest, leave the rest to me.”

“What you say delights me,” said the doctor, “and if he is one who

delights in wise men, let him talk with me a little and I will act in such a way that he will always be after me, for I am so wise I could furnish a whole city and yet remain most wise."

After this Bruno told Buffalmacco the whole story, and Buffalmacco thought it a thousand years until he could do what Master Fool was asking for. The doctor who wanted so much to go on expeditions had no rest until he became the friend of Buffalmacco, which was easily done. He then began to give excellent dinners and suppers to him and Bruno. And they flattered him like those gentlemen who smell out good wines and fat capons and other good things and get near them without having to be pressed, and yet always keep saying that they would not do it for anyone else. But when the doctor thought the time had come he made his request of Buffalmacco, as he had done with Bruno. Buffalmacco pretended to be very angry and made a scene with Bruno, saying:

"I vow to the high God of Passignano that I'm tempted to give you such a crack on the head that your nose would hit your heels, traitor that you are, for none but you could have revealed these things to the doctor!"

But the doctor defended Bruno warmly, saying and swearing that he had learned of it from someone else; and after many of his wise words Buffalmacco calmed down, and said:

"Master, it is plain that you have been to Bologna and that you have come home with a shut mouth; moreover I can see you did not learn your A B C on the block, as many fools do, but on the block-head which is very long; and if I'm not deceived you were christened on Sunday. Although Bruno tells me you went there to study medicine, it seems to me that you learned to captivate men, which you are able to do better than any man I ever saw with your wisdom and your tales."

Whereupon the doctor, interrupting him, said to Bruno:

"What a thing it is to converse and move with wise men! Who would have understood every particular of my feeling so quickly as this worthy man? You did not perceive my worth nearly so quickly as he has done. But tell him now what I said to you a while ago when you said that

Buffalmacco delighted in wise men. Do you think I have done it?"

"Better than I expected," said Bruno.

"If you had seen me at Bologna," said the doctor to Buffalmacco, "you would have said more, since there was no man great or small, doctor or student, but wished me well, so much did they all learn from my talk and wisdom. I will go further, and tell you I never spoke a word without everyone laughing, so much did I please them. When I went away they all lamented and wanted me to stay; and the matter went so far that they were willing to let me alone and read medicine to all the students. But I would not do it, for I had decided to return to a great inheritance I have here which has always been in my family; and this I did."

Then said Bruno to Buffalmacco:

"What do you think? You wouldn't believe me when I told you. By the Holy Scriptures, in this country there is not another doctor who can cast asses' water as he does, and you wouldn't find another like him from here to the gates of Paris. Now see if you can refuse to do what he wants!"

"Bruno speaks truly," said the doctor, "but I am not properly appreciated here. You are all ignorant people, and I should like you to see me among doctors."

"Truly, Master," said Buffalmacco, "you know far more than I should ever have believed. Wherefore, speaking to you as one should speak to wise men like you, I tell you bombastically that I shall so endeavour that you shall become one of our group."

After this promise the doctor redoubled his civilities to them. And they made him believe the most absurd things, promising him that his mistress should be the Lady Watercloset, who was the fairest thing in all the arsey-versy of the human race. The doctor asked who this Lady was, and Buffalmacco said:

"O pumpkin full of seed, she is a very great lady, and there are few houses in the world where she has not some jurisdiction. Even the minor friars honour her to the sound of castanets. And I can tell you that when she is about she makes her presence known, although she remains shut up. But it was not long ago that she passed your door, going down

to the Arno to wash her feet and get a breath of air. But her usual dwelling is in Latrina. Many of her officers go about there, carrying a staff and a plumb-line in sign of her majesty. Many of her barons may be seen, such as the Tamagnin of the Gate, Don Meta, Manico di Scopa, the Squacchera and others, who were I think your familiar friends, but you no longer remember them. If we succeed, you can abandon the girl at Cacavincigli, and we will place you in the arms of this great lady."

The doctor, who was born and bred at Bologna, did not understand that all these were words for the jakes, and so was delighted with his lady. And soon after all this the two painters assured him that he would be received. The day before the evening on which they were to assemble, the doctor invited them both to supper, and after supper asked them how he should go to the gathering.

"Master," said Buffalmacco, "you must be very bold, for if you are not very bold you might be thwarted, and great harm would result to us. You shall hear how you must be bold. You must find some means after nightfall this evening to be on one of the raised tombs recently made outside Santa Maria Novella, wearing one of your best gowns, so that you may appear before the club for the first time in honourable wise, and also because you, being a gentleman (in case it might be said that we are not), the Lady intends to make you a knight of the bath at her expense. There you must await the person we shall send for you.

"To tell you everything, there will come for you a horned black creature, not very large, which will go whistling and leaping round the square near you to frighten you. But when it sees you are not afraid it will come up gently to you. And when it is close at hand, you must get down from the tomb without any fear and without thinking of God or the Saints, and when you have got onto it, you must fold your arms and hands on your chest and not touch the creature any further. It will then move gently along and bring you to us. But if you remember God or the Saints or feel afraid, I warn you it may throw you off or dash you somewhere which will hurt you stinkingly. So, if you have not the heart to be bold, do not come, for you will only harm yourself and do no good to us."

"You don't yet know me," said the doctor. "You hesitate, because you see I wear gloves and long robes. If you knew the things I did in Bologna when I went after women with my friends, you would marvel. God's faith, there was one night when a woman wouldn't come with us (what's worse, she was a little creature not a palm high), and I first punched her, and then, catching her up, I think I threw her a cross-bow shot, and made her come along with us.

"Another time I remember that, alone except for my servant, I was passing about dusk beside the churchyard of the minor friars where a woman had been buried that day; and I was not a bit afraid. So have no doubt, I am bold and stout enough. To come in all honourable wise I shall wear the scarlet robe in which I received my doctorate, and you'll see whether the company will not be glad to see me and if I'm not nearly made your captain right away. See how things will go when I'm there, since the Lady without ever having seen me wants to make me a knight of the bath! Perhaps knighthood won't befit me, perhaps I shan't know how to maintain my rank—and perhaps I shall! You leave it to me."

"Well said," replied Buffalmacco, "but see you don't play a trick on us and fail to come or to be there when we send for you. I say this because it is cold, and you doctors guard carefully against it."

"Please God," said the doctor, "I'm not one of your chilly ones. I don't mind the cold. I often get up in the night for the necessities which take men out of bed, and I never put on anything but a fur coat over my doublet. So I'll certainly be there."

They then separated, and when night came on the doctor made an excuse to his wife, secretly got his fine gown and put it on, and went to one of the tombs. He got up on to the marble and waited for the creature, in the great cold. Buffalmacco, who was tall and active, managed to obtain one of those masks which used to be worn in certain games no longer in fashion, and put on a black fur coat inside out, so that he looked like a bear except that the mask was horned and had a devil's face. Thus disguised he went to the new square of Santa Maria Novella, and Bruno came along to see what would happen. When Buffalmacco found the doctor was there he began to leap about and make a great

noise in the square, and to whistle and scream and yell as if he had gone mad.

When the doctor saw and heard him, the hair stood up on his flesh and he began to tremble all over like a man who was more timorous than a woman; and he then began to wish that he had stayed at home. But since he had come, he tried to hearten himself, so much was he conquered by his desire to see the marvels they had told him about. After Buffalmacco had raged around in this way for some time, he pretended to calm down, and going towards the tomb on which the doctor was lying, stood still.

The doctor, who was trembling all over with terror, did not know whether to stay where he was or to get down. Finally, fearing he might be hurt if he did not get down, he let his second fear drive out the first, got down from the tomb saying softly, "God help me," mounted the creature, and trembling all over folded his hands as he had been told. Buffalmacco then began to move slowly toward Santa Maria della Scala, and going on all fours took him near the nunnery of Ripole.

In that part of the country there were ditches, in which the field labourers made their offerings to the Lady Watercloset to enrich their fields. When Buffalmacco got near them, he went close alongside one of them, put his hand on one of the doctor's feet with which he lifted him from his back and threw him into the ditch. He then began to snarl and leap and rage and went away alongside Santa Maria della Scala in the direction of Ognissanti, where he found Bruno who had run away because he could not restrain his laughter. They both laughed heartily together, and watched from a distance to see what the ditched doctor would do.

Master Doctor, finding himself in such an abominable plight, strove to stand upright and to get out of it. Plastered from head to foot, falling backward time and again, wretched and miserable, he finally got out after having swallowed a few drams, leaving his hood behind. He cleaned himself down with his hands as well as he could, and, not knowing what else to do, returned home and knocked until the door was opened. Scarcely was the door locked behind him as he entered in this stinking

plight, when Bruno and Buffalmacco arrived to learn how the doctor had been received by his wife. As they listened, they heard the wife abusing him violently:

"Now, what a pickle you're in! You've been after some woman, and wanted to appear very fine in your scarlet gown. Am I not sufficient for you? My boy, I'd be enough for a whole nation, let alone you! Now they've ducked you by throwing you where you ought to be thrown. You're a fine Doctor, to have a wife and go about by night after other men's wives!"

And as she washed the doctor down, the wife did not cease tormenting him with these and similar words until midnight.

Next morning along came Bruno and Buffalmacco, having painted their skin beneath their clothes with dark patches, as if they had been beaten, and found the doctor already risen. As they entered, they smelled the stink, for it had not yet been possible to clean everything so that there was no smell. The doctor went to meet them and bade them good morrow. But Bruno and Buffalmacco, as they had arranged beforehand, replied angrily:

"So do we not say to you, but pray God that He may so deal with you that you die stabbed as the vilest traitor who ever lived! We were trying to do you honour and to please you, and it's no virtue in you that kept us from being murdered like dogs. Through your treachery we got enough bangs last night to drive a donkey to Rome, as well as running the risk of being expelled from the club where we were trying to get you received. If you don't believe us, look at our bodies."

They opened their clothes for an instant and showed him their chests all painted with bruises, and then covered them up at once. The doctor attempted to excuse himself, and to tell them about his misfortunes and where he had been thrown. But Buffalmacco said:

"I wish he had thrown you from the bridge into the Arno. Why did you think of God and the Saints? Weren't you told not to beforehand?"

"God's Faith, I didn't think of them," said the doctor.

"What!" said Buffalmacco, "you didn't think of them! You don't think much! Our messenger said you trembled like a bough and didn't

know where you were. You've done well! But nobody shall ever do it again, and we shall henceforth honour you as you deserve."

The doctor then asked their pardon and begged them in God's name not to abuse him, and tried to pacify them with the softest words in his power. For fear lest they should talk of his disgrace he honoured and entertained them thereafter far more even than he had done before.

Thus, as you have heard, is wisdom taught to those who have not learned sufficient in Bologna.

Tenth Tale

A SICILIAN WOMAN ARTFULLY SWINDLES A MERCHANT OF ALL THE GOODS HE HAD BROUGHT TO PALERMO. HE PRETENDS TO RETURN WITH MORE MERCHANDISE THAN BEFORE, BORROWS HER MONEY, AND LEAVES NOTHING BUT WATER AND HEMP

It is needless to ask whether the queen's tale made the ladies laugh at different times. There was not one of them but laughed so hard that the tears came into her eyes a dozen times. But when she had ended, Dioneo, whose turn it now was, said:

Gracious ladies, these tricks are the more pleasing when the person artfully tricked is more cunning. Now, although the tricks already related were all excellent, I intend to tell you of one which should please you more than any yet told, because the person tricked was a greater mistress in the art of tricking others than any of the victims of trickery you have heard about.

There was and perhaps still is an arrangement in all ports that when merchants arrive and unload their cargo, the goods are all carried to a warehouse, which in many places is called the Customs House, belonging to the government of the country. Those in charge must be furnished with a written account of all the goods and their value, and they

then provide the merchant with storage room where he can deposit his goods under lock and key. The Customs officers then enter in their books all the goods credited to the merchant, and as he withdraws part or all his goods from the Customs, he has to pay them their dues. This Customs House book is often consulted by the brokers to find out the quantity and quality of the goods deposited and also the names of the merchants who hold them; and afterwards the merchants and brokers discuss exchange, barter, sale and other transactions, as the case may be.

This arrangement was in force at Palermo in Sicily, as in many other places; and there likewise lived many women, very lovely of body but foes to chastity, who would be and are thought noble and most honest ladies by those who do not know them. Being accustomed not to shave, but to flay men of all they have, these ladies, as soon as they see a foreign merchant, find out from the Customs book what he has and what his credit is. Then with soft words and their pleasing and amorous acts they strive to allure the merchant and to draw him into love. Many a merchant has been so beguiled, some of whom have lost part of their goods thereby, and some all. Some of them even have left behind their goods and ship and flesh and bones, so skilfully has the she-barber wielded the razor.

Well, not long ago a young man arrived there, sent by his masters. He was a Florentine, by name Nicolo da Cignano, otherwise known as Sala-baetto; and he brought with him woollen goods worth five hundred gold florins, bought at the fair of Salerno. Having paid the Customs fees, he placed these goods in store, and, displaying no great haste to sell them, went about amusing himself on land.

He was white-skinned, golden-haired and very handsome, and life went well with him. It happened that one of these female barbers, who called herself Madonna Jancofiore, heard about him and cast an eye upon him. He thought she was a great lady, and when he discovered this he thought she had fallen in love with his good looks, and determined to manage the affair very prudently. So, without saying a word to anyone, he began to pass to and fro in front of her house. After having fired him with her glances for several days, pretending to be greatly in

love with him, she secretly sent him a woman servant who was highly skilled in pandering. After much talk this woman told him with tears in her eyes that his charm and beauty had so taken her mistress that she could not rest day or night. Wherefore she desired above everything to meet him whenever he pleased secretly at a bagnio. After which she took a ring from her purse and gave it to him on behalf of her mistress.

Salabaetto was as happy as a man can be when he heard this. He took the ring, gazed at it, kissed it, put it on his finger, and replied to the good woman that if Madonna Jancofiore loved him she was well repaid, for he loved her more than his own life and was ready to go wherever she wished and at any time.

The go-between returned to the lady with this answer, and Salabaetto was immediately informed of the bagnio where he was to await her the next day after vespers. Without saying a word to anyone, he went there at the appointed time, and found the bagnio engaged by the lady. He had not been there long when in came two slaves with burdens. One of them carried a fine large cotton mattress on her head, and the other a very large basket filled with various things. They placed this mattress on a bed in one of the rooms, and laid over it a pair of sheets most delicately worked in silk, and then a coverlet of whitest Cyprus stuff, with two marvellously decorated pillows. They then undressed, got into the bath, and washed and cleaned it thoroughly.

Very soon the lady came to the bath with two more female slaves. As soon as she could, she greeted him lovingly, embraced and kissed him many times, and then, after several deep sighs, said:

“I don’t know anyone but you who could have brought me to this. You have set fire to my soul, you Tuscan dog!”

After this they both entered the bath together naked, and the two slaves with them. Without permitting anyone else to lay a hand on him, the lady herself washed Salabaetto all over with soap scented with musk and cloves. She then had herself washed and rubbed down by the slaves. This done, the slaves brought two fine and very white sheets, so scented with roses that they seemed like roses; the slaves wrapped Salabaetto in one and the lady in the other and then carried them both on their shoul-

ders to the bed. When they had ceased perspiring, the slaves took away these two sheets and left them naked between the others. They then took from the basket silver vases of great beauty, some of which were filled with rose water, some with orange water, some with jasmine water, and some with lemon water, which they sprinkled upon them. After which they refreshed themselves from boxes of sweetmeats and the finest wines.

Salabaetto felt he was in paradise, and gazed at her a thousand times, for she was indeed very beautiful. He thought it a hundred years until the slaves would go away and leave him in her arms. At last the lady ordered them to go, and they departed, leaving a small light burning in the room. The lady then embraced Salabaetto and he her, and they spent a long hour together to the immense joy of Salabaetto, who thought she was melting away with love for him.

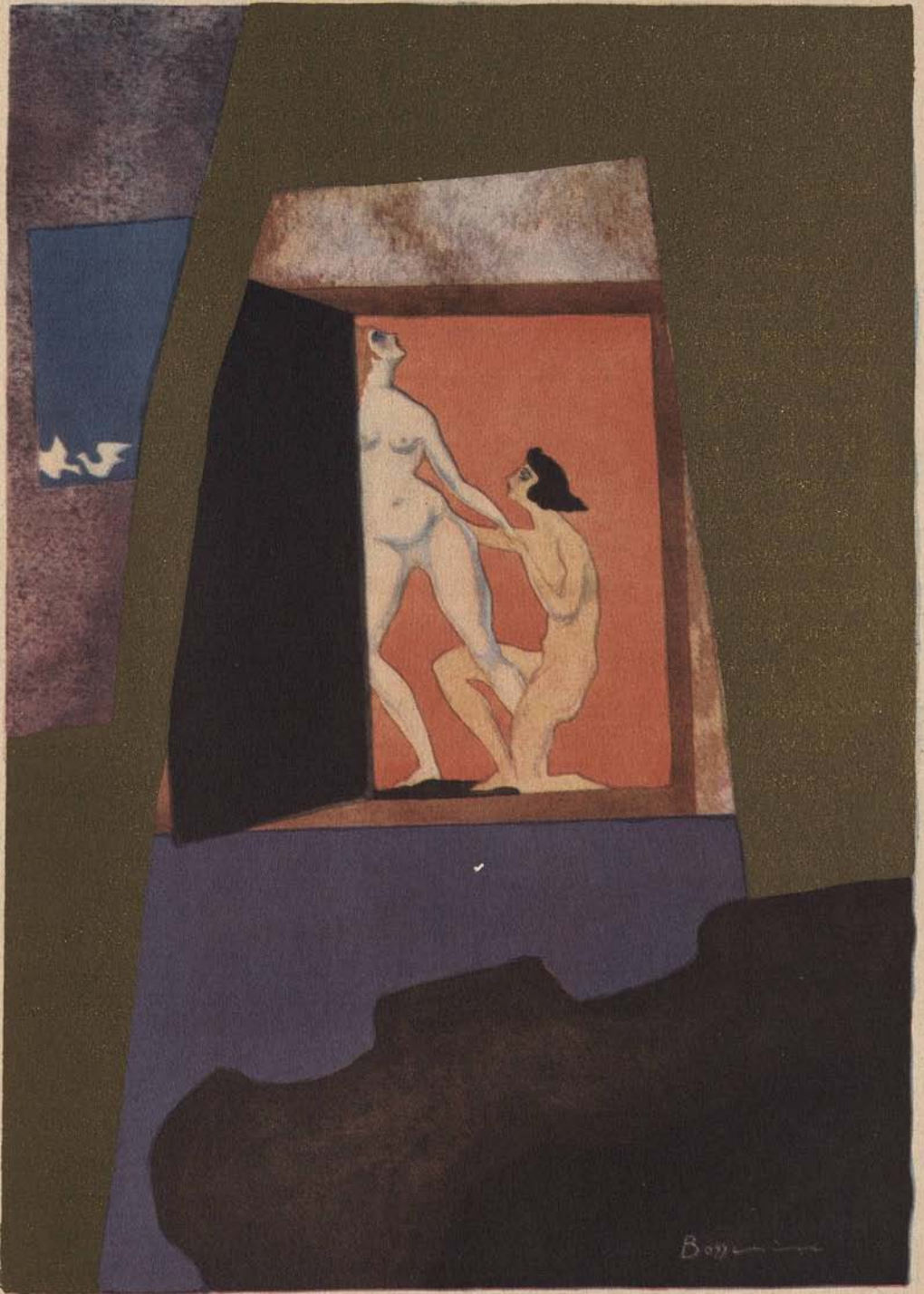
When the lady thought it time to get up, she called in the slaves, who dressed them. Once more they refreshed themselves with drink and sweetmeats, and their hands and faces were washed in the scented waters. As the lady was going, she said to Salabaetto:

“If it pleased you, it would be a very great favour to me if you came and supped with me this evening and spent the night.”

Salabaetto, who was already snared with her beauty and cunning allurements and thought she loved him as the heart of her body, replied:

“Madonna, every wish of yours is to me the greatest of pleasures. This evening and for ever I mean to do what pleases you, and to be commanded by you.”

The lady then went home and decorated her bedroom with her best possessions and hangings, and arranged a magnificent supper. As soon as it was dark, Salabaetto went there, was joyously welcomed, and supped in great plenty and gaiety. Entering the bedroom, he perceived a wonderful scent of wood and aloes, and saw the bed was decked with bird ornaments of Cyprus and that there were many handsome things on the walls. All these things, taken separately and together, made him think she must be a very great and rich lady. And whatever he might have heard trumpeted against her life, he would not have believed it. And even if he had believed that she had deceived other men before, nothing



in the world would have made him think that it could happen to him. That night he lay with her in the greatest pleasure, more and more in love with her.

Next morning she fastened on him a handsome girdle of silver with a beautiful purse attached, and said:

"My sweet Salabaetto, I commend me to you. My person is at your disposal and all I have here; and whatever I can do is at your command."

Salabaetto joyfully kissed and embraced her, departed from her house, and went to the merchants' gathering place. He went with her several times without any expense to himself, and fell ever deeper in love. And when he sold his woollen goods at a profit for cash, the lady at once heard of it, not from him but from others.

That evening when Salabaetto was with her, she began to jest and play with him, to kiss and embrace him, and pretended to be so much in love with him that it seemed as if she must die of love in his arms. She then tried to give him two beautiful silver goblets she had, but Salabaetto would not take them, because at one time and another he had taken from her gifts which must have been worth thirty gold florins, without having been able to make her accept even a shilling's worth. Finally, having well warmed him up by pretending to be so excited about him and so liberal, she was called out by one of her slaves, as she had arranged. Having left the room and remained away for some time, she returned weeping, threw herself on the bed and began the most piteous lamentation ever made by woman. The amazed Salabaetto took her in his arms, and wept with her, saying:

"Heart of my body! What has happened to you so suddenly? What is the reason for this grief? Ah! my love, tell me."

The lady refused to tell him at first, and then said:

"Alas, my sweet lord, I don't know what to do or what to say. I have just received letters from Messina, and my brother writes to me that I must sell and pawn everything I have here and without fail send him a thousand gold florins within eight days, otherwise he will lose his head. I don't know what to do in order to get the money so quickly. If I had a fortnight or so, I would find means to collect it from places where I

must have much more; or I would sell some of our lands. But, as I can't do that, I wish I had died before this bad news came to me."

So saying, she pretended to be in the greatest distress, and kept on weeping. Salabaetto, who had already lost most of his wits in love's flames, thought her tears genuine and her words still more so; and said:

"Madonna, I cannot provide you with a thousand gold florins, but I can lend you five hundred if you can pay me back in a fortnight. This is a piece of luck for you, since I sold my cloth yesterday; otherwise I could not have lent you a shilling."

"Oh!" said she, "have you been suffering from lack of money? Why did you not ask me? I may not have a thousand, but I have a hundred or two to give you. You take from me the courage to accept from you the service you offer me."

Salabaetto was more than captured by these words, and said:

"Madonna, I will not have you refuse on those grounds; if I had needed money as much as you do, I would have asked you."

"O Salabaetto," said she, "I see your true and perfect love for me when, without waiting to be asked for so great a sum of money, you come liberally to my aid in this necessity. Indeed I was wholly yours without this, but now I shall be much more so; and I shall ever be grateful to you for saving my brother's head. God knows I take it unwillingly, for I know you are a merchant and that merchants do all their business with money. But since necessity constrains me and I have every hope of paying you back, I will take it; and as for the remainder, if I cannot get it quickly anywhere else, I will pawn everything I have."

Saying all this with tears, she fell upon Salabaetto's neck. He comforted her and, after spending the night with her, brought her five hundred good gold florins, without awaiting any request from her, to show himself her most generous lover. She took them with laughter in her heart and tears in her eyes, Salabaetto relying on her mere promise.

As soon as she had the money, the aspect of matters began to change. Whereas Salabaetto had been perfectly free to come to the lady whenever he wanted, there now began to be obstacles, so that he could only go to her once in seven times; and when he did get in, found neither the

smiles nor the caresses nor the feasts of the past. One month and then two passed after the period when he should have had his money back; and when he asked for it, he received only words in payment. Thus Salabaetto discovered the wicked woman's wiles and his own folly, and knew that he could say nothing about her except what she pleased because he had no receipt and no witness. He was ashamed to complain to anyone else, both because he had been warned beforehand and because of the jests which he rightly deserved for his stupidity. And so he wept over his folly in the deepest distress. He had received several letters from his employers telling him to exchange the money and to send it to them; so he determined to go away, so that his default would not be discovered by his failing to do this. He therefore got on a boat, and instead of going to Pisa as he ought to have done, went to Naples.

At that time there lived in Naples our fellow citizen, Pietro dello Canigiano, treasurer to the Empress of Constantinople, a man of great intellect and subtle genius, a very close friend of Salabaetto and his family. A few days later Salabaetto confided in him as a man of the greatest discretion, and dolefully related what he had done and his unlucky misfortune, asking him for advice and help in earning his living there, since he was determined never to return to Florence.

Grieved at these things, Canigiano said:

"Ill have you done; ill have you behaved; ill have you obeyed your masters. Too much money have you spent in pleasure; but for what is done some remedy must be found."

And being a man of experience he saw at once what was to be done, and told Salabaetto, who liked the advice and set out to follow it. He had a little money and Canigiano lent him some more. He made up a number of well-tied bales and bought twenty oil casks and filled them. He had them loaded and returned to Palermo. He gave a list of the bales and the value of the casks to the Customs and had them all inscribed at his valuation. He then placed them all in storage, saying that he would not touch them until other goods he was expecting had arrived.

Jancofiore at once heard about this, and learned that the goods he had brought were worth two thousand florins or more, while those he ex-

pected were worth three thousand. She felt she had got very little out of him, and thought she would pay him back the five hundred in order to get the greater part of the five thousand. So she sent for him, and Salabaetto, now fully on his guard, went to her. She pretended to know nothing about what he had brought with him, and greeted him most affectionately, saying:

"If you were angry with me because I did not repay your money when it was due . . ."

Salabaetto laughed and interrupted her:

"Madonna, I was indeed a little displeased, as a man would be when he is ready to take the heart from his body to please you! I should like you to hear how angry I am with you. I love you so much that I have sold the greater part of my possessions and have brought here goods to the value of two thousand florins, while I expect more than three thousand florinsworth from the West. I intend to set up in business and to remain here so that I can always be near you, for I feel I am happier in your love than any other lover can be in his."

"Salabaetto," said she, "since I love you better than my life I am glad of any profit of yours, and I am very happy that you have returned with the intention of remaining here, since I hope to spend many happy times with you. But I want to apologise a little because in the time just before you left, you sometimes wanted to come here and could not, and sometimes you came and were not as joyfully received as usual. Moreover, I want to apologise also for not having repaid your money at the time I promised.

"You must know that I was then in great grief and trouble. Whosoever is in that state cannot be so cheerful and attend to another person as she would wish, however dear that person may be. You must know also that it is very difficult for a woman to get together a thousand gold florins. She is told lies, and does not receive what is promised; and so she has to tell lies to others. This and nothing else is the cause of my not returning your money. But I received it soon after your departure and I should certainly have forwarded it to you, if I had known where to send it. As I did not know, I have kept it for you."

She then sent for a purse which contained the money he had brought her, put it into his hand, and said:

"Count it, and see if there are five hundred."

Salabaetto was never so happy in his life, counted the money and found there were five hundred florins.

"Madonna," said he, "I know that what you say is true, but you have done enough. For this and for the sake of the love I bear you, I will always place at your service any sum of money you require if I can do so. Since I shall be established here, you can test me."

Having thus renewed his love to her, in words at least, Salabaetto recommenced his intimacy with her, and she did him all honour and pleasure, and feigned the greatest love for him. But Salabaetto wanted to punish her trick with a trick of his own. One day when she had invited him to sup and spend the night with her, he arrived looking as sad and melancholy as if he wanted to die. Jancofiore embraced and kissed him, and asked why he was so sad. For a time he refused to tell her, and then said:

"I am sad because the boat carrying the goods I expected has been captured by the pirates of Monaco. The ransom is ten thousand florins, of which my share is one thousand, and I have not a farthing to pay it. The five hundred you repaid me I sent immediately to Naples to invest in cloth which is being sent here. This is the wrong time to sell the goods I brought here with me, and I could scarcely get half price for them. I am not yet so well known here as to be able to find someone to come to my aid. So I don't know what to say or do. If I don't send the money soon the goods will be carried into Monaco, and I shall never be able to get them again."

The lady was greatly upset by this since she felt she was losing it all. Thinking of some means of preventing their being taken to Monaco, she said:

"God knows I am sorry, out of my love for you; but what use is it to grieve so much? If I had the money, God knows I would lend it to you at once, but I haven't got it. There is a man here who lent me the other five hundred florins when I needed them, but he wants a high rate of

interest. He will not lend at less than thirty per cent. If you borrow from him you will have to give good security, and I myself am ready to pawn myself and all my belongings to help you. But how will you give security for the rest?"

Salabaetto saw the motive which made her offer this service and knew that she herself would be lending him the money. He first of all thanked her, and then said that under pressure of necessity he could not refuse even such heavy interest. He then said he would give as security the goods he had in the Customs, and would have them entered in the name of the person lending the money, but that he wanted to keep the key of the store-house himself, so that he could show his goods if asked and also to prevent anyone from touching or exchanging or altering them.

The lady said he spoke well, and that the security was good. Next morning, she sent for a broker in whom she had great confidence, told him the circumstances and gave him a thousand florins. These the broker lent to Salabaetto, and had the goods which Salabaetto possessed in the Customs transferred to his name. They gave each other receipts and then, parting in agreement, went about their business.

Salabaetto at once went on board ship with his fifteen hundred gold florins, and returned to Pietro dello Canigiano at Naples. He thence remitted to Florence the full amount due to the employers who had sent him out with the cloth. He paid Pietro and everyone else to whom he owed money, and rejoiced with Canigiano over the trick he had played upon the Sicilian girl. Then, determined to be a merchant no longer, he went to Ferrara.

When Jancofiore found that Salabaetto had left Palermo she was surprised and began to feel suspicious. After waiting for him two months and finding he did not return, she had the broker open the store-room. First they looked into the casks which they thought were full of oil, and found them full of sea water with a little oil on top near the bung. They then undid the bales, which contained nothing but hemp, except for two which contained cloth. In short, the value of the goods there did not exceed two hundred florins.

Jancofiore, finding herself thus tricked, long wept for the five hun-

dred florins she had returned and still more for the thousand she had lent, often repeating: "You've got to have sharp eyes in dealing with a Florentine!" Thus, tricked and despoiled, she found that other people knew as much as she did.

When Dioneo finished his tale, the queen knew that the end of her reign had come. She praised Pietro Canigiano's advice which was proved good by its results, and also Salabaetto's sagacity which was equally displayed in carrying out the plan. She then took the laurel from her head and laid it upon Emilia's, saying in womanly fashion:

"Madonna, I know not how pleasant a queen we shall have in you, but we shall certainly have a beautiful one. Let your actions correspond to your beauties."

She then returned to her seat. Emilia felt a little shamefaced, not so much at being made queen as at being publicly praised for what women most desire; and her face became like fresh roses in the light of dawn. But she had kept her eyes lowered for a time, the blush disappeared, and she made the necessary arrangements with the steward for matters concerning the band. She then spoke thus:

"Delightful ladies, when oxen have laboured under the yoke for part of the day and are then freed and unyoked, we see them going freely at their pleasure through the woods to their pasture. We also see that gardens with many leafy trees are not less but more beautiful than woods with nothing but oaks. Therefore, since for several days we have told tales under the restraint of certain laws, I think it would be not only useful but fitting that we should wander freely like those who have laboured, and thus regain strength to return to the yoke.

"Tomorrow, when you continue your delightful tale-telling, I do not intend that you shall be bound to any particular topic in what you say. I want each one of you to speak of anything you please, being convinced that the variety of things which will be talked of will be no less charming than to speak of one topic alone. If this is done, the person who succeeds me in this kingdom will be in a stronger position to enforce the customary laws."

The Ninth Day

HERE BEGINS THE NINTH DAY OF THE *DECAMERON*, WHEREIN, UNDER THE RULE OF EMILIA, TALES ARE TOLD AS EVERYONE PLEASES ON WHATEVER SUBJECT HE LIKES

THE light, from whose splendour the darkness fled, had already changed the dark colour of the eighth heaven to bright blue, and the little flowers in the fields were lifting their heads, when Emilia arose, and had her companions and the young men likewise called. They came, and strolled slowly along with the queen to a little wood not far from the mansion. This they entered, and watched the animals, such as deer and fawns and others, which let them come near as if fearless or tame, so free from pursuit had they been owing to the plague. They amused themselves for some time by going up close first to one and then to another, and making them run and leap. But as the sun was now high, they all wished to return home.

They went along garlanded with oak, carrying handfuls of flowers and scented plants; and any person who met them would have said: "These people will not be conquered by death, or at worst will die happy."

Singing and jesting and laughing they returned step by step to the mansion, where they found everything in good order and the servants cheerful and happy. They rested a little, and did not sit down to table until the young men and the ladies had sung six songs, each gayer than the one before. After washing their hands they were ranged at table by the steward as the queen wished; and when the food was served, all ate merrily. Rising from table, they spent some time in singing and dancing; and then, at the queen's command, retired to rest.

But at the accustomed hour each went to the place where they gathered for tale-telling. The queen looked at Filomena, and told her that she must tell the first tale that day, and she began smilingly as follows:

First Tale

MADONNA FRANCESCA IS BELOVED BY RINUCCIO AND BY ALESSANDRO, NEITHER OF WHOM SHE LIKES. SHE MAKES ONE OF THEM LIE DOWN IN A GRAVE AND SENDS THE OTHER TO GET OUT WHAT HE THINKS TO BE A DEAD BODY; AS THEY FAIL IN THE TEST, SHE GETS RID OF THEM BOTH

MADONNA, since it is your pleasure I am delighted to be the first to run a race in the wide and open field of tale-telling which your magnificence has opened to us; if I do it well, I doubt not that those who come after me will do as well and better.

In our stories, lovely ladies, we have often showed the great powers of love. Yet I do not think it has been fully expressed or would be, even if we spoke of nothing else until the end of the year. Now since love not only leads lovers into danger of death, but even to enter the houses of the dead to take out corpses, I wish to tell you a tale, in addition to those already told, which will not only show you the power of love, but will make you see the good sense of a worthy lady, which enabled her to get rid of two men who loved her against her will.

In the city of Pistoia there lived a very beautiful widow; and two Florentines, exiled to the city, named Rinuccio Palermini and Alessandro Chiarmontesi, who were both deeply in love with her, although neither knew about the other's love. Each went prudently to work, striving to do everything he could to obtain her love.

The name of this gentlewoman was Madonna Francesca de' Lazzari. She was often urged by messages and entreaties by each of them, and rather unwisely lent an ear to them; she then wanted to get rid of them, and was unable to do so. In order to get rid of their tiresome attentions she determined to ask them to perform a service which nobody would carry out, although it would be possible to do it. Then, if they failed to perform it, she would have a good cause or pretext for refusing to receive their messages any longer.

On the day she thought of this, there died in Pistoia a man who was reputed the vilest fellow, not only in Pistoia but in the whole world, although his ancestors had been gentlemen. Moreover, he was so deformed and his face was so ugly that anyone who did not know him would have been terrified at seeing him for the first time. He had been buried in a tomb outside the church of the minor friars, a fact which she thought fell in very well with her plan. And so she said to her maid-servant:

"You know the daily annoyance and trouble I have with the messages from those two Florentines, Rinuccio and Alessandro. I have made up my mind not to satisfy them, and as they are always making great promises I want to get rid of them, by putting them to the test with something I am certain they will not do, and in this way I shall get rid of their tiresome attentions.

"My plan is this. This morning, as you know, Scannadio" (that was this bad man's name) "was buried in the churchyard of the minor friars; and the boldest men on this earth were afraid when they saw him alive, let alone dead. So you must first go to Alessandro, and say: 'Madonna Francesca sends to say that the time has now come when you may have her love which you have so long desired, and spend the night with her in the following way. For a reason which you shall know later, one of her relatives intends to bring to her house tonight the body of Scannadio, who was buried today. And she does not want it, because she is afraid of him even when dead. So she begs you to do her a great service, and to go tonight to the grave where Scannadio is buried, wrap yourself in his shroud and lie down as if you were the corpse, and wait until someone comes. Then, without moving or speaking, you must allow yourself to be taken out of the grave and brought to her house, where she will receive you and you can be with her, and depart when you like; while the rest you can leave to her.' If he says he will do it, very good; if he says he will not do it, tell him from me that he must never again appear before me and if he values his life never again send me message or messenger.

"After that, go to Rinuccio Palermini, and say: 'Madonna Francesca says she is ready to do your pleasure, if you will do her a great service.

About midnight you must go to the tomb where Scannadio was buried this morning, and without saying a word at anything you see or hear, you must gently take him up and carry him to her house. There you will see why she wants this service, and you may have your pleasure of her. If you will not do this, never send message or messenger to her again.' ”

The maid-servant went to them, and delivered the messages as she had been ordered. And each replied that for Francesca's pleasure, they were ready, not only to enter a tomb, but to go down to hell. The servant brought back the answer to her mistress, who waited to see whether they would be such fools as to do it.

At nightfall Alessandro Chiarmontesi left his house, stripped to his doublet, to go and lie in the tomb in Scannadio's place; as he went along terrible thoughts came into his mind, and he said to himself: "Ah! What an idiot I am! Where am I going? How do I know that her relatives have not found out that I love her and think we have been together, and have made her do this so that they can kill me in the tomb? If that happened, I should receive the harm, and nobody in the world would ever know it, and they would escape scot-free. Or how do I know that this has not been devised by some enemy of mine, with whom perhaps she is in love, and who will take advantage of it?" He then went on: "But assuming that none of these is true, yet if her relatives carry me to her house I must suppose that they will not take Scannadio's body in their arms and put it into hers. I can only suppose that they want to mutilate it because he harmed them somehow in the past. She said I was not to speak a word whatever happened. Suppose they tore out my eyes or pulled out my teeth or cut off my hands or played some similar game with me? Could I remain silent? And if I speak they will either recognize me and do me harm, or if they don't do that I shall have achieved nothing, for they will not leave me with the lady. And she will say that I broke her commands, and will never again do anything to pleasure me."

At this, he was on the point of returning home. But then his great love urged him in the opposite direction with arguments of such force that they brought him to the tomb. He opened it, got in, stripped Scannadio, wrapped himself in the shroud, closed the tomb over him, and lay

down in Scannadio's place. He then began to think what Scannadio had been, and remembered what he had heard about the things which happen by night in tombs and elsewhere, so that the hair stood erect on his flesh, and he felt as if Scannadio was about to stand upright and strangle him. But with the aid of his ardent love he overcame these and other thoughts of terror, and lay there as if he were a corpse, waiting to see what would happen to him.

As midnight came near, Rinuccio left his house to do what his lady had bidden him. As he went along, he thought of many different things which might happen. He might fall into the hands of the watch, with Scannadio's body on his back, and be burned alive as a violator of graves. Or, if the matter came to light, he might acquire the hatred of Scannadio's relatives. These and many similar thoughts held him back. But then he turned again, and said to himself: "Ah! Shall I say 'No' to the very first request from this gentle lady, whom I have loved and love so much, especially since I shall acquire her favours thereby? Even were I certainly to die for it, I would do what I have promised her."

Walking on, he came to the tomb, and quietly opened it. Alessandro heard him open it, and although very much afraid, remained silent. Rinuccio got in, and, thinking he held the corpse of Scannadio, took Alessandro by the feet and pulled him out. He then lifted him on to his back and started off towards the lady's house. The night was so dark that he could not see where he was going, and as he went along, he knocked Alessandro against first one and then another of the posts which were along the side of the road.

Rinuccio had nearly reached the lady's door, and she, who was waiting at the window with her servant to see if he would bring Alessandro back, was already fortifying herself to send them both away, when the watch, who were secretly posted close at hand to capture a bandit, heard the noise of Rinuccio's steps. They suddenly brought out a light to see what he was doing and where he was going, presented their spears and shields, and shouted: "Who goes there?"

When he saw them, Rinuccio had not much time to make up his mind as to what to do. He dropped Alessandro, and made off as fast as his legs



would carry him. Alessandro jumped to his feet, and also made off, although hindered by the long folds of the shroud.

By the light which the watch carried the lady had clearly seen Rinuccio with Alessandro on his back and had also noticed that Alessandro was dressed in Scannadio's shroud; and she was greatly surprised at the ardour of each of them. But with all her marvelling, she laughed heartily when she saw Alessandro thrown down, and both of them run away. She was very glad at this unexpected event, and praised God for having freed her from their importunities. Returning to her bedroom, she vowed to her maid that there could be no doubt that each of them was very much in love with her, since it was obvious that they had done what she had commanded them to do.

In distress, and cursing his bad luck, Rinuccio did not for all that go straight home. When the watch had departed, he returned to the place where he had dropped Alessandro and groped about trying to find the body, in order to complete the service required. But since he could not find it, he supposed that it had been carried off by the watch; and so returned home in grief.

As for Alessandro, he likewise returned home, not knowing what else to do, ignorant of the person by whom he had been carried, and distressed by the misfortune.

Next morning Scannadio's tomb was found open and his body was not seen, because Alessandro had put it in the bottom of the tomb. All Pistoia was filled with different views about it, and the fools thought he had been carried off by the devil.

Nevertheless, each of the two lovers informed the lady of what they had done and what had happened; and, having thus excused themselves for not having fully carried out her commands, begged her favour and her love. But she pretended not to believe them, and replied sharply that she would never do anything for them since they had not performed what she had asked; and in this way she got rid of them.

Second Tale

AN ABBESS GETS OUT OF BED HASTILY IN THE DARK TO CATCH ONE OF HER NUNS WHO IS ACCUSED OF BEING WITH A LOVER IN BED. THE ABBESS HERSELF IS LYING WITH A PRIEST AND PUTS HIS BREECHES ON HER HEAD IN MISTAKE FOR HER VEIL. THE ACCUSED NUN SEES THEM AND POINTS THEM OUT TO THE ABBESS; SHE IS SET FREE AND ALLOWED TO BE WITH HER LOVER

FILOMENA was silent, and all praised the wisdom of the lady in getting rid of the men she did not love, while they all on the contrary considered the ardent determination of the lovers to be folly rather than love. The queen then turned pleasantly to Elisa, and said: "Elisa, you must follow." And she began immediately:

Dearest ladies, as you have heard, Madonna Francesca showed wisdom in getting free from an annoyance. But a young nun by a word in season freed herself, with the aid of Fortune, from an impending danger. As you know, there are many very foolish people who set up as censors and directors of others; and, as you will see from my tale, Fortune sometimes deservedly brings them to shame. This happened to an abbess, under whose rule there lived the nun I speak of.

You must know that in Lombardy there is a convent renowned for its sanctity and religious fervour. Among the nuns was a girl of noble blood and marvellous beauty, by name Isabella. One day she came to the grating to speak with a relative, and fell in love with a young man who accompanied him. He surprised her desire in her eyes and, seeing how beautiful she was, fell in love with her; but for a long time this love remained fruitless to the great unhappiness of them both. Finally, as each wanted the other, the young man saw a way to go secretly to his nun; she agreed, and to the pleasure of each of them he visited her, not once, but many times.

But one night he was seen to leave Isabella by one of the nuns, without either of them knowing it. She told the news to some of the others. Their

first idea was to denounce her to the abbess, Madonna Usimbalda, a good and holy woman in the opinion of her nuns and all who knew her. But on reflection they decided to have the abbess catch her with the young man, to prevent any possibility of denial. So they remained silent, secretly keeping watch in turns in order to catch them.

Isabella did not perceive this, and knew nothing about it; and so one night she had the young man come to her; which was immediately known to those who were on the watch. When they thought the time ripe, which was late in the night, they divided into two parties, one of which kept watch over the door to Isabella's cell, while the other ran to the abbess's door and knocked. When she replied, they said:

"Get up, madonna, get up quickly, we've found Isabella with a young man in her room!"

That night the abbess was in the company of a priest, whom she often had brought to her in a chest. She was afraid that the nuns in their zeal and haste might beat so hard at the door that it would open; so she got up quickly and dressed herself in the dark. Thinking she was picking up her nun's veil she took the priest's breeches, and, such was her haste, that without noticing it she put them on her head instead of the veil; and came out of her room. She immediately locked it behind her, and said:

"Where is this depraved woman?"

The other nuns were so fiery and eager to catch Isabella at fault that they did not notice what the abbess had on her head; and coming to Isabella's cell they helped each other to throw down the door. Rushing in, they found the two lovers in each other's arms, unable to move in their amazement at this sudden irruption.

The girl was at once seized by the other nuns and, by command of the abbess, taken to the chapter-house. The man was left alone. He dressed and waited to see what would happen, determined to injure as many of them as he could if any harm befell his young novice, and to take her away with him.

The abbess took her seat in the chapter-house in the presence of all the nuns, who had eyes only for the guilty novice. She denounced her violently as one whose wicked and depraved actions, if known, would con-

taminate the sanctity, chastity and good fame of the monastery. And her denunciations were followed by fierce threats.

The guilty novice in her timidity and shame did not know what to reply, save by silence to arouse the others' compassion. The abbess continued her speech, and the girl, raising her head, noticed what the abbess was wearing on her own head and the garters dangling on either side. Regaining her self-control she said:

"Madonna, God be good to you, tie up your head-dress and then say to me anything you like."

"What head-dress, you vile creature?" said the abbess, who did not see her meaning. "Have you the front to jest with me? Do you think what you have done is a subject for jests?"

"Madonna," said the girl again, "I beg you will tie up your head-dress, and then say anything you please to me."

Thereupon numbers of the nuns looked at the abbess's head, and she raised her hands to her veil; and all perceived what Isabella meant. The abbess realized her own fault and that they all saw it and that she had no excuse to offer. She changed her tone, and began to speak in very different terms, to the effect that it was impossible for anyone to defend herself from the appetites of the flesh. And she said that everyone should secretly, as they had done until then, enjoy themselves when possible.

The girl was set at liberty, the abbess went back to sleep with her priest, and Isabella with her lover. And despite those who envied her, Isabella often had him come to her again. Those nuns who had no lover secretly tried their luck to the best of their ability.



Third Tale

MASTER SIMONE, EGGED ON BY BRUNO, BUFFALMACCO AND NELLO, MAKES CALANDRINO THINK HE IS PREGNANT. HE GIVES THEM CAPONS AND MONEY TO MAKE MEDICINE AND IS CURED WITHOUT HAVING A CHILD

WHEN Elisa had finished her tale all the ladies gave thanks to God that the young nun had so luckily escaped the clutches of the envious community. The queen then ordered Filostrato to follow next, and, without waiting for further orders, he began thus:

Fairest ladies, yesterday's tale of the judge whose clothes were pulled off, reminded me of a tale about Calandrino which I shall tell you. Although we have said a lot about him and his friends, yet whatever is said about him can only cause merriment; and so I shall tell you the tale I had in mind yesterday.

We have already made clear who were Calandrino and the others who will be mentioned in this tale. So, without saying more about that, I must tell you that an aunt of Calandrino's died, and left him two hundred lire in small change. So Calandrino went about saying that he intended to buy a farm. He bargained with all the estate agents in Florence, as if he had possessed ten thousand florins of gold to spend; but the bargain was always broken off when it came to the point of paying.

Bruno and Buffalmacco of course knew about it, and often told him that he would do far better to enjoy the money with them than to go about buying land, as if he had to make cross-bow bolts. But, far from that, they did not even succeed in getting him to give them a single meal. In their annoyance at this, they agreed with a painter friend of theirs, named Nello, that between them they would find some way to get fed at Calandrino's expense. Without any delay they arranged together what they would do. The next morning Nello waited for Calandrino to leave his house, and before he had gone far, went up to him and said:

"Good morning, Calandrino."

Calandrino wished him a good day and a good year in the name of God. Nello then halted and looked him in the face. Then Calandrino said to him:

"What are you looking at?"

"Didn't you feel anything wrong in the night?" asked Nello. "You don't look the same."

Calandrino immediately began to feel concerned and said:

"How? What do you think's wrong with me?"

"Oh!" said Nello, "I can't say, but you seem quite different. Perhaps it's nothing."

And so let him go. Calandrino went along, very anxious about himself, but not feeling anything amiss. Buffalmacco, who was not far off, saw him leave Nello, and then went up to him, greeted him, and asked if he felt nothing amiss.

"I don't know," said Calandrino, "but Nello told me just now that I looked quite changed. Perhaps there is something wrong with me?"

"Yes," said Buffalmacco, "and it may be more serious than just something. You look half dead."

Calandrino already began to feel rather feverish. Then along came Bruno and the first thing he said was:

"Why, Calandrino, look at your face! You look like a dead man! How do you feel?"

Hearing all of them talk in this way, Calandrino felt certain that he was ill, and said wildly:

"What shall I do?"

"I think you ought to go home," said Bruno, "and get to bed, and cover yourself up well, and send a specimen of your urine to Doctor Simone, who is so friendly with us, as you know. He'll tell you at once what you have to do, and we'll come to you, and if there's anything to be done, we'll do it."

Nello then came up, and they all went home with Calandrino, who went languidly to his bedroom, saying to his wife:

"Come and cover me up well, I feel very ill."

After he got to bed, he sent a little maid-servant with a bottle of his

water to Doctor Simone, who then dwelt in the Mercato Vecchio at the sign of the Blockhead. Bruno said to his friends:

"You stay here with him, and I will go and see what the doctor says. If necessary, I'll bring him back with me."

"Ah! yes, my dear friend," said Calandrino, "go and tell me what it is, for I feel something queer inside me."

Bruno went off to Doctor Simone, arrived before the little girl with the bottle of urine, and told the doctor the joke. Then, when the little girl arrived, the doctor had inspected the urine, and said:

"Go back and tell Calandrino to keep warm, and that I'll come to him immediately and tell him what is the matter with him and what he must do."

The little girl delivered the message, and soon after the doctor and Bruno came along. The doctor sat down beside Calandrino, felt his pulse, and then in his wife's presence, said:

"Calandrino, speaking to you as a friend, there is nothing wrong with you except that you are pregnant."

When Calandrino heard this he screamed dismally and exclaimed:

"Alas! It's your fault, Tessa. You would always lie on top. I told you how it would be."

At this, the wife, who was a modest creature, blushed red with shame, and lowering her head left the room without speaking a word. Calandrino went on complaining, and said:

"Alas, alas! What shall I do? How shall I bear this child? Where will it come out? I see that I shall die through my wife's folly; may God punish her as much as I wish to be happy! If I were well, I'd get up and beat her till I broke her bones, for it would have been well for me if I had never let her get on top. But if I escape this, then she can die of wanting it first!"

Bruno, Buffalmacco and Nello were bursting with laughter when they heard him talk, but managed to refrain. However, Doctor Monkeysimon laughed so squawkingly that you could have pulled every tooth out of his head. But finally Calandrino appealed to the doctor and begged for his advice and help.

"Calandrino," said the doctor, "don't be disturbed. Praised be God, we have found it out so soon that we can set you free in a few days with very little trouble. But you'll have to spend some money."

"Oh! Doctor! Yes, for the love of God!" said Calandrino. "I've got two hundred lire I was going to buy a farm with; if they're all needed, take them all, only keep me from having a child, for I don't know how I should bear it. I've heard women make such a noise when child-bearing, although they've got a good large place to do it with, that I think if I suffered such pain I should die before I bore the child."

"Have no fear," said the doctor, "I'll make you a certain distilled drink, very good and pleasant to drink, which in three mornings will take it all away, and you'll be as fit as a fiddle. But be careful after this, and don't fall into such a folly again. For this cordial you'll have to provide three pairs of good fat capons. For the other things needed, give one of your friends five lire to buy them and have them brought to my house. Tomorrow morning, in the name of God, I'll send you this distilled drink; and begin by drinking a good large glass of it each time."

"Doctor," said Calandrino at this, "I leave it all to you."

And he gave Bruno five lire and enough money besides to buy three pairs of capons, and besought him to take the trouble to assist his friend. The doctor departed, made up some harmless medicine, and sent it to him. Bruno went and bought the capons and other things needed for a good meal, and ate them with the doctor and his other friends.

Calandrino drank the medicine on three mornings, and then the doctor came to see him with his other friends, felt his pulse, and said:

"Calandrino, you are perfectly cured. You can now go about and do anything you want, there's no need to stay in the house."

Calandrino got up very cheerfully and went about his business. He told everybody he met of the wonderful cure performed on him by Doctor Simone, who had un-pregnated him in three days without any pain at all. Bruno, Buffalmacco and Nello rejoiced at having tricked Calandrino's avarice by their device; but Monna Tessa found out what had happened, and grumbled continually about it to her husband.

Fourth Tale

CECCO DI MESSER FORTARRIGO GAMBLES AWAY ALL HE HAS AT BUONCONVENTO AND THE MONEY OF CECCO DI MESSER ANGIULIERI AS WELL. HE RUNS AFTER ANGIULIERI IN HIS SHIRT, SAYING THAT HE IS A THIEF, GETS THE PEASANTS TO STOP HIM, DRESSES IN HIS CLOTHES, MOUNTS HIS HORSE AND LEAVES HIM IN HIS SHIRT

THE words which Calandrino spoke about his wife were received by the band with great laughter; and when Filostrato had ended, the queen ordered Neifile to speak next, and she said:

Worthy ladies, if it were not more difficult for men to show others their wisdom and virtue than their folly and vice, it would not be necessary for them to restrain their speech. This has been shown by the foolishness of Calandrino, who, in his eagerness to be cured of a sickness which his own stupidity made him think he had, quite unnecessarily mentioned in public his secret pleasures with his wife. This has brought an opposite example to my mind, viz., how the cunning of one man vanquished the wisdom of another, to the great harm and shame of the latter. And this I shall take pleasure in telling you.

Not many years ago there were two men of the same age, each called Cecco, one belonging to Messer Angiulieri and the other to Messer Fortarrigo. Although they were ill-assorted in many of their habits, they agreed so much in hating their own fathers that they became friends, and spent much time together.

Angiulieri was a handsome and educated man, and he felt it was wretched to stay in Siena with the pittance his father allowed him. He heard that a Cardinal, who was very friendly towards him, had been sent as legate to the Marches of Ancona; and made up his mind to go to this prelate, hoping to better his condition. He informed his father, and arranged to receive six months' allowance at one time, so that he could provide himself with clothes and a horse and set out in honourable wise.

He was looking about for someone to take with him as a servant. Fortarrigo heard of this and went immediately to Angiulieri, begging him in the best terms he knew to take him along, saying that he wanted to be his servant and attendant and everything, and all that with no wages but his expenses. Angiulieri replied that he did not want to take him, not because he did not know everything a servant needs to know, but because he gambled, and often got drunk as well. Fortarrigo replied that he would avoid them both, and swore it with so many oaths, to which he added so many entreaties, that Angiulieri gave way and agreed.

They both set out one morning, and dined at Buonconvento. After dinner Angiulieri had a bed prepared in the inn on account of the great heat, and after undressing with Fortarrigo's help, he went to sleep, telling his servant to call him at Nones. While Angiulieri was asleep, Fortarrigo went to the tavern, and after drinking a little, began to gamble. In a very short time he lost what money he had and then the clothes from his back. Hoping to make good his losses, he went in his shirt to the room where Angiulieri was fast asleep, took all the money from his purse, and returned to his gambling, where this money soon followed the rest.

Angiulieri awoke, got up, dressed and asked for Fortarrigo. Not finding him, Angiulieri concluded that he must have got drunk and gone to sleep somewhere, as he often did. Angiulieri therefore decided to leave him, had his saddle and saddle-bags put on his horse, with the intention of getting another servant at Corsignano. When he went to pay the landlord, he found he had no money. At this the whole place was in an uproar, for Angiulieri said he had been robbed in the house, and threatened to have them all arrested and sent to Siena. Fortarrigo then appeared in his shirt, coming to take Angiulieri's clothes as he had taken his money. Seeing him about to mount, he said:

"What does this mean, Angiulieri? Are we to leave now? Wait a moment. The man who lent me thirty-eight soldi for my doublet will be here in a moment, and I'm sure he'll give it up for thirty-five in cash."

While he was speaking a man came along who informed Angiulieri that Fortarrigo must have stolen his money, by telling him the exact sum he had lost. In great anger Angiulieri abused Fortarrigo violently, and would

have killed him if he had not been more afraid of the law than of God. Threatening to have him hanged in person or in effigy, he mounted his horse. As if Angiulieri had not been speaking to him but to someone else, Fortarrigo said:

"Come now, Angiulieri, enough of this; such talk gets us nowhere. Listen to this—if we pay at once, we can get it back for thirty-five soldi, but if we wait even till tomorrow he will want the thirty-eight he lent. He will do this for me, because I laid a wager in his favour. Why should we not save these three soldi?"

At this Angiulieri was in despair, especially since he saw everyone present looking hard at him and appearing to think, not that Fortarrigo had stolen his money but that Angiulieri had Fortarrigo's. So he said:

"What have I to do with your doublet? May you be hanged, for you've not only robbed me and gambled away my money, but you're now preventing my leaving, and making fun of me!"

Fortarrigo still acted as if Angiulieri was talking to someone else, and said:

"Ah! Why won't you make those three soldi for me? Do you think I can't pay you back? Ah! Do it, if you care anything about me. Why this haste? We have plenty of time to get to Torrenieri this evening. Come, pull out your purse. I might hunt all Siena and never find a doublet which suited me so well as this; and to think that I let him have it for thirty-eight soldi! It's worth forty or more, so you're harming me in two ways."

Angiulieri, in great wrath with him for having stolen his money and then keeping him in talk, made no reply but, turning his horse's head, took the road for Torrenieri. Fortarrigo, thinking of a cunning trick, trotted after him in his shirt. He had gone two miles, begging for his doublet, and Angiulieri was going fast to get this annoyance out of his ears when Fortarrigo saw some workmen in a field near the road ahead of Angiulieri. So he began to shout loudly:

"Stop him! Stop him!"

They rushed into the road in front of Angiulieri with their hoes and spades, thinking that he had robbed the man who was shouting behind

in his shirt; and they seized and held Angiulieri. It was of no avail for him to tell them who he was and what had happened. And when Fortarrigo arrived, he said with an angry look:

"I don't know why I don't slay you, you treacherous thief, running off with my property!"

Then, turning to the peasants, he said:

"See, gentlemen, how he left me in the inn after having first gambled away all he had! Thanks to you and God I have recovered everything, and shall always be grateful to you."

Angiulieri said the same thing about Fortarrigo, but his words were not listened to. With the peasants' help Fortarrigo pulled him from his horse, stripped off his clothes and put them on himself, and then mounted, leaving Angiulieri in his shirt and hose. He returned to Siena and told everyone that he had won the horse and clothes from Angiulieri at dice. Angiulieri, who thought he was going in comfortable circumstances to the Cardinal in the Marches, returned poor and in his shirt to Buonconvento. Out of shame he had no desire to return to Siena at that time, but borrowed some clothes and rode to some relatives at Corsignano on the sorry nag belonging to Fortarrigo, where he stayed until his father again came to his assistance.

Thus Fortarrigo's cunning ruined Angiulieri's wise plans, although at a fitting time and place he did not go unpunished.

Fifth Tale

CALANDRINO FALLS IN LOVE WITH A YOUNG WOMAN. BRUNO MAKES HIM A WRITTEN CHARM AND, WHEN HE TOUCHES HER WITH IT, SHE GOES WITH HIM. HE IS SURPRISED BY HIS WIFE AND HAS A PAINFUL QUARREL WITH HER IN CONSEQUENCE

NEIFILE's short tale passed without exciting much laughter or comment from the band, and the queen then turned to Fiammetta and ordered her to follow next. She merrily replied that she would do so willingly, and began thus:

Most gentle ladies, as I think you all know, there is no subject so often repeated but will please if the person who speaks of it knows how to choose the right time and place. When I consider the reason why we are here (which is for our amusement and pleasure, and nothing else), I think that this is a fitting time and place for everything which provides us with pleasure and amusement. And though such a thing were repeated a thousand times it could not give anything but pleasure each time. We have several times talked of the doings of Calandrino, but since they are all amusing (as Filostrato said recently), I want to tell you another additional tale about him. If I wanted to depart from the truth, I could easily conceal it under borrowed names; but since departure from the truth in story-telling about things which actually happened greatly diminishes the pleasure of the hearers, I shall tell it you as it actually happened, for the above-mentioned reason.

Niccolo Cornacchini, our countryman, was a rich man, and among his possessions was an estate in the Camerata. He built a large, handsome house there and made an agreement with Bruno and Buffalmacco to paint it with frescoes. Since there was a great deal of work to do, they took on Nello and Calandrino as their assistants, and then began the job. Some of the rooms had beds and other furniture and an old woman servant was there as care-taker; but, since none of the family was there, one of Niccolo's sons, a young unmarried man named Filippo, sometimes

brought out a woman for his pleasure, kept her there two or three days, and then sent her away. Among those he brought out was a girl named Niccolosa, who was kept in a low house at Camaldoli belonging to a man named Mangione, who let her out on hire.

She was handsome and well dressed, and for a girl of her sort well behaved and well spoken. One morning she came out of her room in a white petticoat, with her hair loosely knotted on her head, and went to the well in the courtyard to wash her hands and face. At that moment Calandrino happened to come there for water, and saluted her familiarly. She replied and looked at him, more because he was a curious looking man than for any flirtatious reason. Calandrino began to look at her and thought her beautiful; he then began to make advances, and did not return with the water. But as he did not know her, he had nothing to say to her. She had noticed his looking at her and looked at him with a little sigh, to egg him on. This made Calandrino immediately fall in love with her, and he did not leave the courtyard until she was called back to Filippo's room. Calandrino returned to his work, and did nothing but heave deep sighs. Bruno, who always watched him carefully because he took great delight in Calandrino's doings, noticed this, and said:

"What the devil's wrong with you, friend Calandrino? You do nothing but puff."

"Friend," said Calandrino, "if I had anyone to help me, I should be all right."

"How's that?" asked Bruno.

"Don't tell anyone," said Calandrino, "there's a girl here who's more beautiful than a Lamia, and she's so much in love with me, you'd be surprised. I noticed it just now when I went for water."

"Oh!" said Bruno, "look out that it isn't Filippo's wife."

"I think she is," said Calandrino, "because he called her, and she went into his room. But what does that matter? I'd steal such little bits from Christ, let alone Filippo. To tell you the truth, friend, I like her so much I can't tell you how much."

"Friend," said Bruno, "I'll find out who she is for you. And if she's

Filippo's wife, I'll fix up your affair in two minutes, for I'm very friendly with her. But how shall we manage to keep Buffalmacco from knowing? I can never talk to her without his being there."

"I don't mind about Buffalmacco," said Calandrino, "but we must look out for Nello; he's a relative of Tessa, and would spoil everything."

"Well said," replied Bruno.

Bruno knew who she was, because he had seen her arrive, and Filippo had told him about her. So, when Calandrino left his work for a time and went to look for her, Bruno told Nello and Buffalmacco about it, and they agreed together on what they would do about this love affair. When he returned, Bruno whispered:

"Did you see her?"

"Oh yes," replied Calandrino, "she's smitten me!"

"I'll go and see if she's the girl I think," said Bruno, "and if she is, leave it to me."

So Bruno went off to Filippo and the girl, and first told them the sort of man Calandrino was, and what he had said; then he arranged what each of them would do and say, for them all to get fun out of Calandrino's love-making. He then returned to Calandrino, and said:

"Yes, it's she. You'll have to go very carefully in the matter, because, if Filippo found it out, all the water in the Arno would not wash it away. But what do you want me to say to her on your behalf, if I can speak to her?"

"Ah!" said Calandrino, "tell her first that I wish her a thousand bushels of the stuff good to impregnate her, that I'm her servant, and if she wants anything. Do you understand me?"

"Yes," said Bruno, "leave it to me."

When supper came and they all left work and went down into the courtyard, Filippo and Niccolosa made friendly advances to Calandrino, who stared at Niccolosa and made the most absurd gestures at her, so that a blind man would have noticed them. Following Bruno's advice, she did everything she could think of to encourage him. She amused herself greatly with Calandrino's absurd behaviour, while Filippo pretended to be talking to Buffalmacco and the others, and not to notice what was

going on. Soon afterwards they left, to Calandrino's great despair; and as they went towards Florence, Bruno said to Calandrino:

"I told you that you'd make her melt like ice in the sun. God's body, if you brought back your guitar and sang some of your love songs, you'd make her throw herself out of the window to get at you."

"Do you think so, friend?" asked Calandrino. "Shall I bring it back then?"

"Yes," replied Bruno.

"You didn't believe me today," said Calandrino, "when I told you about her. I'm quite sure, friend, that I know how to get what I want better than any man living. Who else would have been able to make such a woman fall in love with him so quickly? Do you think it could have been done by those young men who go trumpeting up and down all day, and can't collect three handfuls of nuts in a thousand years? Now I want you to see what I can do with the guitar; you'll see fine playing. Understand, I'm not such an old man as you think, as she saw at once. Anyway, I'll soon show her if I once get my hand on her. By the true body of Christ, I'll make her play so that she'll follow me like the madwoman after her child."

"Oh!" said Bruno, "you'll take her by the nose. I can see you already with your teeth like lute-keys biting her red lips and her two rosy cheeks, and then eating her all up."

These words made Calandrino feel that he had her already, and he went along singing and leaping so happily that he could have jumped out of his skin.

Next day he brought his lute, and sang several songs with her, to the immense amusement of all the others. In short, he became so excited to see her often that he scarcely did any work, and kept going to the window or the door or into the courtyard to see her. And she, cleverly behaving in accordance with Bruno's instructions, gave him every opportunity. Bruno replied to Calandrino's messages and occasionally sent one from her. When she was not there, he produced letters from her, in which she gave him great hopes, but said she was in the house of relatives and could not see him.

Bruno and Buffalmacco kept the affair in their hands, and in this way got great amusement out of Calandrino's doings. They made him buy her an ivory comb and a purse and a small knife and similar trifles, on the pretence that she had asked for them, and in exchange they brought him back one or two worthless rings, over which he went into ecstasies. Moreover, he gave them good lunches and other treats, so that they would help him on.

Things went on in this way for about two months, without advancing any further; and then Calandrino saw that the work was coming to an end and realised that if he did not bring his love to a successful end before the work was over, he would never be able to do so. He therefore kept urging and entreating Bruno, who, having first made his arrangements with her and Filippo, said to Calandrino one day when she was there:

"Friend, the girl has promised me a thousand times to do what you want, and yet she doesn't do it. I think she's leading you by the nose. Now, since she won't do what she promises, we'll make her do it, whether she wants or not, if you agree."

"Ah yes!" said Calandrino. "For the love of God let's do it soon."

"Have you the courage to touch her with a written spell I can make for you?" asked Bruno.

"Of course," said Calandrino.

"Well then," said Bruno, "bring me a little unborn paper, a live bat, three grains of incense and a blessed candle, and leave the rest to me."

Calandrino spent the whole of that evening trying to catch a bat, and at last caught one which he took to Bruno with the other things. Bruno went into a room and wrote certain absurd phrases on the card with magical characters, and then took it to Calandrino, saying:

"Calandrino, if you touch her with this writing, she will immediately follow you, and do what you want. So if Filippo goes away today, you must find her and touch her with it. Go to the small house near, which is the best place because nobody frequents it. You'll see that she'll come there. When she's there, you know what you have to do."

Calandrino was the happiest man in the world at this, took the writing, and said:

"Friend, leave it to me."

Nello, of whom Calandrino was afraid, was as much amused with all this as the others, and had a hand in the jest. So, as Bruno had arranged, he went to Calandrino's wife in Florence, and said:

"Tessa, you know how Calandrino unreasonably beat you when he brought the stones back from Mugnone. I mean that you shall have your revenge, and if you don't take it, never consider me your relative and friend again. He has fallen in love with a woman up there, and she is so light that she often shuts herself up alone with him. They have arranged to meet soon; and I want you to come along and catch him and punish him."

The wife did not see it was all a joke, but started to her feet, saying:

"Ah! You common thief, is that how you treat me? By God's Cross, it shall not go on without your paying for it!"

She put on her cloak, found a woman to accompany her, and set out at a sharp pace with Nello. When Bruno saw them coming in the distance, he said to Filippo:

"Here comes our friend."

So Filippo went up to the place where Calandrino and the others were working, and said:

"My masters, I have to go to Florence at once; work hard!"

He then went and hid in a place where he could see what Calandrino did, but not be seen himself. When Calandrino thought that Filippo had got far enough away, he came down into the courtyard. There he found Niccolosa alone and began to talk to her; while she, who knew her part well, greeted him a little more warmly than usual. Calandrino then touched her with the written spell. As soon as he had touched her, he walked towards the cottage without saying a word, and she followed him. As soon as they were inside, she closed the door, embraced Calandrino, threw him down on some straw there and straddled over him, keeping her hands on his shoulders so that he could not put his face close to hers. She looked at him, as if with great desire, saying:

"O sweet Calandrino, heart of my body, my soul, my love, my repose, how long have I wanted to have you and to hold you as I wished! Your

charm enchanted me, and your guitar-playing made lattice-work of my heart. Can it be true that I have you?"

Calandrino, who was hardly able to move, said:

"Ah! sweet soul! Let me kiss you!"

"Oh, you're very hasty," said Niccolosa. "Let me first gaze my fill at you. Let me satiate my eyes with that sweet face."

Bruno and Buffalmacco had rejoined Filippo, and all three heard and saw this. Just as Calandrino was trying to kiss Niccolosa, up came Nello and Monna Tessa. And, as soon as they arrived, Nello said:

"I vow to God they're together now!"

The wife in a rage beat on the door of the cottage, broke it open and, rushing in, saw Niccolosa on Calandrino. As soon as she saw Tessa, Niccolosa sprang up and ran away to Filippo. Before Calandrino could get up, Monna Tessa ran at his face with her nails and scratched him, seized him by the hair, and dragged him to and fro, screaming:

"Cursed foul dog, so this is how you treat me! You silly old man, cursed be my love for you! Do you think you haven't enough to do in your own home that you go making love to other women? You're a nice lover! Don't you know what you are, villain? Don't you know what you are, idiot? If you were squeezed to the last drop there wouldn't come out enough juice to make a sauce. God's faith, it's not Tessa now makes you pregnant, God punish her whoever she may be, for she must be a poor creature to want such a jewel as you!"

At the sight of his wife, Calandrino felt neither alive nor dead, and dared not make any defence. But when he had been scratched and buffeted and his hair pulled out, he found his hat and stood up, humbly begging his wife not to scream so loud if she did not want him to be cut to pieces, because the woman who had been with him was the wife of the master of the house. Said his wife:

"Let her be! God curse her!"

Bruno and Buffalmacco, who had laughed their fill over all this with Filippo and Niccolosa, came up as if they had heard the noise, and after much talk calmed Tessa down. They advised Calandrino to go to Florence and not return, so that he might not receive any harm, in case Filippo

heard about it. So poor sad Calandrino, with his scratches and torn hair, returned to Florence without any desire to go back to that place again, day and night tormented and teased with his wife's scoldings. Thus ended his ardent love, after providing much mirth to his friends, and to Niccolosa and Filippo.

Sixth Tale

TWO YOUNG MEN SPEND THE NIGHT WITH A MAN; ONE OF THEM LIES WITH THE MAN'S DAUGHTER, AND HIS WIFE UNWITTINGLY LIES WITH THE OTHER. THE YOUNG MAN WHO LAY WITH THE DAUGHTER GETS INTO THE FATHER'S BED AND TELLS HIM ABOUT IT, THINKING IT IS HIS COMPANION. THEY START A QUARREL. THE WIFE GUESSES WHAT HAS HAPPENED, GETS INTO THE DAUGHTER'S BED AND MAKES PEACE BETWEEN THEM

CALANDRINO had made the group laugh before, and did so again. When the ladies had ceased discussing his doings, the queen ordered Pamfilo to speak, and he said:

Fair ladies, the name of Calandrino's love, Niccolosa, makes me think of another Niccolosa, about whom I want to tell you, since her story will show you how a good woman's sudden device prevented a great scandal.

Not long ago in the Mugnone Valley there lived a good man who provided food and drink for travellers who could pay for it. Since he was poor and had only a small house, he sometimes put acquaintances up for the night, but no one else. His wife was quite a handsome woman, and by her he had two children. One was a pretty girl of about fifteen or sixteen, but not yet married; the other was a baby not a year old, whom the mother fed at the breast.

A gay, pleasant young gentleman of our city, who often passed that way, saw the girl and fell violently in love with her. She was very proud

that such a young man should fall in love with her, and while she was devising means to keep him in love with her by various feignings, she fell in love with him herself. Their mutual desire would have brought this love to its fruition if Pinuccio (such was the young man's name) had not wanted to avoid any scandal to the girl and himself.

But his ardour became greater every day, and Pinuccio wanted to be with her. He determined to find some way of spending the night there, for since he knew the plan of the house he felt certain that if he could do this he would be able to go to her without anyone knowing about it. As soon as he thought of this, he put his plan into action.

With a confidential friend of his named Adriano, who knew all about this love affair, he hired two post horses and loaded them with a couple of saddle-bags stuffed with straw. They rode out of Florence and, after making a circle round, reached the Mugnone Valley after nightfall. Then, as if they were returning from Romagna, they turned and rode up to the poor man's house, and knocked at the door. As he knew them both well, he opened the door at once. Said Pinuccio:

"You'll have to put us up for the night. We thought we could reach Florence, but the best of our efforts have only brought us as far as this at this hour, as you see."

"Pinuccio," said the host, "you know how difficult it is for me to lodge gentlemen like you. But since night has caught you here and there is no time to go elsewhere, I will gladly lodge you as well as I can."

The two young men dismounted and, after attending to their horses, entered the little inn. They had brought food with them, and had supper with the host. He had only one small bedroom in which he had made up three beds to the best of his ability. Consequently there was very little space left, for two of the beds were ranged along one wall and the third opposite, so that there was only a narrow passage between them. The host had the best of these beds prepared for the two young men, and sent them to lie there. A little later, when they pretended to be asleep, although they were both awake, the host sent his daughter to bed in the second, and got into the third with his wife. The cradle containing the baby was put at the foot of the wife's bed.

Pinuccio saw all these arrangements, and a little later, when he thought everyone was asleep, he got up quietly and went to the bed where the girl he loved was lying, and lay down beside her. Although she was afraid, she received him gladly, and they enjoyed together the pleasures they desired. While Pinuccio was with the girl, a cat happened to knock something down, and woke the wife up. Thinking it was something important, she got up in the dark, and went to the place where she had heard the noise.

Adriano had paid no attention to this, but happened at that moment to get up for a natural function. As he was going out for this purpose he came upon the child's cradle, and, not being able to pass, took it from where it was and placed it beside his own bed. Then, having done what he wanted, he returned, and without troubling about the cradle, got back into bed.

The wife found that what had fallen was not important and so did not trouble to make a light to look further; she scolded at the cat and returned to the bedroom. She went straight to the bed in which her husband was sleeping, but not finding the cradle said to herself: "Oh! see what I was going to do! God's faith, I was just going to get into the guests' bed!" She searched a little further and came upon the cradle, whereupon she got into bed and lay down beside Adriano, thinking it was her husband. Adriano, who had not yet fallen asleep again, received her most gladly, and without saying a word seized her eagerly, to her great satisfaction.

Meanwhile Pinuccio had taken his pleasure of the girl as he desired. Fearing that sleep might surprise him while with her, he left her to go and sleep in his own bed. Finding the cradle there, he thought it the host's bed; so he went on, and got into bed with the host, who woke up in consequence. Pinuccio, thinking he was lying beside Adriano, said:

"I told you there was never so sweet a thing as Niccolosa. God's body, I have had the greatest pleasure a man ever had with a woman, and I went six times into the town before I left!"

The host was not best pleased to hear this news, and at first said to himself: "What the devil is he doing here?" Then with more anger than wisdom he said:

"Pinuccio, you've done a foul deed, and I don't know why you should have done it to me. But, by God's body, I'll make you pay for it."

Pinuccio was not the wisest young man in the world; he saw his mistake, but instead of trying to amend it as well as he could, he said:

"How will you pay me? What can you do to me?"

The host's wife, thinking she was with her husband, said to Adriano:

"Oh! Listen to our guests quarrelling together!"

"Let them alone," said Adriano, laughing. "God curse them! They drank too much last night."

The woman thought she heard her husband grumbling in the other bed and from Adriano's voice she realized at once where she was. Like a wise woman, she said not a word but at once arose and picked up the child's cradle. Since there was not a gleam of light in the room, she groped her way with the cradle to her daughter's bed and lay down beside her. Then, pretending that she had been awakened by her husband's clamour, she called to him and asked him why he was quarrelling with Pinuccio.

"Didn't you hear what he said he did to Niccolosa tonight?" asked the husband.

"He lies in his throat," said she. "He hasn't lain with Niccolosa, for I have been in bed with her and I should never have slept through it. You're a fool to believe it. You drink so much in the evening that you dream all night, and toss up and down without knowing it, and think you are doing wonders. It's a great pity you don't break your neck. But what is Pinuccio doing there? Why isn't he in his own bed?"

Adriano saw how cleverly the woman was hiding her shame and her daughter's, and said:

"Pinuccio, I've told you a hundred times that you ought not to sleep away from home. Your habit of walking in your sleep and relating your silly dreams as truth will get you into trouble. Come back to bed, bad luck to you!"

From what Adriano and his wife said, the host began to think that Pinuccio was dreaming. So he took him by the shoulders, shook him, and said:

"Pinuccio, wake up! Go back to your own bed."

Pinuccio saw at once why they spoke in this way, and at once began to talk nonsense like a man dreaming, at which the host laughed heartily. Finally, after much shaking, he pretended to awake, and called to Adriano:

“Is it morning? Why are you calling me?”

“Yes,” said Adriano, “come here.”

Pretending to be very sleepy, Pinuccio at last got out of the host's bed and returned to Adriano. When day came and they got up, the host laughed and joked at him and his dreams. So with one jest and another, the two young men got their horses ready, strapped on the saddle-bags, drank a stirrup-cup with the host, and rode to Florence, no less delighted with the way in which the adventure had succeeded than with the success itself.

Afterwards Pinuccio and Niccolosa found other ways of meeting; while the girl vowed to her mother that Pinuccio really had been dreaming. Thus the mother, remembering Adriano's embraces, thought that she had been the only one awake.

Seventh Tale

TALANO DI MOLESE DREAMS THAT A WOLF TEARS HIS WIFE'S THROAT AND FACE AND WARNS HER TO BE CAREFUL. SHE PAYS NO ATTENTION TO THE WARNING, AND THE THING HAPPENS

WHEN Pamfilo ended his tale, they all praised the woman's presence of mind; the queen then ordered Pampinea to speak, and she began thus:

Fair ladies, we have spoken before of the truth of dreams, which many people laugh at. But, although we have discussed this, I intend to tell you a very short tale of what happened not long ago to a woman neighbour of mine, through her not believing a dream seen by her husband.

I do not know if you are acquainted with a man of some importance,

named Talano di Molese. He married a very beautiful girl named Margarita, who was very eccentric, self-willed and petulant, so much so that nobody could do anything to please her, while she would do nothing in accordance with the advice of others. This was naturally very hard for Talano to bear, but he put up with it, since there was nothing else to do.

One night Talano and Margarita were asleep in a country house they possessed; and in a dream he thought he saw her walking through a wood not far from their house. As he looked at her, he saw a large fierce wolf come out of the wood, seize her by the throat, cast her on the ground and try to drag her away as she screamed for help; she escaped from its jaws, and he saw that her throat and face were all mangled. When they got up in the morning, he said to his wife:

"Although your petulance has prevented me from ever having one happy day with you, yet I should be unhappy if ill befell you; and so, if you will take my advice, you will not go out of the house today."

She asked him why, and he then told her his dream. She tossed her head, and said:

"Those who wish ill, dream ill. You pretend to be very careful of me, but you dreamed what you would like to see happen to me. So today and always I shall be very careful not to make you happy with this or any other misfortune to me."

"I knew you would say that," said Talano, "because who scratches a scab gets that for his reward. Think what you please, I meant well; and I advise you again to stay in the house today, or at least not to go into the wood."

"Very well," said she.

But then she said to herself: "How cunningly he tried to frighten me out of not going to the wood today! He must certainly have arranged to meet one of those women there, and doesn't want me to find them. Oh, he'd not deceive a blind man, and I should be a great fool if I believed him and didn't know what he is! He certainly won't succeed. If I have to stay there all day, I must see what he is getting up to there today."

Meanwhile, the husband left the house by one entrance, and she went out by another. She hastened as secretly as she could and hid herself in the

thickest part of the wood, watching and looking here and there to see if anyone were coming. While she was doing this, with no thought of the wolf, suddenly from a thick clump of trees emerged a great terrible wolf, and she had scarcely time to say: "God help me!" when the wolf was at her throat. It seized her, and began to carry her away as if she had been a small lamb.

Her throat was held so firmly that she could not scream, nor help herself in any other way. She would inevitably have been strangled as the wolf dragged her along if it had not come upon some shepherds, who shouted at it, and forced it to leave her. The shepherds recognised the unhappy woman and carried her home. After long treatment she was healed by the doctors, but all her throat and part of her face were so much scarred that, instead of being beautiful as before, she looked deformed and ugly. Thus, being ashamed to appear where she would be seen, she often miserably wept for her petulance and her refusal to believe her husband's true dream, in a way which would have cost her nothing.

Eighth Tale

BIONDELLO PLAYS A TRICK ON CIACCO WITH A DINNER;
CIACCO REVENGES HIMSELF PRUDENTLY AND GETS BIONDELLO
SOUNDLY BEATEN

EVERYONE in the merry band said that what Talano had seen in his sleep was not a dream but a vision, since it had all happened exactly as he dreamed it. When everyone was silent, the queen ordered Lauretta to follow next, and she said:

Most wise ladies, those who have spoken before me today have almost all been inspired by something we have talked of formerly. I myself am now moved by Pampinea's tale of yesterday about the savage revenge of the scholar, to tell you of a vengeance which was serious enough to the person who suffered it, although not so savage as that.

I must therefore tell you that among the Florentines was a very gluttonous man, named Ciacco. His income was not sufficient to meet the expense of his gluttony, and since he was well mannered and full of witty jokes and sayings, he made himself, not a courtier, but a sarcastic buffoon. He frequented the rich and delighted to eat good food; so he dined and supped with the wealthy, although he was not always invited.

At the same time in Florence there was a man called Biondello, who had the same parasitical occupation as Ciacco. He was a pleasant little man, as neat as a fly, with his cap on his head, and a mass of yellow hair with never a single hair out of place. One morning in Lent he went to the fish market and bought two very large lampreys for Messer Vieri de' Cerchi. Ciacco saw him, and going up to him, said:

"What is the meaning of this?"

"Yesterday," replied Biondello, "three lampreys much larger than these and a sturgeon were sent to Messer Corso Donati. They are not sufficient to entertain the gentlemen he has invited, and so he sent me to buy two more. Won't you come along?"

"Indeed I'll come," replied Ciacco.

So at the right time he went to Messer Corso's house, and found him with several of his neighbours waiting for dinner. When he was asked why he had come there, he replied:

"Messer, I have come to dine with you and your friends."

"You are welcome," replied Messer Corso, "and since it is dinner time, let us sit down to it."

So they sat down to table, and were served with peas and tunny fish, and then fried fish from the Arno, and nothing more. Ciacco then saw through Biondello's trick, and, being very angry at it, made up his mind to pay him back. Biondello made a lot of people laugh by telling them the trick; and not many days later he met Ciacco. Biondello greeted him, and laughingly asked him how he liked Messer Corso's lampreys.

"Before a week has passed," said Ciacco, "you'll be able to tell much better than I."

He then left Biondello and at once put his plan into action. He promised some money to a market-man and, handing him a glass bottle, took

him to the Loggia de' Cavicciuli. There he pointed to a knight, named Messer Filippo Argenti, a tall, strong, sinewy man, haughty, irascible and hasty; and said to the market-man:

"Take this bottle to him, and speak these words: 'Messer, I am sent to you by Biondello, who begs that you will redden this bottle with your good ruby wine, because he wants to treat some of his friends.' Be careful that he doesn't get his hands on you, because he would give you a bad time and it would spoil my plan."

"Am I to say anything else?" asked the market-man.

"No," said Ciaccio, "go along; when you have said this to him, come back to me with the bottle, and I'll pay you."

So the market-man went off, and delivered the message to Messer Filippo. When Messer Filippo heard it, he went red in the face, for he was very prone to wrath and thought that Biondello, whom he knew, was making a jest of him. He started to his feet, saying: "What 'reddening' and what 'friends' does he mean? God curse him and you!" And he stretched out his arm to grasp the market-man; but he was on the alert and fled away at once. He returned to Ciaccio, who had watched everything from a safe distance, and told him what Messer Filippo had said. Ciaccio in delight at once paid the market-man, and did not rest until he found Biondello, to whom he said:

"Were you in the Loggia de' Cavicciuli just now?"

"No," replied Biondello. "Why do you ask?"

"Because," replied Ciaccio, "I know that Messer Filippo is looking for you—I don't know why."

"Good," said Biondello, "I'll go to him and make a joke."

Biondello went off, followed at a distance by Ciaccio who wanted to see what would happen. Messer Filippo, who had not been able to catch the market-man, was in a great rage and chafed inwardly, for he could make nothing of the market-man's words except that Biondello, at someone's instigation, was making fun of him. And while he was chafing in this way, up came Biondello. As soon as Messer Filippo saw him, he went up and gave him a punch in the face.

"Oh! Messer!" exclaimed Biondello. "What does this mean?"

Messer Filippo took him by the hair, tore off his cap and threw his hood on the ground, still punching him hard, and saying:

"Traitor! You'll soon see what it means! What do you mean by sending me messages about 'reddening' and 'friends'? Do you think I am a boy to be hoodwinked?"

So saying, he kept smashing at his face with a fist which seemed like iron, tore out his hair, and dragging him through the mud made rags of his clothes. And he went at it so violently that Biondello had not time to say a word or to ask him why he was attacking him. He had certainly heard the "reddening" and the "friends," but did not know what they meant.

Finally, after Messer Filippo had given him a sound thrashing, a number of people gathered round and with great difficulty rescued Biondello, who was all buffeted and bruised, from his hands. They told him why Messer Filippo had done this, and reprehended him for having sent such a message, telling him that he ought to know the sort of man Messer Filippo was, and that he was not a man to be jested with. Biondello in tears tried to clear himself, and said that he had never sent to Messer Filippo for wine. And when he had collected himself a little, he went home sadly and painfully, suspecting that this was Ciacco's work. Several days later, when the marks of the bruises had left his face, he began to go about again. He happened to meet Ciacco, who said to him:

"Well, Biondello, how did you like Messer Filippo's wine?"

"I wish you had found Messer Corso's lampreys like it!" replied Biondello.

"Right!" said Ciacco. "Next time you give me such a dinner as that I'll give you another drink like the one you had!"

Biondello realized that he was more able to feel ill will towards Ciacco than he had power to hurt him, and prayed God to make his peace with him. Thereafter he was very careful not to play such tricks.

Tenth Tale

TWO YOUNG MEN GO TO SOLOMON FOR ADVICE. ONE ASKS WHAT HE MUST DO TO BE LOVED, THE OTHER HOW TO REFORM A SHREWISH WIFE. SOLOMON TELLS THE FIRST TO LOVE, AND THE OTHER TO GO TO THE BRIDGE OF GEESE

IF Dioneo's privilege was to be respected, no one remained to tell a tale but the queen; and when the ladies had laughed their full at the unfortunate Biondello, she began merrily to speak thus:

Amiable ladies, if the nature of things is sanely examined, we may easily perceive that the whole mass of women are subjected to men by nature, by custom and by the laws, and that they are bound to submit to the discretion of men. Therefore, every woman who desires peace, rest and comfort, ought to be humble, patient and obedient to the man to whom she belongs, as well as being chaste, which is the chief and special treasure of every wise woman.

If this were not enforced by the laws, which in all things look to the common good, and by usage or custom, whose power is very great and to be revered, Nature herself would plainly display it, for she has made women delicate and fine of body, timid and fearful of mind, giving them slight bodily strength, pleasant voices and gentle movements. All of which things show that we need the control of others. It stands to reason that everyone who needs help and control should be subject, obedient and reverent to his ruler. And what rulers and helpers have we, except men? Therefore we should honour men most highly and be subject to them. And if any woman should revolt, I consider that she would deserve sharp punishment as well as stern admonition.

I have more than once made these reflections, but I was particularly led to them by Pampinea's story of Talano's self-willed wife, to whom God sent the punishment which her husband was unable to inflict. Therefore, as I said before, in my judgment all women who are not pleasant, mild and amiable, as they are required to be by Nature, custom and the laws,

are deserving of harsh and stern punishment. So I take pleasure in telling you the advice of Solomon, which is a useful medicine for curing those who are afflicted with this disease. Let no woman, who does not deserve this medicine, think that it is intended for her, although men have a proverb which says: "A good horse and a bad horse need the spur, and a good woman and a bad woman need the stick." If these words are interpreted humorously, it can easily be admitted that they are true; and even if they are to be interpreted morally, I will say they are admissible. Women are naturally pliant and yielding, and so the stick is needed to punish the iniquity of those who go too far beyond the limits assigned them; and similarly the support and terror of the stick are needed to strengthen the virtue of those who do not allow themselves to transgress.

But, let me leave sermonizing, and come to what I have in mind to say. At the time when nearly the whole world had heard the great fame of the miraculous wisdom of Solomon, and how he most liberally gave proof of it to those who sought to know, many people came to him from different parts of the world for advice in their difficulties.

Among them was a noble and very rich young man, named Melisso, who set out from the city of Laiazzo, where he dwelt. As he left Antioch on the way to Jerusalem, he rode for a time beside a young man named Giosefo, who was going the same way, and, as is usual with travellers, entered into conversation with him. Melisso having learned Giosefo's rank and the place from which he came, asked him where he was going and for what reason. Giosefo said that he was going to ask Solomon's advice as to how he should deal with his wife, who was the most perverse and shrewish of women and could not be persuaded from her shrewishness by entreaties or flatteries or any other means. He then asked Melisso whence he came, where he was going and for what reason; and Melisso replied:

"I come from Laiazzo, and I have a misfortune just as you have. I am a rich young man, and I spend my money in entertaining my fellow citizens, and yet it is a strange thing to think that for all that I cannot find one person who loves me. So I am going where you are going, to find out from him what I must do to be loved."

So the two rode on together, and when they reached Jerusalem, one of

Solomon's barons introduced them to his presence, and Melisso briefly stated what he needed. To which Solomon replied: "Love." When he had said this, Melisso was at once dismissed, and Giosefo then said why he was there. The only answer Solomon gave was: "Go to the Bridge of Geese." And then Giosefo was also removed from the King's presence. He found Melisso waiting for him, and told him the reply he had received. They thought over these words, and being unable to see any meaning in them or any remedy to their needs, they felt they had been scorned, and so set out on their way home.

After they had journeyed for some days, they came to a river, over which there was a fine bridge. And since a large caravan of laden mules and horses was passing over it, they had to wait until they had all crossed. And when they had nearly all passed, there was a mule which balked, as they often do, and utterly refused to cross. The mule-driver took a small stick and began to beat it, quite moderately at first, to make it go on. But the mule went first to one side and then to the other, and sometimes turned right around, and could not be made to cross over. So the mule-driver in a great rage began to beat it violently with his stick, on the head and sides and rump; but all to no avail.

Melisso and Giosefo, who were watching, kept saying to him:

"Ah! you villain! Do you want to kill it? Why don't you try to lead it gently on? It will go quicker that way than by your beating it."

Said the mule-driver:

"You know your horses and I know my mule; you leave him to me."

So saying, he recommenced beating it, and gave it so many blows on one side and the other that the mule crossed over, and the mule-driver proved he was right. And as the two young men were leaving, Giosefo asked an old man who was sitting by the bridge-head what was the name of the bridge. And he replied:

"Messer, it is the Bridge of Geese."

As soon as Giosefo heard that, he remembered Solomon's words, and said to Melisso:

"Friend, it may be that the advice Solomon gave me was good and



true, because I recognize that I haven't learned to beat my wife, and that mule-driver showed me what I ought to do."

A few days later they reached Antioch, and Giosefo invited Melisso to rest there a few days with him. Giosefo's wife received them ungraciously, and he told her to prepare such a supper as Melisso should order; and he did so in a few words, to please his friend. The lady, as she had been accustomed to do in the past, prepared a supper almost exactly the opposite to that Melisso had ordered. Seeing this, Giosefo said angrily:

"Were you not told how you should make this supper?"

"What do you mean?" she replied, turning haughtily to him. "Bah! Am I not to sup if you want to? If I was told to make it differently, I thought I'd make it the way I wanted. If it pleases you, let it please you; if not, let it alone."

Melisso was surprised at the lady's answer, and blamed her for it. And Giosefo said to her: "Woman, you are still what you were wont to be; but, trust me, I'll make you alter your ways."

He then turned to Melisso, and said:

"Friend, we shall soon see the value of Solomon's advice. But I beg you will not object to being present or that you will consider what I am about to do a mere game. Don't try to interrupt me, but remember the mule-driver's answer when we complained about his mule."

"I am in your house," replied Melisso, "and there I shall do nothing contrary to your pleasure."

Giosefo found a stick cut from a sapling oak, and went to the room where his wife had gone grumbling, after leaving the table in irritation. He seized her by the hair, threw her at his feet, and began to beat her hard with the stick. The lady first shrieked, and then threatened him. But Giosefo went on, and as she was now bruised all over she begged him for God's sake mercifully not to kill her, saying that she would never again thwart his wishes. But Giosefo still did not stop. He laid on with more fury than ever, now on her ribs, now on her buttocks, now on her shoulders, and basted her until he was weary. In short, the good lady had bruises on every bone and part of her. Having done this, he returned to Melisso and said:

“Tomorrow we shall see the result of the advice: ‘Go to the Bridge of Geese.’”

After washing his hands and resting, he supped with Melisso, and then they went to bed.

The poor lady with great difficulty got up from the floor and threw herself on the bed, where she rested as well as she could. Next morning, she got up very early, and sent to ask Giosefo what he would like for dinner. Laughing over this with Melisso, he gave his orders; and then when they went home for dinner they found everything prepared exactly as he had ordered. So they highly praised the advice which at first they had not understood.

A few days later Melisso left Giosefo and returned home, where he consulted a wise man, and told him the advice he had received from Solomon. Said the wise man:

“No truer or better advice could have been given you. You know quite well that you care for nobody, and your entertainments and good services do not come from any love you bear to others, but from ostentation. Love then, as Solomon told you, and you will be loved.”

Thus the shrew was chastised, and the young man by loving obtained love.

Tenth Tale

AT THE REQUEST OF GAFFER PIETRO, DON GIANNI RECITES SPELLS TO TURN HIS WIFE INTO A MARE; BUT WHEN IT COMES TO STICKING ON THE TAIL, GAFFER PIETRO SPOILS THE WHOLE MAGICAL OPERATION BY SAYING HE DOESN'T WANT A TAIL

THE tale told by the queen made the young men laugh and the ladies murmur a little; but when they were silent Dioneo began to speak thus:

Fair ladies, among many white doves a black crow adds more beauty than a snowy swan; so among many wise men one who is less wise not

only adds splendour and beauty to their ripe wisdom but pleasure and amusement. You are all most discreet and moderate, and I am a witless fellow who makes your virtue more conspicuous by my defects, and so you should cherish me more than if I diminished it by greater worth in myself. Therefore I should have more freedom to show you what I am by what I say, and should more patiently be endured by you than if I were a wise man. I shall tell you a short tale whereby you may learn how carefully one should observe the instructions of those who conduct magical operations, and how small an error may ruin the whole charm.

Last year at Barletta there was a priest named Don Gianni di Barolo; and because his church was a poor one he went round the fairs of Apulia with his mare, buying and selling and hawking goods to support himself. As he went about thus he became familiar with one Pietro da Tresanti, who followed the same occupation as himself with an ass; and to show his friendship and affection he always called him gaffer Pietro. Whenever he came to Barletta, the priest always took him in and entertained him to the best of his ability. Gaffer Pietro, on his side, was a very poor man and had a little cottage at Tresanti, just big enough for himself and his pretty young wife and his ass. And whenever Don Gianni came to Tresanti, Pietro took him in and entertained him in exchange for the hospitality he had received at Barletta. But in the matter of lodging, gaffer Pietro had only one small bed, in which he slept with his pretty wife. So he could not entertain the priest as he wanted, for Don Gianni had to sleep on straw in the stable beside his mare and the ass.

The wife knew how the priest entertained her husband at Barletta, and more than once when the priest came she wanted to go and sleep with her neighbour, named Zita Carapresa di Giudice Leo, so that the priest could sleep in the bed with her husband. She often offered it to him, but he would never consent, and once said to her:

“Gammer Gemmata, trouble not about me, I am well enough. Whenever I like I can change my mare into a fair damsel and lie with her, and when I want I can change her back into a mare; and so I will never be separated from her.”

The girl was amazed, but believed him, and told her husband about it, adding:

"If he's as friendly to you as you say, why don't you make him teach you these spells so that you can turn me into a mare, and go about your business with an ass and a mare, and in that way we'd both make money, and then when we got home you could turn me into a woman again!"

Gaffer Pietro, who was about as ignorant as a man can be, believed this and accepted her advice; and began to urge Don Gianni to teach him how to do it. Don Gianni did his best to wean the man from his stupidity, but not being able to, he said:

"Well, since you must have it, we'll get up tomorrow at dawn as usual, and I'll show you how it's done. The most difficult part is to stick on the tail, as you'll see."

Gaffer Pietro and Gammer Gemmata hardly slept at all that night, so eagerly did they expect it; and when it was near daylight they got up and called Don Gianni, who rose up in his shirt and went into gaffer Pietro's little room, saying:

"I don't know anyone in the world I would do this for, except for you, but since you want it, I'll do it. But you'll have to do what I tell you if you want it done."

They said they would do what he told them. So Don Gianni lighted a candle and put it into gaffer Pietro's hand, saying:

"Watch carefully what I do, and remember what I say, and if you don't want to spoil everything be careful not to utter a word whatever you may see or hear; and pray God that the tail may stick on well."

Gaffer Pietro took the candle and said he would be careful. Don Gianni then made Gammer Gemmata strip stark naked, and stand on all fours like a mare, warning her likewise not to speak a word whatever happened. He then touched her face and head, saying: "This will be a good mare's head"; then touched her hair, saying: "This will be a good mare's mane"; he touched her arms, saying: "These will be good mare's legs and hoofs"; then he touched her breasts and found them round and firm, and a part of him which wasn't called woke and stood upright, and he said: "This will make a good mare's chest"; and he did the same

thing to her back and belly and buttocks and thighs and calves. Finally, nothing remained but the tail; so the priest lifted his shirt and took out the dibber used for planting men and placed it in its natural sheath, saying: "And this will make a fine mare's tail!"

Gaffer Pietro had watched everything most carefully hitherto, but he greatly disapproved of this last, and said:

"Oh! Don Gianni! I don't want a tail, I don't want a tail!"

The radical moisture by which all plants are settled had already come when Don Gianni pulled it out, saying:

"Ah! Gaffer Pietro, what have you done? Didn't I tell you not to speak, whatever you saw? The mare was nearly made but your talking has spoiled it all, and there's no way to begin it over again."

"Well enough," said Gaffer Pietro, "but I didn't want that sort of tail. Why didn't you tell me to make it myself, and besides you put it on too low down."

"Because the first time you wouldn't have known how to put it on as well as I can," replied Don Gianni.

The wife stood up as they were arguing, and in all good faith said to her husband:

"Fool that you are, why did you spoil your own business and mine? When did you ever see a mare without a tail? God help me, you're a poor man, and it'll be a mercy if you're not still poorer."

Since there was no other way to make the girl into a mare, because Pietro had spoken, she dressed sadly and regretfully. Gaffer Pietro prepared to follow his old calling with his ass as usual, and went off to the fair at Bitonto with Don Gianni, whom he never again asked for such a favour.

They laughed as if they were never going to stop at this tale, which was better understood by the ladies than Dioneo had intended. But when the tale was ended and the sun began to grow cooler, the queen knew that the end of her reign had come; so she arose and took off the garland and placed it on the head of Pamfilo, the only one of them who remained to have the honour. And she said, smiling:

"Sire, since you are the last you have the great task of amending all the errors of myself and the rest who held this place before you, and so God grant you grace, as he has granted it to me, to make you a king."

Pamfilo received the honour gaily, and replied:

"Your virtues and those of my other subjects will cause me to be worthy of praise, like my predecessors."

In accordance with established custom he made suitable arrangements with the steward, and then turned to the waiting ladies, and said:

"Enamoured ladies, Emilia, our queen today, in her wisdom gave you liberty to speak on any subject you chose, in order to rest your powers. But, since you are now rested, I consider it would be well to return to our old laws. So tomorrow I want each of you to be ready to tell a tale on the subject of those who have behaved liberally or munificently in love affairs or other matters. Hearing of these things will doubtless kindle your spirits to high actions. Thus our lives, which can but be brief in these our mortal bodies, will be remembered through our fame, which all who think beyond their bellies should not only desire but seek and labour after with all their efforts."

The merry band approved the theme, and then, by permission of the new king, they got up and gave themselves to their wonted pleasures, each of them doing what he most wished to do; and thus they passed the time until supper. They went merrily to it, and were served diligently and in order; and thereafter danced as usual, and sang perhaps a thousand songs, more charming for their words than their music. The king then ordered Neifile to sing a song of her own, and she immediately and charmingly began to sing in a clear gay voice as follows:

A girl am I and gladly do rejoice in the new season of the year, thanks be to love and to my happy thoughts.

Through the green meadows do I go to see the yellow flowers and white and red, the roses on their thorns and the white flowers-de-luce; and I go likening them to the face of him who loving me hath captured me, even as she that doth desire naught else save her delight.

When among these I find a flower that seems like him, I pluck and kiss it and speak to it, and open all my soul to it and what the heart desires, and then I plait it up with other flowers to make a garland for my fine gold hair.

And as by nature every flower doth give delight unto our eyes, so this one gives delight as if indeed I saw him who hath snared me with his gentle love; the greater joy its perfume gives me, speech may not express, but these my sighs true witness bear thereof.

Heavy and harsh they never leave my breast like other ladies' sighs; but warm and soft they come from me and speed toward my love: who, when he feels them, of himself is moved to give delight to me, and comes even at that moment when I whisper: "Come, ah! come, lest I despair!"

Neifile's song was greatly praised by the king and all the ladies; after which, since it was already late at night, the king ordered each of them to repose until the next day.

HERE ENDS THE NINTH DAY

The Tenth Day

HERE BEGINS THE TENTH AND LAST DAY OF THE *DECAMERON*, WHEREIN, UNDER THE RULE OF PAMFILO, TALES ARE TOLD OF THOSE WHO HAVE ACTED LIBERALLY OR MAGNIFICENTLY IN LOVE AFFAIRS OR IN OTHER MATTERS

A FEW small clouds in the west were still red and those in the east were already tipped with gold where the approaching rays of the sun struck them, when Pamfilo arose and had the ladies and his companions called. When they had all arrived they discussed where they should go for their amusement, and Pamfilo set out with Filomena and Fiammetta, followed by all the rest. And as they went along, they discussed their future life. After quite a long walk they found the sun was beginning to be hot, and so returned to the mansion. There they had glasses rinsed in the clear fountain, and those who wished could drink; after which they amused themselves in the pleasant shade of the garden until dinner time.

When they had eaten and slept as usual, they gathered together at the place appointed by the king, who ordered Neifile to speak first, and she began cheerfully as follows:

First Tale

A KNIGHT IN THE SERVICE OF THE KING OF SPAIN THINKS HIMSELF ILL-REWARDED, BUT THE KING PROVES THAT IT IS NOT HIS FAULT BUT THE KNIGHT'S MISFORTUNE, AND THEN HIGHLY REWARDS HIM FOR HIS VALOUR

HONOURABLE ladies, I ought to think it a very great favour that our king should have chosen me to speak first of such a topic as munificence, which is the light and loveliness of all virtue, even as the sun is the beauty

and ornament of the whole sky. So I shall tell you a short tale, which I think quite pleasing, while to remember it cannot but be useful to you.

You must know that among the brave knights who have been produced by our city, one of the best was Messer Ruggieri de' Figiovanni. He was a rich, high-spirited man, and from his observation of the manners and way of living of Tuscany he saw that he could show little or nothing of his bravery if he remained there. So he decided that for a time he would serve Alfonso, King of Spain, whose fame at that time had spread among all knights. So he went to Spain honourably furnished with arms, horses and followers; and was graciously received by the King.

Messer Ruggieri lived there splendidly, and performed marvellous feats of arms, and thus was soon renowned for his valour. After he had been there a considerable time and had observed the King's ways, he felt that the King bestowed his gifts of castles, towns and baronies rather recklessly, and gave them to undeserving persons. He knew his own value, and since nothing was given him, he considered it a diminution of his fame. He therefore determined to leave, and asked the King's permission, which was given him, together with one of the best and finest mules ever ridden—which was a valuable gift to Messer Ruggieri because of the distance he had to ride.

After this, the King ordered one of his trusted servants to arrange in some manner that he ride with Messer Ruggieri without appearing to have been sent by the King, that he should observe everything Messer Ruggieri said, so that he could repeat it to the King, and the next morning order Messer Ruggieri to return to the King. This servant waited for Messer Ruggieri to set out and fell into company with him, giving him to understand that he too was going to Italy.

As Messer Ruggieri rode along on the ass given him by the King, talking of one thing and another, he said about the hour of Terce:

"I think it would be a good thing to let the animals stale."

All the animals were taken into a stable and all, except the mule, staled. They then rode on, with the King's attendant continually listening to what the knight said; and came to a stream. There they watered

their beasts, and the mule staled in the water. Seeing this, Messer Ruggieri said:

"Ah! God punish you, you beast, you're made like the King who gave you to me."

The servant noted these words, and although he observed everything the knight said all that day, he found he said nothing else which was not in the King's praise. Next morning when Messer Ruggieri went to horse, meaning to continue on his way to Tuscany, the servant delivered the King's order, and Messer Ruggieri at once turned back.

The King learned from his servant what had been said of him, and therefore sent for Messer Ruggieri, received him with a cheerful countenance, and asked him why he had likened him to the mule, or rather the mule to him. Messer Ruggieri replied with an open visage:

"Sire, I likened it to you, because you gave gifts where they ought not to have been given and did not give them where they ought to have been given; similarly the mule did not stale where it ought to have and did stale where it ought not to have done so."

"Messer Ruggieri," said the King, "my not having made gifts to you, when I have made gifts to many men who are nothing in comparison with you, did not occur because I failed to realize that you are a most valorous knight and worthy of all great gifts, but because your fortune did not allow me to make you presents, wherein your luck is at fault and not myself. I will prove to you that what I say is true."

"Sire," replied Ruggieri, "I am not angry because I have not received gifts from you, for I do not desire them in order to become richer, but because I receive no acknowledgment of my worth from you. Nevertheless, I accept your excuse as good and sincere, and am ready to look at anything you please, although I accept what you say without any proof."

The King then took him into a great hall where, as he had previously ordered, there were two large locked chests; and in the presence of many knights said to him:

"Messer Ruggieri, in one of those chests are my crown, the royal sceptre and orb, many fine girdles, clasps, rings and other valuable jewels.

The other is full of earth. Choose one of them, and the one you choose shall be yours; and then you will see whether I or your Fortune were ungrateful to you."

Seeing it was the King's pleasure, Messer Ruggieri chose one of them, which the King ordered to be opened, and it was found to be full of earth. Then said the King, laughing:

"Messer Ruggieri, you can see that what I said about Fortune was the truth. But your valour deserves that I should oppose the power of Fortune. I know you do not wish to become a Spaniard, and so I shall not give you a castle or a town, but in despite of Fortune I give you the chest of which she deprived you, so that you may take it with you to your own country, and with your neighbours deservedly exult in your valour together with the testimony of my gifts."

Messer Ruggieri took it, gave the King the thanks befitting such a gift, and returned happily with it to Tuscany.

Second Tale

GHINO DI TACCO CAPTURES THE ABBOT OF CLIGNI, TREATS HIM FOR A MALADY OF THE STOMACH, AND THEN SETS HIM FREE. THE ABBOT RETURNS TO ROME, RECONCILES GHINO WITH POPE BONIFACE AND MAKES HIM PRIOR OF THE HOSPITALERS

THE munificence of King Alfonso to the Florentine knight was praised by them all. The king, who had taken great pleasure in it, ordered Elisa to follow next and she began immediately:

Delicate ladies, it cannot but be called praiseworthy and a great matter to be a munificent King and to have displayed munificence towards one who had served him; but what shall be said if we tell of a cleric who displayed wonderful munificence towards a person, when nobody would have blamed him if he had behaved in a hostile way? Certainly, we can only say that what was virtue in the King was a miracle in the

cleric, for all clerics are more avaricious than women, and at daggers drawn with liberality. And although every man naturally desires revenge for an injury done him, the clerics, as we see, permit themselves to pursue revenge more eagerly than other men, although they preach patience and above all things commend the forgiveness of offences. The tale I shall tell you will show you how a cleric behaved with munificence.

Ghino di Tacco, a man famous for his fierceness and his robberies, was driven from Siena and declared an enemy of the Counts of Santa Fiore. He roused Radicofani against the Church of Rome and dwelt therein, causing his followers to rob everyone who passed through the neighbouring districts.

The Pope at that time was Boniface VIII, who was visited by the Abbot of Cligni, thought to be the richest man in the world. His stomach became disordered in Rome, and the doctors advised him to go to the baths of Siena, where he would indubitably be cured. So, paying no attention to Ghino's ill-fame, he obtained the Pope's permission, and set out with great pomp of horses and servants and trappings and sumpter-mules. Hearing that the Abbot was coming, Ghino di Tacco spread his nets and, without the loss of a single boy, caught the Abbot with all his attendants and possessions in a narrow place. Having done this, he sent the ablest of his followers well attended to the Abbot, who courteously required him to dismount at Ghino's castle. The Abbot replied in fury that he would do nothing of the kind, for he had nothing whatever to do with Ghino; that he should go on, and would like to see who would stop him. To which the ambassador replied, speaking in gentle tones:

"Messer, you have come to a place where we fear nothing for ourselves except the power of God, where excommunications and interdicts are of no avail. And so be pleased to pleasure Ghino in this."

While he was speaking, the whole place was surrounded with armed robbers. The Abbot, seeing he was captured, in great annoyance set out with the messenger towards the castle, followed by all his company and possessions. He dismounted, and, at Ghino's command, was lodged alone in a small room of a rather dark, uncomfortable house; everyone else was lodged in the castle according to his rank, and the horses and all

goods were placed in safety, without anything being touched. This done, Ghino went to the Abbot and said:

"Messer, Ghino, whose guest you are, sends to ask where you are going and for what reason."

The Abbot, like a wise man, had already abandoned his haughtiness, and said where he was going and why. Ghino went away, and thought he would cure him without any baths. So he had a large fire lighted in his room and a good guard kept over him, and did not visit him again until the next morning. He then carried him two slices of toast and a large glass of the Abbot's own Corniglia wine on a clean napkin, and said:

"Messer, when Ghino was younger he studied medicine, and he says that there is no medicine for a sick stomach better than that he sends you, and therefore take it and be comforted."

The Abbot, who was more hungry than eager to jest, ate the toast and drank the wine, although in annoyance; afterwards he said many haughty things, asking and advising numerous matters, and above all requesting to see Ghino. Ghino let some of these things pass as unimportant, and replied courteously to the others, saying that Ghino would visit him as soon as he could. After this, he went away and did not return until the next morning, bringing the same quantity of wine and toast. He kept him in this way for several days, until he found that the Abbot had eaten some dried beans which Ghino had brought in secretly, and intentionally had left there. So he asked him, as if on Ghino's behalf, how his stomach was; and the Abbot replied:

"I think I should be quite well if I could get out of his hands; after that I want nothing better than to eat, so well has his medicine cured me."

Ghino therefore prepared a room with his own possessions and servants, and prepared a great feast for all the Abbot's attendants and many of his own men. He then went to him the next morning, and said:

"Messer, since you feel better, it is time for you to come out of hospital."

He took the Abbot by the hand, and led him to the room prepared and there left him with his attendants, while Ghino himself went away

to oversee the preparation of the banquet. The Abbot remained with his attendants and told them how he had been treated; while they on the other hand all said they had been marvellously entertained by Ghino. When dinner time arrived, the Abbot and all his attendants were served with good food and wine. Ghino still did not make himself known, but when the Abbot had passed several days in this way, Ghino collected all his baggage in a room and all his horses in a courtyard below it. He then went to the Abbot and asked him how he was, and if he felt well enough to ride. The Abbot replied that he was quite strong and that his stomach was cured, and that he should be perfectly happy when he was out of Ghino's hands. Ghino then took the Abbot to the room containing all his baggage and servants, and made him lean out a window so that he could see all his horses. He then said:

"Messer Abbot, you must know that it was not wickedness of soul which led me, who am Ghino di Tacco, to be a highway robber and the enemy of Rome, but because I was a poor gentleman driven from home, with many powerful enemies, and in that way was forced to defend my life and rank. Now I have cured you of your stomach illness, and since you seem to me to be a worthy gentleman I do not intend to treat you as I should treat others, who, when they fall into my hands as you have done, leave me so much of their possessions as I demand. But my intention is that you should leave me whatever you think fit, in consideration of the service I performed for you. All your possessions are here before you, and you can see your horses in the courtyard through that window. So take all or part, as you wish, and from this moment your staying or departing is at your disposal."

The Abbot was amazed and delighted to hear such noble words from a highway robber; his anger and annoyance at once disappeared and changed to good-will. He felt a sincere friendship for Ghino, and embracing him, said:

"I swear to God that to gain the friendship of a man such as I consider you to be I would suffer far greater injury than that I hitherto considered I had suffered from you! Cursed be the fate that condemned you to so damnable an occupation!"

After this the Abbot took only a very few essential things and a few horses, and returned to Rome. The Pope had heard of his captivity and had greatly regretted it; but when he saw the Abbot he asked him if the baths had done him good. The Abbot smiled, and replied:

“Holy Father, I found an excellent doctor much nearer at hand than the baths, and he cured me completely.”

He then related what had happened; and the Pope laughed at it. The Abbot went on talking and, moved by the munificence of his spirit, asked a favour. The Pope, little thinking what he would ask, freely promised him what he should request. Then said the Abbot:

“Holy Father, what I have to ask of you is that you will restore your favour to Ghino di Tacco, my doctor, because he is certainly one of the finest men I ever knew. The evil he does I consider to be far more the sin of Fortune than his own. If you grant him your favour and enough to live on suitably to his rank, I have no doubt that in a short time he will appear to you such as he seems to me.”

The Pope, who was a large-minded man and liked brave men, said he would gladly do so if the man was such as the Abbot said, and added that he might come to Rome in safety. Ghino therefore, at the Abbot's request, came to Court with a safe-conduct. He had not been near the Pope for long when the Pope came to think him an excellent man, was reconciled with him, and gave him a large Priory of the Hospitallers, of which order he was made knight. This he held as long as he lived, and remained a servant of Holy Church and the Abbot of Cligni.

Third Tale

MITRIDANES ENVIES THE GENEROSITY OF NATHAN AND SETS OUT TO KILL HIM. NATHAN RECEIVES MITRIDANES WITHOUT MAKING HIMSELF KNOWN, INFORMS HIM HOW HE MAY BE KILLED, MEETS HIM IN A WOOD AS ARRANGED, TO THE SHAME OF NATHAN, WHO BECOMES HIS FRIEND

THAT a cleric should have done anything so munificent seemed like a miracle to all who heard it; but as the ladies' talk calmed down, the king ordered Filostrato to proceed, and he began at once:

Noble ladies, the munificence of the King of Spain was great, and that of the Abbot of Cligni perhaps never to be heard of again; but perhaps it will seem to you a thing no less marvellous to hear of one who out of sheer generosity was prepared to give his life to another person who desired it. And, as I shall show you by my little tale, he would have done so, if the other man had been willing to take it.

If we may trust the words of certain Genoese and other men who have visited those parts, it is certain that in Cathay there was once a nobleman of inestimable wealth, named Nathan. He lived near a road which almost of necessity was traversed by everyone going from East to West or from West to East; and since his spirit was great and generous and he desired to have it known by his works, he assembled many masters and in a short space of time built one of the finest, largest and richest palaces ever seen, and furnished it with everything necessary to receive and to entertain gentlemen. And since he had many servants, he entertained magnificently everyone who passed that way. He persevered so long in his praiseworthy custom that he became known by fame to all the East and even to many in the West.

When he was full of years, and still not yet weary of generosity, his fame reached the ears of a young man named Mitridanes, who lived in a country not far distant. Knowing that he was just as rich as Nathan, he felt envious of the man's fame and virtue, and determined to eclipse or

to tarnish it by greater liberality. So he built a palace like Nathan's, and began to entertain in the most extravagant manner everybody who went to and fro in that district; so that in a short time he became quite famous.

Now one day the young man was alone in the courtyard of his palace, and a woman came to him through one of the palace doors and asked for alms. She then returned to him by a second door and again received alms, and this she did twelve times; but when she returned by the thirteenth door Mitridanes said:

"Good woman, you are somewhat importunate in your demands."

But still he gave her alms once more. But at these words, the old woman exclaimed:

"O generosity of Nathan! How wonderful you are! By thirty-two doors of his palace did I enter, even as here, and asked an alms; and never did he show that he recognized me, and each time I had what I asked. Here I only entered thirteen times, and I am recognized and reproved!"

So saying, she departed, and never came back.

Mitridanes fell into a great rage at the old woman's words, because he felt that what he had heard to Nathan's fame diminished his own, and he said to himself:

"Alas! When shall I equal the generosity of Nathan in great things, let alone surpass him as I wish, when I cannot come near him even in small things? I labour in vain, unless I can remove him from the earth. Since old age will not do it, I must do it without delay with my own hands."

Without letting anyone know his plans, he started up and went to horse with a few attendants, and in three days reached the place where Nathan lived. He ordered his attendants to pretend they were not with him and did not know him, and to look for lodging until they heard further from him.

Riding alone not far from the palace, towards evening, he came upon Nathan, also alone and plainly dressed, walking for his amusement. Not knowing who he was, Mitridanes asked if he could tell him where Nathan lived.

“My son,” replied Nathan cheerfully, “nobody here can tell you better than I, and I will take you to him whenever you wish.”

The young man said that this was what he desired, but that he did not wish to be seen or known by Nathan.

“This also I will do,” said Nathan, “since you desire it.”

Mitridanes then dismounted and walked towards the palace with Nathan, who entertained him with amusing talk. There Nathan made one of his servants take the young man’s horse, and whispered into his ear to tell the whole household that nobody should tell the young man he was Nathan. As soon as they entered the palace, he placed Mitridanes in a most handsome apartment where he saw none but those deputed to his service, and where Nathan himself kept him company, doing him all imaginable honour. Now, although Mitridanes respected him as an old man, he could not refrain from asking who he was, and Nathan replied:

“I am a humble servant of Nathan’s, who has grown old with him since my childhood; and I have never raised myself above what you see because, although everyone else praises him, I can praise him but little.”

These words gave Mitridanes some hope that he might carry out his base intention with more skill and safety. Nathan then asked courteously who he was and what brought him there, offering his advice and aid in any way possible. Mitridanes hesitated a little before replying, but at last determined to trust in him, and after much beating about the bush asked him to pledge his secrecy, and his advice and help, and then fully revealed to him who he was and why he had come and with what intention. When Nathan heard Mitridanes’s speech and cruel design, he was inwardly perturbed, but without much delay he replied with a strong mind and firm countenance:

“Mitridanes, your father was a noble man, from whom you strive not to degenerate since you have undertaken the high enterprise of being generous to all men, and I greatly praise your envy of Nathan’s virtue, because if there were many such envies, the world, which is most wretched, would soon become good. The intention you have revealed to me shall certainly be kept secret, but I can rather give you useful advice

than great help. About half a mile from here you can see a small wood, where Nathan goes alone every morning for a long time to take recreation. It will be easy for you to find him there and to work your will on him. If you kill him, the easiest way for you to go home is not to return by the path you came, but to take that which you will see going out of the wood to the left; it is a little wilder, but nearer your house and safer for you."

After giving this information Nathan went away, and Mitridanes secretly informed his followers (who had also entered the palace) where they were to await him the next day. Nathan did not change his mind from what he had said to Mitridanes, and next morning went to the wood to be killed. Mitridanes arose and took his bow and sword, the only weapons he had with him, mounted his horse and went to the wood. In the distance he saw Nathan walking all alone in the wood, but before killing him thought he would like to see him and hear him speak. So he ran up to him, seized him by the band he wore on his head, and exclaimed:

"Old man, you must die!"

The only reply Nathan made was:

"Then I have deserved it."

From the voice and face, Mitridanes suddenly recognized the man who had kindly received him, familiarly borne him company and loyally counselled him. His fury suddenly fell from him, and his anger was changed to shame. He threw away the sword, that he had already drawn, with which to kill him, dismounted from his horse, and threw himself weeping at Nathan's feet, saying:

"Most dear father, now plainly do I perceive your generosity, seeing how secretly you came here to give me your life, which I myself told you I wanted, though for no reason. But God, more regardful of my duty than I myself, at the moment of greatest need has opened my eyes which had been shut by miserable envy. The more ready you were to pleasure me, the more I admit I should be penitent for my error. Therefore take upon me what vengeance you think merited by my sin."

Nathan raised Mitridanes to his feet, tenderly embraced him, and said:

“My son, whether you desire to call your enterprise wicked or otherwise, there is no need to ask nor to give pardon, because I executed it not from hatred but to be more esteemed by you. Live then without fear of me, and be sure there is no man alive who loves you so much as I, considering the loftiness of your spirit which has not given itself to amassing money like a miser but to spending it. Do not be ashamed that you wished to kill me in order to become famous, and do not think that I feel amazed. High Emperors and great Kings slay many men—not one, as you wished to do—and burn countries and destroy cities to increase their dominions and consequently their fame. Thus, your desire to make yourself famous by killing me alone was not something extraordinary but very common.”

Mitridanes did not excuse his base design but commended the honest excuse found by Nathan, and in talking to him said that he greatly marvelled how Nathan could have been disposed to do such a thing, and to help him to it. Said Nathan:

“Mitridanes, you must not marvel at my readiness and my advice, for since I have been of age and desirous to do the same thing that you have undertaken, nobody ever entered my house whom I did not endeavour to satisfy as far as I could in anything he asked of me: You came wanting my life. I did not want you to be the only person who ever went away from here without receiving what he asked for, so when I heard you ask for it I immediately determined to give it to you. In order that you might have it, I gave you the advice I thought likely to allow you to take my life without losing your own. Therefore I beg you to take it and satisfy yourself with it, if you desire. I do not know how I can spend it better. I have already passed eighty years in pleasures and delights, and I know that in the course of nature I can have but a short time left, like other men and all things generally. Therefore I think it much better to give my life, as I have always given and spent my treasures, than to try to keep it and to have it taken from me against my will by nature.

“A hundred years is a small gift. How much less then are the six or eight years I have left to give you! If you want it, I beg you to take it; for as long as I have been alive I have not found anyone who wanted it,

and I don't know when I shall find another, if you who asked for it do not take it. And even if I should find someone else, I know that the longer I keep it the less valuable it will be; so take it, I beg, before it becomes more worthless."

In great shame Mitridanes replied:

"God forbid that by dividing it from you I should take so precious a thing as your life, or even desire it as I did just now. Not only would I not diminish the years of your life but I would gladly increase them with my own."

Nathan promptly replied:

"And if you could you would give them to me and make me do to you what I have never done to any other man, that is to take things from you when I have never taken from anyone?"

"Yes," said Mitridanes at once.

"Then," said Nathan, "do as I tell you. You, who are a young man, shall stay here in my house and be called Nathan; and I will go to yours and always have myself called Mitridanes."

"If I could act as well as you have done and do," replied Mitridanes, "I would take what you offer without overmuch hesitation; but I feel sure that my actions would diminish the fame of Nathan, and so I do not intend to spoil in another what I cannot attain to myself, and therefore will not take it."

After this and other agreeable conversation, Nathan and Mitridanes, at Nathan's request, returned to the palace, where Nathan for several days sumptuously entertained Mitridanes, and gave him every encouragement to persevere in his great and lofty enterprise. And when Mitridanes wished to return home with his companions, Nathan let him go, having showed him that he could never overcome Nathan in generosity.

Fourth Tale

MESSER GENTIL DE'CARISENDI COMES FROM MODENA AND TAKES FROM THE GRAVE A LADY HE LOVES, WHO HAD BEEN BURIED AS DEAD. SHE BEARS A MALE CHILD, AND MESSER GENTIL RESTORES HER AND THE CHILD TO HER HUSBAND

THEY all thought it marvellous that anyone should be liberal of his own blood, and they said that Nathan had indeed exceeded the generosity of the King of Spain and the Abbot of Cligni. But when one thing and another had been said, the king looked at Lauretta, thereby showing that he wished her to speak next; so she immediately began:

Young ladies, the things related have been great and munificent. I do not think anything is left for us to say and so enjoy our tale-telling, and reach the height of the examples of munificence related, unless we turn our hand to love affairs, which always provide a most abundant supply of tales on any topic. For these reasons and also because it is suitable to our age I wish to tell you of a piece of munificence on the part of a lover, which, all things considered, will not appear less than those already related, if it is true that treasures are given, enmities forgotten, life, love and fame risked a thousand times to possess the thing beloved.

In Bologna, that most noble city of Lombardy, there lived a knight named Messer Gentil Carisendi, eminent for his worth and noble blood. This young man fell in love with a gentlewoman named Madonna Catalina, the wife of one Niccoluccio Caccianimico. And since his love was ill-requited by the lady, he went off in despair to Modena, where he had been appointed podestà.

At that time Niccoluccio was absent from Bologna, and his wife went to stay on an estate about three miles away, because she was pregnant. A sudden illness came upon her, the effect of which was to deprive her of all signs of life, and even a doctor would have said she was dead. And since her nearest relatives declared that they knew from her that she had not been pregnant long enough for the child to be perfected, with-

out giving themselves any further trouble they buried her with much lamentation in a tomb of a neighbouring church. This event was immediately told Messer Gentil by one of his friends; and although he had received no favours from her yet he grieved much over it, and finally said to himself:

“Madonna Catalina, you are dead! While you were alive, I never received a single glance from you. But now, when you cannot defend yourself, I must take a few kisses from you, dead though you are.”

It was then night; he made arrangements to keep his journey secret and went to horse with one of his servants. Without resting he rode to the place where the lady was buried, opened the tomb, entered, lay down beside her, put his face against hers and kept kissing it as he wept many tears. But man’s appetite is never satisfied within any limit and always desires to go further, especially lovers’; and, making up his mind not to halt there, he said to himself:

“Ah! Now I am here why do I not touch her breasts a little? I never have touched them, and shall never touch them again.”

With this desire upon him he placed his hand on her breast and held it there for a time, when he thought he felt her heart beating slightly. When he had recovered from his fear and had examined her more closely, he found that she was certainly not dead, although he thought there was only a little faint life in her. With the aid of his servant he lifted her from the tomb as gently as possible, set her before him on his horse, and secretly carried her to his house in Bologna. His mother, a wise and worthy lady, was there; and when she had heard the whole story from her son, she was moved to pity, and secretly brought Catalina back to life with hot baths and fires. When she recovered her senses, she heaved a deep sigh, and said:

“Oh! Where am I?”

“Be comforted, you are in a safe place,” replied the lady.

Catalina turned and looked round her, but did not know where she was. She saw Messer Gentil before her, and in great surprise asked his mother how she had got there; and Messer Gentil then told her everything that had happened. She was grieved by this, and after having returned

him thanks she besought him by the love he had borne her and also by chivalry, that she might suffer nothing in his house detrimental to her honour or her husband's, and also, since it was now day, that he would let her return to her own house.

"Madonna," replied Messer Gentil, "God has granted me the grace to bring you back from death to life through the love that I bore you; but whatever my desire may have been in the past, I do not intend either now or in the future to treat you either here or elsewhere otherwise than as a dear sister. But the benefit I conferred upon you last night deserves some reward, and so I desire you will not refuse me a favour which I shall ask of you."

The lady replied that she was willing to do so if it were virtuous and if she could do it.

"Madonna," said Messer Gentil, "all your relatives and everyone in Bologna think you are dead, and so there is no one awaiting you at your house. The favour I ask of you is that you will remain here secretly with my mother until I return from Modena, which will not be long. The reason I ask this is that I intend to make a solemn and precious gift of you to your husband in the presence of the most notable citizens of this country."

Knowing her obligations to the knight and that his request was virtuous, the lady agreed to what Messer Gentil asked and pledged him her faith, although she was very anxious to make her relatives happy by the news that she was alive. She had scarcely done speaking when she felt the pains of labour come upon her, and, being tenderly aided by Messer Gentil's mother, in a short time brought forth a fine male child; which greatly increased her happiness and Messer Gentil's. Messer Gentil ordered everything she needed and that she should be treated as if she were his own wife; after which he secretly returned to Modena.

When the period of his office expired and he was about to return to Bologna, he arranged that on the morning he returned a great banquet should be given in his house to many of the gentlemen of Bologna, including Niccoluccio Caccianimico. He returned, dismounted from his horse and met them. He found the lady healthier and more beautiful

than she had ever been and the child well; so with extraordinary joy he seated his guests and had them magnificently served. He had told the lady beforehand what he intended to do and arranged with her how she should behave; and towards the end of the banquet he spoke as follows:

"Gentlemen, I remember to have heard that there is a custom in Persia, in my judgment a pleasant one, which is that when a man desires highly to honour a friend, he invites him to his house and there shows him the most precious thing he has, whether his wife, his mistress or his daughter, at the same time declaring that, if he could, he would be even more glad to show his heart in the same manner. And I mean to observe this custom in Bologna.

"You have honoured my banquet with your presence and I intend to honour you in the Persian manner, by showing you the most precious thing I have or ever shall have in the world. But before I do this I beg you will give me your opinion on something which is troubling me. A certain person had in his house a good and most faithful servant who fell seriously ill. Without awaiting the servant's end, this man had him carried out into the street and paid no more attention to him. A stranger came along and moved by pity for the sick man, took him home, and with great trouble and expense restored him to health. Now I want to know whether, if the second man retains and makes use of his services, the first master can grieve or complain should the second refuse to let him have the servant back."

After some discussion among themselves, the gentlemen agreed on their opinion, and the task of replying was allotted to Niccoluccio Caccianimico, because he was a good, ornate speaker. He first praised the Persian custom, and then said that he and the others had agreed that the first master had no further claim upon his servant, since he had not only abandoned him in such a state, but had cast him forth. As to the services taken by the second, it seemed just that the man should become his servant, because no injury, no wrong, was thereby done the first.

The knight was delighted by this opinion and that Niccoluccio had expressed it, declared that he was of the same opinion, and added:

"It is now time that I do you honour in the way promised."

He sent two of his servants to the lady, whom he had caused to be beautifully dressed and ornamented, to beg her to be pleased to come and gladden the gentlemen with her presence. She took her beautiful child in her arms and went to the hall, accompanied by two servants, and sat down beside a worthy gentleman, at the knight's request. He then said:

"Gentlemen, this is the most precious thing I have or ever mean to have; see if you think me right."

The gentlemen highly praised her and assured the knight that he ought to value her, and gazed closely at her. Many of them would have said who she was, if they had not thought her dead. Niccoluccio especially gazed at her, and when the knight moved a little away, he felt so anxious to know who she was that he could not refrain from asking whether she came from Bologna or was a stranger. At this question from her husband, it was difficult for the lady not to answer; but she remained silent, in obedience to the arrangement. Others asked her if that were her child, if she were Messer Gentil's wife or his relative in any other way; to all of which she made no reply. Messer Gentil then came up to them, and some of his guests said to him:

"Messer, this is a beautiful woman of yours, but she seems dumb. Is she?"

"Gentlemen," replied Messer Gentil, "that she has not yet spoken is no small argument of her virtue."

"Then do you say who she is," pursued the other.

"I will gladly do so," said the knight, "provided you will promise me that, whatever I may say, none of you will move from his seat until I have finished my story."

Everyone gave his promise, the tables were drawn, and Messer Gentil sat down beside the lady, saying:

"Gentlemen, this lady is that true and faithful servant about whom I asked you just now. She was held in small esteem by her relatives and cast out into the street as something vile and useless; I took her up, by my care and labour she was snatched from death, and God so favoured my good affection to her that He has enabled me to change her from a

dreadful corpse to her present beauty. But I shall now briefly inform you how this happened to me, so that you may fully understand it all."

He then began from the point of his falling in love with her and to the great amazement of all listeners told them all that had happened until that time, adding:

"Wherefore, if you and Niccoluccio especially have not changed your opinions, this woman is rightfully mine, nor can anyone justly ask me for her."

No one replied, but all waited to hear what he would say further. Niccoluccio and the lady and the others present were weeping with compassion; and Messer Gentil then stood up, took the child in his arm and the lady by the hand, and went towards Niccoluccio, saying:

"Stand up, my relative in baptism. I do not return you your wife, whom you and your relatives cast forth; but I desire to give you this woman and her child, my godson, whom I know to have been begotten by you and whom I held at the font and named Gentil. Now, since she remained nearly three months in my house, I beg that will not make her less dear to you. I swear to you by God, Who perhaps made me fall in love with her that my love might be the occasion of her being saved as it has been, that she never lived more chastely with her father or mother or you than she has lived with my mother in my house."

So saying, he turned to the lady and said:

"Madonna, I now release you from every promise made to me and give you free to Niccoluccio."

He then placed the lady and her child in Niccoluccio's arms, and returned to his seat. Niccoluccio eagerly received his wife and child, the more happy since he was far indeed from any such hope. To the best of his ability he thanked the knight, and all the others weeping with emotion praised him greatly, and he was praised by all who heard of it. The lady was received home with great rejoicing, and gazed at for some time by all Bologna, as if she had risen from the dead. Messer Gentil always remained a friend of Niccoluccio and his relatives and the lady's relatives.

What more shall I say, gentle ladies? Do you think that a King's giving

his crown and sceptre, an Abbot's having reconciled a malefactor with the Pope at no cost to himself, an old man yielding his throat to an enemy's knife, can equal the act of Messer Gentil? He was young and ardent and thought he had a just right to what others in their negligence had cast forth and he by good fortune had taken up; yet he not only chastely tempered his desire but when he possessed her, freely restored the woman whom he had desired to steal with all his might. Therefore none of the examples related seems to me similar to this.

Fifth Tale

MADONNA DIANORA ASKS MESSER ANSALDO FOR A GARDEN IN JANUARY AS BEAUTIFUL AS ONE IN MAY. MESSER ANSALDO PAYS A LARGE SUM TO A MAGICIAN, AND SO GIVES IT TO HER. HER HUSBAND DECLARES SHE MUST KEEP HER WORD AND SUBMIT TO MESSER ANSALDO'S PLEASURE; BUT WHEN HE HEARS OF THE HUSBAND'S GENEROSITY HE FREES HER FROM HER PROMISE, AND THE MAGICIAN LIKEWISE REFUSES TO TAKE ANYTHING

EVERYONE in the merry party praised Messer Gentil to the skies. The king then ordered Emilia to follow next and she began merrily, as one who desired to speak, thus:

Delicate ladies, nobody can reasonably say that Messer Gentil did not act munificently, but if anyone says that to go beyond him is impossible, it would not perhaps be hard to show the contrary. And this I mean to show you in my tale.

In Friuli, a cold but beautiful land, abounding in mountains, streams and rivers, there is a place called Udine. There dwelt a beautiful and noble lady named Madonna Dianora, the wife of a very rich and pleasant man called Gilberto. For her great worth this lady deserved that she should be loved by a great and noble baron, named Messer Ansaldo

Gradense, a man of high position, known to all for his feats of arms and chivalry. In his fervent love for her he did everything he could to obtain her love and frequently sent messages to beseech her; but all in vain.

The knight's importunities were very displeasing to the lady and she saw that her refusal to do anything he asked did not prevent him from continuing to love and solicit her. She therefore thought she would get rid of him by making a strange and impossible request. So she spoke as follows to a woman who often came to her on the knight's behalf:

"Good woman, you have often assured me that Messer Ansaldo loves me above everything; you have offered me marvellous gifts from him which I have desired him to keep because I could never be brought through them to love him or to do his pleasure. But yet I should be brought to love him and to do what he wants if I could be certain he loves me as much as you say he does. Therefore if he proves it to me by what I ask of him, I shall be at his command."

"Madonna," said the woman, "what do you want him to do?"

"What I desire is this," said the lady. "In the coming month of January I want near here a garden as full of green plants, flowers and leafy trees as if it were May. If he does not do this, let him never send you or anyone else to me again, for if he then went on urging me I should no longer hide this from my husband and relatives as I have done, but would complain to them and try to get rid of him."

When the knight heard the lady's request and offer, he thought it difficult and almost impossible to perform and knew that the lady had only asked it in order to deprive him of all hope; yet he determined to attempt whatever could be done. He sent out to various parts of the world to seek for someone who would give him advice and aid; and there came to him a man who offered to do it by black magic for a large sum of money, which Messer Ansaldo agreed to pay him, and cheerfully awaited the appointed time.

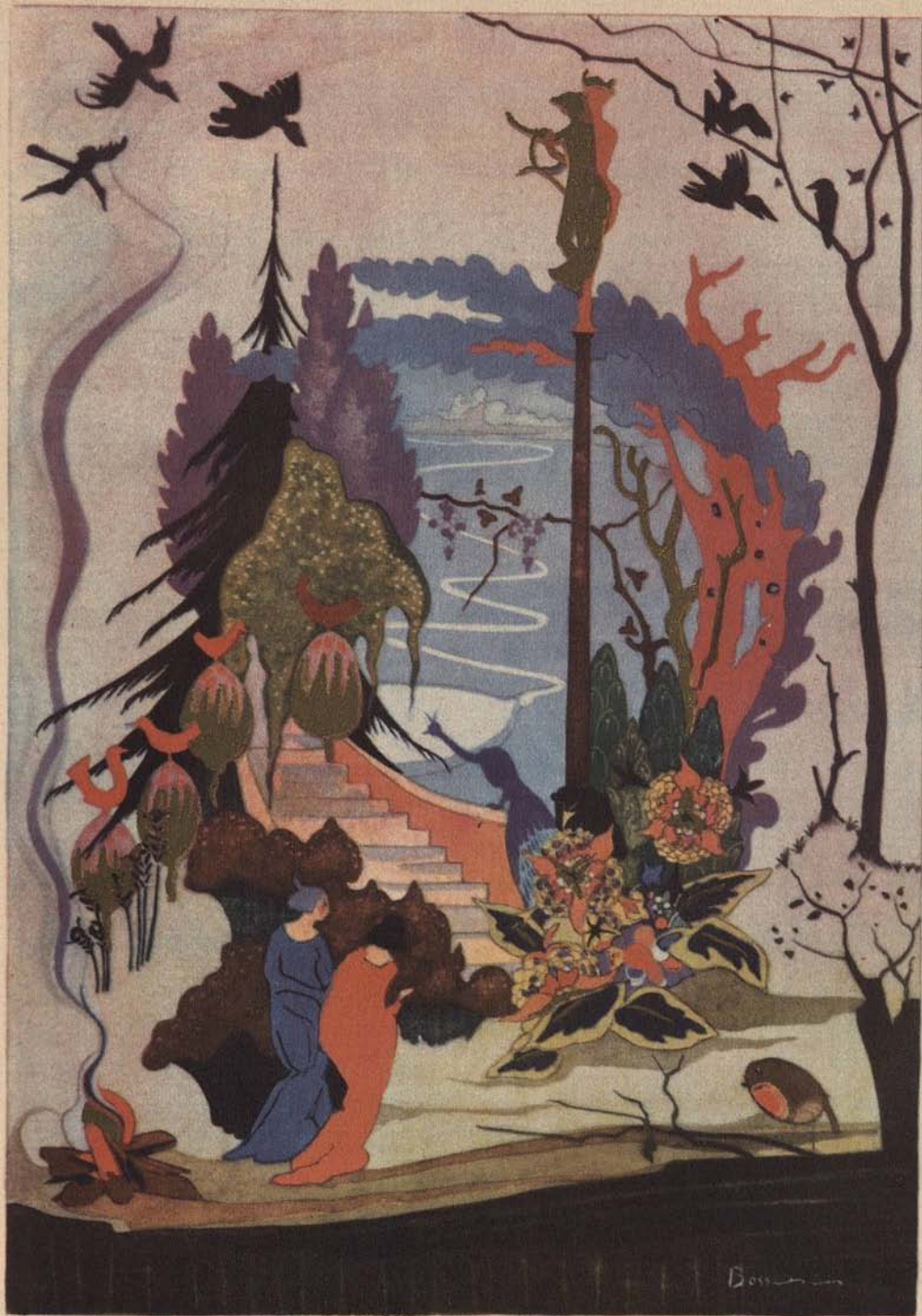
When this time came, the cold was intense and everything was covered with snow and ice. With his arts, the man so wrought that on the night following the calends of January, a beautiful meadow near the city appeared in the morning (according to the testimony of those who saw

it) one of the fairest gardens ever seen, filled with grass and trees and all sorts of fruits. Messer Ansaldo beheld it with delight, and caused the fairest fruits and flowers to be plucked and sent secretly to his lady, with an invitation to come and see the garden she had asked for, in order that she might perceive how much he loved her and remember the promise she had made and confirmed with an oath and, like a woman of good faith, find means to carry it out.

When the lady saw the fruits and flowers, confirming what she had already heard of the marvellous garden from others, she began to repent her promise. But for all her repentance she liked to see strange things, and went with many other ladies of the city to see the garden. She praised it greatly, not without amazement, and returned home in the deepest distress, thinking of what she had bound herself to do in exchange. Her grief was such that she could not conceal it; her husband noticed the outward signs, and insisted upon knowing the reason. For a long time the lady was silent from shame, but at last under compulsion she revealed everything to him. Gilberto at first was very angry when he heard it, but then when he considered the purity of his wife's intentions, he put aside his anger, and said:

"Dianora, a chaste and wise woman never listens to any messenger on such matters and never bargains for her chastity on any consideration. The words received into the heart through the ears have more power than many people think, and almost everything becomes possible to lovers. You did ill then, first by listening and then by bargaining. But since I know the purity of your soul I will grant you what nobody else perhaps would allow, in order to free you from the bonds of the promise and also on account of the magician who may do us some harm at Messer Ansaldo's request if we disappoint him. You must go to him and do anything you can to free yourself from this promise, short of your chastity; and if that is impossible, for once you must yield him your body, but not your soul."

At this the lady wept and refused to accept such a favour from him. But, however much the lady refused, Gilberto insisted that she should do it. So at dawn next day the lady, without dressing herself very finely, went to Messer Ansaldo's house, followed by two servants and a waiting



Bosson

woman. When he heard that the lady had come to him, Messer Ansaldo arose in great amazement, and sent for the magician, to whom he said:

"I wish you to see the good which your art has procured me."

He then went to her and received her courteously, with no display of disorderly appetite. They all went into a fair chamber where there was a large fire, and when they were seated, he said:

"Madonna, if the long love I have borne you merits any reward, I beg you will tell me the real reason of your coming here at such an hour and with such attendants."

Shamefacedly and almost in tears, the lady replied:

"Messer, I am brought here neither by love for you nor by my plighted faith, but by my husband's command. He has sent me here, considering more the labours of your disorderly love than my honour and his own; and by his command I am prepared for once to do all your pleasure."

Messer Ansaldo was surprised at the beginning of the lady's speech, and still more by its ending. Moved by Gilberto's generosity, his passion began to change to pity, and he said:

"Madonna, since it is as you say, please God I may never harm the honour of one who pities my love. And so you shall remain here as long as you wish as if you were my sister, and whenever you want you shall freely depart, on condition that you give your husband such thanks as you think befitting such courtesy, and tell him that in future I shall always consider myself his brother and servant."

At these words the lady was very happy, and said:

"With my knowledge of your manners, nothing could have made me believe that my coming here would have any other results than those I see, for which I shall always be obliged to you."

She then took leave and returned, honourably accompanied, to Messer Gilberto, to whom she related everything which had happened, which caused him to make a close and true friendship with Messer Ansaldo.

Messer Ansaldo offered the magician the reward agreed upon, but having seen Gilberto's generosity to Messer Ansaldo, and Messer Ansaldo's generosity to the lady, he said:

"Since I have seen Gilberto so liberal of his honour and you of your

love, God forbid that I should not be liberal of my reward; therefore, knowing that it is well employed by you, I intend it to remain yours."

The knight felt ashamed at this, and tried to induce him to take all or a part of it, but in vain. Three days later the magician removed the garden and departed, with Messer Ansaldo's good wishes. And the lascivious love for the lady having departed from his heart, he remained filled with sober charity towards her.

What shall we say of this, beloved ladies? Shall we place the almost dead lady and the love cooled by extinguished hope above the generosity of Messer Ansaldo, who was more warmed with love than ever and kindled with more hope, and who held in his hands the prey he had pursued so long? It seems to me foolish to think that such generosity can be compared with his.

Sixth Tale

KING CARLO, VICTORIOUS BUT AGED, FALLS IN LOVE WITH A YOUNG GIRL; ASHAMED OF HIS FOOLISH PASSION, HE ARRANGES HONOURABLE MARRIAGES FOR HER AND HER SISTER

It would take far too long to relate in full the various discussions among the ladies as to whether greater generosity were shown in the affair of Madonna Dianora by Gilberto, or by Messer Ansaldo, or by the magician. But when the king had allowed some time for discussion he looked at Fiammetta and ordered her to end the argument by telling a tale, and she immediately began thus:

Splendid ladies, I was always of the opinion that in a group like ours we should speak so fully that no opportunity for argument should be provided by overmuch narrowness in the meaning of the things said. This is much more befitting the schools than ourselves who scarcely suffice our wheels and distaffs. Therefore, since I may have some doubts in my

mind and see that you are in conflict on account of what has been said, I mean to tell you a tale, not about a man of humble condition but about a valiant King and how he acted chivalrously, with never a stain upon his honour.

Every one of you must often have heard of King Carlo the elder, or the first, through whose magnificent prowess and especially by his glorious victory over King Manfred, the Ghibelins were driven from Florence and the Guelfs returned. Owing to this a knight named Messer Neri degli Uberti left the town with all his family and great wealth. He determined to live under the protection of none but King Carlo, and went to Castello da mare di Distabia to live in a solitary place and there end his life in peace. At about a bow-shot from all other dwellings he bought a piece of land among olives and hazel trees and chestnuts, which are very abundant in that country, and there he built a comfortable country house with a delightful garden about it, which according to our customs abounded in flowing water which he formed into a clear fish-pool stocked with a great many fish.

While he was giving his whole attention to beautifying his garden, it chanced in the hot weather that King Carlo went to Castellamare to rest, and while there heard so much of the beauty of Messer Neri's garden that he wished to see it. Knowing that Messer Neri belonged to the opposite party, the King wished to act in a friendly way to him, and sent to inform him that the King and four companions would sup privately with him the next evening. Messer Neri was very happy at this, made magnificent preparations, arranged with his servants everything that should be done, and received the King in his garden as handsomely as he could.

When he had looked over and praised Messer Neri's garden and house, the King washed and sat down to one of the tables set out near the fish-pool, and ordered one of his companions, Count Guido di Monforte, to sit on one side of him and Messer Neri on the other, and commanded the other three that they should wait upon him in accordance with Messer Neri's arrangements. The food was delicate, the wines excellent, the service good, with no disturbance or noise; all of which the King praised highly.

The King ate merrily and enjoyed the solitude of the place, when there came into the garden two girls about fifteen years old, with curls of hair like spun gold on which were garlands of flowers, while their faces were so delicate and beautiful they seemed more like angels than anything else. They were dressed in very thin linen garments as white as snow, tight fitting from the girdle upwards and below the girdle spreading out like a petticoat to the feet. The girl who came first carried a couple of fishing nets over her left shoulder and held a long stick in her right hand. The other had a frying-pan on her left shoulder and a bundle of wood under her left arm and a tripod in her left hand, while in the other hand she carried a bottle of oil and a lighted torch. The King was greatly surprised to see them, and waited with interest to see what it meant.

The girls came forward modestly and, blushing, bowed to the King. Then the girl carrying the frying-pan laid it down near the pool with the other things she had and took the stick from the other girl; and then they both entered the water which came up as high as their breasts. One of Messer Neri's servants quickly lighted a fire, put the pan on the tripod and poured oil into it, and waited for the girls to throw out the fish to him. One of them beat the water where she knew the fish hid and the other prepared the nets, and to the great delight of the King, who watched it all carefully, they soon caught a number of fish. They threw them to the servant who put them almost alive into the pan, as they had been told to do, and then they took the finest fishes, and threw them on the table before the King and Count Guido and their father.

The fish flapped about on the table, to the great delight of the King, who took up some of them and courteously threw them back to the girls. They played in this manner until the servant had cooked the fish which had been given to him, and these were then set before the King as a side dish of rare and delightful food arranged by Messer Neri.

When enough fish had been caught and cooked, the girls came out of the water with their thin white clothes clinging to their bodies and concealing scarcely any of their beauties, and so passed blushing before the King and returned to the house.

The King, the Count and the other three gentlemen waiting upon him

had watched the girls and had inwardly praised them highly as beautiful and well formed and charming and well behaved; but the King was especially delighted with them. When they came from the water he had gazed so attentively at every part of their bodies that he would not have felt it if he had been pricked. As he thought of them, without knowing who they were, or how, he felt in his heart a most eager desire to please them and thereby knew that he would fall in love if he were not careful, and yet he did not know which of the two he liked best, so much did they resemble each other. After thinking this over for a time, he turned to Messer Neri and asked him who the two girls were, and Messer Neri replied:

“Sire, they are twin daughters of mine, one of whom is called the beautiful Ginevra and the other the gold-haired Isotta.”

The King highly praised them, and urged that they should be married; which Messer Neri put off by saying he was unable to do so. And when the only thing left to serve at the supper was fruit, the two girls returned dressed in fine silks and carrying two very large silver dishes filled with various fruits then in season, which they placed on the table before the King. This done, they retired a short distance and sang a song, beginning:

None can fully tell, O Love,
Where I have come,

so sweetly and charmingly that the King, who watched and listened with delight, felt as if all the hierarchies of the angels had come down to sing. After this they kneeled down and asked the King's permission to retire, which he gave with apparent cheerfulness, although he was sorry to have them go.

When supper was ended the King and his companions mounted their horses and took leave of Messer Neri, and rode back to the King's palace, talking of one thing and another.

The King kept his love a secret, but in spite of all affairs of state he could not forget the beautiful Ginevra's charm and beauty, while for love of her he also loved the sister who resembled her, and thus became so entangled in the snares of love that he could scarcely think of anything

else. Upon various pretences he became very intimate with Messer Neri, and often visited his garden to see the fair Ginevra. Finally, he could endure his state no longer and, not knowing what else to do, thought he would take not one but both the girls from their father. He revealed his love and his intention to Count Guido, who, being a valiant man, replied:

“Sire, I marvel at what you tell me, and marvel more than any other man would do since I think I know your behaviour from childhood up better than anyone else. In your youth, when Love might easily have pierced you with his shafts, I knew of no such passion in you; but when I hear of it now that you are close upon old age it seems so strange and curious that you should fall in love like this that it seems a miracle to me. If it fell to me to reprove you I know what I should say to you, considering that you are still in arms in a newly conquered kingdom, among nations unknown to you and full of deceits and treacheries, occupied as you are with great cares and matters of state so that you have never been able to sit down—and in the midst of all this you give way to the flatteries of love.

“This is not the deed of a high-minded King but of a pusillanimous youth. Moreover, and this is far worse, you say you have determined to take his two daughters away from the poor knight, who has done you every honour he could in your house, and to show you the more honour displayed them almost naked before you, thereby showing how much he trusts you and that he believes you to be a King and not a ravening wolf.

“Has it escaped your memory that Manfred’s violences to women opened the way to this kingdom for you? What treachery more worthy of eternal punishment was ever committed than this would be—to deprive the man who did you honour of his hope, his consolation and his honour? Perhaps you think it would be a sufficient excuse to say: ‘I did it because he was a Ghibelline.’ Is it the justice of Kings to treat in such a way those, whoever they may be, who seek their protection? Let me remind you, O King, that it was very glorious to have conquered Manfred but far more glorious to conquer oneself. Therefore do you, who have to correct others, conquer yourself and curb this appetite, and do not spoil what you have gloriously acquired with such a stain.”

These words sharply stabbed the King's soul and distressed him the more because he knew them to be true. So, after several hot sighs he said:

"Count, I think that for a well-trained warrior it would be easier to conquer any enemy rather than one's own appetite. But though the fatigue will be great and the strength needed inestimable, your words have so spurred me that before many days have passed I must show you by my deeds that I can dominate myself as well as conquer others."

Not many days after these words had passed, the King returned to Naples. To deprive himself of the chance of acting basely and also to reward the knight for the entertainment bestowed upon him, he determined to marry off the two girls as if they were his own daughters and not Messer Neri's, although it was hard for him to let others possess what he desired so ardently for himself. With Messer Neri's consent he bestowed magnificent dowries upon them, and gave the fair Ginevra to Messer Maffeo da Palizzi and the gold-haired Isotta to Messer Guiglielmo della Magna, both of them noble knights and great barons. Having done this he set off for Apulia in an agony of grief and so quenched his fierce appetite with continual activities that he broke his amorous chains, and for the rest of his life lived free from that passion.

Some perhaps will say that it is a small thing for a King to have married off two girls; and I will admit it. But I call it a very great thing to have been done by a King in love, marrying off the girl he loved without having plucked leaf, flower or fruit of his love. Thus the King acted munificently, rewarding the noble knight highly, honouring the girls he loved in a praiseworthy way, and powerfully conquering himself.

Seventh Tale

KING PIETRO DISCOVERS THE ARDENT LOVE FELT FOR HIM BY LISA WHO HAS FALLEN ILL BECAUSE OF IT. HE COMFORTS HER, MARRIES HER TO A YOUNG GENTLEMAN, AND KISSES HER ON THE FOREHEAD, EVER AFTERWARDS HER KNIGHT

FIAMMETTA reached the end of her tale and King Carlo's virile munificence was highly praised, although one of the ladies, a Ghibelline, would not praise him; then Pampinea, at the king's command, began thus:

Illustrious ladies, no wise person would contradict what you say of good King Carlo unless he bore the King ill will for some other reason; but since I have remembered an event no less commendable I wish to tell you what was done by his adversary to a girl of Florence.

At the time the French were driven from Sicily, there lived in Palermo a very rich Florentine apothecary, named Bernado Puccini, who had by his wife an only daughter, a very beautiful girl of marriageable age. And when King Pietro of Aragon became lord of the island, he and his barons held high festival at Palermo. In this festival he jousted in the Catalan style, and it chanced that Lisa, standing at a window with other ladies, saw him ride by, and as she looked at him liked him so much that she fell deeply in love with him. When the festival was over and she remained in her father's house, she could think of nothing else but her magnificent and lofty love. What most distressed her was the knowledge of her lowly birth, which gave her no hope of any happy ending; yet this did not prevent her from continuing to love the King, although she kept it secret for fear of worse things.

The King knew and cared nothing about this, which caused her a more intolerable pain than can be estimated. Her love continued to increase and one melancholy mood followed another until the girl could endure it no longer and fell ill, plainly wasting away from day to day, like snow in the sun. Her grieving father and mother did all they could to aid her with continual attentions and doctors and medicines, but all to no avail, be-

cause in despair over her love she had determined to die. Now, as her father offered to do anything she wanted, it occurred to her to try to let the King know her love and her determination before she died, if she could do so becomingly; and therefore she one day asked him to let her see Minuccio d'Arezzo.

In those days Minuccio d'Arezzo was considered a very great musician and singer and was much liked by King Pietro. Bernado thought that Lisa wanted to hear him sing and play, and as soon as Minuccio, who was a pleasant man, heard of it, he went to her. After trying to cheer her up with kindly words, he played to her on his viol and then sang her some songs, which were so much smoke and flame to the love of the girl whom he thought he was consoling. The girl then said that she wished to say a few words to him in private, and when everyone had left the room, she said:

"Minuccio, I have chosen you as the most trustworthy keeper of my secret, hoping first that you will never reveal it to anyone but the person I desire to know it, and then that you will help me to the extent of your power. And this I beg of you.

"You must know then, Minuccio, that on the day when our lord, King Pietro, made the great feast for his triumph, I saw him jousting and love of him lit such a fire in my soul that it has brought me to what you see. Knowing how ill my love befits a King and being unable either to drive it away or to lessen it, I have determined to die as the lesser suffering, since to bear it is too much for me.

"True it is that I shall depart disconsolate if he does not first know of it. I know of nobody who can more fittingly make him know my condition than you, and so I want to entrust it to you and beg you will not refuse to do it, so that, dying consoled, I may escape these woes."

This she spoke weeping, and then was silent.

Minuccio was amazed at her greatness of spirit and her fierce determination. He suddenly saw how he could virtuously assist her, and said:

"Lisa, I pledge you my faith, and you may live certain that I shall never deceive you; I praise you for your lofty enterprise in having raised your spirit to so great a King; and I offer you my aid whereby

I hope, if you wish for comfort, that before the third day has passed I shall so act that I think I shall bring you news which will be most dear to you. Not to waste time, let me go and start at once."

Lisa once again besought him eagerly and promised him to be comforted, and then said good-bye. Minuccio departed and went to one Mico da Siena, in those days quite a good rhymster, and by his entreaties forced him to write the following song:

Go forth, O Love, to my Lord and tell him the pain I endure, tell him I am near to death, hiding my desire from fear.

With folded hands, O Love, I beg you to go to my Lord. Tell him my heart so sweetly is in love that I desire and love him often; and that I fear to die from the great fire which burns in me and do not know how I may escape the heavy pain I bear, desiring him in fear and shame. Ah! Let him know my woe, for love of God!

Since I have been in love with him, O Love, you never gave me courage greater than my fear to show my desire even once to him who keeps me in such pain. And to die thus is bitter to me. Perhaps it would not displease him if he knew what pain I feel, if you had given me strength to make known to him my state.

Since it was not your pleasure, Love, to grant me so much grace as to make known my heart unto my Lord, alas, by sign or semblance, I beg of you, sweet my lord, to go to him and to remind him of the day I saw him with shield and lance bearing his arms like other knights, and gazed at him, and fell in love with him, so that my heart is dying.

These words Minuccio immediately set to soft and piteous music as the matter required, and the third day went to Court when King Pietro had already sat down to eat and sent him orders to sing something to his viol. He then played and sang the song so sweetly that everyone in the hall seemed like shadow men, so silent and earnest were they to listen, the King more than anyone else. And when Minuccio had finished his song,

the King asked him whence it came, for he believed he had never heard it before.

"Sire," replied Minuccio, "the words and music were composed not three days ago."

The King then asked for whom, and he replied:

"I dare not reveal it save to you only."

Desirous to hear this, the King arose from table and took him into another room, where Minuccio related to him everything he had heard. The King was delighted, praised the girl, and said that he would have compassion upon so worthy a girl. He then told Minuccio to go to her and comfort her on his behalf, and to say that the King would come to visit her about Vespers that day without fail.

Minuccio was most happy to bear such good news to the girl, and at once went to her with his viol, and told her everything in private; after which he sang her the song to his viol. The girl was so pleased and happy that evident signs of returning health appeared in her at once. Without knowing or trying to guess what might happen, she eagerly awaited Vespers when she would see her lord.

The King was a generous and kindly lord, and, having several times thought over what Minuccio had told him, while he knew the girl and her beauty very well, felt more pity than ever. About the time of Vespers he mounted his horse, as if riding out for recreation, and came to the apothecary's house. There he asked to see a very beautiful garden which belonged to the apothecary, and after some time enquired of Bernado how his daughter was and if he had yet arranged a marriage for her.

"Sire," replied Bernado, "she is not yet married and has been and is very ill. It is true that she has improved marvellously since Nones today."

The King immediately saw what this improvement meant, and said to Bernado:

"Faith, it would be a pity that so beautiful a creature should be taken from the world; we desire to visit her."

So a little afterwards he went to her bedroom, accompanied only by Bernado and two attendants; he went to the bedside where the girl was eagerly awaiting him propped up a little, took her by the hand, and said:

“Madonna, what is the meaning of this? You are young and should be a comfort to others, yet you allow yourself to be ill. We pray you, for love of us, to be pleased to take comfort in such a way that you may be soon well.”

Feeling herself touched by the hand of him whom she loved above all things the girl indeed felt a little modest shame but also as much pleasure in her soul as if she had been in Paradise. And she replied to the best of her ability:

“My lord, the cause of my sickness was my attempt to bear very heavy burdens with my small strength; but thanks to you, you will soon see me free from it.”

The King alone understood the girl’s hidden meaning and thought more and more highly of her, and often cursed Fortune for making her the daughter of such a man. And after staying with her for some time and comforting her, he departed.

This kindness on the King’s part was highly commended and considered a great honour to the apothecary and his daughter, who remained as glad as any woman could be with her lover. Aided by hope she grew well in a few days and became more beautiful than ever. The King had discussed with the Queen what reward should be given her for so great a love, and when the girl was well he mounted his horse and, accompanied by many of his barons, went to the garden and sent for the apothecary and his daughter. The Queen and many of her ladies also came there and received the girl with the greatest kindness. Then the King, standing beside the Queen, said to Lisa:

“The great love you bear, brave girl, deserves great honour from us, and for love of us we will that you should be contented. The honour is this—that since you should be married we will that you should accept the husband we shall bestow upon you, ourselves none the less ever intending to be called your knight, while we ask no more of your love than a single kiss.”

The girl blushed deep red with shame and, obedient to the King’s pleasure, answered in a low voice:

“My lord, I am very sure that if it were known that I am in love with

you, most people would consider me mad, thinking perhaps that I am out of my mind and ignorant of my own rank and yours. But God, who alone sees the hearts of mortals, knows that at the hour I first loved you I knew you to be a King and myself to be the daughter of Bernado the apothecary, and that it ill became me to set the love of my spirit so high. But, as you know better than I, none of us loves by deliberate choice but from appetite and pleasure. I have often opposed all my strength to these laws but in vain, and so I loved, love and always shall love you.

“True it is that when I felt myself taken with love of you I determined that your will should always be mine. Therefore, if you told me to stand in a fire and I thought it would please you, it would be a delight to me; how gladly then will I take a husband and cherish him whom you are pleased to give me, since this will be an honour and estate to me. You know how honourable it is for me to have you, a King, as my knight; and therefore I say no more of this. As for the kiss which is all you ask of my love, it shall only be yielded you with the Queen’s permission. Nevertheless, for the kindness of the Queen and you to me, God through me renders you thanks and reward!”

She was then silent. The Queen was greatly pleased by the girl’s reply, and thought her as wise as the King had said. The King sent for the girl’s father and mother, and having found they agreed to what he intended to do, he sent for a young but poor gentleman, named Perdicone, to whom he handed a ring and there, with his consent, betrothed him to Lisa. In addition to many valuable jewels which the King and Queen gave the girl, the King also gave them Ceffalu and Calatabellotta, two excellent and very fruitful estates, saying:

“We give you these as your lady’s dowry; what we intend to do for you, you shall see when the time comes.”

He then turned to the girl, and said:

“We now desire to take the fruit of your love which is ours.”

And he took her head in both his hands and kissed her on the forehead.

Perdicone and Lisa’s father and mother and Lisa herself were delighted, and made a great and merry marriage feast.

And, as many affirm, the King most faithfully observed his pact with the girl. As long as he lived he always called himself her knight, and whenever he rode out on any feat of arms bore no token or badge save that which she sent him.

Acting thus he captured the souls of his subjects; he set an example to others and acquired eternal fame. But today there are few who stretch the bow of the intellect to such matters, for most lords have become cruel and tyrannical.

Eighth Tale

SOFRONIA THINKS SHE IS THE WIFE OF GISIPPUS, BUT IN FACT IS MARRIED TO TITUS QUINTUS FULVIUS WITH WHOM SHE GOES TO ROME. THERE GISIPPUS ARRIVES IN POVERTY AND THINKS HE HAS BEEN TREATED CONTEMPTUOUSLY BY TITUS, AND THEREFORE SAYS HE HAS KILLED A MAN IN ORDER TO DIE HIMSELF. TITUS RECOGNISES HIM AND, TO SAVE HIM, SAYS HE KILLED THE MAN; WHEREUPON THE REAL MURDERER THEN CONFESSES. OCTAVIUS SETS THEM ALL AT LIBERTY; TITUS GIVES GISIPPUS HIS SISTER IN MARRIAGE AND SHARES HIS PROPERTY WITH HIM

WHEN Pampinea had ceased speaking and all, especially the Ghibelline, had praised King Pietro, Filomena began thus at the king's command:

Magnificent ladies, who does not know that Kings can do very great things when they want, and that therefore they are specially called upon to be generous to others? The man who has power and does what is befitting him, does well; but we should not marvel so much at him or praise him so highly as we ought to do with another who accomplished the same thing when less is expected of him. Therefore, if you think the works of Kings so excellent and praise them so much, I have no doubt you will admire and praise those of our equals when their deeds resemble or

exceed those of kings. And so I propose to tell you of the praiseworthy and generous deeds of two citizens, friends.

At the time when Octavius Cæsar had not been saluted Augustus, but reigned over Rome as one of the Triumvirate, there lived in Rome a gentleman called Publius Quintus Fulvius. He had a son named Titus Quintus Fulvius, who, on account of his high intelligence, was sent to learn philosophy at Athens and was warmly recommended by his father to a very old friend, a nobleman named Chremes. Titus was lodged by him in his own house along with his son Gisippus, and both were sent to learn philosophy under the discipline of the philosopher Aristippus.

The manners of the two young men were so similar that from familiarity they developed so great a friendship and fraternity that nothing but death could separate them. Neither was happy except when with the other. They began their studies together, and since each was endowed with the highest intelligence they rose to the glorious heights of philosophy side by side and with great commendation. In this way they spent three years to the great delight of Chremes, who looked upon them both as his own children. At the end of this time Chremes, who was old, departed this life, like all things else. They felt an equal grief as at the loss of a common father, nor could the friends and relatives of Chremes discover which of the two was the more in need of consolation.

Some months later the relatives and friends of Gisippus, including Titus, urged him to marry; and found him a girl of noble birth and the greatest beauty, a freewoman of Athens, aged about fifteen, by name Sofronia. When the wedding was close at hand, Gisippus one day asked Titus, who had not yet seen her, to come with him to visit her. As she sat between them in her house, Titus, who was naturally interested in the beauty of his friend's wife, looked closely at her, found every portion of her most pleasing to him, and, as he praised her, fell as deeply in love with her as ever a lover could, although he showed no signs of it.

After spending some time with her, they departed and returned home. Titus went alone to his room, and there began to think of the charming girl; and the more he thought of her the more he fell in love with her. After heaving many deep sighs he said to himself:

“Ah! Titus, wretched is your life! Where and in whom have you set your soul and love and hope? Do you not know that you should look upon this girl as your sister, both on account of the favours you have received from Chremes and his family, and on account of the close friendship between you and Gisippus, whose betrothed she is? Whom then do you love? Whither do you let yourself be carried by deceitful love? Whither by flattering hope? Open the eyes of your mind, and know yourself, wretch! Make way for reason, curb your lascivious appetite, temper your unhealthy desires, and direct your thoughts elsewhere. Oppose your lust in its beginnings, and conquer yourself while there is yet time. What you wish to do is not befitting, is not comely. You should flee from what you desire to pursue even if you are sure of winning it (which you are not), if you have any regard for what is required by true friendship and what you owe it. What then will you do, Titus? Leave this unbecoming love if you would do what is befitting.”

But then he thought of Sofronia and all his thoughts turned in the opposite direction; he condemned everything he had said, and went on:

“The laws of love are stronger than any others; they break divine laws as well as those of friendship. How often has the father loved his daughter? The brother his sister? The step-mother her step-son? Things more monstrous than for a man to love his friend’s wife have already occurred a thousand times. Moreover I am young, and youth is entirely subject to the laws of love. What pleases love must therefore please me. Virtuous deeds belong to my elders; I can only will what love wills. Her beauty deserves all men’s love; if I, a young man, love her, who can rightly reprove me for it? I do not love her because she is Gisippus’s, but should love her whosoever’s she were. It is Fortune’s error for yielding her to my friend Gisippus rather than to another. And if she must be loved (as she deservedly must for her beauty), then, if Gisippus hears of it, he should be more happy to have me love her than another.”

Thus, making a mock of himself, he continued in this argument, going first to one side and then to the other, and spent not only that day and night but many others, until for lack of food and sleep he was compelled to take to his bed. Gisippus for several days had noticed that he

was thoughtful and now saw he was ill, felt grieved, and used every art and device to cheer him up, never left his side, and often and insistently asked him the cause of his pensiveness and illness. Titus several times invented false tales which Gisippus found out; but finally, when Titus found himself constrained, he answered in this manner with many sighs and laments:

“Gisippus, if it had pleased the Gods I would rather have died than continue to live, when I think how Fortune has led me to a point where my virtue has been tested and where, to my great shame, I have been beaten. But indeed I expect soon that reward which befits me, I mean death, which will be more precious to me than to live with the remembrance of my baseness, which I shall reveal to you, though not without blushing, for I neither can nor ought to conceal anything from you.”

He then began from the beginning and revealed to his friend the reason for his thoughts, and the contest among them, and to which side the final victory inclined, and how he was dying for love of Sofronia, affirming that since he knew how unbecoming this was in him he had made up his mind to die as a penance, which he thought would soon come to pass. When Gisippus heard this and saw his weeping, he was silent for a time, for he too was absorbed, though more temperately, by his delight in the beautiful girl. But then without hesitation he decided that his friend's life should be dearer to him than Sofronia. So, with his own tears claiming the other's tears, he replied, weeping:

“Titus, if you were not so much in need of comfort as you now are, I should complain of you to yourself as a man who has violated our friendship by keeping your great passion so long concealed from me. And although you thought it unvirtuous, yet unvirtuous things are no more to be concealed from a friend than virtuous ones, because since a friend delights in virtuous things with his friend, so he strives to uproot the unvirtuous things from his friend's mind. But let us leave that for the present, and come to that which I know to be of greater importance. I do not wonder that you love Sofronia who is my betrothed, but I should wonder if it were otherwise, knowing as I do her beauty and the nobility of your spirit which is the more apt to feel passion in proportion to the

excellence of the thing which delights you. And the more reasonable your love of Sofronia, the more unjust your complaint of Fortune (although you do not express it) for yielding her to me, since you think your love would be right if she were anyone's but mine. But, if you are wise as you are wont to be, to whom could Fortune have yielded her more favourably for you than to me? Whoever else had her—however justified your love might then be—would have loved her more for himself than for you, which you had no need to fear from me if you know me to be the friend I am. The reason is this—that so long as we have been friends I do not remember ever to have had anything which was not yours as much as mine.

“Therefore, if matters had gone so far forward that it could not be otherwise, even then this should be as with other things; but it has not gone so far that I cannot make her yours only, and this I will do. For I do not know how my friendship could be dear to you if I did not make my will yours in something which may virtuously be done. True, Sofronia is betrothed to me, and I love her greatly, and was awaiting the marriage with great eagerness. But since you, who have more understanding than I, more eagerly desire a thing so precious as she, be sure that in this my room you shall see, not my—but your—wife. Therefore, put off your pensiveness, drive away melancholy, call back your lost health and content and happiness, and from this hour onward await cheerfully the reward of your love which is so much more worthy than mine.”

At these words of Gisippus's, Titus felt the pleasures of flattering hope but at the same time equally felt ashamed, for his reason showed him that the greater was Gisippus's generosity the more unseemly was it for him to make use of it. Therefore, without ceasing to weep, he answered as follows with great difficulty:

“Gisippus, your true and generous friendship clearly shows me what I ought to do. God forbid that I should ever take from you as mine the woman God has given to you as the more worthy. If He had seen that she was more suitable for me, neither you nor anyone else ought to think that she would have been granted to you. Therefore, cheerfully enjoy

your choice and wise council and His gift, and leave me to waste away in tears, which He has prepared for me as one unworthy of such good as she, which tears I shall either conquer and shall thus be dear to you, or they will conquer me and I shall be out of my pain."

"Titus," said Gisippus, "if our friendship permits me to force you to follow my wishes and can induce you to follow them, this is a case when I mean to take full advantage of it. If you do not yield amicably to my entreaties, I shall make use of such compulsion as befits a friend in order to make Sofronia yours. I know the strength of love's powers and I know that they have led lovers to an unhappy death, not once but many times. I see you so near it that you can neither turn back nor conquer your tears, and if you proceed you will be overcome, and I without any doubt should soon follow you.

"Therefore, even if I loved you for no other reason, your life is precious to me for the sake of my own. Sofronia then shall be yours, and you will not easily find another so pleasing to you. I shall transfer my love to someone else, and shall thus have contented us both. Perhaps I should not be so generous if it were as hard and difficult to find wives as it is to find friends. Since I can very easily find another wife but not another friend I prefer—I will not say to lose her, for I shall not lose her by giving her to you, but to transfer her from good to better, to another man—to transfer her, I say, than to lose you. So, if my entreaties have any power over you, I beg you to cast off this sorrow and at one and the same time to comfort yourself and me, and with good hope to make ready to enjoy that happiness which your hot love desires of the person you love."

Titus was ashamed to consent to allow Sofronia to be his wife and so remained silent, pulled in the other direction by his love and Gisippus's entreaties.

"Gisippus," said he, "I do not know if I can say that I am pleasing myself more, or you, by doing what you tell me will please you so much. But since your generosity is such that it vanquishes my natural shame, I will do it. But I tell you this—I do it as a man who knows that he is receiving from you both the woman he loves and his life. May the Gods grant that I may yet prove to you with honour and benefits to yourself

how much gratitude I feel for what you are doing for me in greater pity for me than I feel for myself.”

After these words Gisippus said:

“Titus, if we are to succeed in this matter I think we must act as follows: as you know, Sofronia has been betrothed to me after long discussion between my parents and hers, and so if I now went and said I do not want her as my wife, great scandal would arise and would anger her relatives and mine. I should care nothing about that if I thought that thereby she would become your wife. But if I did that I fear that her relatives would speedily give her to another, who perhaps would not be you, and so you would have lost the woman I should not have gained. Therefore, if you agree, I think I should continue as I have begun, bring her home to the house as mine and make a wedding feast, and then we can arrange that you secretly lie with her as if she were your wife. Then at a fitting time and place we will let them know what we have done. If they like it, all well and good; if they do not, yet the thing will be done and nothing can then undo it, so they will be forced to accept it.”

Titus liked the plan. Therefore, when Titus was well and happy again, Gisippus received her into his house as his wife. A great feast was made, and when night came the women left the bride in her husband's bed and went away. Titus's room was next to Gisippus's and they communicated; so, when Gisippus went to his room after all lights had been extinguished he passed softly into Titus's and told him to go and lie with his lady. At this Titus was overcome with shame and wanted to change his mind and refuse to go; but since Gisippus was as determined in spirit as in his words, he sent him there after a long argument.

When he reached the bed, he took the girl as if to embrace her, and softly asked her if she would be his wife. Thinking he was Gisippus, she said “yes,” and he slipped a beautiful and valuable ring on her finger, saying:

“And I will be your husband.”

He then consummated the marriage, and took long amorous pleasure of her, and neither she nor anyone else perceived that it was not Gisippus who lay with her.

The marriage of Titus and Sofronia was in this position, when his father Publius died, and a letter was sent him that he must return to Rome at once to attend to his affairs. He therefore arranged with Gisippus to go and take Sofronia with him, but this could not be done secretly without telling her how things were. So one day they took her to a room and told her everything that had happened, and Titus proved it to her from many incidents between them. After gazing somewhat scornfully at one and then the other, she began to weep exceedingly and complained of Gisippus's deception. Before a word of all this was mentioned in Gisippus's house, she went to her father's house and told him and her mother of the deceit Gisippus had practised upon her and them, adding that she was the wife of Titus, and not of Gisippus as they believed.

Sofronia's father was bitterly angered by this, and raised a great quarrel between his relatives and those of Gisippus. The talk and disturbance was loud and long. Gisippus became hated by his relatives and by Sofronia's, and they all said that he deserved severe punishment as well as reprehension. But he maintained that he had done a good action, and that Sofronia's relatives should thank him for having married her to a better man than himself.

Meanwhile, Titus heard all this with the greatest distress. He knew that the character of the Greeks made them the more noisy and threatening, the less they met with opposition; while otherwise they would become humble and even abject. So he made up his mind not to endure their insults further without reply. He had a Roman soul and Athenian wit, and therefore managed to collect the relatives of Gisippus and Sofronia in a temple. He then came in, accompanied only by Gisippus, and spoke thus to them as they sat waiting:

"Many philosophers believe that whatever is done by mortal man comes to pass through the will and foresight of the immortal gods, and therefore some assert that all which is done or will be done happens of necessity, although others say that this necessity applies only to what has been done. If these opinions are examined with care, it will plainly appear that to reprehend something which cannot be hindered is doing nothing less than attempting to show oneself wiser than the immortal

gods, of whom we are compelled to believe that they govern and dispose of us and our affairs with eternal wisdom and without error.

"You may easily see what mad presumption and folly it is to question their deeds and how those who most eagerly do this are the most deserving of chains. In my opinion, you are all like this, if it be true what I have heard you say and go on saying because Sofronia has become my wife, when it was intended that she should be Gisippus's; for you have not considered that from all eternity it had been decreed that she should not be Gisippus's wife but mine, as is now plain from the event.

"But, since many persons think it a heavy matter, hard of understanding, to speak of the secret providence and intention of the gods, I will descend to the counsels of men, presupposing even that the gods had nothing to do with what has happened. In speaking thus, I shall be compelled to do two things very contrary to my habits; one is to praise myself, the second to blame and condemn others. But I shall do it because the present matters require it, while I do not intend to depart from the truth in either.

"Your complaints, which arise more from anger than reason, your continual murmurings and outcries, insult, vilify and condemn Gisippus because from his own desire he gave me for my wife the woman you meant to give him, wherein I consider that he is highly to be praised. My reasons are these: first, he did what a friend ought to do; second, he acted more wisely than you would have done.

"It is not my intention here to discuss what the sacred laws of friendship demand that one friend should do for another; it is sufficient only to recall that the bonds of friendship are closer than those of blood and parenthood, for our friends are our own choice while our parents are the result of Fortune. Therefore, you should not marvel if Gisippus prefers my life to your affection, since I am his friend.

"Coming now to the second reason, which I must demonstrate to you with more insistence (which is that he was wiser than you are), it appears to me that you have understood nothing of the gods' providence, while you are still less aware of the effects of friendship. I say then that your foresight, your counsel and your reflection decided to give Sofronia to

Gisippus, a young man and a philosopher. Gisippus's gave her to a young man and a philosopher. Your counsel gave her to an Athenian, and Gisippus's to a Roman. Yours to a young nobleman, his to one more noble. Yours to a rich young man, his to one much richer. Yours to a young man who not only did not love her, but scarcely knew her; his to a young man who loved her beyond his own happiness and more than his own life.

"Examine now whether what I have said is not true and more to be praised than what you did. That I am a young man and a philosopher like Gisippus, my face and studies declare, without need for further demonstration. He and I are of the same age, and we have advanced step by step together in our studies. True it is that he is Athenian, and I a Roman. If we are to dispute about the fame of our cities, I shall say that I belong to a free country and he to one subject; I shall say that my city is queen of the world and his city obedient to mine; I shall say that my city is pre-eminent in war, power and the arts, whereas his can only be praised for the arts.

"Moreover, however humble I might seem to you here as a scholar, I was not born from the dregs of the Roman people. My own houses and the public buildings of Rome are filled with the ancient statues of my ancestors, and the Roman annals are filled with the triumphs conducted by the family of Quintus to the Capitol of Rome. Nor has it declined with age, for the glory of our name is today more flourishing than ever.

"From very shame I am silent as to my wealth, for I consider that decent poverty is the ancient and best patrimony of the noble citizens of Rome. If this opinion be condemned by the vulgar, and riches be praised, then I must tell you I am abundantly wealthy, not because I am avaricious but because I am Fortune's friend. I know it is true that you were and would be happy to have Gisippus as a relative; but I should be no less dear to you in Rome, since in me you will have an excellent guest, a useful, solicitous and powerful patron both for private needs and public occasions.

"Now leaving the will free and looking at the matter reasonably, who would commend your counsel more than my Gisippus's? Assuredly, no

one. Sofronia then is well married to Titus Quintus Fulvius, a rich and noble and antique citizen of Rome, the friend of Gisippus. If anyone laments or complains about that, he is not doing what he ought to do, and does not know what he is doing. Perhaps some will say that they do not complain that Sofronia is the wife of Titus, but do complain of the manner in which she became so—stealthily, furtively, without the knowledge of her friends and relatives. Nor is this a miracle or any new thing.

“I set aside those women who have taken husbands against the wishes of their fathers, those who have fled with their lovers and thus have been mistresses before they were wives, those who have pleaded for marriage more by pregnancy and children than with their tongues, and whom necessity has advanced. None of these happened to Sofronia, who was discreetly, soberly and orderly given in marriage by Gisippus. Some will say that he married her to a man she ought not to have married. These are foolish and womanly laments, proceeding from a lack of thought. This is not the first time Fortune has made use of devious ways and new methods to attain her pre-determined ends. What do I care whether a cobbler or a philosopher attends to some affair of mine, and whether it be in secret or openly, if the result is good? If the cobbler is indiscreet I ought to be careful to see that he has nothing more to do with it, and thank him for what he has done. If Gisippus has married Sofronia well, it is a superfluous folly to regret the manner and to complain of him. If you have no confidence in his wisdom, take care that he marries no one else, and thank him for this.

“Nevertheless you must know I did not seek, either by trickery or fraud, to lay any stain on the honour and nobility of your blood in the person of Sofronia. Although I took her secretly to wife, I did not come like a ravisher to take her virginity nor did I wish like an enemy to possess her otherwise than honourably; but I was ardently aflame for her delicate beauty and virtue, and I knew that you loved her so much that if I had sought her in the manner you perhaps think I ought to have adopted, I should not have had her, owing to your fear that I should take her to Rome.



Bessie Green

"Therefore I made use of the secret means which now are revealed to you, and I made Gisippus consent in my name to what he was unwilling to do. Although I loved her eagerly, I sought her embraces not as a lover but as a husband, and, as she herself can bear true witness, I did not approach her until I had wedded her with the customary words and a ring, asking her whether she would be my wife, to which she said 'Yes.' If you think her deceived, you should blame her and not me, because she did not ask who I was. The great wrong, the great sin, the great crime wrought by Gisippus, my friend whom I love, is that he secretly married Sofronia to Titus Quintus. For this you slander, menace and plot against him. What more could you do if he had given her to a peasant, a ruffian or a slave? What chains, prison, crucifying will suffice?

"But let us leave this. The time has come, before I expected it, when my father has died, and I must return to Rome. Since I wish to take Sofronia with me, I have told you what I should perhaps otherwise have kept secret. If you are wise, you will cheerfully accept it, for if I had wished to insult or outrage you I could have left her here scorned; but God forbid that such baseness should ever dwell in a Roman soul!

"Sofronia then is mine, by the consent of the gods and the force of human laws, by the praiseworthy wisdom of my friend Gisippus and by my own lover's wit; and you, peradventure thinking yourselves wiser than the gods and other men, show me that you stupidly condemn this in two ways which to me are very annoying. First, you retain Sofronia, which you have no right to do except so far as it please me; second, you treat Gisippus as an enemy, when you are under great obligations to him. I do not at present mean to show you how foolishly you are acting in these matters, but I advise you as my friends to put aside your anger and get rid of your fury. Restore Sofronia to me, and let me depart and live cheerfully as your relative. Be certain of this, whether what is done pleases or displeases you, I shall take Gisippus from you, and as soon as I return to Rome I shall undoubtedly regain her who is rightfully mine, however much you object. And by perpetual enmity I shall make you learn from experience what the anger of the Romans can achieve."

Having said this, Titus rose to his feet with an angry countenance,

took Gisippus by the hand, and left the temple, shaking his head at them in a threatening way to show how little he cared for them. Those who remained, partly persuaded to friendship and family alliance with Titus by his reasonings, and partly terrified by his final words, agreed together that it would be better to have Titus as their relative (since Gisippus had not wanted it) than to lose Gisippus as a relative and to have Titus as an enemy into the bargain. They therefore went after Titus and told him they were willing Sofronia should be his, and that they wanted to have him as their relative and Gisippus as a good friend. After a friendly and family meeting, they departed, and sent Sofronia back to him. Like a wise woman, she made a virtue of necessity, and devoted to Titus the love she had felt for Gisippus. She set out with Titus for Rome, and there was received with great honour.

Gisippus remained in Athens, held in low esteem by nearly everybody; and not long afterwards through the intrigues of the citizens, he was driven out of Athens, poor and helpless, and condemned to perpetual exile. Gisippus, having thus become not only poor but a beggar, made his way as best he could to Rome, to find if Titus remembered him. He learned that Titus was alive and respected by all the Romans, and, having found his house, waited about until Titus came. In his miserable condition he was unwilling to speak, but strove to be seen, so that Titus might recognise him and call him. Titus passed by, and Gisippus thought he had seen and scorned him; and remembering what he had done for him in the past, Gisippus departed in anger and despair.

It was already night; he was hungry and penniless, knew not where to go, and desired death above all things. He came to a deserted part of the city and saw a large cave, where he spent the night on the bare ground in an evil plight, falling asleep when he was worn out with weeping.

Towards morning, two men who had been thieving during the night came to the cave with their spoils. A quarrel started, and the stronger killed the other man, and went away. Gisippus heard and saw what happened, and felt he had found the means of obtaining the death he so much desired, without killing himself. So he remained there until the

police officers, who had heard of the deed, came there and haled Gisippus savagely away. When he was examined, he said he had killed the man and had never been able to leave the cave. Therefore the Prætor, by name Marcus Varro, ordered that he should be crucified, as was then the custom.

At that moment Titus happened to come to the Prætor's court, and, looking at the wretch's face as he was told what had happened, suddenly recognised Gisippus, and marvelled at his miserable fate and how he had got there. He desired ardently to help him, and, seeing no other way to help him except to set free his friend by denouncing himself, immediately thrust forward and said:

"Marcus Varro, I claim the poor man whom you have condemned, because he is innocent. I have offended the gods enough with one crime, by slaying the man whom your officers found dead this morning; and I will not further offend them by the death of another innocent man."

Varro was amazed, and regretted that the whole Court had heard what he said. But, since he could not honourably do anything but what the laws commanded, he had Gisippus brought back, and in the presence of Titus said to him:

"How could you be so mad as to confess without any torture that you did something you had not done, when it was a matter of your life? You said you killed the man last night, and now this man comes and says that he and not you killed him."

Gisippus saw the man was Titus, and realised at once that this had been done to save him, out of gratitude for the services received from him. So, weeping piteously, he said:

"Varro, in truth I killed him; and Titus's pity is now too late to save me."

But Titus said:

"Varro, as you see, this man is a foreigner, and he was found unarmed beside the murdered man. You can see that his miserable condition makes him want to die; set him free then, and punish me who have deserved it."

Varro marvelled at their insistence, and guessed that neither of them was guilty. He was thinking how to set them free when there came in a

young man, named Publius Ambustus, an abandoned sinner, known as a thief to all the Romans, and the man who had really committed the murder. He knew that neither of the two men was guilty, and such a softening of heart came over him for their innocence that he was moved by compassion, and said to Varro:

“Prætor, my deeds bring me to solve this debate between these two, and I know not what god within me urges me to make plain my crime. You must know that neither is guilty. I killed the man towards morning last night, and I saw that other poor man asleep while I was dividing the spoil with the man I killed. There is no need for me to clear Titus. His fame is known to all that he is not a man of that sort. Set them free then, and punish me as the laws require.”

The news of this came to Octavius, who sent for all three of them, and desired to know the reason why each of them wanted to be condemned; and they told him. Octavius set free the first two because they were innocent, and the third for love of them. Titus first reproved Gisippus for his mistrust, and then rejoiced greatly with him, and took him home, where Sofronia with tears of pity received him as a brother. After he had rested, Titus dressed him in the clothes suited to his rank and virtue and, after sharing equally with him all his money and possessions, gave him his young sister Fulvia as his wife. He then said:

“Gisippus, it is now for you to decide whether you will remain here with me, or whether you will return to Achaia with all I have given you.”

Constrained on the one side by the decree of exile from his own city and on the other by the love he owed to Titus’s friendship, Gisippus determined to become a Roman. There, he with his Fulvia and Titus with his Sofronia lived long and happily in a large house, and each day became closer friends—if that were possible.

Friendship, then, is a most sacred thing, worthy not only of singular reverence but of being commended with perpetual praise, as the most discreet mother of liberality and honour, the sister of gratitude and charity, the enemy of hatred and avarice, ever ready, without waiting to

be asked, to do virtuously to another what it would wish done to itself. Its sacred results are today most rarely to be seen in two persons, for to the shame and sin of men's miserable cupidity which makes them look only to their own interest, friendship has been driven to the ends of the earth and left in perpetual exile.

What love, what wealth, what family tie could have made Gisippus feel so deeply in his heart the fervour and tears and sighs of Titus, so that he gave his friend his own beautiful and loved wife—save only friendship! What laws, what threats, what fear would have made the young arms of Gisippus abstain from embracing the girl (who perhaps invited it) in dark and solitary places or in his own bed—save only friendship! What rank, what merit, what advantages would have made Gisippus careless of losing his own relatives and Sofronia's, careless of the insulting gibes of the multitude, careless of scorns and jests to content his friend—save only friendship!

Moreover, what could have urged Titus (when he could blamelessly have feigned not to see him) unhesitatingly to procure his own death to save Gisippus from the cross, which he himself had provoked, save only friendship? What could have made Titus most liberal in sharing his great patrimony with Gisippus, whom Fortune had deprived of all he had, save only friendship? What could have made Titus most unsuspectingly eager to give his sister to Gisippus, although he saw him in extreme poverty and misery, save only friendship?

We see men desire a multitude of relatives, crowds of brothers, a great quantity of sons, and to increase the number of their servants with their wealth. And they do not perceive that any one of them dreads more the slightest danger to himself than he is solicitous to avert great dangers from his father, brother or master; whereas we see exactly the contrary in a friend.

Ninth Tale

SALADIN, DISGUISED AS A MERCHANT, IS ENTERTAINED BY MESSER TORELLO, WHO AFTERWARDS GOES ON A CRUSADE AND SETS A TIME TO HIS WIFE, AFTER WHICH IF HE DOES NOT RETURN SHE MAY RE-MARRY. MESSER TORELLO IS CAPTURED, AND HIS SKILL IN DRESSING HAWKS BRINGS HIM TO THE NOTICE OF THE SULTAN, BY WHOM HE IS RECOGNISED AND HIGHLY HONOURED. MESSER TORELLO FALLS ILL; THEN BY MAGIC ARTS HE IS CARRIED BACK TO PAVIA AT THE VERY MOMENT WHEN HIS WIFE IS ABOUT TO RE-MARRY. SHE RECOGNISES HIM, AND THEY RETURN HOME TOGETHER.

FILOMENA ended her tale and Titus's munificent gratitude was praised by all, when the king, reserving to Dioneo his right to speak last, began thus:

Fair ladies, Filomena is undoubtedly right in what she says about friendship, and she has every reason to complain, as she did at the end, that friendship is now so little accepted by mankind. If we were here to correct or reprove the world's faults, I could follow up her words with a long speech. But our object is different, and it occurs to me to relate to you in a long but pleasant tale one of Saladin's liberalities. From the things you will hear in my tale you will see that, although our vices prevent us from obtaining anyone's complete friendship, we may at least take delight in rendering service, in the hope that some day it will be rewarded.

I say then that, as some relate, in the time of the Emperor Frederick the First, a general Crusade was undertaken by all Christians for the recovery of the Holy Land. Saladin, the Sultan of Babylon and a most valiant Prince, hearing something of this, determined to go personally and observe the preparations of the Christian Princes, so that he could better resist them. He made all his arrangements in Egypt, pretended he was going on a pilgrimage, and set out with two of his wisest and most

important councillors, and only three servants, in the guise of merchants. They passed through many Christian provinces, and as they rode through Lombardy towards the Alps, it happened that one evening on the way from Milan to Pavia they met a gentleman, by name Messer Torello d'Istria da Pavia, who was going with his attendants, hounds and hawks, to stay at a handsome estate he had in the Ticino. When Messer Torello noticed them, he saw they were gentlemen and foreigners, and wished to honour them.

Saladin asked one of the attendants how far it was to Pavia and if they could get there in time to enter the city; but Torello, not giving the attendant time to speak, replied himself:

"Gentlemen, you cannot reach Pavia in time to enter the city today."

"Then," said Saladin, "since we are foreigners, will you be kind enough to tell us the best inn where we can lodge?"

"Gladly," replied Messer Torello. "I was just about to send one of my servants to Pavia on an errand; I will send him with you and he will guide you where you will find the best inn."

He then gave orders to the most intelligent of his servants as to what to do, and sent him off with them. He himself rode straight to his house, and arranged the best supper he could, with tables set out in the garden. That done, he waited for them at the door. The attendant rode along talking of different things with the gentlemen, and led them by side roads to his master's house, without their noticing it. And when Messer Torello saw them, he went to meet them on foot, saying with a laugh:

"Gentlemen, you are very welcome."

Saladin, who was very quick-witted, guessed that the gentlemen had doubted whether they would have accepted his invitation, if he had invited them when he met them, and so, artfully, had them brought to his own house, so that they could not refuse to spend the evening with him. He returned his salutation, and said:

"Messer, if a man might ever complain of courteous men, we might do so of you, for you have taken us out of our way, and you force us to accept your hospitality without our having deserved such kindness except by a single greeting."

"Gentlemen," said the knight, who was a wise and well spoken man, "if I may guess from your appearance, what you will receive from me will be but poor entertainment compared with what is befitting you. But indeed there is nowhere outside Pavia where you could be well lodged, and therefore do not regret having gone a little out of your way to be lodged not quite so ill."

When he had said this, the servants surrounded the gentlemen as they dismounted, and led away their horses. Messer Torello conducted the three gentlemen into the rooms prepared for them, had their riding boots taken off and refreshed them with cool wines, and retained them in conversation until supper time.

Saladin and his companions and servants all knew Latin, so they could all make themselves perfectly well understood. Each of them thought that the knight was the most pleasant, courteous man and the best talker they had ever met. Messer Torello, on the other hand, thought they were far more important and magnificent personages than he had at first supposed, and therefore regretted that he could not entertain them that evening with company and with a more ceremonious banquet. He determined to atone for it next day, and, having told one of his servants what he wanted done, sent him to his wife, a most excellent and high-minded woman, who was at Pavia—which was close at hand, and where none of the gates was ever locked. After this he took the gentlemen into the garden, and courteously asked who they were. Saladin replied:

"We are merchants of Cyprus on our way from Cyprus to Paris about our affairs."

"Would to God," replied Messer Torello, "that our country produced such gentlemen as I see the merchants of Cyprus are!"

After spending a short time in conversation about other things, supper was served. He had them sit at his own table, to do them greater honour, and they were well served, as far as an impromptu supper could provide.

Soon after the tables were removed, Messer Torello saw they were tired, and so took them to excellent beds to sleep; soon after which he went to bed himself.

The servant carried the message to Messer Torello's wife in Pavia. She, whose spirit was rather regal than feminine, immediately called together Messer Torello's friends and servants, prepared everything befitting a great banquet, sent out invitations by torch-light to many of the noblest citizens, hung out carpets and arras and hangings, and arranged everything in accordance with her husband's message.

Next day the gentlemen arose, and Messer Torello went to horse with them and ordered out his hawks. He took them to a neighbouring marsh, and showed them how the birds flew. Saladin asked for someone to lead them to the best inn of Pavia, and Messer Torello said:

"I will take you, for I have to go there."

They believed him, and were glad, and together they set out. About Terce they came to the city, and, thinking they were going to the best inn, went with Messer Torello to his house, where quite fifty of the noblest inhabitants had gathered to receive the gentlemen, whose bridles and stirrups were immediately held for them. As soon as Saladin and his companions saw this, they saw what had happened, and said:

"Messer Torello, this is not what we asked of you. Last night you did sufficient and more than we required; therefore you might well let us go on our way."

"Gentlemen," said Messer Torello, "I owe more to Fortune than to you for what happened yesterday, since I met you on the road at a time when you had to come to my little house. But today I shall be indebted to you, as will all these gentlemen; and if you think it courteous to refuse to dine with them, you can do so if you wish."

Vanquished by this, Saladin and his companions dismounted and were gaily conducted by the gentlemen to the rooms which had been richly decorated for them. When they had put off their travelling clothes and rested a little, they came to the great hall which was splendidly arrayed. Water was poured on their hands and they were ceremoniously marshalled to their places and magnificently served with all kinds of dishes, so much so that the Emperor himself could not have been better entertained. Although Saladin and his companions were great Princes and accustomed to see the finest things, yet they greatly marvelled at this,

and the more so when they considered the knight's rank, for they knew he was a citizen and not a Prince.

After they had eaten and the tables had been removed and they had talked for a time, the gentlemen of Pavia, at Messer Torello's desire went off to rest, since it was very hot. He remained with his three guests, whom he took to a room, and there sent for his wife so that they might see everything that he held dear. She was tall and handsome and dressed in rich clothes, and came into the room with her two children, who looked like two angels, and saluted the guests. They stood up when they saw her and greeted her respectfully. They had her sit down with them, and made much of the two children. After they had been conversing pleasantly for a short time, Messer Torello went away, and she asked them who they were and where they were going. And they made her the same answer as to Messer Torello. Then the lady said gaily:

"Then I see my woman's idea will be useful, and so I beg you as a special grace that you will not refuse or despise a little gift I shall have brought to you. Remember that women give small gifts, in accordance with their small hearts, and so take them, looking more to the good will of the giver than to the value of the gift."

She then had brought to each of them two pairs of robes, one of cloth and the other of silk, fit for Princes rather than for citizens or merchants, and three taffeta coats and linen garments, saying:

"Take these; I have dressed you in clothes like my husband. Although the other things are not worth much, still, they may be useful to you, since you are far from your wives, and have a long way to go and return, and since merchants are neat and fastidious men."

The gentlemen were amazed and saw that Messer Torello was determined to omit no courtesy to them. From the richness of the clothes, far above the status of a merchant, they began to suspect that Messer Torello had recognised them. But one of them answered the lady:

"These are very great gifts, madonna, and could not be lightly accepted, were it not that we are constrained by your request, which cannot be refused."

Messer Torello then returned and the lady, after commending them

to God, departed and made like gifts to the servants, suitable to their rank. Messer Torello besought them to spend the rest of the day with him; so, after their siesta, they put on their new clothes and rode through the city with him. And when supper time came, they supped magnificently with a large and honourable company. At a fitting time they went to bed, and when they got up next morning, in place of their tired hacks they found three good fat palfreys, and likewise new strong horses for their servants. Seeing this, Saladin turned to his companions, and said:

“I swear to God that there was never a more complete or courteous or shrewd man than this. If the Christian Kings are such Kings as he is a knight, the Sultan of Babylon would not be able to resist one of them, let alone all those we have seen preparing to invade him.”

Knowing it would be useless to refuse them, they thanked him courteously, and mounted. Messer Torello, with a large company, went with them a great distance on their way. Although the Sultan was reluctant to part from Messer Torello (so much had he already taken a liking to him), yet, since he was in a hurry to push on, he begged them to return. And, though Messer Torello regretted leaving them, he said:

“Gentlemen, I shall do so since you wish it. But this I must say. I do not know who you are, and do not ask to know more than you wish to tell; but whoever you may be, you will never make me believe that you are merchants. And so I commend you to God.”

After taking leave of the rest of the company, the Sultan replied to him: “Messer, perhaps we shall be able one day to show you our merchandise and so convince you. God be with you.”

Saladin then departed with his companions, determined if his life lasted and he were not worsted in the coming war that he would honour Messer Torello no less than he had been honoured by him. He spoke much of him and his wife and all his deeds and actions and possessions, praising them all to his companions. And when at the expense of much fatigue he had gone through the whole of the West, he and his companions took ship to return to Alexandria, where with full information they prepared for defence.

Messer Torello returned to Pavia and for a long time wondered who the three could have been, but never came anywhere near the truth.

The time for the Crusade arrived, and there were great preparations on all sides. In spite of his wife's tears and entreaties, Messer Torello determined to go. When everything was ready, and he was about to start, he said to his wife, whom he loved profoundly:

"Lady, as you see, I am going on this Crusade, both for the honour of my body and the salvation of my soul. I leave our goods and our honour in your keeping. Now it is certain that I am going, but a thousand things may happen which make my return uncertain. And so I wish you to grant me a favour. Whatever happens to me, if you have no certain news of my life, wait a year and a month before you re-marry, beginning from this day of my departure."

The lady wept bitterly, and replied:

"Messer Torello, I do not know how I shall bear the grief in which you leave me by going. But if my life proves stronger than grief and it should happen otherwise to you, live and die secure in the knowledge that I shall live and die the wife of Messer Torello."

"Lady," said Messer Torello, "I am most certain that as far as concerns you, what you have promised would be carried out. But you are a young and beautiful woman of noble family, and your great virtue is known to everyone. So I have no doubt that if nothing is heard of me, there will be many gentlemen who will ask for you as wife from your brothers and relatives. And however much you wish, you will not be able to defend yourself from their exhortations, and you will be forced to agree to their wishes. That is why I ask this limit, and not a greater one."

"I will do what I can to carry out what I have said," replied the lady, "and I will certainly obey what you enjoin upon me, although I might want to do otherwise. I pray God that neither you nor I may be brought to such an end within that time."

The lady then embraced Messer Torello with tears, and taking a ring from her finger, gave it to him, saying: "If I should happen to die before you return, remember me when you see this."

He then mounted his horse, said farewell to everyone, and went on his way. Coming to Genoa with his company, he went on board a galley and in a short time came to Acre, where he joined the remainder of the Christian host, wherein almost immediately there began a great plague and mortality. While this sickness still lasted, Saladin, either by good fortune or design, captured almost all the surviving Christians and imprisoned them in many different towns. Among them was Messer Torello, who was taken to Alexandria. He was known to nobody there and was afraid to reveal his identity, and so was forced by necessity to train hawks—in which he was extremely skilled—and in this way came to the notice of Saladin, who had him brought out of captivity and made him his falconer.

Messer Torello was called Saladin's Christian, and neither recognised the Sultan nor was recognised by him. All his thoughts were turned towards Pavia, and several times he tried without success to make his escape. Certain Genoese came as ambassadors to Saladin to ransom their fellow citizens, and when they were leaving, Messer Torello wrote to his wife that he was alive and would come to her as soon as he could and she should wait for him; and he earnestly asked one of the ambassadors, whom he knew, to convey the letter to his uncle, the abbot of San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro.

About this time Messer Torello was one day talking with Saladin about the hawks, when Messer Torello happened to smile, and made a movement with his mouth which Saladin had noticed in his house at Pavia. This movement made Saladin remember Messer Torello, and so he looked at him more carefully and thought he recognised him. Changing the conversation, he said:

"Tell me, Christian, which is your country in the West?"

"Sire," replied Messer Torello, "I am a Lombard from a city called Pavia, a poor man of humble birth."

When Saladin heard this he felt his suspicions almost certainties, and said to himself:

"God has now granted me the opportunity to show this man how much I thought of his courtesy."

Without saying another word, Saladin had all his clothes brought into a room to which he took Messer Torello, and said:

“Look, Christian, and tell me if you ever saw any of these clothes before.”

Messer Torello looked about and saw the clothes his wife had given to Saladin. It seemed impossible that they should be there, but still he said:

“Sire, I recognise none of them. But it is true that these two are like the clothes in which I clad three merchants who stayed at my house.”

Then Saladin, able to restrain himself no longer, tenderly embraced him, saying:

“You are Messer Torello d’ Istria, and I am one of the three merchants to whom your wife gave those clothes, and now the time has come for me to show you my merchandise, as I said might happen when I left you.”

Hearing this Messer Torello was both happy and ashamed—happy that he had had such a guest, ashamed because he felt he had entertained him but poorly. Then said Saladin:

“Messer Torello, since God has sent you here, you must feel that not I but you are the master.”

They rejoiced greatly together, and Saladin had him clothed in royal garments, and led him forth in the sight of all his great barons, speaking much praise of him and commanding that all who valued his favour should honour Messer Torello as if he were the Sultan himself. And this each of them immediately did, but especially the two lords who had been with Saladin in his house. The height of this sudden glory in which Messer Torello found himself to some extent withdrew his thoughts from Lombardy, especially since he had every hope that his letters had reached his uncle.

In the camp or army of the Christians on the day when Saladin captured them, there died and was buried a knight of Provence, of small importance, named Messer Torello of Dignes. Now, since Messer Torello d’ Istria was known to the whole army through his nobility, everyone who heard the news “Messer Torello is dead” thought this meant Torello d’ Istria and not Torello of Dignes. And the subsequent event of their



being captured prevented them from learning the truth. Thus many Italians returned with this piece of news, and some of them were so reckless as to say that they had seen him dead and had been present at his burial. When his wife and relatives heard it, the news gave them inexpressible grief, as it also did to all who had known him.

It would be a long task to relate the lady's grief and sadness and woe; but when after some months of continual mourning her grief had begun to subside, she was courted by the most eminent men in Lombardy, while her brothers and other relatives urged her to marry again. At first she refused many times and with great lamentations, but being constrained she finally agreed to do what her relatives asked, on condition that she should be allowed to remain unmarried for the period she had promised Messer Torello.

While the lady's affairs in Pavia were in this state and only about a week remained before she was to marry again, Messer Torello in Alexandria happened to meet a man whom he had seen go on board the galley which was to take the Genoese ambassadors to Genoa. He therefore called to him, and asked what sort of a voyage they had had, and when they had reached Genoa.

"My lord," said the man, "the galley had an ill voyage, as we heard in Crete, where I remained on shore. When it was near Sicily a dangerous gale arose and drove it on the shores of Barbary, and not one man escaped; two of my own brothers perished in it."

Messer Torello believed what he said (and indeed it was perfectly true), and, remembering that the period of time he had asked his wife to give him would expire in a few days, that no news of him could have come to Pavia, he felt certain that his wife would be on the point of remarrying. Consequently he fell into such distress that he lost his appetite and took to his bed, determined to die.

The news of this came to Saladin, who had the greatest affection for him, and went to see him, and thus after many entreaties and questionings discovered the reason of his grief and sickness. Saladin reproached him for not having spoken of it sooner, and then told him to cheer up, saying that he would manage things in such a way that Messer Torello

would be in Pavia on the appointed day, and told him how. Messer Torello believed Saladin, and, since he had often heard that this was possible and had been done, he was comforted and begged Saladin to carry it out.

Saladin ordered one of his magicians, whose skill he often proved, to discover some means whereby Messer Torello could be carried to Pavia in his bed in a single night. The magician replied that it could be done, but that for his own good Messer Torello should be conveyed in his sleep.

Having arranged this, Saladin returned to Messer Torello. Seeing that he was determined either to be in Pavia on the given day if he could or to die if he could not, Saladin said:

“Messer Torello, God knows that you are in no wise to be reproved for loving your wife affectionately and for suspecting that she may be married to another, for among all the ladies I ever saw I think her behaviour, her manners, her garb, apart from her beauty which is but a perishable flower, are most to be commended. Since Fortune has brought you here, it would have greatly delighted me for us to live together as equal princes in the government of my kingdom for as long as we lived together. God has not granted me this, for it has come into your mind either to die or to return to Pavia at the appointed date; but I should greatly have liked to know it in time so that I could have sped you to your home with the honour, grandeur and the company your virtues deserve. This too has not been granted me. You desire to be there at once, and so I shall send you there, as I can, in the way I have told you.”

“Sire,” replied Messer Torello, “your words show me the effects of your kindness, which I never deserved to this supreme degree; but even if you had not spoken I should have lived and died most certain of it. But since I have made this determination, I beg that what you tell me may be done quickly, because tomorrow is the last day she will still await me.”

Saladin said that it should be accomplished without fail. Next day, with the intention of sending him that night, Saladin ordered that in a great hall there should be prepared a rich and handsome bed of cushions, all of which were made of velvet and cloth of gold, in accordance with their customs. Over the bed was a coverlet worked in designs of very large

pearls and most precious stones, and two pillows befitting such a bed. This done, he ordered that Messer Torello (who was already recovered), should be clothed in Saracen clothes of the richest and most beautiful kind ever seen, while about his head was wound one of his longest turbans.

It was now late, and Saladin with many of his barons went to Messer Torello's room, sat down beside him, and said, almost in tears:

"Messer Torello, the hour which must separate us draws near; and since I cannot go with you or send anyone along with you because the manner of your travelling forbids it, I must take leave of you in this room, and have therefore come here. Before I commend you to God, I beg you by the love and friendship between us that you will remember me. Then, if possible, before our lives end, I beg that when you have arranged your affairs in Lombardy you will come at least once to see me, to make up for the loss of pleasure in seeing you which your haste to be gone imposes on me. To make this easier, do not shrink from visiting me with letters and from asking what you please of me, for I will certainly do it more gladly for you than for any other man living."

Messer Torello could not restrain his tears, and being hindered by them replied in a few words that it was impossible Saladin's benefits and virtue should ever leave his memory, and that he would indeed do what the Sultan commanded, if life were granted him. Saladin then tenderly embraced and kissed him with many tears, and said:

"Go, in God's care."

He then left the room. After this, all the barons took their leave, and went with Saladin to the room where the bed had been prepared. Since it was now late and the magician was waiting and in haste to despatch him, there came a doctor with a certain drink, telling him that it would strengthen him. This Messer Torello drank, and in a short time fell asleep. By Saladin's command he was carried in his sleep to the handsome bed, and beside him was laid a large beautiful crown of great value, which was marked in a way to show plainly that it was sent by Saladin to Messer Torello's wife.

After this he placed on Messer Torello's finger a ring, set with a carbuncle of such brilliance that it seemed like a torch, while its value

could scarcely be estimated. He was girt with a sword, whose ornaments could not easily be valued. On his chest was fastened a clasp, set with pearls whose like was never seen, and other precious stones. Then, on either side of him was set a large gold bowl filled with double ducats, and many strings of pearls and rings and girdles and other things, which would take long to describe. This done, he kissed Messer Torello once again, and told the magician to hurry; and immediately in Saladin's presence the bed and Messer Torello disappeared, and Saladin remained talking of him with his barons.

Messer Torello, with all the above-mentioned gems and ornaments, had reached the church of San Piero in Ciel d'Oro, as he had asked, and was still asleep when the sacristan, having rung the angelus, entered the church with a light in his hand. Suddenly he saw the rich bed, and was not only surprised but terrified, so that he fled. When the Abbot and the monks saw him fly, they were amazed and asked him the reason; and the monk told them.

"Oh," said the Abbot, "you're not such a child now or so new to this church that you should be frightened so easily. Let us go and see what has scared you so much."

They lit more torches, and the Abbot with all his monks entered the church, where they saw the marvellous rich bed, and the knight sleeping on it. While they were doubtfully and timidly looking at the noble gems, without going too near the bed, the effect of the potion came to an end and Messer Torello awoke and heaved a deep sigh. The Abbot and monks saw this and fled in terror, shrieking, "Lord help us!"

Messer Torello opened his eyes and looked about him, and saw he was in the place where he had asked Saladin to send him, which gave him great joy. He sat up and looked at some of the things about him; although he already knew Saladin's munificence, he now thought it greater than ever and knew it better. Nevertheless, when he heard the monks run away and knew the reason, he did not move but called to the Abbot by name, and begged him to have no fear, since it was Torello his nephew. At this the Abbot was still more frightened, since for several months he had believed Torello was dead. But in a little time, feeling reassured by

good reasons and finding himself still called, he made the sign of the holy cross, and went up to Messer Torello, who said:

"Why are you suspicious, father? I am alive, thank God, and returned here from beyond the seas."

Although Torello had a long beard and was dressed in Arab clothes, the Abbot soon recognised him, and being completely reassured took him by the hand, saying:

"My son, you are welcome." And then proceeded: "You must not be surprised at our fear, because there is not a man in this place but thinks you are dead; so much so that I must tell you Madonna Adalieta, your wife, overcome by the entreaties and threats of her relatives, has agreed to marry again, and this morning is to go to her new husband—the marriage feast and everything connected with it are all prepared."

Messer Torello arose from the rich bed and greeted the Abbot and the monks with marvellous cheer. He begged every one of them to say nothing about his return, until he had done what he had to do. After this, he had the rich gems placed in safe keeping, and told the Abbot all that had happened to him until that moment. The Abbot, delighted at his good fortune, returned thanks with him to God. Messer Torello then asked the Abbot who was his wife's new husband; and the Abbot told him.

"Before my return is known," said Messer Torello, "I want to see how my wife behaves at this wedding feast. I know it is not customary for churchmen to go to such banquets, but out of love for me I should like you to arrange for us to go there together."

The Abbot replied that he would gladly do so. It was now full day, and he sent to the bridegroom to say that he would like to come to the wedding feast with a friend. And the gentleman replied that he would be happy for them to come.

At the appointed hour, Messer Torello, still in the same clothes, went to the bridegroom's house with the Abbot, gazed at by everyone he met but recognised by no one. And the Abbot told everyone he was a Saracen, sent as ambassador by the Sultan to the King of France.

Messer Torello was placed at a table opposite the lady, whom he beheld with the greatest joy, while he thought from her face that she looked

discontented with her new marriage. She also looked several times at him, but she did not recognise him on account of his long beard and foreign clothes, and her firm belief that he was dead.

When Messer Torello thought the time had come to find out whether she remembered him, he took from his finger the ring she had given him when he set out, and called to a boy who was serving at his table, saying:

“Say to the bride from me that in my country the custom is when a stranger, as I am here, eats at a bride’s feast, that to show her pleasure at his coming to eat with her she sends him her own wine-cup filled with wine, and when the stranger has drunk, the cup is covered, and the bride drinks the wine that is left.”

The boy took the message to the lady. She thought the stranger was a great personage, and, being a well-bred woman, wished to show that she was pleased at his coming; so she ordered them to wash a large gold cup which stood before her, to fill it with wine and take it to the gentleman.

Messer Torello put the ring in his mouth, and while drinking managed to let it fall in the cup without anyone noticing. Leaving only a little wine, he covered up the cup, and sent it back to his wife. To carry out the custom, she took the cup, uncovered it, carried it to her mouth, saw the ring, and gazed at it without saying anything. She saw that it was the ring she had given Messer Torello at his departure, took it in her hand and looked closely at the man she had thought a foreigner. She recognised her husband, and overthrew the table in front of her, as if she had gone mad, screaming:

“There is my husband! It is Messer Torello!”

She ran to the table where he was sitting, and without caring for her clothes or what was on the table, threw herself across it and closely embraced him; and nobody there could get her to loose him, until Messer Torello told her to restrain herself a little since there would soon be plenty of time for them to embrace. Whereupon she stood up. The banquet was in confusion, but in part happier at the return of such a knight. At his request every man was silent, and then Messer Torello related all that had happened to him from the day of his departure until that moment, ending up by saying his being there alive must not

displease the gentleman who, thinking him dead, had married his wife.

Although the gentleman was a little irate, he replied freely and like a friend that Messer Torello should dispose of what was his as he wished. The lady took off the new husband's ring and crown, and put on the ring she had taken from the cup and the crown sent her by the Sultan. They then left the house and with all the wedding pomp returned to Messer Torello's house, where he rejoiced with his relatives and friends and all the citizens, who looked upon him almost as a miracle.

Messer Torello gave some of the gems to the man who had paid for the wedding banquet, and some to the Abbot and many others. He sent several letters to the Sultan to announce his happy return, declaring himself Saladin's friend and servant; and then lived many years with his virtuous wife, with more chivalrous courtesy than ever.

Thus ended the trials of Messer Torello and his beloved wife, and such was the reward of their ready and cheerful courtesy. Many attempt to do the same, but do it with so ill a grace that they make their guests pay more for it beforehand than it is worth; and thus if no reward follows, neither they nor anyone else should be surprised.

Tenth Tale

THE MARQUESS OF SALUZZO IS URGED BY HIS SUBJECTS TO TAKE A WIFE AND, TO CHOOSE IN HIS OWN WAY, TAKES THE DAUGHTER OF A PEASANT. HE HAS TWO CHILDREN BY HER AND PRETENDS TO HER THAT HE HAS KILLED THEM. HE THEN PRETENDS THAT HE IS TIRED OF HER AND THAT HE HAS TAKEN ANOTHER WIFE AND SO BRINGS THEIR OWN DAUGHTER TO THE HOUSE AS IF SHE WERE HIS NEW WIFE, AFTER DRIVING HER AWAY IN HER SHIFT. SHE ENDURES IT ALL PATIENTLY. HE BRINGS HER BACK HOME, MORE BELOVED BY HIM THAN EVER, SHOWS HER THEIR GROWN CHILDREN, HONOURS HER AND MAKES OTHERS HONOUR HER AS MARCHIONESS

WHEN the king had ended his long tale, which, to judge by their looks, had greatly pleased everyone, Dioneo said, laughing:

“The good man who was waiting to bring down the ghost’s stiff tail that night would not have given two cents for all the praise you give Messer Torello!”

Then, knowing that he was the only one left to tell a tale, he began: Gracious ladies, as far as I can see, today has been given up to Kings, Sultans and such like persons; so, not to wander away too far from you, I shall tell you about a Marquess, but not of his munificence. It will be about his silly brutality, although good came of it in the end. I do not advise anyone to imitate him, for it was a great pity that good did come to him.

A long time ago the eldest son of the Marquess of Saluzzo was a young man named Gualtieri. He was wifeless and childless, spent his time hunting and hawking, and never thought about marrying or having children, wherein he was probably very wise. This displeased his subjects, who several times begged him to take a wife, so that he might not die without an heir and leave them without a ruler, offering to find him

a wife born of such a father and mother as would give him good hopes of her and content him. To which Gualtieri replied:

"My friends, you urge me to do something I was determined never to do, seeing how hard it is to find a woman of suitable character, and how many of the opposite sort there are, and how wretched is the life of a man who takes a wife unsuitable to him. It is foolishness of you to think you can judge a girl by the characters of her father and mother (from which you argue that you can find me one to please me), for I do not see how you can really know the fathers' or the mothers' secrets. And even if you did know them, daughters are often quite different from their fathers and mothers.

"But you want me to take these chains, and I am content to do so. If it turns out badly I want to have no one to complain of but myself, and so I shall choose for myself. And I tell you that if you do not honour the wife I choose as your lady you will find out to your cost how serious a thing it is to have compelled me by your entreaties to take a wife against my will."

They replied that they were content, if only he would take a wife.

For some time Gualtieri had been pleased by the character of a poor girl in a hamlet near his house. He thought her beautiful, and that he might live comfortably enough with her. So he decided that he would marry her without seeking any further, and, having sent for her father, who was a very poor man, he arranged to marry her. Having done this, Gualtieri called together all his friends from the surrounding country, and said:

"My friends, it has pleased you to desire that I should marry, and I am ready to do so, more to please you than from any desire I have of taking a wife. You know you promised me that you would honour anyone I chose as your lady. The time has now come for me to keep my promise to you and you to keep yours to me. I have found a girl after my heart quite near here; I intend to marry her and to bring her home in a few days. So take thought to make a handsome marriage feast and how you can honourably receive her, so that I may consider myself content with your promise as you may be with mine."

The good men cheerfully replied that they were glad of it, and that they would consider her their lady and honour her as their lady in all things. After which, they all set about preparing a great and handsome wedding feast, and so did Gualtieri. He prepared a great and fine banquet, and invited many friends and relatives and noblemen and others. Moreover, he had rich and beautiful dresses cut out and fitted on a girl, who seemed to him about the same build as the girl he proposed to marry. And he also purchased girdles and rings and a rich and beautiful crown, and everything necessary to a bride.

When the day appointed for the wedding arrived, Gualtieri about the middle of Terce mounted his horse, and so did those who had come to honour him. Everything being arranged, he said:

“Gentlemen, it is time to go for the bride.”

Setting out with all his company he came to the hamlet and the house of the girl’s father, where he found her drawing water in great haste, so that she could go with the other women to see Gualtieri’s bride. And when Gualtieri saw her, he called her by her name, Griselda, and asked where her father was. She blushed and said:

“He is in the house, my lord.”

Gualtieri dismounted, told everyone to wait for him, entered the poor little house where he found the girl’s father (who was named Gian-nucolo), and said to him:

“I have come to marry Griselda, but first I want to ask her a few things in your presence.”

He then asked her whether, if he married her, she would try to please him, and never be angry at anything he said or did, and if she would be obedient, and several other things, to all of which she said “Yes.” Gualtieri then took her by the hand and led her forth. In the presence of all his company he had her stripped naked, and then the clothes he had prepared were brought, and she was immediately dressed and shod, and he had a crown put on her hair, all unkempt as it was. Everyone marvelled at this, and he said:

“Gentlemen, I intend to take this girl as my wife, if she will take me as her husband.”

He then turned to her, as she stood blushing and irresolute, and said: "Griselda, will you take me as your husband?"

"Yes, my lord," she replied.

"And I will take you as my wife," said he.

Then in the presence of them all he pledged his faith to her; and they set her on a palfrey and honourably conducted her to his house. The wedding feast was great and handsome, and the rejoicing no less than if he had married the daughter of the King of France.

The girl seemed to have changed her soul and manners with her clothes. As I said, she was beautiful of face and body, and she became so agreeable, so pleasant, so well-behaved that she seemed like the daughter of a nobleman, and not Giannucole's child and a cattle herder; which surprised everyone who had known her before. Moreover, she was so obedient and so ready to serve her husband that he felt himself to be the happiest and best matched man in the world. And she was so gracious and kindly to her husband's subjects that there was not one of them but loved her and gladly honoured her, while all prayed for her good and her prosperity and advancement. Whereas they had said that Gualtieri had showed little wisdom in marrying her, they now said that he was the wisest and shrewdest man in the world, because no one else would have known the lofty virtue hidden under her poor clothes and village garb.

In short, before long she acted so well that not only in the marquisate but everywhere people were talking of her virtues and good actions; and whatever had been said against her husband for having married her was now turned to the opposite. She had not long been with Gualtieri when she became pregnant, and in due time gave birth to a daughter, at which Gualtieri rejoiced greatly.

Soon after this the idea came to him to test her patience with a long trial and intolerable things. He said unkind things to her, seemed to be angry, and said that his subjects were most discontented with her on account of her low birth, and especially when they saw that she bore children. He said they were very angry at the birth of a daughter and did nothing but murmur. When the lady heard these words, she did not change countenance or cheerfulness, but said to him:

"My lord, you may do with me what you think most to your honour and satisfaction. I shall be content, for I know that I am less than they and unworthy of the honour to which you have raised me by your courtesy."

Gualtieri liked this reply and saw that no pride had risen up in her from the honour done her by him and others.

Soon after, he informed his wife in general terms that his subjects could not endure the daughter she had borne. He then gave orders to one of his servants whom he sent to her. The man, with a dolorous visage, said:

"Madonna, if I am to avoid death I must do what my lord bids me. He tells me I am to take your daughter and . . ."

He said no more, but the lady, hearing these words and seeing the servant's face, and remembering what had been said to her, guessed that he had been ordered to kill the child. She went straight to the cradle, kissed and blessed the child, and although she felt great anguish in her heart, put the child in the servant's arms without changing her countenance, and said:

"Do what my lord and yours has ordered you to do. But do not leave her for the birds and animals to devour her body, unless you were ordered to do so."

The servant took the child and told Gualtieri what the lady had said. He marvelled at her constancy, and sent the servant with the child to a relative at Bologna, begging her to bring her up and educate her carefully, but without ever saying whose daughter she was.

After this the lady again became pregnant, and in due time brought forth a male child, which delighted Gualtieri. But what he had already done was not enough for him. He pierced the lady with a worse wound, and one day said to her in pretended anger:

"Since you have borne this male child, I cannot live at peace with my subjects, who complain bitterly that a grandson of Giannucole must be their lord after me. If I am not to be driven out, I fear I must do now as I did before, and in the end abandon you and take another wife."

The lady listened to him patiently, and her only reply was:

“My lord, content yourself and do what is pleasing to you. Do not think about me, for nothing pleases me except as it pleases you.”

Not many days afterwards Gualtieri sent for his son in the same way that he had sent for his daughter, and while pretending in the same way to kill the child, sent it to be brought up in Bologna, as he had sent the girl. And his wife said no more and looked no worse than she had done about the daughter. Gualtieri marvelled at this and said to himself that no other woman could have done what she did; and if he had not seen that she loved her children while she had them, he would have thought she did it to get rid of them, whereas he saw it was from obedience to him.

His subjects thought he had killed his children, blamed him severely and thought him a cruel man, while they felt great pity for his wife. And when the women condoled with her on the death of her children, she never said anything except that it was not her wish but the wish of him who begot them.

Several years after his daughter's birth, Gualtieri thought the time had come for the last test of his wife's patience. He kept saying that he could no longer endure to have Griselda as his wife, that he knew he had acted childishly and wrongly when he married her, that he therefore meant to solicit the Pope for a dispensation to marry another woman and abandon Griselda; for all of which he was reproved by many good men. But his only reply was that it was fitting this should be done.

Hearing of these things, the lady felt she must expect to return to her father's house and perhaps watch cattle as she had done in the past, and see another woman take the man she loved; at which she grieved deeply. But she prepared herself to endure this with a firm countenance, as she had endured the other wrongs of Fortune.

Not long afterwards Gualtieri received forged letters from Rome, which he showed to his subjects, pretending that the Pope by these letters gave him a dispensation to take another wife and leave Griselda. So, calling her before him, he said to her in the presence of many of his subjects:

“Wife, the Pope has granted me a dispensation to leave you and to take another wife. Now, since my ancestors were great gentlemen and lords of

this country while yours were always labourers, I intend that you shall no longer be my wife, but return to Giannucole's house with the dowry you brought me, while I shall bring home another wife I have found more suitable for me."

At these words the lady could only restrain her tears by a great effort, beyond that of women's nature, and replied:

"My lord, I always knew that my lowly rank was in no wise suitable to your nobility; and the rank I have had with you I always recognised as coming from God and you, and never looked upon it as given to me, but only lent. You are pleased to take it back, and it must and does please me to return it to you. Here is the ring with which you wedded me; take it. You tell me to take the dowry I brought you; to do this there is no need for you to pay anything nor shall I need a purse or a sumpter horse, for I have not forgotten that I came to you naked. If you think it right that the body which has borne your children should be seen by everyone, I will go away naked. But in exchange for my virginity, which I brought here and cannot carry away, I beg you will at least be pleased to let me take away one shift over and above my dowry."

Gualtieri, who was nearer to tears than anyone else present, managed to keep his countenance stern, and said:

"You shall have a shift."

Those who were present urged him to give her a dress, so that she who had been his wife for thirteen years should not be seen to leave his house so poorly and insultingly as it would be for her to leave it in a shift. But their entreaties were vain. So the lady, clad only in her shift, unshod and with nothing on her head, commended him to God, left his house, and returned to her father accompanied by the tears and lamentation of all who saw her.

Giannucole (who had never believed it was true that Gualtieri would keep his daughter as a wife and had always expected this event), had kept the clothes she had taken off on the morning when Gualtieri married her. So she took them and put them on, and devoted herself to drudgery in her father's house, enduring the assaults of hostile Fortune with a brave spirit.

After Gualtieri had done this, he told his subjects that he was to marry the daughter of one of the Counts of Panago. He therefore made great preparations for the wedding, and sent from Griselda to come to him; and when she came, he said:

"I am bringing home the lady I have just married, and I intend to do her honour at her arrival. You know there is not a woman in the house who can prepare the rooms and do many other things needed for such a feast. You know everything connected with the house better than any-one, so you must arrange everything that is to be done, and invite all the women you think fit and receive them as if you were mistress of the house. Then, when the marriage feast is over, you can return home."

These words were a dagger in Griselda's heart, for she had not been able to dispense with the love she felt for him as she had her good fortune, but she said:

"My lord, I am ready."

So, in her coarse peasant dress, she entered the house she had left a little before in her shift, and had the rooms cleaned and arranged, put out hangings and carpets in the halls, looked to the kitchen, and set her hand to everything as if she had been a scullery wench of the house. And she never paused until everything was ready and properly arranged.

After this she invited all the ladies of the surrounding country in Gualtieri's name, and then awaited the feast. On the wedding day, dressed in her poor clothes, she received all the ladies with a cheerful visage and a womanly manner.

Gualtieri had had his children carefully brought up in Bologna by his relative, who was married into the family of the Counts of Panago. The daughter was now twelve years old, the most beautiful thing ever seen, and the boy was seven. He sent to her and asked her to come to Saluzzo with his son and daughter, to bring an honourable company with her, and to tell everyone that she was bringing the girl as his wife, and never to let anyone know that the girl was anything else. Her husband did what the Marquess asked, and set out. In a few days he reached Saluzzo about dinner time, with the girl and boy and his noble company; and all the peasants of the country were there to see Gualtieri's new wife.

The girl was received by the ladies and taken to the hall where the tables were spread, and Griselda went cheerfully to meet her, saying:

"Lady, you are welcome."

The ladies had begged Gualtieri, but in vain, to allow Griselda to stay in her room or to lend her one of her own dresses, so that she might not have to meet strangers in such a guise. They all sat down to table and began the meal. Every man looked at the girl and said that Gualtieri had made a good exchange, and Griselda above all praised her and her little brother.

Gualtieri now felt that he had tested his wife's patience as far as he desired. He saw that the strangeness of all this did not alter her and he was certain it was not the result of stupidity, for he knew her to be an intelligent woman. He thought it now time to take her from the bitterness which he felt she must be hiding behind a smiling face. So he called her to him, and in everyone's presence said to her smilingly:

"What do you think of my new wife?"

"My lord," replied Griselda, "I see nothing but good in her. If she is as virtuous as she is beautiful, as I well believe, I have no doubt that you will live with her the happiest lord in the world. But I beg you as earnestly as I can not to give her the wounds you gave the other woman who was your wife. I think she could hardly endure them, because she is younger and because she has been brought up delicately, whereas the other laboured continually from her childhood."

Gualtieri saw that she really believed he was to marry the other, and yet spoke nothing but good of her. He made her sit down beside him, and said:

"Griselda, it is now time that you should reap the reward of your long patience, and that those who have thought me cruel and wicked and brutal should know that what I have done was directed towards a pre-determined end, which was to teach you to be a wife, then how to choose and keep a wife, and to procure me perpetual peace so long as I live with you. When I came and took you to wife, I greatly feared that this would not happen to me; and so, to test you, I have given you the trials and sufferings you know. I have never perceived that you thwarted my wishes

by word or deed, and I think that in you I have the comfort I desire. I mean to give you back now what I deprived you of for a long time, and to heal the wounds I gave you with the greatest delight. Therefore, with a glad spirit, take her whom you think to be my wife and her brother as your children and mine. They are the children whom you and many others have long thought that I had cruelly murdered. And I am your husband, who loves you above all things, believing I can boast that no man exists who can so rejoice in his wife as I in you."

He then embraced and kissed her. She was weeping with happiness. They both arose and went to where their daughter was sitting, quite stupefied by what she had heard, and tenderly embraced her and her brother, thus undeceiving them and many of those present.

The ladies arose merrily from table and went with Griselda to her room. With better hopes they took off her old clothes and dressed her in one of her noble robes, and brought her back to the hall a lady, which she had looked even in her rags.

They rejoiced over their children, and everyone was glad at what had happened. The feasting and merrymaking were prolonged for several days, and Gualtieri was held to be a wise man, although they thought the testing of his wife harsh and intolerable. But above all they esteemed the virtue of Griselda.

The Count of Panago soon afterwards returned to Bologna. Gualtieri took Giannucole away from his labour and installed him as his father-in-law, so that he ended his days honourably and in great content. He afterwards married off his daughter to a nobleman of great wealth and distinction, and lived long and happily with Griselda, always honouring her as much as he could.

What more is to be said, save that divine souls are sometimes rained down from Heaven into poor houses, while in royal palaces are born those who are better fitted to herd swine than to rule over men? Who but Griselda could have endured with a face not only tearless but cheerful, the stern and unheard-of tests imposed on her by Gualtieri? It would perhaps not have been such a bad thing if he had chosen one of those women who, if she had been driven out of her home in a shift, would

have let another man so shake her fur that a new dress would have come from it.

Dioneo's tale was over, and the ladies talked about it, taking first one part and then another, blaming some things and praising others. The king looked up at the sky and saw that the sun was already sinking towards the hour of Vespers, and so, without rising, he spoke thus:

"Beautiful ladies, as I think you know, human wisdom does not wholly consist in remembering past things and knowing the present; but grave men esteem it the highest wisdom to be able to foresee the future from a knowledge of both.

"As you know, it will be a fortnight tomorrow since we left Florence to find some amusement to support our health and vitality, and to escape the melancholy, agony and woes which have continued in our city since the beginning of the plague. In my opinion we have virtuously performed this. We have told merry tales, which perhaps might incline to concupiscence; we have eaten and drunk well, played and sung music, all of which things incite weak minds to things less than virtuous; but so far as I have seen there has not been one word or one act on your part or on ours which could be blamed. I have noticed only continual virtue, concord and fraternal familiarity; which is certainly most pleasing to me in your honour and in mine. Now, through too long a habit something might arise which would turn to annoyance, and if we stay away too long an opportunity for scandal might occur; and moreover each of us has now for one day exercised the honour which now dwells in me. I therefore think, if you agree, that it would be well for us to return to the place from which we set out. And, if you consider the matter, our being together is already known round about, and so our company might be increased in such a way as to destroy our pleasure. If you approve my advice, I shall retain the crown until we leave, which I think should be tomorrow. If you decide otherwise, I am quite ready to crown someone for tomorrow."

The discussion between the ladies and young men was long, but at last the king's advice was adopted as wise and virtuous, and they de-

terminated to do as he had said. So, having called the steward, he discussed with him what should be done next morning, and then, standing up, gave the company their freedom until supper time.

The ladies and the rest arose, and as usual amused themselves in different ways. They came to supper merrily, and after that began to sing and dance and play music. After Laretta had danced, the king ordered Fiammetta to sing a song, and she began pleasantly as follows:

If Love came to us without jealousy, no woman living—whoever she might be—would be so glad as I!

And if a woman should be pleased to find in her lover gay youth, the very pinnacle of virtue, eagerness and prowess, wisdom, manners, eloquent speech and perfect grace—I should be pleased, who love them all and see them in my hope.

But since I see that other ladies are as wise as I, I tremble with my fears and dread the worst—which is that others may desire the man I love; and so my wondrous fortune turns to woe and sighing, and all life seems ill.

If my lover were but as faithful as he is valiant, I should feel no jealousy. But now so many ladies seek for lovers that I think all men are faithless. This stabs my heart and makes me wish to die; I dread each woman who looks at him, and fear I may be robbed of him.

Therefore in God's name I beg all ladies not to work this wrong on me; for should any seek to do me harm by word or sign or flattery, either I shall turn fool at learning it or she shall weep her bitter foolishness!

When Fiammetta had ended her song, Dioneo, who was sitting beside her said laughingly:

“Madonna, you would be very courteous to let all women know this, so that no one in ignorance may deprive you of a possession, whose loss would make you so angry!”

After this, they sang several other songs, and when it was nearly midnight, the king commanded that they should all go to bed.

Next morning they arose after the steward had already sent off all their baggage, and returned to Florence under the guidance of their prudent king. The three young men left the seven ladies in Santa Maria Novella, where they had met; and after taking leave of them went about their business. And the ladies returned home.

END OF THE TENTH AND LAST DAY

Conclusion

MOST noble ladies, for whose delight I have given myself over to this long task, I believe that with the aid of divine grace it is more through your pious prayers than any merit of mine that I have carried out what I promised to do at the beginning of this work. So now, after giving thanks, first to God and then to you, I shall rest my pen and weary hand. I know that these tales can expect no more immunity than any others, as I think I showed in the beginning of the Fourth Day; and so before I rest, I mean to reply to certain objections which might be made by you or others.

Some of you may say that in writing these tales I have taken too much license, by making ladies sometimes say and often listen to matters which are not proper to be said or heard by virtuous ladies. This I deny, for there is nothing so unchaste but may be said chastely if modest words are used; and this I think I have done.

But suppose it to be true—and I shall not strive with you, for you are certain to win—I reply that I have many arguments ready. First, if there is any license in some of them, the nature of the stories demanded it; and if any understanding person looks at them with a reasonable eye he will see that they could not be related otherwise, unless I had altered them entirely. And if there are a few words rather freer than suits the prudes, who weigh words more than deeds and take more pains to appear than to be good, I say that I should no more be reprovèd for having written them than other men and women are reprovèd for daily saying “hole,” “peg,” “mortar,” “pestle,” “sausage,” “Bologna sausage,” and the like things. My pen should be allowed no less power than is permitted the painter’s brush; the painters are not censured for allowing Saint Michele to slay the serpent with a sword or lance and Saint Giorgio to kill the dragon as he pleases. They make Christ male and Eve female, and they fasten sometimes with one nail, sometimes with two, the feet of Him who died for the human race on the Cross.

In addition, anyone can see that these things were not told in church,

where everything should be treated with reverent words and minds (although you will find plenty of license in the stories of the church); nor were they told in a school of philosophers, where virtue is as much required as anywhere else; nor among churchmen or other philosophers in any place; but they were told in gardens, in pleasure places, by young people who were old enough not to be led astray by stories, and at a time when everyone threw his cap over the mill and the most virtuous were not reproved for it.

But, such as they are, they may be amusing or harmful, like everything else, according to the persons who listen to them. Who does not know that wine is a most excellent thing, if we may believe Cinciglione and Scolaio, while it is harmful to a man with a fever? Are we to say wine is wicked because it is bad for those who are feverish? Who does not know that fire is most useful and even necessary to mankind? And because it sometimes destroys houses, villages and towns, shall we say it is bad? Weapons defend the safety of those who wish to live in peace, but they also kill men, not through any wrong in them but through the wickedness of those who use them ill.

No corrupt mind ever understands words healthily. And just as such people do not enjoy virtuous words, so the well-disposed cannot be harmed by words which are somewhat less than virtuous, any more than mud can sully sunlight or earthy filth the beauty of the skies.

What books, what words, what letters are more holy, more worthy, more to be revered than those of the divine Scripture? Yet many people by perversely interpreting them have sent themselves and others to perdition. Everything in itself is good for something, and if wrongly used may be harmful in many ways; and I say the same of my tales. Whoever wants to turn them to bad counsel or bad ends will not be forbidden by the tales themselves, if by any chance they contain such things and are twisted and turned to produce them. Those who want utility and good fruits from them, will not find them denied; nor will the tales ever be thought anything but useful and virtuous if they are read at the times and to the persons for which they are intended.

Those who have to say paternosters and play the hypocrite to their

confessor can leave them alone; my tales will run after nobody asking to be read. And yet bigots say and even do such little trifles from time to time!

There will also be people to say that if some of the tales here were absent it would be all the better. Granted. But I could only write down the tales which were related; if they had told better ones, I should have written them down better. But suppose that I was both the inventor and the scribe (which I was not), I say that I am not ashamed that they are not all good, because there is no one, save God alone, who can do everything well and perfectly. Charlemagne, who first devised the Paladins, could not make enough of them to form an army. In a multitude of things we must be prepared to find diverse qualities. No field was ever so well cultivated that it contained no nettles, briars and thorns mingled with better plants.

Moreover, since I was speaking to simple young women such as most of you are, it would have been folly for me to go seeking and striving to find such exquisite things and to take pains to speak with great measure. However, those who read these tales can leave those they dislike and read those they like. I do not want to deceive anybody, and so all these tales bear written at the head a title explaining what they contain.

I suppose some people will say that some of the tales are too long. I reply that for those who have something else to do it is folly to read the tales, even when they are short. A long time has passed between the day when I began to write and now when I have come to the end of my labours; but I have not forgotten that I said my work is offered to those ladies who are unoccupied, and not to others. To those who read for pastime, no tale can be too long if it succeeds in its object. Brevity befits students, who labour to spend time usefully, not to make it pass; but not you, ladies, who have unoccupied all that time you do not spend in love pleasures. None of you has studied at Athens, Bologna or Paris; and so one must chatter a little more volubly for you than for those who have sharpened their wits by study.

I have no doubt that others will say that the things related are too full of jests and jokes, and that it ill befits a grave and weighty man to write

such things. To them I must offer thanks and do thank them that they are so zealously tender of my good fame. But I shall reply to their objection. I confess I am weighty, and have often weighed myself. But, speaking to those who have not weighed me, I must observe that I am not grave but so light that I float in water. Considering that the friars' sermons, which are made to censure men's sins, are full of jokes and jests and raileries, I think that such things do not go ill in my tales, which are written to drive away ladies' melancholy. However, if the tales make them laugh too much, they can easily cure that by reading the lamentations of Jeremiah, the passion of the Saviour and the penitence of Mary Magdalene.

Who can doubt that there will be others who will say that I have a wicked poisonous tongue, because in some places I have written the truth about the friars? I mean to pardon those who say that, because it cannot be believed but that they are moved except by just cause, since the friars are good men who avoid poverty for the love of God, and do good service to the ladies and say nothing about it. And if they did not all smell a little of the goat, their company would be most pleasant.

Yet I confess that there is no stability in the things of this world and that everything changes. So may it have chanced with my tongue. I do not trust my own judgment, which I always avoid in matters concerning myself, but one of my women neighbours the other day told me I have the best and sweetest tongue in the world. But, to speak the truth, when that happened there were not many of my tales left to finish. And so let what I have said suffice as a reply to those who make these objections.

I leave it to every lady to say and think what she pleases; for me it is time to end my words, giving thanks humbly to Him who by His aid and after so much labour has brought me to the desired end.

And you, fair ladies, rest in peace in His grace; and if in reading any of these tales you find any pleasure, remember me.

THE END

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